

# Gregorio Magno: Spiritual Care and Political Praxis. A New Look at the Emerging Patterns of Church-State Relations in the Early Medieval West

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Boston College  
School of Theology and Ministry

GREGORIO MAGNO:  
SPIRITUAL CARE AND POLITICAL PRAXIS.  
A NEW LOOK AT THE EMERGING PATTERNS OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS  
IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL WEST

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A Dissertation

by

Wayne Louis Belschner

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctorate of Sacred Theology

February 2017



*To Lucy Ryan*

Gregorio Magno: Spiritual Care and Political Praxis.  
A new look at the emerging Patterns of Church-State Relations  
in the Early Medieval West  
By Wayne Louis Belschner  
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Readers: Francine Cardman, George Demacopoulos, Robin Fleming, Catherine Mooney

### **Abstract**

By the time Gregory the Great (590-604) began his ministry as bishop of Rome, the political, economic, and social circumstances in Italy were dire, as evidenced by ongoing barbarian threats, Rome's failing infrastructure, monuments and aqueducts in need of repair, abandoned farms, and decimated populations. As a result, demands were made on Gregory to tend to both the spiritual and physical needs of the people in Rome and in Italy. I argue that through his actions and writings, Gregory took control of the situation, and transcended pre-established ecclesiastical policies and procedures that permitted religious authorities to enter into political affairs. An examination of the fourth-century paradigm of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and the fifth-century paradigm of Leo the Great, bishop of Rome, introduces earlier examples in which pastoral leaders became active in state matters. Gregory, while not explicitly stating their influence on him, goes beyond them both and develops a paradigm uniquely his own. Gregory's eschatology significantly shaped his understanding of the need to be involved in both religious and political matters.

In analyzing his *Pastoral Rule*, *Moralia*, and homilies on the Gospels and the Prophet Ezekiel, I have identified the virtues and qualities that Gregory felt all pastoral leaders must possess. The resulting profile of leadership emphasizes the moral conduct and the intentionality that those in authority need to operate. Through examining a large selection of his letters, I have

been able to present a political theology that was key to Gregory's entrance into political affairs and his development of social programs that tended to the physical needs of the people. I conclude that Gregory's profile of leadership and political theology reveal a new paradigm which is his contribution to the ongoing development of the relationship between the Church and the state as both emerge from the age of late antiquity.

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### Abbreviations of Book and Journals

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>BSGRT</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Scriptorum et Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum</i> , Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>IJPR</i>	<i>International Journal of the Psychology of Religion</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religion and Health</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>The Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus</i> , Series Graecae, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Migne
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus</i> , Series Latina, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Migne
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> (Berlin)
<i>PSO</i>	<i>Political Science Quarterly</i>
<i>SCh</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> . Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

All references to translations of texts will cite text series, the last name of the translator, and the page number. Readers are referred to the bibliography for the full reference.

**Abbreviations of Texts**

<i>Ad Leandrum</i>	<i>Epistle to Leander of Seville</i>
<i>Comm Hiez</i>	<i>Commentariorum in Hiezechielem</i>
<i>De Obitu Theo</i>	<i>On the Death of Theodosius</i>
<i>Dial</i>	<i>The Dialogues of Saint Gregroy the Great</i>
<i>Epist</i>	<i>The Letters</i>
<i>Hom Evan</i>	<i>Forty Gospel Homilies</i>
<i>Hom Hiez</i>	<i>On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel</i>
<i>Moralia</i>	<i>Moralia In Iob</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>The Pastoral Rule</i>
<i>Sermo</i>	<i>The Sermons of Pope Leo I</i>
<i>Vita Ambr.</i>	<i>The Life of St. Ambrose</i>

## Introduction

At least since the time of Constantine (306-337), bishops, and in particular the bishop of Rome, were directly involved in affairs of the state. It would be erroneous to claim that the relationship between the Church and the state was easily definable. The nature of such a relationship has been, for centuries, complex and confusing. The complexity of this relationship is not something particular to the twenty-first century, but can be seen evolving in late antiquity. In this dissertation, I reach back to the papacy of Pope Gregory the Great in order to examine the relationship between the Church and state as both entities navigated the transition from late antiquity to the early middle ages in the West.

Why Gregory? At the end of late antiquity, Gregory stood at a crossroads, and not only had something to say regarding the Church's role in the affairs of the empire, but also undertook activities that influenced perceptions and expectations on how the two could or should relate. The question arises whether Gregory's policies and practices were his own creation or an amalgamation of past practices? Does Gregory the Great represent continuity with past ecclesial practices or introduce a new level of ecclesiastical engagement in secular affairs? The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Gregory's involvement in secular affairs and the impact he had on the developing relationship between the Church and the state, particularly in the West, during the transition into the early middle ages.

Since it is difficult to comprehend the internal motivations of a person, this dissertation delves into what Gregory said and did, in order to shed light on what he regarded as appropriate conduct for pastoral leaders, in particular the bishop of Rome, in relation to secular and political affairs. Gregory noted: "He must not relax his care for the internal life while he is occupied with

external concerns, nor should he relinquish what is prudent of external matters so as to focus on things internal.”<sup>1</sup> By examining Gregory’s actions and words, I attempt to determine his understanding of his role as bishop of Rome, and also to discover what awareness if any that he had of the historical precedents regarding the relationship of the Roman bishop to the political institutions of the West as well as with the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople.

The undeniably complicated relationship between these two vital entities can be traced back to the beginning of the fourth century. During the fourth century reign of the Emperor Constantine, the Church entered into a relationship with the state that was quite unprecedented. It was Constantine’s increased identification with Christianity and his involvement with the Church that paved the way for such a new connection. He set into motion a new, complex alliance between the religious (Church) and political (empire) realms.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent emperors promoted this affiliation and, at times, the association between the Church and state became so intermeshed that it is reasonable to ask, from both a political and an ecclesial point of view, who was actually in charge?<sup>3</sup>

As the fifth century unfolded, Rome began a decline which in 476 eventually led to the abdication of the emperor in the West. Evidence of the condition of Rome can be seen in Saint Jerome’s prefaces of Books I and II on the Prophet Ezekiel, in which he lamented over the

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1. *PR.* 2.1, 174, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 49. *Internorum curam in exteriorum occupatione non minuens, exteriorem providentiam in internorum solitudine non relinquens.*

2. Harold Drake takes up the relationship between Constantine and the bishops in order to demonstrate exactly how and why the Church was necessary in his political world. See *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 43. For further discussion of the nature of the new relationship between the Church and empire; see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2009), 189-200 and Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 16-46.

3. The question of authority in this instance is applied to both religious and secular authority. Emperors, from the time of Constantine, were very active in Church affairs for instance calling councils, dealing with heresies, and promoting the Christian faith. Bishops, moreover, were involved in the imperial bureaucracy which will be the focus of chapter two.

Goths' attack, in 410, on the city of Rome: "After the true brightest light of all the world was extinguished, and with certainty the head of the Roman Empire was cut off, truly let me say, that in one city the whole world ceased to exist."<sup>4</sup> He continued his dirge in Book VII with disbelief that Rome, who provided for all the world's needs, was in need of assistance from others: "Who would believe that the world structured by the victories of Rome would collapse, and that the same mother of her people would be their grave, so that all the East, Egypt, Africa along the coast, at that time the dominant cities, for the number of male and female slaves would understand, that daily, Holy Bethlehem, the nobles of both sexes and even all the affluent wealthy undertook begging."<sup>5</sup> Jerome presented an image of Rome comparable to Luke's Gospel account of the Good Samaritan, like the man left on the side of the road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho, Rome had fallen into the hands of robbers and left half dead.<sup>6</sup>

In juxtaposition to Jerome's requiem for Rome was Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. The pagans in the city believed that Christianity was to blame for the fall of the city in 410. They felt that due to Christian practices and policies the Roman gods were angered and as a result exacted a healthy dose of divine retribution. He wrote this treatise to answer that charge and also in response to some Christians who were dismayed by the reality that the city of Peter had fallen. Augustine undertook the writing of a massive *apologia* to refute the claims of the pagans and to

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4. Jerome, *Comm Hiez.* Prol, lines 12-14, CCSL 79; translation my own. *Postquam vero clarissimum terrarium omnium lumen extinctum est, immo romani imperii truncatum caput et, ut verius dicam, in una urbe totus orbis interii.*

5. *Comm Hiez. Preaf.*, lines 7-10, CCSL 79; translation my own.. *Quis crederet ut totius orbis exstructa victoriis roma corrueret, ut ipsa suis populis et mater fieret et sepulcrum, ut tota orientis, aegypti, africae littoria olim dominatricis urbis, seruorum et ancillarum numero complerentur, ut cotidie sancta bethleem, nobiles quondam utriusque sexus atque omnibus diuitiis affluentes, susciperet mendicantes?*

6. This Gospel passage describes beautifully the situation of Rome at the beginning of the fifth century: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead," Luke 10:30.

assure the Christians that this was all part of God's plan for salvation.<sup>7</sup> Augustine offered a sacred history in which the divine plan of God was revealed in and through the sacking of Rome. He cautioned pagans not to be rash in their judgments and proposed that perhaps the lack of support for the Church and participation of Christians in pagan rituals caused the downfall of the city. He reminded them that the gods of Rome had failed to protect the city in the past: "Troy, itself, the mother of the Roman people, was not able, as I have said, to protect its own citizens in the sacred places of their gods from the fire and the sword of the Greeks, though the Greeks worshipped the same gods."<sup>8</sup> Not only did the Roman gods fail to protect the city from the invasion by the Goths, but Augustine further contended the God of the Christians spared the city from greater devastation:

All the spoiling, then, which Rome was exposed to in the recent calamity . . . was the result of the custom of war. But what was novel was that savage barbarians showed themselves in so gentle a guise, that the largest churches were set aside . . . and that in them none were slain . . . from them none were led into slavery by merciless foes. Whoever does not see that this is to be attributed to the name of Christ, and to the Christian temper is blind.<sup>9</sup>

Augustine's approach was slightly different than Jerome's. Jerome offered a lament for the city, while Augustine offered a historical perspective stretching from the time of Noah and the Ark to the eschaton, an approach which promises the eternal happiness that will be revealed

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7. *De Civitate Dei* was begun in 412 and completed an astounding fourteen years later in 426.

8. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 1.4, lines 1-4, *PL* 32; trans. Dyson, 131. *Ipsa, ut dixi, Troia, mater populi Romani, sacratissimis locis deorum suorum munire non potuit ciues suos ab ignibus ferroque Graecorum, eosdem ipsos deos colentium.*

9. *De Civitate Dei*, 1.7, lines 1-13, *PL* 32; trans. Dyson, 132-33. *Quidquid ergo uastationis trucidationis depraedationis concremationis adflictionis in ista recentissima Romana clade commissum est, fecit hoc consuetudo bellorum; quod autem noui more factum est, quod inusitata rerum facie inmanitas barbara tam mitis apparuit, ut amplissimae basilicae implendae populo cui parceretur eligerentur et decernerentur ubi nemo feriretur, unde nemo raperetur, quo liberandi multi a miserantibus hostibus abducerentur: hoc Christi nomini, hoc Christiano tempore tribuendum quisquis non uidet, caecus, quisquis uidet nec laudet, ingratus, quisquis laudanti reluctatur, insanus est.*



in the City of God on the last day.<sup>10</sup> Even though these two saints offered different viewpoints in dealing with the calamities that befell Rome in the early-fifth century, they both agreed that, in fact, something catastrophic had occurred.

By the time Gregory began his ministry as the bishop of Rome (590-604), various groups wrestled for control of Italy. In fact, Italy had passed through many hands, foreign and imperial, before Gregory appeared on the scene. At the close of the sixth century, the political, economic, and social circumstances in Italy were in dire straits, as evidenced by ongoing barbarian threats, Rome's failing infrastructure, monuments and aqueducts in need of repair, abandoned farms, and decimated populations. In desperation, Gregory asked: Where is the senate? *Ubi enim senatus?*

The question Gregory posed becomes the point of departure for this dissertation. It is not the intention of this study to locate the tangible presence of the senate. The senate, albeit a weakened form of its earlier self, was still seated in Rome and performing certain duties.<sup>11</sup> Gregory's question was rhetorical and opened the door for a discussion on what he considered the right relationship between the leadership of the Church and the state. During the papacy of Gregory the Great, the bishop of Rome did, in fact, assume greater responsibility in political, economic, and social matters in the West. A closer examination of the actions and words of Gregory can help towards understanding not only the level of political involvement this sixth-century pontiff exercised, but also if he operated out of a pre-existing paradigm of ecclesiastical engagement with the secular world introduced by earlier ecclesiastical leaders.

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10. Augustine's synopsis of salvation history, in which the sack of Rome is an integral part, can be located in Books 16-22. Also, Christopher Dawson, *Dynamics of World History*, 3rd ed., ed. John Mulloy (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002), 311-339, offers a unique perspective on Augustine's sacred history, eschatology, and understanding of how human nature and ethics are embodied in his theory of history and theology as the foundation to his theology of creation and grace.

11. Mark Humphries, "From emperor to pope? Ceremonial, space, and authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great," in *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome 300-900*, eds. Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 56.

From late antiquity to the medieval era, the increase of papal authority in the West, coupled with the developed political power of the bishop in Rome, proved to be a dominant force. As the power of the papacy grew, the Church advanced in both the religious and temporal spheres. According to some in the Renaissance, the pope began to act more like a Caesar than a humble servant of God's servants.<sup>12</sup> This was a fear of Gregory's: "We who are supposed to be attentive to the mysteries of the interior life are caught up in external cares."<sup>13</sup> It is against this backdrop that the work of the dissertation begins. In examining Gregory's understanding of the nature of the religious and the political worlds in Rome and his role in them as bishop of Rome, I will evaluate the relationship as Gregory presented it and consider his contribution and influence to the ongoing development of that relationship.

In 1904, to mark the occasion of the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of the death of Saint Gregory the Great, Pope Pius X wrote the encyclical *Iucunda Sane*. In this encyclical, Pius X referred to Gregory as the "savior and liberator of Italy."<sup>14</sup> Gregory's homilies, letters, commentaries, political savvy, social programs, and civic outreach to the poor, the hungry, and widows and orphans certainly guaranteed him a place as one of the most notable popes of all time; yet, was he in fact the "savior and liberator" Pius X made him out to be?

Although Gregory was reluctant to assume the office of the papacy, he did so in September 590 and, with a sense of duty, he inserted himself into the temporal affairs of his day. In his introductory epistle to the *Morals in Job* [*Moralia In Iob*], Gregory describes to Bishop Leander of Seville the peace and fulfillment that he had found in the monastery. It was when he

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12. The sixteenth-century humanist and Catholic reformer, Desiderius Erasmus is widely considered to be the author of the anonymous satire *Julius Exclusus* (*Julius Excluded from Heaven*) about the corruption and vices of the papacy under Julius II (1503-1513).

13. *Moralia, ad Leandrum*. 1, lines, 28-30, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Kerns, 48. *Ipsi nos, qui interiorius mysteriis deservire credimur, curis exterioribus implicamur.*"

14. Pope Pius X, *Iucunda Sane*, para. 3. <http://www.totustuustools.net/magistero/p10iucun.htm>. (accessed June 20, 2016).

was taken from the haven of the monastery that he found himself overwhelmed and weary of his responsibility. He wrote:

As you know, a ship that is not carefully moored usually drifts away from the harbor, even from the most sheltered beach, once a storm has risen. I in like manner was soon back in the stormy waters of worldly affairs, with ecclesiastical office as an excuse, and I realized what the peace of the monastery is by losing it and how tightly it must be clung to by clinging loosely when I had it.<sup>15</sup>

For one who was content with the contemplative life, he entered into the active life of secular and political concerns of the western sphere of the Roman empire with exceptional vigor. As pope, Gregory desired to maintain a contemplative life, yet he felt a moral obligation to be involved in the temporal affairs of the city. I examine his homilies, letters, and actions, to provide evidence that sheds light on what Gregory explicitly envisioned to be the right relationship between the Church and state, and to discover the rationales he offered for exercising management in the temporal realm.

In this dissertation, I survey the historical background and context that galvanized Gregory. By analyzing the condition of the empire and the state of affairs in the Church between the fifth and sixth centuries, a foundation is established that is vital to understanding the relationship between the two entities.<sup>16</sup> The political context, factors that led to the decline and decay of the western empire, and the needs of the people that emerged in the aftermath, all formed the milieu for Gregory's papacy. From studying these features, insights can be gained

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15. *Moralia, ad Leandrum*, 1.5, lines 15-20, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Kerns, 47. *Quia enim plerumque navem incaute religatam, etiam de sinu tutissimi litoris unda excutit, cum tempestas excrescit, repente me sub praetextu ecclesiastici ordinis in causarum saecularium pelage repperi et quietem monasterii, quam habendo non fortiter tenui, quam stricte tenenda fuerit, perdendo cognovi.*

16. Since the focus of this dissertation is on Gregory, I have limited my presentation to the events in the West. It is not my intention to exclude the development of the East; rather, I will attend to matters in the East as they pertain to the topic at hand.

into Gregory's world that illuminates the reasons for his ultimate decision to be active in the secular affairs of the West.

To that end, the primary task of chapter one is to outline the political and historical dimensions of the transition from late antiquity into the early medieval period. I explore the early twentieth-century scholarship on the decline and decay of the West as well as various factors these scholars put forward as having contributed to the "Fall" or the "End" of the Roman empire in the West. More current trends in scholarship create two plausible pictures of the transition that occurred in the empire. This chapter argues that it was not one single event that brought the western Roman empire down, but rather a series of interconnected events and circumstances, including barbarian invasions, civil unrest, economic woes, the role of Christianity, as well as several other factors. The chapter concludes with the events that led to the abdication of the emperor Romulus Augustulus in 476, an important symbolic moment in the decline of the western empire.

There may not have been a seated emperor in the West; however, there was still an emperor in the East who assumed control of the West as well as an imperial presence in the person of an *exarch* in Ravenna and Africa, as well as the imperial office of *praetor* in Sicily. The late fourth century saw the transfer of the imperial seat in the West from Rome to Milan. At the beginning of the fifth century, there was another transfer of the imperial court. The court, under the reign of Honorius, departed Milan and resided in Ravenna until the early eighth century. Ravenna was selected due to its strategic location. John Matthews observes: "And in the winter of 402/3 Honorius and his court left Milan to take up permanent residence in the harbor city of Ravenna – a city only accessible, from the land side, by way of a raised causeway

across salt flats and marshes.”<sup>17</sup> The development of the roles of *exarch* and *praetor* in the late fourth-century West was extremely important in defining any relationship between the Church and the state. These imperial offices, along with the senate, were the political entities with which Gregory dealt as he ventured out of the sacred walls of the Church and into the worldly affairs of Rome.

The second chapter evaluates the contribution Ambrose, the fourth-century bishop of Milan, made to the relationship between the Church and the state. This chapter focuses on the policies and practices employed by Ambrose while dealing with the imperial court. Ambrose provides a theological and practical foundation for the involvement of western bishops in political matters. Certain historical moments, such as the attempted restoration of the Altar of Victory or the issues in Callincium and Thessalonica, suggestively portray Ambrose of Milan as a powerful bishop applying pressure to a reluctant emperor. Yet, recent scholarship regarding the relationship between the bishop and the emperor concludes that Ambrose and emperors Valentinian I and Theodosius I were all powerful men in their respective realms. Modern historians Neil McLynn, John Moorhead, and Angelo Pirelli see the actions of Ambrose not as political but rather as pastoral and spiritual.<sup>18</sup> This chapter also examines Cicero’s, *On Duties* [*De Officiis*] and its impact on Ambrose’s own treatise by the same title, in order to determine

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17. John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364-425*, rev. ed. (1975; repr, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 274.

18. Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), has presented a nuanced approach to the relationship of Ambrose and imperial leaders. In the instances in which Ambrose inserted himself in political matters, McLynn claims that it was simply a matter of Ambrose exercising pastoral care and not a policy of political administration. John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 1999), also calls into question the earlier perception of Ambrose’s relationship with imperial authorities. Angelo Pirelli claims the only influence Ambrose held over Theodosius was spiritual: “Unfortunately, even some modern critics have seen in Theodosius’ repentance only the excessive power of the Church and the weakness of an impotent prince or the ‘humiliation’ of the imperial dignity.” *Ambrose: His Life and Times*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 310.

what influence they might have had on the developing relationship between the Church and the state.

The third chapter looks at the fifth-century example of Leo and his contribution to the Church's role in political affairs. In the absence of political and military leadership in the city of Rome, Leo took on the responsibilities of providing protection for the city and social order in addition to the pastoral care of the Roman church. Prior to Leo's papacy, Rome had been battered by barbarians, with three sieges between 408-410. During the Leonine papacy, the Huns and Vandals posed threats to the city. The policy of the empire, at least up to 450, was to enter into treaties with the barbarians; these included a monetary payoff that ensured they were held at bay. In 450 Marcian, the new eastern emperor, decided not to pay the tribute to the Huns. As a consequence, Attila attacked northern Italy in 452 and threatened to advance on Rome. Legendary accounts, which include a defiant Leo and a vision of Saints Peter and Paul, claim that Leo was able to negotiate a successful truce with Attila. Attila did leave Italy without attacking Rome, but his decision was based on contextual factors such as extreme famine.<sup>19</sup> The focus of this chapter is to analyze Leo's practice of the *cura animarum* and *cura Romae* in order to ascertain his contribution to a model of ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs and its possible impact on Gregory's understanding.

Chapter four looks at the historiography of Gregory's sixth-century world. After the presentation of some biographical information on Gregory, the chapter concentrates on two focal points: the transformation from secular authority to the emergence of ecclesiastical authority in the West and the development of a second locus of authority, the bishop of Rome alongside some continuing imperial officials. David Hipshon claims that: "Gregorian scholars have been

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19. See chapter 3, below. Also Bronwen Neil, *Leo the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2009) for an brief look at Leo's political, social, and religious roles in the city of Rome and at times within the context of the empire both in the West and East.

unable to reconcile widely differing views on Gregory the Great's 'political thought'. The trend has been to view him as either ambivalent towards secular authority or completely indifferent to it."<sup>20</sup> Hipshon's comments help to identify two very divergent schools of thought regarding the role of Gregory in secular affairs.

Scholarship from Richard Krautheimer and Robert Markus supports a description of a crippled Rome in need of strong leadership. Krautheimer argues that in 476, with the abdication of Romulus Augustulus, the great Roman empire of the West collapsed; thus, a political vacuum was created. With this view, the fifth-century papacy seemingly arose from the ash heap of the decrepit city of Rome and grasped the reins of secular leadership. As a result, the pope, and not the emperor, was the one recognized as both the spiritual and the secular authority in the West.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence, the papacy assumed, and aggressively asserted, secular management that would fill the power vacuum caused by the mid-fifth-century abdication of imperial power in the West.

Robert Markus argues that Gregory understood the secular and the religious spheres to be separate but complementary entities, with the spheres working in tandem to establish right order and find competent leaders to maintain their respective structures and interests. Robert Markus describes the overlap of civil and canonical laws enforced by imperial officials and bishops and argues that over time the two separate but complementary entities collapsed into one: the Church. Both Krautheimer and Markus conclude that by the time of Gregory's papacy the Church had become the only recognizable source of legitimate authority.

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20. David Hipshon, "Gregory the Great's 'political thought'," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, no. 3 (July 2002): 439.

21. Some essential scholarship supports this view; see Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) and *Three Christian Capitals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); also Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) and W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

Contrasting scholarship from Mark Humphries and Carole Straw presents an altogether different picture. They present evidence that the Church did assume some power in the West without, however, becoming the only or definitive source of authority. They argue that power resided with the emperor of the East, who still maintained an imperial presence in the West and was in control. Humphries questions the veracity of claims that the papacy seized absolute control in the West in the wake of a non-existent imperial ruler.<sup>22</sup>

Supporting Humphries, Straw presents a different image of Gregory's understanding of the relationship between secular and ecclesial authority, hence refuting the claim of Markus. She argues that Gregory was accustomed to seeing things through a dichotomist lens and working with paradoxes. Gregory saw the political and ecclesial spheres as entirely separate. Amidst the many factions striving to attain power, Gregory recognized that the Church should not compete with or desire political power, but rather strive to be purified of it. Straw concludes that Gregory's preference for avoiding secular power meant that in Gregory's time the secular authorities were dominant and never conceded power to the Church.<sup>23</sup>

This chapter analyzes each of the different schools of thought in order to construct what David Hipshon called Gregory's "political theology." By looking at the strengths and limitations of each approach, an assessment of Gregory's understanding of pastoral involvement in secular matters can be made.

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22. See Mark Humphries, "Italy, A.D. 425-605," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: Late Antiquity Empire and Successors A.D. 425-600*, vol. 14, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 525-51, and "From emperor to pope?", 21-58; Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590-752* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009); finally, Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages 476-752* (Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul Book 1979).

23. Carol Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 83.



Chapter five analyzes a selection of Gregory's homilies on the Gospels and Ezekiel, his *Pastoral Rule*, and citations from his *Moralia*, in order to construct his profile of pastoral leadership. Gregory's leadership style is grounded by his belief that the end times were upon the people. The task of the pastoral leader was to ready souls for the judgment that was imminent. For Gregory, the *cura animarum* becomes the mitigating factor that allows the pastoral leader to enter into affairs of the state. For him, the care of the soul was based on the virtue of love. It was not enough to profess love for God. The pastoral leader needed also to understand that the commandment of love is two-fold: love for God and love for one's neighbor. It was precisely love for one's neighbor that guided Gregory onto the road that led him into secular affairs.

Although Gregory ventured into secular affairs, and encouraged other pastoral leaders to do likewise, he was adamant that external concerns should not interfere or draw the pastoral leader away from a contemplative life. Balance was needed in order to enable one to enter into affairs of the state without jeopardizing spiritual concerns. Also, spiritual concerns could not consume the pastoral leader in such a way that he neglects tending to the physical needs of his neighbor, those entrusted to his care. To that end, he felt that moral conduct and right intention needed to be at the forefront of any exercise of authority. Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* offers a code of conduct for all those in the position of pastoral authority. This becomes his paradigm for entering into secular affairs.

Chapter six continues to build the Gregorian paradigm of leadership, while also introducing the importance of teaching as a key aspect of the pastoral leader's responsibilities. Utilizing his homilies, reflections, and pastoral treatise, this chapter examines certain virtues and characteristics necessary for a pastoral leader to understand, possess, and teach. This chapter offers Gregory's teachings and applications on the virtues of humility, detachment, and charity.

The virtues discussed play a vital role in developing Gregory's rationale for leaving, albeit momentarily, the confines of the Church to enter into affairs of the secular realm. In evaluating the virtues and their impact on the life of the pastoral leader, the chapter concludes with Gregory's understanding of the duality of contemplation and action. The interplay between these two lives set the stage for a discussion of those situations and issues that draw the pastoral leader into secular matters.

Chapter seven uses Gregory's letters, *Registrum Epistularum*, to establish a more integral picture of Gregory's approach to political, social, and military issues. While his correspondence allows us to catch a glimpse into his mind and thought, they also provide historical information about the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Although Gregory wrote an abundance of letters, only about 850 of them have survived. The *Registrum* was composed primarily by Gregory, however, when he was too ill or weak to write, he would dictate the letters to his administrative staff. Treatment of these letters provides a more detailed view of his social programs, which went beyond the ordinary scope of the religious sphere. Religious programs were integrated into the secular sphere, including care and compassion extended to the poor, widows, and orphans. In addition, Gregory was involved with securing and distributing grain, seeking out terms of peace with the Lombards, raising funds to help pay the salaries of the soldiers, and instituting programs of repair and maintenance for the city's aqueduct system. By analyzing these letters, a fuller picture is revealed of Gregory's attitude towards and relationship with those in political authority; moreover, an evaluation of his contribution and its effect on the ecclesial and political worlds of his day can be made.

From a survey of historical elements that contributed to the decay and decline of the city of Rome and the senate, a dreary picture of the once imperial Roman city emerged. With that

depiction of Rome, and the paradigms of leadership presented by Ambrose and Leo, a framework of ecclesiastical leaders' involvement in secular affairs became apparent. These factors, together with a treatment of Gregory's writings and actions, make it possible to formulate a sketch of his "political theology." The conclusion, therefore, returns to the question posed in this dissertation, namely, did Gregory operate out of a predetermined or pre-established ecclesial paradigm or did he institute a new leadership paradigm? Finally, the conclusion addresses how Gregory the Great involved himself in secular affairs and how his involvement contributed to the ongoing development of the relationship between the Church and the state as both emerge from the age of late antiquity.

## Chapter One: Historical Factors in the Decline of the Imperial West

### 1.0.0: Overview

This chapter examines the major historical explanations of what transpired in the autumn of 476 that led to the abdication of the western emperor Romulus Augustulus and the end of the imperial western seat of the Roman empire. I concentrate on the year 476 because of its obvious impact on the governmental status of the West. 476 is also a defining moment for historians who are trying to determine what role the Church played in the secular affairs of the West. The Church did in fact enter into such affairs, but to what extent and under what conditions? This chapter provides insight into the factors that led to the decline of the western imperial seat and looks at the ways the events of 476 affected the relationship between Church and state. The reason for doing this is to shed light on the actions and the secular functions of the bishop of Rome, particularly Gregory the Great (590-604), and with a focus on the effects it had on the city of Rome itself.

The chapter examines the major historical explanations both past and current that attempt to explain why the western imperial seat of the empire ceased to exist by the end of the fifth century. Past scholarship attempted, albeit in a simplistic and fragmentary manner, to explain the declining conditions of the West with a distinct focus on the city of Rome. Research from Vladimir Simkhovitch, Tenney Frank, and Mikhail Rostovtzeff, however, refuted these simplistic claims and demonstrated that the western decline was complex. Current trends in scholarship take into consideration such factors as the impact of the governmental restructuring by Diocletian in the later third century, the transformation of the late Roman senate, the effect of barbarian incursions, and the role of Christianity. When examined together, all these factors present a more complete picture of the state of the West and the imperial city of Rome. A

synopsis of the major historical developments, factors, and research sets the stage for examining the contribution made by Gregory the Great in the sixth century.

### **1.1.0: Early Scholarship on the Decline and Decay of the West**

In the eighteenth century, Edward Gibbon claimed that the decay and decline of the Roman empire could be attributed to four simple facts: forces of nature, greed, civil strife, and, finally, the presence of the barbarians and the Christians. Of these four, however, two quickly rose to the top of his overall assessment. According to Gibbon, the barbarians and the Christians were single-handedly responsible for the overall decline. The forces of nature allowed the barbarians to gain control, the greed of the barbarians led to the destruction of monuments and buildings, and the demeanor of the Christians and barbarians was the cause of civil strife and quarreling in the West.<sup>24</sup> For him, the entire argument was summed up in two persistent realities: the Romans underestimated the danger, resolve, and power of the barbarian forces and they fell prey to the perceived divisions caused by the spread and practice of Christianity.<sup>25</sup>

Although Gibbon leveled a broad judgment against what he felt were the reasons for the decline of the western empire, he further claimed: “The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring *why* the Roman Empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long.”<sup>26</sup> Was it that simple? Did the western region of the empire fall because the barbarians were too powerful and the Christians sowed seeds of discord among the Romans? Christopher Dawson has described Gibbon as a product of his times, the

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24. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, abr. ed., ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 743-56.

25. Gibbon’s claim that barbarians and Christianity were the two dominant forces that caused the decline and fall of the empire in the West is documented in *The Decline and Fall*, particularly in “General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West,” 434-43.

26. *Ibid.*, 435-36.

Enlightenment. Dawson's critique of Gibbon is that his hostility toward Christianity and contempt for the Byzantine empire colored his historical interpretation of the decline of the empire in the West. Dawson asserted:

Anyone who lives in his subject, as Gibbon has done, is bound to be a partisan, and Gibbon was a partisan of Rome, or antiquity and of the classical tradition. No doubt this makes him unjust to Christianity, the Catholic Church, and the Byzantine Empire, for all of them were guilty in his eyes of *lèse majesté* against the indivisible authority of Rome and Reason and Civilization.<sup>27</sup>

Scholarship undertaken after the eighteenth century, however, demonstrated that the weakening of the West, by the end of late antiquity, was far from as simple as Gibbon claimed. In fact, there existed a plethora of factors which, when combined, sealed the fate of the western empire. The pivotal moment in the life of the West was the abdication of Romulus Augustulus in 476. Historians vary in their estimation of the factors that led up to and the reasons for such a dramatic event and the impact it had on ecclesial involvement in secular matters. By the early twentieth century, historians had begun to take another look at the factors that led to the decay and decline of the once powerful western Roman empire. Norman Baynes analyzed the early scholarship regarding the decline and "fall" of the empire in the West. He established that the circumstances that led up to the collapse of the imperial seat of the West were an interwoven series of events that led to the ruination of the West.<sup>28</sup> As we have already seen, Gibbon promoted a simple answer to Rome's decline. The research of Vladimir Simkhovitch, in 1916, however, introduced an altogether credible factor that was unrelated to Gibbon's claim. Simkhovitch's contribution centered on the great land estates, or *latifundia*. The *latifundia* out-produced small farms, which caused devastating consequences for the economy and fostered a

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27. Dawson, *Dynamics of World History*, 350.

28. Donald Kagan, ed., *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Why did It Collapse?* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1965), 78-85.

deep sense of corruption rooted in greed from within as opposed to Gibbon's claim of barbarian greed.

New forms of production and greed in the late Roman period led to the disappearance of the farming class, a development that may offer an alternative explanation for the destabilization of the West. Simkhovitch claimed: "The two complaints, the two Roman explanations of their own decline and disintegration *reduce themselves, therefore, to one single explanation*. For it is clear that the *latifundia* and corruption are but different aspects of the same social phenomenon."<sup>29</sup> Although Simkhovitch explored this phenomenon, he brought into the discussion what he felt was the factor *par excellence* to explain the ultimate decline. While acknowledging that the western empire fell prey to mismanagement, plagues, economic instability, and violence due to war, he concluded that these were only outward manifestations of the fundamental cause of the empire's inner anguish. In his final analysis, he believed that the empire fell because of the abandonment of farms due to soil exhaustion. He asserted:

It is therefore evident that the steady shrinkage of population and the crumbling of the empire can not be attributed to wars. It stands to reason that the permanent desertion of entire countryside can not be caused by temporary devastations of war, for war can not rob the fields of their fertility. Exhaustion of the soil, on the other hand, will lead to its desertion in time of peace and of course still more in times of war.<sup>30</sup>

Simkhovitch was not alone in attempting to redefine the factors that led to the West's deterioration. Tenney Frank, also in 1916, introduced other factors that he believed contributed to its demise. He raised the possibility that "race-mixture" was a significant factor in the overall decline of the West. His assumption was that the true Roman stock that was responsible for the foundation of Rome as a Republic, and later an empire, was gradually diluted and eventually

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29. Vladimir Simkhovitch, "Rome's Fall Reconsidered," *Political Science Quarterly* 31 (1916): 203.

30. *Ibid.*, 228.

replaced. Whether or not those who replaced the pure Roman standard were slaves, Greeks, free-born foreigners, or eastern aristocrats, the result was the same: the integrity of the Roman race from his perspective was compromised.

Tenney Frank's research was based on a study of honorary and sepulchral inscriptions of the noble and middle classes as well as an examination of the cognomens of slaves and humble classes of people in the empire. His studies yielded names that were Greek, Latin, "Oriental," and Biblical. His conclusion was that the true "Roman stock" was diminished and that people from foreign lands were now populating the empire.<sup>31</sup> He wrote: "Race-mixture may produce good results, but it has also been established that in the mixture of two excellent stocks of widely differing qualities an unstable fusion often results which perpetuates the poorer qualities of both."<sup>32</sup> Although Frank's position of race-mixture was supported by Martin Nilsson, an early twentieth-century scholar of Greek and Roman religion,<sup>33</sup> it was critiqued by Mary Gordon. Gordon admitted that the Roman stock was mixed, but maintained that research could not support the claim that this was in some fashion responsible for the decline of the empire.<sup>34</sup>

Beyond his race-based argument, Frank acknowledged that there also existed political, moral, and economic factors that must have figured into the empire's weakening. Frank realized that each sector of society brought a set of issues to the argument of its decline. He stated:

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31. Tenney Frank, "Race Mixture in the Roman Empire," *American Historical Review* 21 (1916): 51-68.

32. Tenney Frank, *A History of Rome* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923), 566-67.

33. Martin Nilsson, *Imperial Rome* (London: G. Bell & Son, 1926). Nilsson asserted that the original Roman stock was completely overwhelmed by those they conquered and allowed into the empire. He embraced Frank's claim and argued that the mixture of races "is, of itself, a sufficient explanation for the collapse of ancient culture and the Roman Empire," 362-3.

34. Mary L. Gordon, "The Nationality of Slaves under the Early Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 14 (1924): 93-111. For confirmation of Gordon's research; see E. Christian Kopff, "History and Science in Tenney Frank's Scholarship," *Occidental Quarterly* (Winter 2005), 80. Here Kopff demonstrated that Gordon's research was supported by Norman H. Baynes.



“Statesmen have sought the answer in Rome’s political structure, moralists in the behavior of her people, economists in ‘soil exhaustion,’ in the failure of the currency system, and the like.”<sup>35</sup>

From the moral point of view, Frank critiqued Gibbon et al. who blamed Christianity for the demise of the imperial seat in the West. Frank believed that the argument of Gibbon and others, that somehow the Christian faith produced those who were unwilling to partake in war or rendered them unfit in battle against barbarians, was flawed. True blame, rather, must be placed on the moral behavior of the aristocratic class. *Otium* and *avāritia* seem to be what rendered an entire class of people incompetent and uninterested in battle. According to Frank: “The accumulation of wealth . . . affected the morale adversely. . . . All we can say is that the leisure classes of Rome which are pictured by Ovid were by every standard we know a deleterious force and that the possession of wealth seems to have released them from mental as well as physical exercise.”<sup>36</sup>

Livy expressed a similar sentiment in his first-century *History of Rome*: “Of late, riches have brought in avarice, and excessive pleasures, the longing to carry wantonness and license to the point of ruin for oneself and of universal destruction.”<sup>37</sup> Frank also argued that Rome, as an empire, grew too quickly. As a consequence of such rapid growth, the imperial government was unable to organize itself in an effective manner. In order to compensate for the lack of bureaucratic order, the Roman military was employed to secure the borders and safeguard the city. According to Frank, the size of the armies grew as did the empire and began to dominate the government. Due to the size of the military, taxes had to be raised in order to pay for the troops’ salaries. Increased taxation led to the economic woes of the empire. Frank observed that

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35. Frank, *A History of Rome*, 565.

36. Ibid., 572.

37. Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.prae, line 12, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 114; trans. Foster, 7. *Adeo quanto rerum minus, tanto minus cupiditatis erat; nuper divitiae avaritiam et abundantes voluptates desiderium per luxum atque libidinem pereundi perdendique omnia invexere.*

the key to the Roman economy was agriculture, but imperial wealth, which was rooted in greed, was linked intimately with food production, particularly grain.

The Roman economy also suffered significant blows each time the empire was at war. The farmers were more often than not dragged into military service, which left farms unattended for long periods of time. Neglect of agriculture resulted in a decline in food production which had dire consequences for the overall economy. Frank returned, however, to the initial cause as he saw it: “There is today a healthy activity in the study of economic factors – unscientific finance, fiscal agriculture, inadequate support of industry and commerce, etc. – that contributed to Rome’s decline. But what lay behind and constantly reacted upon all such causes of Rome’s disintegration was . . . the fact that the people who built Rome had given way to a different race.”<sup>38</sup>

Mikhail Rostovtzeff’s early twentieth-century argument for the decline of the West also looked at the political, social, economic, agricultural, and cultural factors for both the Republic and the empire. According to Rostovtzeff, the decline that occurred was the prism through which we could see the transition. His preliminary research and findings led him to conclude that the western empire declined because of civil strife or class warfare. Unlike Gibbon, Rostovtzeff felt that the blame for the downfall of Rome was not the barbarians and Christians, but rather a joining of the lower class with the military. G.W. Bowersock wrote of Rostovtzeff’s work:

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38. Frank, “Race Mixture in the Roman Empire,” 65.

*The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* took up the grand theme of Edward Gibbon: decline and fall. Rostovtzeff, however, ascribed the ruin of Rome neither to the barbarians at the gates nor to Christianity within. In his view, an alliance of the rural proletariat with the military in the third century A.D. destroyed the beneficent rule of the urban bourgeoisie.”<sup>39</sup>

Although Bowersock was critical of Rostovtzeff’s research and final project, he considered Rostovtzeff’s *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, to be “one of the most provocative and influential studies of classical civilization to appear in the present century.”<sup>40</sup>

By the third century, civil strife was a serious problem. The urban aristocratic class was being penetrated and absorbed by the rural lower classes and by military personnel, both of whom were thought to be inferior by aristocrats.<sup>41</sup> It was a typical example of class warfare between the city and the country. Rostovtzeff ascribed to the idea that the city, composed principally of the aristocratic class, was the center of all life and civilization. The countryside, which was predominantly made up of the lower classes, was not the locus of political power or economic opportunity. Since life and city were closely connected, those in the country wanted access to the benefits and joys that came from city dwelling; and, according to Rostovtzeff, they achieved it. He summed up the problem this way: “One of the main causes . . . of decay of the ancient world was . . . this contrast between city and country population, this hatred between the two classes existed and the war was waged and organized by the country against the city population, especially in the third century A.D. Afterward the Roman empire and the later

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39. G.W. Bowersock, “The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire by Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff,” *Daedalus* 103, no. 1 (Winter 1974), 19.

40. *Ibid.*, 15.

41. Mikhail Rostovtzeff compared the city civilization of the Greeks and the Italians and concluded that the inability of both cultures to integrate the various classes of people had devastating consequences. The political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the city were compromised because the classes were unable to assimilate, which eventually led to the replacement of the urban bourgeoisie; see *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 480-84.

Byzantine empire based its power on the peasant class.”<sup>42</sup> A migration took place that inspired those in the country to flood into the cities; consequently, the cities became overcrowded and chaotic. While the cities were being overpopulated, the countryside, in particular its farms, were being abandoned. The process of a gradual impoverishment, which led to the decay of the empire, hinged on the transformation of the city by barbarians and the lower classes of rural people.

The conclusions drawn by these and other early twentieth-century historians suggested that the decline and weakening of the West was a result of various factors over a sustained period of time and not the work of a single entity or event. More recent studies present new findings that may not necessarily invalidate the works of Simkhovitch, Frank, and Rostovtzeff but will offer a much clearer understanding of what led to the events of 476. The following section looks at several of these factors that more recent scholarship holds to have had a direct impact on the decline of the West.

### **1.2.0: Current Scholarship on the decline and decay of the West**

Current trends in historical scholarship support the view that as early as the third century, the empire had experienced a crisis in leadership that saw the rise and fall of a number of ineffective emperors, which caused the city of Rome to lose prestige and the majestic importance of being the center of the empire. Other issues, such as local economic turmoil, frequent plagues, the flooding river *Tevere* [Tiber], endless military threats presented by the barbarians, and the rise of Christianity eroded the status of the city. Modern historians consider these to be

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42. Mikhail Rostovtzeff, *Urban Land Economics* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1922), 19.

important factors behind the overall decline and decay of the imperial West and, specifically, the consequences that decline had on the city of Rome.

A telltale sign that the city was losing its importance was the fact that by the early fourth century the emperors were not living in or frequenting the city. Constantine was only in Rome on three separate occasions and he ruled primarily from Constantinople. The first occasion on which Constantine entered Rome was in 312 when he defeated Maxentius and the senate honored him with a statue and the title senior emperor in the imperial college. He entered Rome again in 315 in order to celebrate the tenth anniversary of having been acclaimed Augustus by his father's troops. To show their love and devotion to him the senate and the people dedicated the triumphant Arch of Constantine. In 326, Constantine returned to Rome to close celebrations in honor of his twentieth anniversary as ruler. This was the final time he entered the city; all other anniversaries, and in particular his thirtieth, were celebrated in Constantinople.<sup>43</sup>

Prior to the transfer of the imperial seat to Constantinople in 330, Constantine governed the empire not from Rome but from Serdica and Trier (313-315). It was in 330 that Constantine officially transferred the imperial seat, by then in fact the heart of the Roman empire, to the city of Byzantium. He transformed the city into an imperial Christian city and dedicated it in 330 as Constantinople. This new imperial capital showed rapid growth in development, construction, and population. In contrast to Constantinople, Walter Scheidel presents stunning numbers that speak of the decline of the population of Rome. His research concludes that in the second century Rome had a population of over 1,000,000.00. By the fifth century, the population of Rome decreased to approximately 500,000 to 750,000 people. When Romulus Augustulus abdicated in 476, the number of inhabitants sharply decreased. At the beginning of the sixth

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43. For Constantine's Roman visits; see Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39-50.

century, Scheidel contends that the population in Rome dropped to 75,000 or 100,000. His study concludes that by the time of Gothic attacks in 535-554, Rome was reduced to a mere 30,000 residents.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast, the city of Byzantium, which was dedicated in 330 as Constantinople swelled from 30,000 residents to 300,000 in just half a century. By the mid-sixth century, the city had grown to roughly 500,000 to 750,000.<sup>45</sup> In order to accommodate the population increase, authorities in the East began to siphon off grain supplies from Rome and diverted them to Constantinople. As a result of this action, Rome was left with inadequate food supplies that further exasperated their already compromised status. It was during the reign of Constantine's son, Constantius II (337-361), that the decisive blow was dealt to Rome by means of the establishment of a new senate in Constantinople which was independent of the Roman senate.

The fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus (c.330-395) wrote some general observations on the city of Rome. He was there during a time of famine, perhaps in 383 or 384, which led to the expulsion of all foreigners. While in Rome, he witnessed the sad reality that this once great city was losing its stature and image, before the world, as a powerful imperial city. He noted:

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44. Walter Scheidel, "Roman population size: the logic of the debate" (working paper, Peasants, citizens and soldiers: the social, economic and demographic background to the Gracchan land reforms; University of Leiden, Netherlands, 2007), 49-53. <http://www.princeton.edu/~pswpc/pdfs/scheidel/070706.pdf>. (accessed November 12, 2013). For support of his findings on population growth; see Raymond Van Dam, *Rome and Constantinople: Rewriting Roman History during Late Antiquity* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), 49-53.

45. Ibid.

Yet throughout all regions and parts of the earth she is accepted as mistress and queen; everywhere the white hair of the senators and their authority are revered and the name of the Roman people is respected and honored. But the magnificence and splendor of the assemblies is marred by the rude worthlessness of a few, who do not consider where they were born, but, as if license were granted to vice, descend to sin and wantonness.<sup>46</sup>

He further commented on the social decay and lack of culture in Rome:

In consequence of this state of things, the few houses that were formerly famed for devotion to serious pursuits now teem with the sports of sluggish indolence, re-echoing to the sound of singing, and the tinkling of flutes and lyres. In short, in place of the philosopher the singer is called in, and in place of the orator the teacher of stagecraft. . . . At last we have reached such a state of baseness, that whereas not so very long ago, when there was fear of a scarcity of food, foreigners were driven neck and crop from the city, and those who practiced the liberal arts . . . were thrust out.<sup>47</sup>

As time progressed, Rome indeed ceased to be the administrative capital of the West.

The strategic cities of Trier, Milan, Antioch, and of course Constantinople took on greater significance than the one-time sole capital. Even though it was no longer the *caput mundi*, Rome was still respected and revered. Ammianus described Rome in terms of the aging of a loved one: “Grown to youth and manhood, from every region which the vast globe includes, they brought back laurels and triumphs. And now, declining into old age, and often owing victory to its name

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46. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History*, 14.6, line 7, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 315; trans. Rolfe, 39. *Per omnes tamen quot orae sunt oartesque terrarium, ut domina suscipitur et regina, et ubique partum reverenda cum auctoritate canities, populique Romani nomen circumspectum et verecundum. Sed laeditur hic coetuum magnificus splendor, levitate paucorum incondite, ubi nati sunt non reputantium, sed tamquam indulta licentia vitiis, ad errors lapsorum atque lasciviam.*

47. Marcellinus, *Roman History*, 14.6, lines 18-19, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 315; trans. Rolfe, 47-9. *Quod cum ita sit, paucae domus studiorum seriis cultibus antae celebratae, nunc ludibriis ignaviae torpentis exundant, vocabili sonu, perflabili tinitu fidium resultants. Denique pro philosopho cantor, et in locum oratoris doctor atrium ludicarum accitur . . . . Postremo ad id indignitatis est ventum, ut cum peregrine ob formidatam haud ita dudum alimentorum inopiam pellerentur ab urbe praecipites, sectatoribus disciplinarum liberalium, impendio paucis.*

alone, it has come to a quieter period of life.”<sup>48</sup> What follows perhaps explains how Ammianus reached such a conclusion regarding the status of the city of Rome by the mid-fourth century.

### 1.2.1: The Political Fallout

The shift in imperial attention away from Rome was rooted in the reality that other regions and cities in the empire were deemed a greater priority. The military was preoccupied with near-constant threats to the frontiers by barbarians and Persians. Due to the ongoing threats to the eastern frontiers, a soldier was deemed better able to lead and protect the empire. As a result, early in the third century the military had taken away from the senate the right to select the emperor. Political power resided with the military commanders and not the Roman senate. Emperors were sought from the ranks of the military and not from the halls of the senatorial aristocracy. Because of the need to secure the borders, a number of imperial leaders spent their time in the outer regions of the empire and knew very little of Rome. Raymond Van Dam observes that although Rome and Italy were protected and respected priorities shifted: “Italy certainly still retained its prestige because of its longstanding eminence, but that seniority also made it appear to be elderly, and outdated and decrepit. The strength, and therefore the future, of the empire seemed to be with the soldiers and their commanders from the Balkan regions.”<sup>49</sup>

In the late third century, Diocletian was deemed a suitable candidate to secure the borders, reform the government, and contain the downward spiraling economy. He began a reform of the government that ultimately resulted in the establishment of the tetrarchy. He established first a dyarchy in 285, which divided the empire in two. Although Diocletian and a

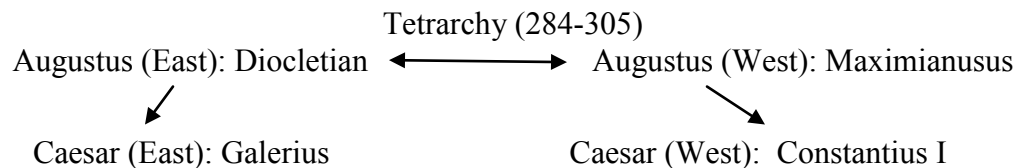
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48. Marcellinus, *Roman History*, 14.6, line 4, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 315; trans. Rolfe, 37. *In iuvenem erectus et virum, ex omni plaga quam orbis ambit immensus, reportavit laureas et triumphos; iamque vergens in senium, et nomine solo aliquotiens vincens, ad tranquilliora vitae discessit.*

49. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine*, 44.



trusted fellow Illyrian officer named Maximianus were co-rulers, ultimate authority resided with Diocletian. After several years of the dyarchy, Diocletian and Maximianus were praised for returning political stability to the empire.<sup>50</sup> The tetrarchy, which was established in 293, was to make governance of the empire manageable and helped address the issue of succession, which loomed over the head of Diocletian, who had no natural heir. Because of the enormous size of the empire, the plethora of administrative responsibilities and issues, battles on the German and Persian frontiers, and the fact that the emperor had no sons, Diocletian needed to appoint those who would assist him in ruling the empire.<sup>51</sup>



In conjunction with his administrative reform, Diocletian had to deal with two concerns regarding the military, namely the economic drain it had placed on the empire for over a century and its readiness. By restructuring the government and reorganizing the military, Diocletian attempted to control the size and effectiveness of the military.<sup>52</sup> As a military leader, he knew how to use the army effectively. He set into motion a redeployment that divided the troops into two branches. The *limitanei* was primarily in charge of the first line of defense that included

50. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 8.

51. In a sense, the tetrarchy established two rulers (*Augusti*), one in the West and one in the East, each having a *vice-ruler* (*Caesar*) selected, as Ramsay MacMullen observed, “on the basis of merit, not descent, and were to succeed the former in their turn after some agreed term.” *Constantine* (New York: The Dial Press, Inc., 1969), 20. Diocletian appointed himself as *Augustus* in the East, with Galerius as his *Caesar*. In the West, he appointed Maximianus as the *Augustus*, with Constantius I, father of Constantine, as his *Caesar*.

52. For over a century, the empire was in financial straits. There was a downscaling of government, increase in taxes, devaluation of the currency, and civil unrest. The programs begun under the reign of Philip I, a system of taxation to offset the expenditures of an increased military, were for all intents and purposes counterproductive. It weakened the government and did little to alleviate the financial concerns of the citizens; see Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 1-15.

strengthening the frontiers; the *comitatenses* was a specialized force that operated behind the lines and could be mobilized quickly to engage in specific combat situations.<sup>53</sup>

The goal of his reorganization plan was to cut back on military spending and shore up the financial and political basis of the empire.<sup>54</sup> At best, what Diocletian initiated was only a stop-gap solution that ultimately contributed to the overall movement of decay and decline in the empire. The administrative division of the eastern and the western parts of the empire in essence formed two empires under one name. As a result, political divisions occurred that were complicated by citizens and members of the military showing allegiance to one of Rome's two emperors at the expense of the other. As long as Diocletian held the reins of power the tetrarchy seemed to accomplish its desired ends of effective governance and an orderly succession. After his abdication, however, it failed to ensure the desired peaceful transition of power that was one of the major aims of the tetrarchy. Political rivals vied for control; jealousy began to rear its ugly head; civil wars and unrest quickly became all too common in the empire.

The fifth century, leading up to the abdication of Romulus Augustulus in 476, was a very unstable period. Emperors were elected and quickly deposed or assassinated because they failed to protect the interests and the safety of people entrusted to them. In the wake of Romulus's deposition, the troops acclaimed Odoacer king of Italy. As the western emperor was being deposed the military proclaimed a monarch in his place, and the senate consented. Peter Heather observes that Odoacer, in a symbolic act, enforced the reality that the imperial seat of the West

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53. A treatment of the reforms and restricting of the military under the reign of Diocletian can be found in Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 62-7.

54. Despite the claim of Ramsay McMullen that the military did not impact the economy in a manner that was originally believed, Heather does contend that the increase of the military to respond to the threat of the Persians accounts for a significant portion of the Empire's budget, cf. Ramsay McMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 39-44 and Heather *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 63-5.

had been annihilated: “He then sent the western imperial vestments, including, of course, the diadem and the cloak which only an emperor could wear, back to Constantinople.”<sup>55</sup>

Odoacer immediately sent a delegation to the eastern emperor Zeno and sought confirmation of his appointment by the senate and the military. The request was denied, and for the first time in many centuries Italy was ruled independently of the empire. Zeno did not accept this new independence and set out to strip Odoacer of his power. He enlisted the support of Theodoric and his Gothic army, who marched on Italy in 488. Within the year, Odoacer was held hostage in Ravenna and finally surrendered in 493. The Gothic troops proclaimed Theodoric the new king of Italy. Zeno was not pleased with these events. It took four years before the eastern emperor, now Anastasius, recognized the Italian leadership of Theodoric.

During the reign of Justinian in the East, Italy returned for a brief period to the jurisdiction of the eastern empire. With the fall of Brescia and Verona in 562, Justinian declared that Italy was completely restored to the empire. Within six years, however, Italy was wrested from the East by the Lombards. Justinian’s desire for reunification never became a reality. Mark Humphries commented: “United or not, the Lombards proved a fatal blow to Byzantine dreams of a united Italy under imperial rule. Time after time, Byzantine armies failed to contain Lombard advance, and by the end of the century, the territorial encroachment of Lombard power was seriously threatening the integrity of those remaining Byzantine possessions in Italy.”<sup>56</sup>

### **1.2.2: The Transformation of the Roman Senate**

In an attempt to reclaim the prestige of Rome, the fourth-century historian Eutropius wrote to the emperor Valens (364-378) highlighting the nature and the usefulness of the senate in

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55. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 430.

56. Humphries, “Italy,” 536.

Rome.<sup>57</sup> In the *Breviarium*, Eutropius pointed to the fact that Romulus established a body of advisors to assist him in matters pertaining to governance. He wrote: “Having founded this city, which, from his own name, he called Rome, the measures he principally pursued were these. He admitted a number of the neighboring inhabitants into the government; selected a hundred of the oldest, by whose advice he might manage everything, and named them senators, on account of their age.”<sup>58</sup> Eutropius attempted to highlight the usefulness of the senate seated in Rome so as to win favor for the city. Eutropius was not alone in the quest to reclaim the importance of the city of Rome vis-à-vis Constantinople.

In 384, the Roman Prefect Symmachus, in his *Relatio*, made an effort to convince Valentinian II, now residing in northern Italy, to restore Rome to its privileged imperial status. In doing so, he sought the restoration of the Altar of Victory along with the reinstatement of the ancestral ceremonies. He recognized that the glory of Rome was so intimately connected to the practices of the pagan rituals. In his remarks to the emperor, he personified Rome by imagining what the city would say if it had the opportunity to address the emperor directly:

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57. Eutropius’s history, which he dedicated to the emperor Valens in 369, highlighted the importance of a good relationship between the emperor and the senate. Regarding his argument for the benefit of the emperor and the senate working together for the common good and glory of the state; see David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 49-56.

58. Eutropius, *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, 1.2.1, lines 10-11, *BSGRT* 19; translation my own. *Condita civitate, quam ex nomine suo Romanam vocavit, haec fere egit. Multitudinem finitimorum in civitatem recepit, centum ex senioribus elegit, quorum consilio omnia ageret, quos senatores nominavit propter senectutem.*

Excellent princes,<sup>59</sup> fathers of the country, respect my years to which pious rites brought me. I use the ancient ceremonies, I do not regret them. Let me live my customs because I am free. This worship reduced the world to my laws, these sacred laws repelled Hannibal from the walls, and the Senonas from the capitol. Have I been saved for this, that in my advanced years I should be blamed? I will see what it is thought to be instituted, tardiness and insult are the improvement of old age.<sup>60</sup>

He contended that when the pious rites of old were observed, Rome was gloriously triumphant. He based his argument on the perception that Rome lost its prestige when the emperors abandoned the religion of their ancestors for the religion of the Christians. He claimed:

Let no one think that I am alone protecting religion, from this have arisen all the disadvantages of the Roman race. The law of our fathers honored the Vestal Virgins and the ministers of the gods with moderation and just privileges. . . . A general famine came, and a poor harvest disappointed the hope of all the provinces. This was not the fault of the earth . . . the year withered through sacrilege. It was all destroyed because religion was denied.<sup>61</sup>

Ambrose, once provincial governor of Milan and now its bishop, took exception to Symmachus's claim and carefully delineated for the emperor the misconceptions of his argument. Ambrose framed his rebuttal to Symmachus's *Relatio* by systematically attacking the three arguments of the address: the restoration of pagan rituals, salaries for the priest and vestal virgins, and famine that resulted from failure to pay the stipend to these functionaries. Ambrose

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59. The *Relatio* was theoretically addressed to the three emperors, Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius. Since the content dealt primarily with the situation in Rome, the words were more directly addressed to the sole emperor of the West, Valentinian.

60. Symmachus, *Relatio* 3, lines 79-87, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 76. *Optimi principes, patres patriae, reveremini annos meos in quos me prius ritus adduxit. Utar avitis; neque enim paenitet, vivam meo more quia libera sum. Hic cultus in leges meas orbem redegit, haec sacra Hannibalem a moenibus, a Capitolio Senonas reppulerunt. Ad hoc ergo servata sum ut longaeva reprehendar? Videro quale sit quod instituendum putatur, sera tamen et contumeliosa est emendation senectutis.*

61. Symmachus, *Relatio* 3, lines 133-43, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 103. *Nemo me putet solam causam religionum tueri; ex huiusmodi facinoribus orta sunt cuncta Romani generis incommode. Honoraverat lex parentum Vestales virgines ac ministros deorum victu modico iustis que privilegiis. . . . Secuta est hoc factum fames publica et spem provinciarum omnium messis aegra decepit. Non sunt haec vitia terrarum . . . sacrilegio annus exaruit. Necesse enim fuit perire omnibus quod religionibus negabatur.*

stated that the gods did nothing to repel Hannibal or Senonas, that the motivation of the virgins and the priests were misguided and unproductive, and that the failure of crops was not due to avenging gods who seemed to have delayed in the execution of their vengeance. Despite his best efforts, Symmachus's request was denied. Several years later, in 391, the emperor in the East, Theodosius I, who declared Christianity the official religion in 381, prohibited the expression and rituals of all other religions. As for the senate in Rome, their political power had waned by the end of the fourth century, but they were not yet obsolete. The senate as a collective body had limited political power. True political power came in the form of the individual wealthy men who comprised the senate.<sup>62</sup> Some members of the senate served as intermediaries (*praefecti urbis*) between the body of the senate and the emperor, others held positions in the imperial bureaucracy, and several maintained positions as consular governors.<sup>63</sup>

Certain Roman senators, when the imperial seat transferred to Constantinople in the 330s, accepted greater local responsibility for governance in the West, which later scholars viewed as a revival of senatorial power. Matthews makes a case: "It can even be argued that the influence of the resident senators of Rome was actually enhanced in the fourth century, as a result of the absence of the emperors."<sup>64</sup> Transfer of the imperial capital to Constantinople effectively introduced a series of events that would weaken the overall power and prestige of the senate in

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62. Peter Heather delineates the powers and functions of the senates in Rome and Constantinople. He argues that actually neither of the senates carried a great deal of collective power. Individual members of the senates, due to their wealth, were more helpful in promoting and endorsing imperial policies and actions; as well as effectively influencing public opinion in favor of the imperial programs. For Heather's argument see, "Senators and Senates," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 13, eds. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 197-204. Heather's assessment of the functions and the influence of the members of the Senate is an affirmation of Michele Salzman's research on senatorial order and power. She states: "Despite its resurgence, the senate after Constantine had limited political power as an institution," *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 36.

63. See Heather, "Senators and Senates," 192-204.

64. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, 254.

Rome. Prior to his victory over Licinius, Constantine had had little or no contact with the eastern sphere of the empire. His lack of contact made the new sole ruler vulnerable, for he had no knowledge of the influential players in the East. Also, Constantine may not have been viewed favorably by those in political positions because he had just decapitated the man who appointed them. In order to secure control, he took several steps to ingratiate himself to the East. He restored property and riches taken by Licinius, he reduced taxes, he reinstated those exiled by Licinius, and he formed a second senate. This eastern senate, although initially not of equal importance to its western counterpart, eventually dismantled the authority of Rome's senate.

The reigns of Constantius II, Valentinian, and Valens dealt the necessary blows that weakened the once powerful Roman senate. During their reigns, the power of the senate in the East grew rapidly. One factor behind this growth was a change in the composition of the senate. Along with the wealthy members of society, the new senate of the East included members of the military and those already in the imperial bureaucracy. This shift increased political power of the eastern senate and elevated it to the same dignity as the senate in the West. No longer did the Roman senate exercise any political authority in the East. Finally, with the new imperial residence in the East, one might expect that favoritism would be extended to those in close proximity to the emperor. Although the Roman senate lost prestige and power on the larger imperial scale, it developed a local identity. The changed Roman senatorial class was responsible for maintaining the social and cultural status of Italy. The senate in Rome also dealt with the mundane matters of the day and the governance of local municipalities.<sup>65</sup>

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65. Giovanni Tabacco concluded that this was a period not of decline for the senate, but of increased power in Italy. As the separation between the West and the East expanded, the senate was poised to exert greater political control in the West; see Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, trans. Rosalind Brown Jensen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37-72.

In the fifth century, there was a short-lived western senatorial renaissance, as a result of several weak and ineffective emperors, but by the sixth century, Justinian accomplished a complete transformation of the Roman senate. The emperor dreamed of reuniting East and West. His campaign of re-conquest, which ended in 562, was a temporary success for the empire, but disastrous for the Roman senate. With the intention of ensuring the stability of the western region, Justinian replaced members of the Roman senatorial class with those whom he could trust. As Peter Brown notes: “They were replaced by an alliance between ‘emperor’s men’ – East Roman officials and army officials – and the petty gentry of the provinces who had grown up in the shadow of the great senatorial families.”<sup>66</sup> The end of the Roman senate’s prestige and power was now in sight.<sup>67</sup>

### 1.2.3: The Barbarians

Originally the term “barbarian” was used for non-Greeks; the etymology of the word barbarian comes from the Greek βάρβαρος which means foreigner. A deeper study of the word reveals that the verb βάρβαρίζειν initially might have meant speaking Greek poorly. Anthony Pagden comments: “For the Hellenistic Greeks, the *barbarous* was merely a babbler, someone who could not speak Greek.”<sup>68</sup> Maria Boletsi concluded that language was not the only criterion that defined a barbarian. Other political, cultural, and religious factors were crucial in defining the nature and history of the barbarians.<sup>69</sup> The barbarians, in the Roman period, represented a class of people who were either Germanic or groups moving into the empire in a

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66. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 195.

67. For a probing analysis regarding the decline of the senate in Rome; see Heather, “Senators and Senates,” 184-210.

68. Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (New York: The Cambridge University Press, 1982), 16.

69. Maria Boletsi, *Barbarism and Its Discontents: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Redwood: CA, Stanford University Press, 2013), 57-107.



southwestward direction from the Russian steppes. They presented a significant threat to the stability and the welfare of the Roman empire. In the mid-third century, the attacks of the barbarians were concentrated at the eastern borders of the empire. The aggressive barrage of barbarian assaults in the East had devastating consequences in the West. While barbarian military campaigns pounded the eastern frontiers from the outside, other barbarians, who had been granted asylum in the empire, were responsible for an uprising from within in 378.

Who were these people the Romans referred to as barbarians? From a Roman point of view, the short definition was those who were not Romans. The Romans did not initially view these groups or tribes as a significant threat for they were unorganized bands moving through the outer frontiers. The Romans were able to hold such bands under control by diplomatic and military means.<sup>70</sup> Also, the barbarians were seen as inferior to the Romans. They were, in essence, viewed by the Romans as brutish, insatiable, boorish hordes of people that roamed the deserts and the outskirts of the empire.<sup>71</sup> In contrast to the nature of the barbarians, the Romans viewed themselves as civil, well-mannered, and rational.<sup>72</sup> The barbarians began to pose a threat to the Roman empire only after they organized themselves into proto-states. Three in particular

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70. Ian Wood, "The north-western provinces," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: Late Antiquity Empire and Successors A.D 425-600*, vol. 14, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 515.

71. Pagden comments that: "The prime function of the term 'barbarian' and its cognates, 'barbarous', barbarity', etc., was to distinguish between those who were members of the observer's own society and those who were not," *The Fall of Natural Man*, 15. Boletsi explored the development of the term barbarian and noted that those, in this case non-Romans, who were considered barbarians originally were viewed as: "Slave . . . nomad . . . savage . . . wild man, cannibal, lunatic . . . animal and monster," *Barbarism and Its Discontents*, 60.

72. It is these principles that Peter Heather applies to the Roman understanding of the character and nature of the Romans and the barbarians. The Romans viewed themselves, according to Heather, as being led by reason and intellect which leads to temperance; whereas, the barbarians were led by ignorance and physicality. Romans viewed the intellect as superior to the physical body. For the distinction and development of Heather's thought; see *The Fall of the Roman World*, 67-76.

were the Persian Sassanians, the Goths from the region of Gotland in the Baltic Sea, and the Mongolian Hsiung-Nu, commonly known as the Huns.<sup>73</sup>

These emerging new powers in the East forced the Romans to acknowledge that other political and military powers existed beyond the confines of the empire; one such power was the Sassanians.<sup>74</sup> In an attempt to assert Roman military authority in the East and conquer the ever-growing power of the Persians, the emperor Gordian III (238-244) mounted a military campaign. In 244, Gordian III became the first of three Roman emperors killed in battle by the Persians. At his death, the Roman military, not the Roman senate, acclaimed Philip as his successor. The Persian threat along the Danube continued to cause instability in the region. Philip decided that the best course of action would be to enter into a treaty with the Persians. In 244, he established a treaty that would be in effect until 259.

Yet, the region of the Danube remained volatile. Across the Danube an uprising ensued, which the military general Decius successfully put down. As a result of his swift actions, the military elevated him as emperor. Challenging Philip, the sitting emperor, Decius made his move to confront Philip for control of the empire and in 249 Philip and his son were killed in battle, leaving the empire in the hands of Decius. The treaty established by Philip remained in effect until the Persians captured and killed the emperor Valerian in 259.<sup>75</sup>

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73. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 43-52.

74. The Sassanians were only one of several groups from the East that posed a threat to the Roman Empire. They were responsible for several major defeats against the Roman armies; yet, their most significant effect was that, along with other barbarian groups, they forced the Romans to concentrate their forces in the East and neglect the western boundaries. Hyun Jin Kim, *Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16.

75. Along the Rhine region, successful campaigns against Rome were waged by Gaul and Spain. A military general named Postumus was proclaimed emperor and he claimed his empire to be comprised of Gaul, Spain, Britain, and Germany. The Gallic empire, as it was called, lasted for little more than a decade.

In 298, the eastern Caesar, Galerius led a successful campaign against the Persians. This, however, did not mean that the Sassanians ceased to pose a threat to the empire. Three successive attacks in 338, 346, and 350 kept the East preoccupied. Due to civil unrest in the West in 350, the Persians once again gained a considerable advantage in the East.<sup>76</sup> Constantius II continued to be beleaguered by the Persians and renewed his post in the East with the ordered execution of Gallus in 354. The Sassanians had seriously damaged not only the eastern frontier but also the psyche of the Roman empire.

In 376, a group of barbarians from Gotland in the Baltic Sea known as the Goths sought asylum in the empire. The empire was preoccupied and overwhelmed by the Persian threat, the petition for asylum was granted, and the Goths settled in northern Thrace. At the time, Valens welcomed a single tribe of Goths, the *Tervingi*, whom he pressed into military service against the Sassanians. It appeared to be a win/win situation for all. Valens received the necessary manpower to hold the Persians at bay and the Goths received protection against the Huns who had pursued them.

In 378, the Goths rose up. In order to control the murmurings of the Goths in northern Thrace, the Roman army contained the members of the *Tervingi* by relocating them to Marcianople where a closer watch was kept. While the army was consumed with the relocation of the *Tervingi*, the *Greuthung* tribe, who had not been allowed into the empire, made inroads of its own. Even though the *Tervingi* were under closer inspection by the imperial forces, they did manage to unite with the *Greuthung* and become a serious military threat to the East from within the confines of the empire. Valens led a military expedition to crush that revolt. The decisive

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76. In 350, the emperor seated in the West, Constans, was overthrown and subsequently executed. Constantius II appointed Gallus as his official representative in the East and Constantius headed to the western empire to control the mutiny that had occurred. In his absence, the East, although not left unoccupied was not the center of focus.

battle of 378 took place north of Adrianople on the coast of Asia Minor (Turkey). The Roman army suffered a major defeat and the emperor was executed. The new emperor Theodosius I (379-395), who was appointed by Gratian, entered into a treaty with the Goths in 382. As a condition of the treaty, they were called on by Theodosius to assist in two campaigns against the West. The first was in 388 to avenge the death of Gratian, and the second was in 394 to avenge the death of Valentinian II. Between these two campaigns, a new barbarian threat emerged when, in 392, Alaric broke from the Goths and established the Visigoths. When Theodosius I died in 395, the empire was split between his two sons. Arcadius was given rule over the East and Honorius, who was only ten years of age, was given control of the West with a regent named Stilicho. A field commander under Theodosius I, Stilicho now exercised imperial control of the West. Despite his best efforts, Stilicho was unable to defeat Alaric and the Visigoths. In 410, Alaric took advantage of the weak, defenseless city of Rome and ransacked it.

The third threat to the empire was from a barbarian group from the great Eurasian steppe on the plains of Mongolia. This group, known as the Hiung-Nu or the Huns, was on the northern bank of the Danube from the late fourth to the early fifth century.<sup>77</sup> They were there because they had suffered a defeat by the Chinese and were forced to flee southwestward for safety and to regroup. Along with that military defeat, famine, economic and social troubles contributed to their migration southwestward. In their southwestward move, the Huns encountered the Goths, which instigated the Goths' migration into the empire. The Huns were a force that pillaged and

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77. While fleeing from other more powerful groups conquering lands in the Far East, Huns occupied the region along the Danube. Walter Pohl studied the patterns of migration among the various groups of barbarians and concluded that a major factor for the movements of these groups was ongoing political pressure and military offensives; see "Migrations, Ethnic Groups, and State Building," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. Michael Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 247-63.

battered the empire in the eastern and western provinces up to and even beyond the leadership of Attila.

Even after the sack of Rome in 410 by Alaric, Rome continued to be a viable imperial city; that had changed by the time Attila was threatening to advance on Rome. Later legend maintained that he was held at bay by the negotiations of Pope Leo the Great in 452 and Rome was spared. Strategic considerations and local logistics seem more plausible reasons for Attila's withdrawal from Italy. Attila did not attack the city, but it was evident that Rome was in a weakened state. Three years later, a new confrontation proved too great for Italy. After orchestrating an assault on Rome by sea, Geiseric, leader of the Vandals, left Italy imperiled. After pillaging the city, he refrained from burning it down, but the damage was done. It was clear that Italy was increasingly helpless against barbarian attacks. These dramatic assaults sent a clear message that *Roma Invicta* was indeed conquered.

### **1.3.0: The Role of Christianity**

By the end of the fourth century the senatorial transformation, the restructuring of the government and the military, and the barbarian presence had weakened the empire and laid the foundation for the fifth-century abdication of the imperial seat in the West. In order to have a complete picture of the state of affairs in the West, the role of Christianity needs to be explored. A study of Christianity, from any particular discipline, needs to assess the significance of the persecutions, which signaled a new level of engagement between Christians and imperial authorities, and the events that surrounded the now famous battle between Constantine and Maxentius at the *Ponte Milvio*. Indeed, this battle and the events that led up to it, including the

vision that Constantine had on its eve, helped thrust Christianity into the mainstream and make it an important part of Constantine's empire.

When Diocletian assumed power he encountered an empire, as we have seen, that was in crisis. During most of Diocletian's reign, Christians enjoyed a relative peace. The memories of the third-century persecutions at the hands of the emperors Decius, Gallus, and Valerian were just that, memories. Perhaps the military offensives, governmental restructuring, and economic reforms kept Diocletian preoccupied and the Christians lived in relative peace. However, it was military operatives that would eventually focus attention once again upon the Christians.<sup>78</sup> By 300, loyalty in the military was becoming an issue. Pagan members of the military were offering the traditional sacrifices to the gods, which proved problematic for the Christians in their ranks who did not participate in any of these ritual sacrifices. Galerius, at the promptings of his mother, was concerned that Christian refusal to offer sacrifices might anger the gods, jeopardize the military offensives and, ultimately, the stability of the empire. Galerius was in favor of coercing the Christians into sacrificing, yet it appeared that Diocletian was not overly concerned with the Christians.<sup>79</sup>

In a relatively brief span of time, the issue of the Christians came to the forefront. There were two decisive moments that would endanger the relative peace enjoyed by the Christians of the early fourth century. First, while Diocletian was offering a sacrifice, the augurs, who were the interpreters of messages from the Roman deities, reported that they could not interpret the

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78. Charles Odahl offers several individual accounts of Christian soldiers who refused to accept the imperial *signum* and the consequences for their actions; see *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 63-6.

79. According to Lactantius, Galerius's mother, Romula, a pagan priestess in Dacia, made daily sacrifices to the gods and the Christians refused to participate in this practice. During these sacrifices, the Christians fasted and prayed, which angered her. She prevailed on her son to persecute them. See *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 11, lines 1-2, *SCh* 39; trans. McDonald, 141. For further discussion on the matter of Romula's influence on Galerius regarding the Christians; see Odhal's *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, 66-7.

oracles. It was believed that Christians, possibly within the military or the imperial household, had crossed themselves at the sight of the oracle and this caused an interference with the “divine signs.”<sup>80</sup> Although Diocletian demanded that members of his court and military personnel demonstrate their loyalty by offering sacrifices to the gods, there was no indication that an imperial persecution, which would affect the entire empire, was on the horizon. But a second incident sealed the fate of the Christians.

Diocletian consulted the oracle of Apollo in Miletus. While at Miletus, again through the interpretation of the augurs, Apollo allegedly replied that if the oracle was false or silence was to follow regarding future oracles, it was due to the Christians. Diocletian was not willing to jeopardize the well-being of the empire. At the urging of Galerius, Diocletian unleashed what would become, with the exception of a few periods of toleration, an eight-year persecution against the Christians. While Diocletian ordered moderation in the persecution against Christians, Galerius sought an aggressive campaign.

On February 23, 303, the Augustus and his Caesar looked on from a watchtower in Nicomedia as soldiers demolished churches. The following day an edict was decreed that mandated the further destruction of churches, the burning of Sacred Scriptures, a prohibition against the gathering of Christians, and Christians being stripped of all honors, dignity, and rank.<sup>81</sup> Diocletian soon issued a series of four edicts. He denied Christians certain privileges and forced them to sacrifice and offer libations to the deities of Rome. He had those who refused imprisoned, exiled, or executed. Corcoran noted: “There followed later in 303 the arrest of

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80. It was believed that the Christians were antagonistic which thwarted the accuracy of the oracles. MacMullen claims that this angered Diocletian, who then insisted those in his court had to participate affably in sacrifices; see *Constantine*, 24.

81. Simon Corcoran, “Diocletian,” in *Lives of the Caesars*, ed. Anthony A. Barrett (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 248.

clergy, to be freed if they apostatized by offering sacrifice. . . . Finally, in 304, came a further measure requiring universal sacrifice.”<sup>82</sup>

Over its course, the intensity of the persecutions fluctuated. Yet, under the direction of Galerius, there were a large number of executions and imprisonments. Frend notes: “During 304, Galerius had turned the persecution from a sharp reminder to the Christian clergy that the immortal gods still protected the empire, and required acknowledgment even from those who ordinarily turned their backs on them, to all-out war on Christians whether lay or clerical.”<sup>83</sup> There were periods in which the extreme harshness of the persecutions was absent, as in 311, when Galerius issued an edict of toleration, but these were short-lived and the persecutions would resume.

The events that led to the confrontation between Constantine and Maxentius were rooted in 304, when Diocletian became seriously ill when returning to Nicomedia from Rome. During the winter of 304, Diocletian’s condition worsened.<sup>84</sup> In March of 305, Diocletian announced his abdication. A formal transfer of power was scheduled for May 1, 305. It was at this time that Maximianus in the West was also forced by Diocletian to retire. This was a decision made for him that he did not necessarily agree to with great enthusiasm. His displeasure became evident in his attempts to regain the purple. At the transfer of power, as established by Diocletian’s constitutional law of succession, Galerius was proclaimed Augustus in the East and Constantius I in the West. Galerius appointed the two new Caesars, his nephew, Galerius

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82. Corcoran, “Diocletian,” 248. For a timeline and historical foundation that is beneficial in understanding the impetus behind the Great Persecutions; see Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 456-63, regarding what he calls the “Outbreak of the Persecution.”

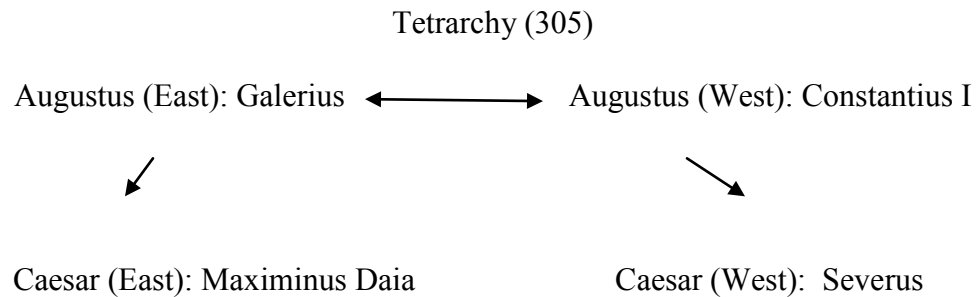
83. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 461.

84. Diocletian suffered from malaria, which took its toll on his body. Frend notes: “One public appearance in Nicomedia on March 1 305 sufficed to convince those who saw him that he was a dying man. For the last year, the reins of government had fallen to his more thrusting colleague, Galerius,” *The Rise of Christianity*, 461. For the abdication of Diocletian and the contested claim that Galerius forced Diocletian into retirement; see Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 141-3.

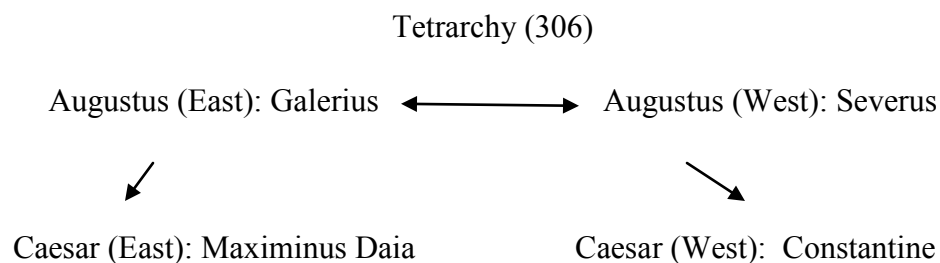


Valerius Maximinus as Caesar in the East, and Flavius Valerius Severus as Caesar in the West.

Based on the line of succession declared by Diocletian, the second tetrarchy was formed.



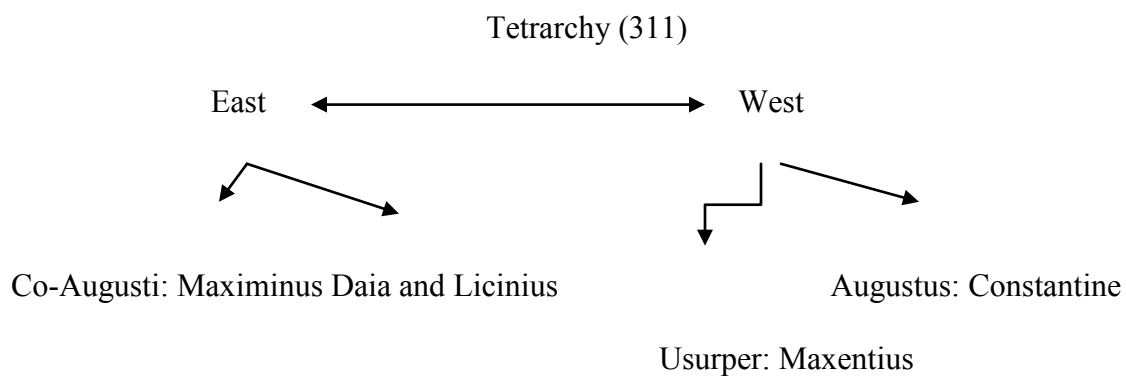
In 306, Constantine joined his father Constantius I in time to assist in a successful campaign in the northern region of the western empire. It was here that he proved himself a competent soldier, and as a result, he endeared himself to the military. The approval of the military was advantageous, indeed crucial in elevating a person to the office of Augustus. In York, on July 25, 306, Constantius I became the first member of the tetrarchy to die and, by acclamation on the same day, the troops declared his son Constantine as Augustus.<sup>85</sup> All that awaited was the blessing of Galerius, who made the ultimate decision on the appointment of a new western Augustus. Instead, Galerius appointed Severus to the position of Augustus in accordance with the succession established by Diocletian and Constantine was made Caesar.




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<sup>85</sup>. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 475.

That same year, Maxentius seized control of Rome and, along with his father, Maximianus, proclaimed themselves co-Augusti after the abdication and execution of Severus.<sup>86</sup> Prompted by Maximianus, the military declared Maxentius emperor in the West, not Constantine.<sup>87</sup> By 311, the tetrarchy was in turmoil. Prior to his death, Galerius, who had a form of leprosy that left him crippled and in pain, had issued an edict of toleration on April 30, 311. He granted the Christians the right to exist freely once again within the empire. However, there was a noticeable stipulation: “Whence, in light of this indulgence on our part, these Christians ought to pray to their God for our health and for the safety of the state and their own.”<sup>88</sup> In the wake of his death, the East was legitimately divided between the co-Augusti Maximinus Daia and Licinius, the latter will eventually become the sole eastern Augustus. In the West, however, things were more complicated. Maxentius claimed sole control of the West at the death of his father in 310. His claim had no merit since Constantine, who was Caesar under Severus, assumed control at the time of Severus’s death.



86. The people of Rome were displeased with the policies and programs of Severus. Frend points out: “Severus had ruled long enough to make himself unpopular.” *The Rise of Christianity*, 475.

87. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 16-8. For the military’s role in giving usurpers political control; see Stephen Mitchell, *Blackwell History of the Ancient World: History of the Later Roman Empire, AD 284-641* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 53-5.

88. *De Mortibus*, 34, line 29, *SCh* 39; trans. McDonald, 181. *Unde iuxta hanc indulgentium nostrum debebunt deum suum orare pro salute nostra, et rei publicae ac sua.*

With the help of Licinius, Constantine began a military campaign that brought decisive victories in northern Italy. These victories allowed Constantine to advance to Rome and seize control over the West. His march on Rome was described by Eusebius as the liberation of the citizens of Rome: “When he then perceived that the whole earthly element was like a great body, and next became aware that the head of the whole, the imperial city of the Roman Empire, lay oppressed by bondage to a tyrant . . . [he] began preparations to overthrow the tyranny.”<sup>89</sup> As he approached Italy, Constantine received warnings from his augurs not to advance, and his own military leaders advised him not to declare war.

In the summer of 312, Constantine rejected the advice offered him and continued his advance. He was successful in the three battles that led him from northern Italy straight to the heart of Rome. His military campaign brought him to the final battle at the *Ponte Milvio*, and to an experience that changed the Roman empire, religion, and the face of Christianity forever. In the fall of 312, Constantine reportedly had a vision that inspired him. There are two variations of what transpired in the vision that differ significantly in details. Lactantius, a Christian rhetorician and an early theologian of sorts, and Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, both reported that Constantine had a vision that evening. Yet, their accounts of the vision differ in degree of detail and their proximity to the events at the Milvian Bridge. Also, the claim of tyranny was an exaggeration on the part of Eusebius. The real issue was that Maxentius was a usurper and Constantine’s ambition fueled his desire to take control of Rome and eventually the empire. According to Lactantius, in one written account circa 317, Constantine and his troops were encamped at the *Ponte Milvio* when Constantine in a dream “was warned in quiet to mark the celestial sign of God on his shields and thus engage in battle. He did as he was ordered. He

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89. Eusebius, *De Vita Imp. Constantini*, 1, line 27, PG 20; trans. Cameron, 79. Εἶθ' ὡς περ μέγα σωμα, τὸ παντὶς οἰκουμένης ἐννοήσας στοιχείον, χαπείτα τὴν βασιλευούσαν πόλιν, θηραννικήν δουλείαν συνιδὼν καθυπηγμένην. . . . παρ᾽ ἐσχευάζετο τὰ πρὸς τὴν καθαιρεσὶν τῆς θηραννίδος.

inscribed the name of Christ on the shields, using the initial letter X, crossed by the letter I with its top portion bent.”<sup>90</sup> Constantine and his men were victorious. In a second much longer account written in 338, Eusebius wrote that in the midst of his fervent prayer, Constantine together with his troops saw a cross in the sky with *In Hoc Signo Vinces* written. It is important to note that Constantine sought divine help, a patron in battle, and thus he prayed to his father’s god, *Sol Invictus*, to be revealed. Later Constantine had a dream in which Christ appeared and instructed him to make a likeness of the sign he saw. When he awoke, he did as was instructed:

About the time of the midday sun, when the day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross shaped trophy formed from the light, and a text attached to it which said, ‘By this conquer’. Thereupon, as he slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make himself a copy.<sup>91</sup>

On October 28, 312, Constantine and his opponent, Maxentius, met at the *Ponte Milvio*. During the battle, Maxentius and his troops became trapped on the bridge. After a brief encounter, Maxentius was thrown from the bridge into the *Tevere* and drowned. With the death of Maxentius at the *Ponte Milvio*, Constantine was recognized by the senate as the sole Augustus of the West. Licinius emerged as the sole Augustus of the East with the death of Maximinus Daia. They agreed to meet in Milan in February of 313. The exact nature of the business that the two wished to accomplish during this meeting was unclear; yet, the place and role of religion within the empire was an urgent matter. From the meeting in Milan, there were two results. The first was the marriage between Licinius and the half-sister of Constantine, Constantia. The

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90. *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 44. 5, lines 30-2, *SCh* 39; trans. McDonald, 191. *Commonitus est in quiete Constantinus, ut caeleste signum dei notaret in scutis atque ita proelium committeret. Fecit ut iussus est et transversa X littera, summo capite circumflexo, Christum in scutis notat.*

91. *De Vita Imp. Constantini*, 1, line 28, *PG* 20; trans. Cameron, 81. Αμφι μεσημορινας ηλιον ωρας, ηδη της ημερας αποχλινουσιν, αυτοις οφθαλμοις ιδειν εφη εν αυτω ουρανω υπερχειμενον του ηλιου σταυρου τροπαιον, εκ φωτος συνισιαμενον, γραφην τε αυτω σουνηφθαι, λεγουσαν τουτω νιχα. Θαμμος δ επι τω θαματι χρατησαι αυτον τε και το στρατιωτικον απαν, ο δν στελλομενω ποι πορειαν συνειπετο τε και θεωρω εγινετο θαυματος.

second, and more significant development was the agreement on a policy of religious toleration within the empire.<sup>92</sup>

Under this agreement, the Christians were given the same rights and privileges as the other religions of the empire. They received their lands back, were allowed to build churches, and obtained other forms of restitution. With Constantine's victory over Licinius in 324, after which he was crowned the sole emperor of both the western and eastern spheres of the empire, the Christian religion rose in stature. Constantine's increased identification with Christianity and involvement with the Church paved the road for Christians to have a new form of respect and reverence for the emperor. The agreement and the imperial laws that flowed from it provide a key insight into the mindset of the "converted" Christian emperor. Constantine was not baptized until just before his death in 337, yet he did display an affinity to the Christian God.

It is crucial to realize that neither the agreement nor Constantine at any point made Christianity the official religion of the empire. Although Constantine displayed respect for the Christian God, he did not directly impose Christianity upon the citizens. The religious toleration granted in the agreement established freedom of religion to all people: "And, therefore, we have determined that this purpose should be undertaken with sound and most upright reason, that we

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92. Counter to the widespread view that Constantine and Licinius met and agreed on a policy that would grant religious freedom to all inhabitants of the empire, Timothy Barnes argues that this document was not an edict or an official proclamation from Milan; see "The Constantinian Settlement," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 634-657. He concludes that it was a policy that Licinius, in Constantine's name and his own, issued in the East. Barnes states that Licinius gave "the Christian subjects of Licinius what those of Constantine had enjoyed since 306 – a fact which the misleading designation "Edict of Milan" conceals and misrepresents"; "The Constantinian Settlement," 645.

think the opportunity should be denied no one whatsoever who has given his attention to the observance of the Christians or to that religion which he feels to be most suitable to himself.”<sup>93</sup>

Aside from the reign of Julian the Apostate (360-363), emperors continued and in certain cases expanded on the policies of Constantine regarding the role of the Church in the affairs of the empire. As the Church-state relationship developed, bishops seemingly amassed greater power over the people of the empire, even the emperor. It was during the reign of Theodosius I that the legendary image of an emperor submitting to the authority of a bishop was emblazoned in the memory of history.<sup>94</sup> Drake explains the encounter: “The confrontation between Ambrose of Milan and Theodosius I came to be celebrated as a victory for the right of bishops to pass moral judgment on Roman emperors.”<sup>95</sup>

Just prior to the Council of Constantinople in 381, Theodosius I declared Christianity the imperial religion of the empire.<sup>96</sup> By the 390s, further imperial legislation was enacted that

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93. *De Mortibus*, 48.3, line 13, *SCh* 39; trans. McDonald, 71. *Itaque hoc consilium salubri ac rectissima ratione ineundum esse credidimus, ut nulli omnino facultatem abnegandam putaremus, qui vel observationi Christianorum vel ei religioni mentem suam dederet.*

94. Theodosius was denied entry in the cathedral of Milan by Saint Ambrose who insisted that Theodosius perform an act of penance for the massacre that took place in Thessalonica. This event and actions of Ambrose will be studied in chapter two. Drake also notes the significance of this moment in the relationship of the two spheres, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 441-46.

95. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 446.

96. On February 27, 380, Theodosius I promulgated Christianity as the imperial religion: “It is our desire that all the various nation . . . should continue to the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter . . . We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as for the others . . . we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their gatherings the name of churches.” *Imperatoris Theodosii Codex*, 16.prae.1, line 2, *CCSL* 5; trans. Pharr, 31. *Imp. Gratianus, Valentinianus et Theodosius. edictum ad populum urbis Constantinopolitanae. Cunctos populos, . . . in tali volumus religione versari, quam divinum Petrum apostolum tradidisse Romanis religio. . . . Hanc legem sequentes christianorum catholicorum nomen iubemus amplecti, reliquos . . . iudicantes haeretici dogmatis infamiam sustinere nec conciliabula eorum ecclesiarum nomen accipere.*

prohibited all other religious practices.<sup>97</sup> This made Christianity the official religion of the empire, that is, the only one legally tolerated or permitted. Even though it was the official religion, the empire was not fully Christianized. It could be presumed that once the emperor converted, in this case Constantine's *quasi* conversion, others would quickly follow. The role of the emperor cannot be dismissed as a cause that contributed to the process; however, the transformation was much slower than previous thought. Beyond the emperor's influence, other factors were transforming life in the Roman world and affecting the rate of conversions to Christianity. The emperor was one factor, albeit a significant one, in a world that consisted of the imperial court, the political institution of the senate (those who were elected or chosen by imperial nomination), military, aristocrats (elite members of society), and the Church. Each of these strata played a role in the overall process of the Christianization of the empire.

Michelle Salzman argues that the conversion process was not as rapid as early scholarship may have indicated. She maintains that the Christianization of the empire would have had to move progressively through a two-fold process of assimilation. First, there needed to be a gradual turning from the pagan rituals and traditions of ancient Rome. Second, there needed to be a slow integration of Christians into pagan positions of wealth and authority.<sup>98</sup> Although conversions were happening throughout the empire, that did not necessarily denote that the empire was fully Christianized by the mid-fourth century. In fact, Ramsay MacMullen points

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97. Frend points out that in February 391 pagan sacrifices and rituals were banned and in June 392 heretical clergy were fined and their property seized. With reference to the *Theodosian Code*, he comments: "The Theodosian state, however, proved more successful in securing religious uniformity than Diocletian's," *The Rise of Christianity*, 640.

98. Salzman concentrates on four essential and influential career paths that would be significant for the Christians. For the military, senatorial, imperial bureaucratic, and religious career paths; see *Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 107-37.

out that two-thirds of personnel of Constantine's government were non-Christian.<sup>99</sup> Also, the senate in Rome reacted strongly to Gratian's decision to remove the Altar of Victory. Religion was one of many factors that marked the transformation not the destruction that was occurring within the empire.

Constantine himself never completely abandoned the trappings of paganism, as attested by the dedication of the new Christian city of Constantinople on May 11, 330. Signs and aspects of both Christianity and paganism were evident in the new city. A new forum was built in which a massive column erected in the center was dedicated to Constantine. At the base of the column, a relic of the True Cross as well as other Christian symbols, but on the top of the column a larger-than-life statue of the emperor. The statue, an obvious reference to older Roman ritual, represented the pagan practice of worshiping the *genius* of the emperor.<sup>100</sup> The gold statue portrayed Constantine as the Roman god *Sol Invictus*. After the dedication of the column, Constantine appeared at the imperial box of the hippodrome. The advisors stood while the emperor alone was seated upon a throne. During the ceremony, a golden chariot bearing an image of the emperor entered the arena. The stunning procession made its way to the emperor for his approval. The image was revered and adored with prostrations from the vast crowd gathered. During the same ceremony, images were brought forward that depicted prosperity and fortune coming from the hands of the emperor. These were only a few of the carefully choreographed actions that gave the emperor the status of near-divinity reminiscent of pagan ideas

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99. Ramsay MacMullen, *The Christianization of the Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 47.

100. Mark Johnson reminds us that the statue on top of the column was in line with Roman traditions. He writes: "On the top of the column, in keeping with the tradition of Roman honorific columns, was placed a large statue of the emperor," "Architecture of Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 291.



about the emperor.<sup>101</sup> It is obvious that during the reign of Constantine the empire was still far from being a Christianized empire.

#### 1.4.0: Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted some of the factors that led to the weakening of the western empire and subsequent abdication of the western imperial seat. The events leading to the abdication of the western emperor in 476 were manifold. This chapter has focused on the complexity of the arguments about the decline and effective end of western Roman empire in the fifth century. Devastation wrought by the floods of the *Tevere*, the outbreak of the plague, malaria, and cholera, the destruction of granaries and livestock, many years of mismanagement, crisis after crisis, civil strife, division from within, and barbarian assaults and migrations combined to weaken the once-mighty city and empire. In the city of Rome, the physical foundations of many buildings had been neglected, which caused these dilapidated structures to collapse. All of these factors accounted for the catastrophic breakdown of the local Roman economy. In the midst of the devastation, the foundation of the city remained viable, although tattered. From the third through the fifth centuries, Christianity gained increasing influence. The next chapter examines a key moment in the process of change.

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101. A complete presentation of the statue of Constantine and the dedication of the Christian City of Constantinople can be found in Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2009), 190-211. See also, Christopher Kelly, "Empire Building," in *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, ed. G.W. Bowersock (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 170-1.

## Chapter Two: A Fourth-Century Ecclesial Paradigm: Ambrose of Milan

### 2.0.0: Overview

The focus of this chapter is an examination of the ecclesial paradigm in which Ambrose operated when involving himself in the secular arena. The objective of studying this Ambrosian paradigm is to ascertain whether or not Gregory employed any of the same policies and procedures when involving himself in matters of the state. This chapter investigates four occasions in which Ambrose engaged with or challenged emperors: the attempt to re-establish the Altar of Victory in the Roman Senate building; the conflict with the empress Justina regarding the use of Milanese churches for Arian worshippers; the events surrounding the burning of a synagogue at Callinicum along with the destruction of the nearby Gnostic temple; and finally emperor Theodosius's role in the massacre at Thessalonica. A study of Ambrose's works and words on these events coupled with a consideration of his treatise *On Duties*, *De Officiis* and *Funeral Oration of Theodosius*, *De obitu Theodosii*, give a picture of his *de facto* actions, his explicit statement of beliefs, assumptions, and principles regarding his role as bishop, his view of his political authority as coming from God, and finally the responsibilities of the Christian emperor to the Church.

### 2.1.0: Ambrose of Milan: Transformation from the political to the religious realm

Ambrose was born circa 339 at Augusta Treverorum, or Trier, an important imperial administrative capital in the West. His father, Aurelius Ambrosius, was the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul during the reign of Constantine II (337-340). The position of prefect was an important

imperial post which, from the time of Constantine, was equivalent to vice-emperor.<sup>102</sup>

According to Ambrose's biographer Paulinus, after his son's birth, Ambrose's father believed that his son was either divinely favored or destined for greatness. Paulinus recounted an incident in which the infant Ambrose, sleeping in a cradle in the courtyard, was swarmed by bees that flew in and out of his mouth.<sup>103</sup> According to Paulinus, the father, understandably concerned, commented that: "When this happened his father was shaken, and he said: 'If this little baby lives, he will become something great.'"<sup>104</sup> Ambrose's father died shortly after the birth of his child.<sup>105</sup> At his father's death, Ambrose's family consisted of his mother, his sister Marcellina, and his brother Satyrus.

Ambrose and Satyrus were educated in Rome. In the late 360s, he and his brother departed Rome to take legal positions in Sirmium at the behest of Petronius Probus who was the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum, Italy, and Africa. Paulinus recalled: "After he had been trained in the liberal arts he left Rome and, having been accepted to practice law before the prefecture of the praetorium, he argued cases so brilliantly that he was chosen by the illustrious man Probus, then praetorian prefect, to serve as his counsel."<sup>106</sup> Probus was an influential man in the West

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102. While examining posts held by Ambrose, Angelo Paredi notes: "*Nell'ordinario amministrativo dato all'impero da Costantino Magno, I prefetti del pretorio erano come vice-imperatori.*" *Politica di S. Ambrogio: Nel XVI Centenario della Sua Elevazione a Vescovo di Milano 374-1974* (Milan: Strenna Dell'Istituto Gaetano Pini, 1974), 11. "In the ordinary administrative dealings during the reign of Constantine the Great, the praetorian prefects were as vice-emperors," (translation mine).

103. See Paulinus, "The Life of Saint Ambrose," in *Ambrose*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (London: Routledge, 1997), 197.

104. *Vita Ambr.* 3.4, line 97, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 197. *Quo facto territus pater ait: Si vixerit infantulus iste, aliquid magni erit.*

105. It is believed that the senior Ambrose's death was linked to the death of the emperor Constantine II. Constantine II was killed by his brother, Constans, during a civil war in 340; see J.H.W.G. Liebschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom: Clerics between Desert and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57.

106. *Vita Ambr.* 5.1, line 1, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 198. *Sed postquam edoctus liberalibus disciplinis ex urbe egressus est professus que in auditorio praefecturae praetorii, ita splendid causas perorabat, ut eligeretur a viro inlustri Probo, tunc praefecto praetorii, ad consilium tribuendum.*

and may have nominated Ambrose for the *consularis*.<sup>107</sup> This was a significant governmental post which, had jurisdiction over large portions of northern Italy namely, the province of Aemilia including Bergamo, Como, Lodi, Milan, Novara, Pavis, Vercelli, and Torino and also the province of Liguria consisting of Forlì, Imola, Parma, Piacenza, and Reggio. The governor resided in Milan, which by the second half of the fourth century, was among the four major imperial cities of the Roman empire.<sup>108</sup> As Ambrose departed for Milan in 369, Probus offered him advice that would be prophetic: “Go, and act not as a judge but as a bishop.”<sup>109</sup> Probus was calling on Ambrose to act with compassion as opposed to juridical rigidity in his new post.

The situation in Milan was tenuous at best. The city was divided into two factions: Arians, who were anti-Nicene, and those who adhered to the teachings of the 325 Council of Nicaea.<sup>110</sup> The Council declared that Jesus Christ was of the *same* substance (ὁμοούσιος) as the Father. In sharp opposition to the Nicene Creed, the Arian anti-Nicenes, subscribed to the teaching that Christ was in some fashion subordinate to the Father and not equal. As a result of this inferior nature, Jesus shared in a *similar* substance (ὁμοιούσιος) with the Father.<sup>111</sup> The controversy was exacerbated in Milan by the emperor Constantius II, who was fresh from a victory over the usurper Magnentius. In 355, Constantius called a Council in Milan for several

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107. See Angelo Paredi, *Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 13.

108. Ibid., 14-15. “Nella seconda metà del quarto secolo Milano era tra le maggiori città del mondo romano. Dalle fine del secolo terzo Milano era divenuta una delle Quattro capitali dell'impero (Costantinopoli, Sirmio, Milano, Treviri), sede di uffici governativi, residenza imperiale.”

109. *Vita Ambr.* 8.3, line 11, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 199. *Vade, age non ut iudex sed ut episcopus.*

110. Michele Salzman concisely summarizes the atmosphere in Milan at Ambrose's arrival; see “Christianity and Paganism, III: Italy,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to c. 600*, vol. 2, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 224-27.

111. The issue of the nature of Christ came to the forefront in 325 when the emperor Constantine called for the Council in Nicaea. The issue was dealt with and the anti-Arian language regarding Christ as being the same substance of the Father was inserted into the council's creedal statement. Even though the bishops agreed to the creed of Nicaea, the issue was far from resolved. See Henry and Owen Chadwick, eds., *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 198-200; and Norman Tanner, *The Councils of the Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2011), 21-25.

specific reasons. The council implemented the pro-Arian pronouncements of the Council of Arles of 353. It condemned and punished anyone who was suspected of supporting the usurper, Magnentius. It may be that Athanasius favored Magnentius. Despite his best efforts, Athanasius could not convince the emperor that he was not of Magnentius's camp. The council also excommunicated Athanasius. The issue, however, was far greater than Athanasius. At the heart of the matter was the Creed of Nicaea, which held that the Son was of the same substance as the Father. Those who refused to endorse the anti-Nicene sentiments of the Council of Milan were sent into exile. Among those deposed and exiled was the pro-Nicene bishop Dionysius of Milan. In his place, Constantius appointed the Arian bishop Auxentius as the new bishop of Milan.<sup>112</sup> The tensions in the city were palpable.

Auxentius was bishop in Milan from 355 until his death in 374; whereupon, the two factions were once again at odds. Those who supported Auxentius and his anti-Nicene attitudes were hopeful that a suitable bishop would be elected in order to maintain the *status quo*. The pro-Nicene camp had been equally confident that a bishop could be elected that would completely alter the existing point of view. In an attempt to curtail any riots or demonstrations such as the ones that occurred in Rome in 366, Ambrose, who was provincial governor, intervened.<sup>113</sup> As he was attempting to establish some semblance of order, Ambrose, a Christian who had yet to be baptized, quickly became the person selected to be the next bishop of Milan. Paulinus reported: "Around the same time, with the death of Auxentius, the bishop of the Arian

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112. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 264-78.

113. A riot broke out in Rome after the death of Liberius. Damasus, one of the city's deacons, was the likely candidate to succeed Liberius. However, parties loyal to Liberius were angered at Damasus who, years before, abandoned Liberius in favor of Felix an anti-pope. In the Church of San Lorenzo a group of clergy gathered and elected him and within the week he was consecrated at the Lateran Basilica. While a group of the clergy gathered in one Church, several others gathered in the Julian Basilica and elected Ursinus as bishop of Rome. For the riots that ensued and the aftermath; see Roger Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven: A History of the Papacy* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 48-55.

perfidy (who burdened the Church after the confessor Dionysius, of blessed memory, had been condemned to exile), the people were in a state of unrest over the search for a bishop. It was [Ambrose's] responsibility to quell the unrest. . . . As he was speaking to the throng, the voice of a small child all at once made itself heard among the people: 'Ambrose for bishop!'"<sup>114</sup>

Ambrose desperately attempted to evade the call to be the city's bishop. He recalled in a letter to the Church at Vercelli: "How I fought against being ordained! And, finally, when I was compelled, I tried at least to have the ordination deferred! But the prescribed rule did not avail, pressure prevailed."<sup>115</sup> In spite of his protest, Ambrose was baptized almost immediately and then consecrated the bishop of Milan.<sup>116</sup> He remained the city's bishop until his death in 397.

### 2.2.0: Ambrose of Milan: Actions and Writings

For purposes of establishing the level of Ambrose's involvement in matters of the state, I have limited the scope of this section to considering his thoughts and actions as displayed in a selection of letters written to the emperors, his treatise on clerical duties, and his funeral oration for Theodosius. These works of Ambrose provide good insight into his awareness of his spiritual authority, the obligations which he felt the Christian emperor had toward the Church, and his notion of the relationship between the bishop and the emperor – and between the Church and the empire.

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114. *Vita Ambr.* 6.1, line 1, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 198. *Per idem tempus, mortuo Auxentio arrianae perfidiae episcopo, qui Dionysio beatae memoriae confessore ad exilium destinato incubabat ecclesiam, cum populus ad seditionem surgeret in petendo episcopo esset que illi cura sedandae seditionis . . . ibi que cum adloqueretur plebem, subito vox fertur infantis in populo sonuisse: 'Ambrosium episcopum.'*

115. Ambrose, *Letters*, Fathers of the Church, vol. 26; trans. Sr. Mary Melchior Beyenka, O.P. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1954), Letter to the Church at Vercelli, para. 65, 345.

116. Paredi, *Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 28. "La domenica 30 novembre 374 Ambrogio ricevette il battesimo, la domenica successiva, 7 dicembre, fu ordinate vescovo."

### 2.2.1: The Altar of Victory

The Altar of Victory had a significant place in the life of the Roman empire. As a result, any alteration in its status provoked a response. After the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 B.C., Octavian installed the Altar of Victory in the Senate building, along with a statue of the Greek goddess Nike (*Victoria*), as an act of thanksgiving. Following his victory, Octavian re-established the principles of the Republic which would soon become the foundation of an empire. Gratitude to the gods did not simply reside in the actions of the soon-to-be emperor, but the members of the senate burned incense on the Altar, commended the well-being of the new emperor and the empire to the gods, and pledged fidelity to the emperor.<sup>117</sup>

The Altar remained in the Senate building until 357 A.D. when Constantius II ordered its removal. Interestingly, he allowed the statue of the Greek goddess Nike to remain. It appears that Constantius was acting on religious principles when he had the Altar removed, yet he still afforded financial support to pagan practices including subsidies to the Vestal Virgins and priests of the Roman temples. The pagan revival during the reign of Julian (361-363) saw the restoration of the Altar of Victory in the Senate building. The Altar remained there until its removal by Gratian in 382, at which time he also withdrew financial subsidies from the Vestal Virgins and priests of the Roman cult.

The first of several attempts to restore the Altar and the subsidies came in 382. A group of senators under the leadership of Symmachus went to Milan in order to seek the emperor's approval of reinstatement. Prior to their arrival, Pope Damasus (366-384) and a group of Christian senators asked Ambrose to deliver a letter they had written to Gratian, petitioning him

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117. For the historical context of the Altar of Victory; see *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, trans. J.H.W.G. Liebschuetz (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 61-2; and Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 29-31. For the Altar's function within the senate; see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 151-57.

not to consent to the request of Symmachus *et al.* Neil McLynn writes: “Ambrose had reached the emperor first, presenting a *libellus* forwarded to him by Damasus and signed by ‘countless’ senators, who asserted that they had not authorized the protest and threatened to cease attending the senate if the measures were revoked.”<sup>118</sup> The pope and the Christian senators prevailed, and the pagan deputation did not even receive a hearing before the emperor. Symmachus lamented the injustice of the situation to Valentinian II: “After an audience with the late emperor [Gratian] had been refused me by disreputable men [Pope Damasus and Ambrose], precisely because otherwise justice would not have failed me.”<sup>119</sup>

The pagan senators saw a window of opportunity open in 383 when Gratian was assassinated. His half-brother Valentinian II was now the emperor in the West. Symmachus, now the Urban Prefect of Rome, composed his *Relatio III*, which pleaded for religious liberty on the basis of tradition. Symmachus argued:

If we defend the customs of our ancestors, the laws and destiny of our country, what stands to gain more than the glory of the present age, glory which will be all the greater when you realise that you have no license to do anything that is contrary to the custom of our forebears. So that is why we ask you to give us back the status of religion, which has been of benefit to our commonwealth for so long.<sup>120</sup>

He advocated for the restoration of the Altar and the reinstatement of subsidies for the Vestal Virgins, pagan rituals, and the cultic priesthood after members of the senate voted to repeal the

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118. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 152.

119. *Relatio* 3, 3, lines 3-7, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 71, brackets added. *Cui ideo divi principis denegata est ab improbis audientia, quia non erat iustitia defutura.*

120. *Relatio* 3, 3, lines 20-4, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 69-70. *Cui enim magis commodat, quod institute maiorum, quod patriae iura et fata defendimus, quam temporum gloriae? Quae tunc maior est, cum vobis contra morem parentum intellegitis nil licere. Repetimus igitur religionum statum qui rei publicae diu profuit.*



decrees of Gratian.<sup>121</sup> He further reminded Valentinian that to a certain degree Constantius respected religious liberties. Aside from the removal of the Altar, Constantius honored the financial commitment made to the Vestal Virgins and pagan priests. Symmachus made the case:

Let your Eternity be reminded of the other actions of the same emperor, which are more worthy of your imitation. He did not take away any of the privileges of the Vestal Virgins. He filled up the priestly colleges with men of noble birth. He did not deny their expenses to the rites of the Roman state . . . and while he himself followed different rites, he preserved these for the empire.<sup>122</sup>

Central to his appeal was the belief that Rome had endured the test of time because of the favor of the Roman gods. In other words, the religion of the Romans sustained and stabilized the empire. Based on this conviction, pagan ritual practices should be maintained for the well-being of the empire.<sup>123</sup> The decrees of Gratian accomplished more than the removal of pagan influences in the senate and the city of Rome. They also stripped money away from many senators. Under the guise of a religious appeal, there was a masked attempt to recoup finances lost at the hands of Gratian.<sup>124</sup> This was not simply a religious matter because the restoration had political ramifications that could jeopardize imperial relations with influential pagan

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121. Paredi stated that Symmachus and the pagan senators were basking in the reality that he was given the great fortune of being the Urban Prefect. He claimed: *Forti del loro aumentato prestigio presso la corte di Milano I senatori romani votarono una mozione che chiedeva al governo l'abolizione Dei decreti di Graziano dell'autunno 382 e il ristabilimento dell'altare fella dea Vittoria nella loro aula. Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 75-6.

122. *Relatio* 3, 3, lines 62-3, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 73.. *Accipiat aeternitas vestra alia eiusdem principis facta quae in usum dignius trahat. Nil ille decerpsit sacrarum virginum privilegiis, replevit nobilibus sacerdotia, Romanis caerimoniis non negavit impensas . . . legit inscripta fastigiis deum nomina . . . cum que alias religio ipse sequeretur has servavit imperio.*

123. John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 124.

124. For Paredi's argument regarding the financial impact of Gratian's decrees; see *Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 77-80.

senators.<sup>125</sup> Despite his warnings that the security of Rome was being jeopardized and failure to support the Vestal Virgins and priests would lead to famine, this second attempt was also denied, under pressure from Ambrose. Ambrose's influence in this affair demonstrated a significant level of ecclesiastical involvement in matters of the state.<sup>126</sup>

Ambrose wrote two successive letters in 384 to Valentinian in response to Symmachus's plea for the restoration of the Altar. In his first letter, he requested a copy of Symmachus's *Relatio*: "As bishop I appeal to you: Let me be given a copy of the communication that was submitted, so that I can make a fuller refutation."<sup>127</sup> The second he reported: "I submitted a pamphlet as soon as I heard the matter. Though I covered everything that needed to be said in that pamphlet, I also demanded that a copy of the petition should be given me."<sup>128</sup> Already in his first letter Ambrose had revealed some of his ideas about the relationship between the Church and the state. He instructed to the emperor: "As all people that are under the dominion of Rome

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125. Liebeschuetz argues that this formal request from the Urban Prefect, on behalf of the pagan members of the senate, could compromise relationships between the emperor and wealthy pagan senators. He claims: "But the request for the restoration of the Altar was a formal resolution of the Roman Senate . . . This meant that that the decision was highly political, for it risked seriously disturbing the relations of the emperor with some of his wealthiest and most powerful subjects;" *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 92.

126. Both Liebeschuetz and Collins refer to Ambrose's "powerful" influence particularly regarding the matter of the Altar of Victory; see Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 93; and Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 66. It must be considered that Ambrose was able to exert slightly greater influence on Valentinian due to his proximity to the emperor. By 381, Gratian had made the primary imperial residence in Milan; prior to that it was in Trier, which was close. Ambrose, not Symmachus or the Roman senate, had easier access to the emperor. The influence that the Senate once had was not as effective now as in earlier times.

127. *Epist.* 17, 10.72, line 117, CSEL 82; trans. Liebeschuetz, 67. *Episcopus convenio. Detur mihi exemplum missae relationis, ut et ego plenius respondeam.*

128. *Epist.* 18, 10.73, line 47, CSEL 82; trans. Liebeschuetz, 80. *Eodem quo comperi puncto libellum obtuli, quo, licet comprehenderim quae suggestio necessaria viderentur, poposci tamen exemplum mihi relationis dari.*

serve you, emperors and princes of this world, so you yourself serve almighty God and the holy faith . . . by whom all things are governed.”<sup>129</sup>

It was Ambrose’s earnest contention that all authority, including political, was ultimately from God. The emperor must acknowledge that his power was derived strictly from God, and, as a consequence, the emperor owed his entire political career to God. Since the emperor was subject to God, then the empire he governed must also be subject to God. The emperor was a servant of God. Ambrose reminded him that acquiescing to any demands to restore pagan practices was an affront to God. His second letter regarding the Altar of Victory echoed this same theme. The emperor had an obligation to promote and preserve the faith of the Christians above all things. Ambrose asserted that: “A Christian emperor has learnt to honour no one but Christ . . . . The voice of our emperor must ring out with the name of Christ, he must declare only the God whom he knows, for the heart of the king is in the hand of God.”<sup>130</sup>

Claudio Morino argues that “the principle which he establishes is general and universal: a Christian emperor is so strictly bound to his religion that he cannot at any time prescind from it or ever act except according to its norms and exigencies.”<sup>131</sup> Ambrose himself stated: “But this [restoring the Altar] cannot be decreed without sacrilege. I therefore ask you not to decree it, not to make such an order, not to put your name under any such decree.”<sup>132</sup> Not only that, but these issues were matters of faith rather than public policy. As a result Ambrose pleaded that in

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129. *Epist.* 17, 10.72, line 4, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 63. *Cum omnes homines qui sub imperium Romana sunt vobis militant imperatoribus terrarum atque principibus, tum ipsi vos omnipotenti deo servatis et sacrae fidei militates . . . a quo cuncta reguntur.*

130. *Epist.* 18, 10.73, lines 96-9, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 83-4. *Christianus imperator aram solius Christi didicit honorare. . . . Vox imperatoris nostri Christum resonat et illum solum quem sentit loquatur, quia cor regis in manu Dei.*

131. Claudio Morino, *Church and State in the Teaching of St. Ambrose*, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, SJ. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1969), 98.

132. *Epist.* 17, 10.72, line 83, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 66. *Sed hoc non potest sine sacrilegio decerni. Unde rogo te ne id decernas, statuas vel in eiusmodi decreta subscribas.*

matters of faith the emperor should first seek God's guidance and then allow the affair to be judged by the proper ecclesiastical authorities. In regard to faith, Ambrose made his most passionate defense: "I once more appeal to your faith. . . . There is nothing of greater importance than religion, nothing more exalted than faith."<sup>133</sup> This was the crux of the argument and the context for the relationship of the Church and the state from Ambrose's point of view. Ambrose concluded that religion or faith were of the utmost importance in the life of all Christians, including the emperor. The emperor was the head of the state yet must yield to the bishops in matters pertaining to faith. As Collins points out: "Ambrose was demanding that the emperor . . . in matters pertaining to the Church and to Christian moral conduct must accept the superior authority of his bishop."<sup>134</sup>

The group under the tutelage of Symmachus remained persistent in their desire for full restoration. They made three more attempts at restoration by the end of the fourth century that yielded a temporary restoration but eventually they were defeated. In 389, a few years prior to the emperor Theodosius I prohibiting all pagan forms of ritual and cultic activities, the pagan faction of the senate attempted once again to secure the Altar and financial support of the government. They did not succeed. Another delegation in 391/2 approached Valentinian II and sought at least the reinstallation of the subsidies. This attempt ultimately failed. In 392, the pagan delegation once again had a door of possibility opened. Valentinian II died, either by suicide or assassination, and the usurper Eugenius seized control of the West. In an attempt to secure support against Theodosius I, Eugenius entered into a relationship with the pagan members of the senate, restoring the Altar of Victory and allowing for a pagan revival of sorts.

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133. *Epist.* 17, 10.72, line 109-15, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 67. *Convenio iterum fidem tuam . . . Nihil maius est religion, nihil sublimius fide.*

134. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 67.

After a two-year usurpation, Eugenius was defeated in 394 and the Altar was removed for the final time.

Through his correspondence with Valentinian regarding the Altar, Ambrose revealed what can be termed his “political theology” regarding the relationship between the Church and state, bishops and emperors, and by extension, other imperial leaders. His letter introduced two significant aspects of his political theology: the emperor derived his authority from God and was in some fashion indebted to God, and matters of faith were to be deferred to competent ecclesial authorities. Because the emperor’s authority was from God, Ambrose reminded him that imperial decrees and actions had to reflect that reality. From Ambrose’s perspective, anything other than this was of grave concern and warranted a reprimand from the Church. Also, Ambrose made certain that imperial policies and actions that had an impact on the faith were to be approved by the Church’s officials and not governmental ones. The correspondence exposed Ambrose’s reasoning for inserting himself in imperial affairs in order to protect the Church.

### **2.2.2: The Milanese Basilicas**

To further the analysis of Ambrose’s political theology, the issue of relinquishing one of the Milanese churches for the use of Arian soldiers, the empress Justina, and imperial officials, is of importance. This case differed from that of the Altar of Victory because Ambrose was not inserting himself into a *quasi*-political matter. In this instance, non-Nicene Christians sought imperial assistance in a matter of religion, and this led to a direct confrontation between the Church and the imperial court. At hand was the question of whether or not the emperor had the authority to force a bishop to surrender a church for imperial religious purposes. The exchange

between the imperial court and Ambrose provided additional insight into Ambrose's thought about the relationship of the Church to the state.

The affair of the basilicas had two stages: the first was Easter of 385; the second was a year later. Easter of 386 was a more dramatic display of imperial and ecclesial positioning. The matter of the basilicas demonstrated the hostility between the Church and the imperial court in the 380s. The prior relationship between the two entities had not been one of friction. Ambrose and Gratian enjoyed a close relationship, which continued under Valentinian II. After the murder of Gratian in 383, Valentinian II (who was twelve years old) and his mother, Justina, who was serving as regent, employed Ambrose as an agent of peace to avoid a military campaign against Milan.<sup>135</sup> A second peace mission took place in 384 when Ambrose was sent to negotiate with the breakaway emperor Magnus Maximus. The mission also sought the return of the slain body of the emperor Gratian.<sup>136</sup> The two undertakings indicated that there existed a good working relationship between the imperial court and the bishop and, moreover, pointed out the benefit of a good relationship with the Church.

The relationship, however, soured quickly with the intervention of the empress Justina, who was a devout Arian. In 385, it was her desire, as well as that of the imperial court and units of the military, to have Easter celebrations in Milan in one of the city's churches. Augustine in his *Confessions* recalled: "Justina, the mother of the boy king, Valentinian, had persecuted your man Ambrose in favor of her heresy, to which she had been seduced by the Arians."<sup>137</sup> To

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135. Paredi remarks that this was indeed the first time that a bishop was employed for a mission based strictly on political matters: "*Era la prima volta ache nell'impero romano veniva affidata a un vescovo una missione esclusivamente politica. Poltica di S. Ambrogio,*" 67.

136. *Vita Ambr.* 19.1, line 1, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 203. *Occiso itaque Gratiano imperatore recipiendi corporis eius causa secundam ad Maximun suscepit legationem.*

137. Augustine, *Confessionum libri tredecim*, 9.7, line 3, *CCLS* 27; trans. Ryan, 215. *Nimirum annus era taut non multo amplius, cum iustina, valentiniani regis pueri mater, hominem tuum ambrosium persequeretur haeresis suae causa, qua fuerat seducta ab arrianis.*

further complicate the matter, she had secured an Arian bishop from the Balkans to preside at the celebrations.<sup>138</sup> As Easter approached, Ambrose was asked by the imperial court to surrender the basilica *Portiana*. Ambrose refused the imperial request. In the aftermath of this refusal, demonstrations in favor of the bishop broke out in the city. Ambrose quelled the rallies and the imperial court withdrew their request for the basilica. Ambrose may have won the battle for the time being, but the war was far from over.

Justina was not quick in admitting defeat and desired to have Ambrose removed. By the close of 385, imperial troops sought to force Ambrose out by surrounding the basilica *Portiana*. This attempt to seize the church proved to be fruitless. Paulinus observed: “But the Lord . . . turned the hearts of the soldiers to the defense of his Church . . . not preventing them from going into the church.”<sup>139</sup> Also during this time, Valentinian, presumably at the behest of his mother, issued a decree that allowed Arians to meet publicly and meted out punishments on those who prohibited Arian meetings and activity. Under the category of meetings and public activities, religious services would be protected by imperial legislation.

The Arian bishop Auxentius and Ambrose were summoned to the imperial court to give an account of the state of religious affairs in Milan. Ambrose refused to attend the imperial consistory, because he held that matters of religion should not be brought forth or presented to secular inquiries. Ambrose countered Valentinian’s summons by reminding him of the laws promulgated by his father, Gratian. He asserted: “In a case involving the faith, or any

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138. There is wide speculation among scholars as to why the Arian bishop Auxentius, who bore the same name as Augustine’s Arian predecessor, was in Milan in the first place. Paredi claims that either Justina invited him to Milan for purposes of celebrating Easter or he travelled there hoping to be received favorably by her; see *Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 81. McLynn asserts that he was in Milan because attitudes in the East under the rule of Theodosius I were hostile to *homoean* beliefs. His presence in Milan meant conditions were more favorable to his theology and that he might have been hoping to offer his services to the imperial court; see *Ambrose of Milan*, 183.

139. *Vita Ambr.* 13.1-2, lines 1-6, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 201. *Sed Dominus . . . ad ecclesiae suae munimentum militum corda converit, ut adversis scutis ecclesiae.*

ecclesiastical order, the judge ought to be one who is not unequal in rank and of similar legal status. . . . in a case involving the faith, it has been usual for bishops to pass judgment on Christian emperors, not emperors on bishops.”<sup>140</sup>

By Easter of 386 tensions were high in Milan. At the request of his mother, Justina, the emperor, Valentinian demanded that Ambrose turn over the “New Cathedral” for Arian Easter celebrations. The defiant Ambrose refused the request for a second time. In a sermon preached against Auxentius, Ambrose offered the rationale of his refusal to surrender any of the Milanese churches to imperial authorities:

If I were required to surrender anything that was my property . . . I would offer willingly; but I was unable to lay hands on and surrender anything from the temple of God, which I have received to keep safe, and not surrender. Secondly, I was also safeguarding the salvation of the emperor, for just as it was not right for me to hand these things over, so it was not right for him to receive them.<sup>141</sup>

Fearing a reprisal from the people in support of the bishop and in order to keep peace in the city, the imperial court sent the praetorian prefect, Eusignius, to negotiate with Ambrose. In the

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140. *Epist.* 21, 10.75, lines 10-32, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 136-37. *In causa fidei vel ecclesiastici alicuius ordinis eum iudicare debere qui nec munere impar sit nec iure dissimilis . . . in causa inquam fidei, episcopos solere de imperatoribus Christianis, non imperatores de episcopis iudicare?*

141. *Epist.* 21A, 5.75A, line, 49, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 145. *Sermo contra Auxentium de basilicis tradendis*, “*Me si de meis aliquid posceretur. . . esset libenter offerre, templo Dei nihil posse decerpere nec trader illud quod custodiendum non tradendum acceperim; deinde consulere me etiam imperatoris saluti, quia nec mihi expediret trader nec illi accipere.*” In Letter 20 to his sister Marcellina, Ambrose stresses the fundamental point he was making to the emperor. In *Epist* 20, 10.76, line 8, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 162, he made the claim: “That a temple belonging to God cannot be handed over by a bishop.” *Templum Dei tradi a sacerdote non posse.* He continued: “But the things that are God’s, I insisted, were not subjected to the power of the emperor.” *Epist* 20, 10.76, line 47, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 164. *Verum ea quae divina imperatoriae potestati non esse subiecta.*



deliberations, the prefect abandoned the original plan for the New Cathedral and asked for the basilica *Portiana* instead of the New Cathedral. Ambrose rebuffed the offer.<sup>142</sup>

The following day, to prohibit the imperial officials from preparing the *Portiana* for services, massive crowds staged a sit-in at the Church. In the process of this peaceful protest, matters spiraled out of control. It seems that the Arian priest, Castulus, was making his way to the church when a large crowd of people assaulted him. The imperial forces responded by once again demanding the New Cathedral be surrendered, which did not occur. This was a violation of the 385 imperial decree forbidding anyone from preventing the public meetings of Arians. The crowds in the *Portiana* and the assault on the Arian priest were serious violations of the law. Heavy fines were levied on the group and some members were to be imprisoned. As for Ambrose, he was to be charged with treason for his refusal to turn over the basilica. Eventually, the emperor gave up on his desire to secure a Milanese church for Arian services and all charges including treason were dropped.<sup>143</sup> Ambrose joyfully wrote his sister Marcellina: “the emperor had ordered the troops to withdraw from the basilica, and that the money, which had been fined, was to be returned to the merchants.”<sup>144</sup>

Behind Ambrose’s act of defiance was his strong belief in the boundaries between the properties and principles of the Church and those of the state. In Ambrose’s mind, the Church and the state were two separate entities and the authority of each must be respected and safeguarded. He rebuked Valentinian: “It is written: *What is God’s to God, what is Caesar’s to*

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142. Liebeschuetz gives a succinct account of what transpired between the years 385-386, underscoring the tensions that erupted between the court and Ambrose; see *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 85-9.

143. An in-depth account of this highly charged stand-off between the court and the Church is detailed in McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 181-96. See Beyenka, *Saint Ambrose Letters*, 365-75.

144. *Epist.* 20, 10.76, line 253, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 172. *Nuntiatur imperatorem iussisse, ut recederent milites de basilica, negotiatoribus quoque quod exacti de condemnation fuerant redderetur.*

*Caesar*. Palaces belong to the emperor, churches to bishops. The jurisdiction entrusted to you is over public buildings, not sacred ones.”<sup>145</sup> This statement of Ambrose, coupled with his original argument that matters of faith were to be taken up by bishops, formulated his political thought regarding civil and ecclesial authority.

The argument was not as simple as each authority maintaining governance in their respective sphere. We must recall Ambrose’s opening statement to Valentinian as he told the emperor that, yes, all people fell under the emperor’s imperial rule but the emperor fell under God’s divine rule. This made the emperor, in a certain sense, subordinate to the Church. The argument is quite linear, in that the emperor was under God; and, God was represented through the Church, which was entrusted to the stewardship of the bishop. The logic of Ambrose’s claim is that since the emperor’s authority was from God, the emperor was subject to God, who was represented by the bishop in all affairs that affect the Church. As a result, the emperor had a moral obligation to defend, protect, and serve the needs of the Church and to be advised by the bishop.

### **2.2.3: The Synagogue in Callinicum**

In examining the stages in the development of Ambrose’s understanding of the relationship of Church and state, we must consider the dual issue of the burning of a synagogue in Callinicum and the destruction of a Gnostic temple in the region of Antioch. At the heart of the issue was Ambrose’s attempt to deter Theodosius from carrying out his imperial order that would force the bishop of Callinicum to rebuild a synagogue that was destroyed by overzealous

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145. *Epist.* 20, 10.76, lines 167-70, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 168-9. *Scriptum est: Quae Dei Deo, quae Caesaris Caesari. Ad imperatorem palatium pertinent, ad sacerdotem ecclesiae, Publicorum tibi moenium ius commissum est, non sacrorum.* The emperor also was expected, however, to protect those sacred buildings and other possessions of the Church.

Christians. The situation again demonstrated the tenacity of Ambrose in resisting an imperial decree. It would appear that Ambrose ventured out into temporal waters as he intervened and forced the emperor's hand from inflicting any type of punishment or restitution for the burning of the synagogue and the destruction of the temple. Again, a stand-off between the Church and the state ensued.

As with the case of the Altar of Victory and the Milanese basilica, the Church appears to have gained the upper hand, but that may not be the case, as we shall see. Liebeschuetz remarks: "He intervened to stop an action commanded in the name of the emperor himself in an area which lay far outside his own ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and which, while involving religion, also had an important political dimension."<sup>146</sup> Did this case represent an increase in ecclesial influence over matters of the state? Liebeschuetz claims: "The record of success achieved by him as a campaigning bishop remains extraordinary, and unparalleled in Roman antiquity."<sup>147</sup> Yet, did this "record of success" denote an alteration in the power structure of the empire in the West?

Recently the relationship between Theodosius I and Ambrose has been re-examined. In reassessing this relationship, McLynn moves away from the earlier portrayals of the relationship as presented by J.R. Palanque and A.H.M. Jones.<sup>148</sup> That earlier scholarship tended to see the relationship between Theodosius and Ambrose as a powerful bishop wielding extraordinary influence over the imperial government. Ecclesial authority superseded the rule of the emperor and even brought pressure on a reluctant emperor to acquiesce to the Church's demands by

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146. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 92.

147. *Ibid.*, 94.

148. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 291-360. Here McLynn cites two works in particular that supported the earlier portrayal of the relationship between Ambrose and Theodosius; see J.R. Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'Empire Romain* (Paris: de Boccard, 1933), 245-50 and A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 204-602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 165-9.

means of manipulation and excommunication. McLynn is one historian who takes a more nuanced look at the relationship. He cautions that Ambrose's letters and sermons may not be a reliable source to judge or understand the personal friendship between Ambrose and Theodosius. Ambrose's writings and preaching only revealed the process of negotiation between the Church and the empire and gave a one-sided version of events. McLynn argues that personalities, political factors, and Ambrose's and Theodosius's understanding of their roles within their respective institutions helped define a more complex relationship.<sup>149</sup> He concludes that a genuine love and friendship existed between the two that was direct and firm as well as personal and intimate. His criticism of how the relationship had been portrayed called for a re-evaluation of the actions and words of the two men. He argues:

The relationship between Ambrose and Theodosius was soon transformed into myth. The two men had within a generation of their deaths already been frozen into the postures that would, for centuries, inspire emulation from tough-minded clerics and pious rulers, and feed the imaginations of scholars and artists alike – the bishop standing before his church, sternly charging Theodosius with the responsibility for the massacre of innocent civilians . . . has long been recognized as a pious fiction devised to illustrate the proper attitude of a Christian monarch to the Church, it continues to exercise its spell even upon contemporary scholarship.<sup>150</sup>

McLynn feels that Ambrose's funeral oration for Theodosius provides useful information concerning their relationship. Ambrose used the occasion to offer both a posthumous panegyric to Theodosius and a political message to the people, in particular Theodosius's two sons, Arcadius, the new emperor of the East, and Honorius, the new emperor in the West. In his oration, Ambrose praised Theodosius for the example he left as his legacy for all Christian

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149. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 292.

150. *Ibid.*, 291.

rulers.<sup>151</sup> Even though it follows the expected rhetoric of a funeral oration, McLynn argues that Ambrose wanted to convey to Theodosius's sons that mercy was a necessary virtue for a Christian emperor: "I have loved a merciful man, humble in power, endowed with a pure heart and a gentle disposition, a man such as God is accustomed to love, saying: 'Upon whom shall I rest, unless upon the humble and the gentle?'"<sup>152</sup> He also extolled the great love that the emperor displayed to the Church even to the end: "I have loved a man, who in his dying hour kept asking for me with his last breath. I have loved a man who when he was already being released from the body, was more concerned about the condition of the Church than about his own trials."<sup>153</sup> McLynn's re-examination of that once mythical relationship of a powerful churchman and a reluctant imperial leader is further supported by Harold Drake. Drake contends that artistic depictions of the famed encounter between Ambrose and Theodosius on the steps of the cathedral in Milan have done a disservice to the actual relationship.<sup>154</sup> He admits that Ambrose did not directly confront Theodosius over his actions, but did so in a letter. The events that transpired in Callinicum and the actions of both Ambrose and Theodosius shed light on the relationship between the two.

In 388, the bishop in the remote area of Callinicum, which was located in the East along the Euphrates in the present-day city of Al-Raqqah in northern Syria, was accused of inciting

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151. Giacomo Raspanti proposed that it was clemency that made Theodosius the exemplar for Christian emperors. He asserts that Theodosius's political policies were effective because he demonstrated mercy not fear; see *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 45-55.

152. Ambrose, *de Obitu Theo.* 33, line 1, PS 9; trans. DeFerrari, 322. . *Et ego . . . dilexi virum misericordem, humilem in imperio, corde puro, et pectore mansueto praeditum, qualem Dominus amare consuevit, dicens: supra quem requiescam nisi supra humilem et mansuetum?*

153. *De Obitu Theo.* 35, lines 1-3, PS 9; trans. DeFerrari, 322. *Dilexi virum, qui me in supremis suis, ultimo spiritu requirebat. Dilexi virum, qui cum iam corpora solveretur, magis de statu Ecclesiarum quam de suis periculis angebatur.*

154. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 441-8, for an analysis of the artistic portrayals of the confrontation between Ambrose and Theodosius.

local Christians to burn down a synagogue in the city. In conjunction with the burning of the synagogue, a group of monks was accused of destroying a Valentinian gnostic temple.<sup>155</sup>

Theodosius wanted those responsible to be held accountable and to make restitution for the synagogue. Ambrose set out to convince the emperor that the monks who had destroyed the Gnostic temple, the Christians who had burned the synagogue, and the bishop who had incited them should not be punished. He also insisted that no financial assistance from the state should be used in rebuilding the synagogue. Ambrose's attempt to persuade the emperor came both in written form in Letter 40, and in an oral argument, a homily regarding this matter, preached in the presence of the emperor, which Ambrose recounted to his sister Marcellina in Letter 41. In both the written and oral response to Theodosius, Ambrose made it clear that the Church and the state were two separate entities that had a responsibility to each other.

He stressed again that the state, in the person of the emperor, was charged with protecting and defending the Church. He repeated that because the emperor's authority was derived from God, he must do all in his power to preserve and defend the faith, which was ultimately to honor God. Ambrose considered that the role of the Church was to instruct the emperor and members of the imperial court on what was moral and to judge their actions to ensure justice.

Ambrose insisted that the bishop in Callinicum should not be forced to pay for and oversee the rebuilding of the synagogue, arguing that the bishop would then be committing an act of apostasy. Failure to comply with the demands of the emperor would be cause for the bishop's death. Ambrose claimed that these actions would kindle again the flames of imperial

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155. For background on the burning of the gnostic temple; see Ambrose, *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome*, vol.5, trans. and ed. S.L. Greenslade (Richmond, VA.: John Knox Press, 1956), 226-250. For a scholarly synopsis of the events that took place in Callinicum and the subsequent reactions by both Theodosius and Ambrose; see A.D. Lee, *From Rome to Byzantium A.D. 363-565: The Transformation of Ancient Rome* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2013), 54-7.

persecutions against Christians. In past persecutions, Christians had to deny their faith and become apostates, or face martyrdom. If the bishop were to rebuild a religious structure for any faith other than Christianity, in Ambrose's eyes it would be tantamount to apostasy. He wrote: "Are you not also apprehensive at the possibility of his [the bishop] speaking out against the count [the one who reported the affair to the emperor]? For in that case the count will have to make the bishop either an apostate or a martyr."<sup>156</sup>

It was Ambrose's strong conviction that this was a religious matter. His argument dealt with the issue of faith and the emperor who, as servant of God, must take the side of the Church and refrain from ordering any help to the afflicted parties.<sup>157</sup> It was however unfortunate that Ambrose framed his entire religious argument, in both letters, with a strong anti-Jewish agenda. His feelings regarding the Jews were not at all subtle in terms of modern sensibilities. Ambrose's sentiments were negative and his tone throughout is offensive. Claiming that the Jews cannot be trusted and that their synagogues were places of faithlessness, Ambrose instructed the emperor not to punish the Christians and not to subsidize the rebuilding efforts. He pressed the emperor: "I beg you, therefore, do not think that you must show such enthusiasm to inflict punishment on Christians."<sup>158</sup> Because Ambrose regarded it as his duty not only to instruct Theodosius but also to judge his actions as unjust in this case, he felt obligated to speak

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156. *Epist.* 40, 10.74, lines 88-9, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 99, brackets added. *Non etiam vereris quod futurum est, ne verbis resistat comiti tuo? Necesse erit igitur, ut aut praevaricatorem aut martyrem faciat.*

157. In a brief statement, Paredi summarizes the entirety of Ambrose's claim that this is a matter of faith. He states: "*La sostanza del ragionamento di Ambrogio è che una sinagoga è un luogo di perfidia e non la si deve ricostruire; il culto Dei nemici di Cristo non ha diritto a nessun aiuto nè legale nè fiscale.*" *Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 100.

158. *Epist.* 40, 10.74, line 352, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 102. *Ne, quaeso, tanto studio putes vindicandum in christianos.* Moorhead simplifies the crux of Ambrose's instruction: "But Christ's body is the Church, and hence Theodosius would do well to pardon and grant peace to those who had sinned, pay honour to people who were not important, and guard the one body of the Lord Jesus, so that he in turn would guard the empire," *Ambrose*, 189.

out of obedience to God and love for the emperor. He passionately wrote: “I am not therefore being a nuisance by intervening where I ought not, intruding on another’s business, but doing my duty, obeying the commands of our God. And I am doing this chiefly for love of you, for your sake, desiring to preserve your safety.”<sup>159</sup>

In order to prevail, Ambrose appealed to Theodosius’s clemency in regard to the bishop of Callinicum. In the past, emperors showed mercy to rioters in Constantinople, Antioch, and the destruction of Christian basilicas by Jews during Julian’s reign. The same clemency, he felt, should be extended to the bishop of Callinicum. He questioned the emperor: “But considerations for public order are perhaps what influence you, emperor. What then is more important, a show of public order, or the cause of religion? Severity ought to give way to devotion. . . . There is no good reason therefore for so much agitation, that people should so severely be penalized because of the burning down of a building.”<sup>160</sup>

Ambrose felt that the Jews in Callinicum exaggerated the claims of torture and destruction. He instructed the emperor: “These are the tricks of the Jews eager to spread slander, so that an extraordinary inquiry of a military court should be set up.”<sup>161</sup> Ambrose further brought to the emperor’s attention several cases in which bishops and priests were being mistreated. Additionally, he wanted to assert the episcopal right to be consulted on matters of religion. At the time that he composed his letter to Theodosius, Ambrose did not yet know that the emperor had already rescinded his imperial order to punish those involved. Ambrose stated:

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159. *Epist.* 40, 10.74, lines 34-6, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 98. *Non ergo importunes indebitis me intersero, alienis ingero, sed debitis obtempero, mandatis Dei nostril oboedio. Quod facio Primum tui amore, tui gratia, tuae studio conservandae salutis.*

160. *Epist.* 40, 10.74, lines 130-57, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 101-102. *Sed disciplinae te ratio, imperator, movet. Quid igitur est amplius, disciplinae species an causa religionis? Cedat oportet censura devotioni. . . Non est ergo causa tantae commotion idonea, ut propter aedificii exustionem in populum tam severe vindicetur.*

161. *Epist.* 40. 10.74, lines 204-64, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 104. *Artes istae sunt Iudaeorum volentium calumniari.*



“I have not yet read that your order has been replaced, let us assume that it has been.”<sup>162</sup>

Ambrose wanted the entire matter dropped. At the conclusion of the letter, he demanded: “Over this issue you will deign to deliberate and make a ruling according to your judgment. But that decree, which distresses and rightly distresses me, cancel it and throw it out!”<sup>163</sup> To that end he addressed the emperor during the Mass and wanted the emperor’s word that all was done. After the sermon that was intended to instruct the emperor and judge his actions, Ambrose went from the pulpit to the emperor himself. He recounted the exchange between them in the letter to his sister:

When I descended from the pulpit he said to me: ‘You have been preaching about me’. I replied: ‘I treated a topic relevant to your welfare.’ Then he said: ‘In the matter of the repairing of the synagogue by the bishop I really did make a rather harsh decision. But it has been put right.’ . . . When I stood inactive for some time, I said to the emperor: ‘Enable me to make the offering on your behalf without worry. Set my mind at rest . . . I insisted that he must cancel the whole investigation . . . He promised that this would happen.’<sup>164</sup>

In the end, the emperor did yield to Ambrose’s desire. At first glance, it might appear that the exchange between the two was a stand-off and that Ambrose was the victor. McLynn, however, argues that, when Ambrose halted the Mass, the emperor had the opportunity to reflect on his actions and act accordingly. The emperor’s reversal of the order allowed him publicly to display his benevolence. If anything negative came out of the exchange, it was that Ambrose was portrayed as an extremist and tyrant. Theodosius reflected the love and clemency that

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162. *Epist.* 40, 10.74. line 60, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 100. *Licet ipse hoc revocatum adhuc non legerim revocatum tamen constituamus.*

163. *Epist.* 40, 10.74, line 332, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 109-110. *De hoc ut placet arbitrio tuo consulere et temperare dignaberis; illud autem quod me angit et iure angit exclude atque eice.*

164. *Epist.* 41, 10.11, lines 343-57, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 122-23. *Ubi descendi ait mihi: ‘De nobis proposuisti’. Respondi: ‘Hoc tractavi quod ad utilitatem tuam pertineret’. Tunc ait: ‘Revera de synagoga reparanda ab episcopo durius statueram sed emendatum est. . . . Deinde cum aliquandiu starem dico imperatori: ‘Fac me securum pro te offerre, absolve animum meum’. . . . Statim dicere coepi, ut omnem cognitionem tolleret. . . . Promisit futurum.*

exemplified Christian rulers. According to McLynn: “The loser in this unhappy affair was Ambrose. Theodosius had been forced to concede clemency in a case he felt deserved exemplary punishment. . . . As compensation, moreover, he [Theodosius] could enjoy the gratitude and admiration which he had no doubt inspired among the Christians of Milan.”<sup>165</sup> The confrontation at the liturgy and the exchange between Ambrose and Theodosius further refined Ambrose’s practice and developing political theology regarding the relationship of the Church and the court. The following examination of Ambrose’s response to Theodosius’s actions in Thessalonica continues to clarify his stance.

#### **2.2.4: The Massacre at Thessalonica**

Thessalonica was a turning point in the relationship between Theodosius and Ambrose as evidenced in Ambrose’s Letter 51.<sup>166</sup> The situation in Thessalonica had been tense for some time. The region was under the constant threat of the Goths. In order to secure the region, Theodosius sent troops to Thessalonica under the leadership of his general Butheric. The citizens were compelled to look after the troops and supply their every need. They were in a precarious situation. They neither desired the unwarranted assault of the Goths nor wanted to be forced to pay for the unwelcomed troops. According to Sozomen (400-450), difficulties were compounded when a leading charioteer from Thessalonica was imprisoned for making unwanted sexual advances to one of Butheric’s men.<sup>167</sup> The general felt that this was a personal insult to the highest degree and detained the charioteer. His incarceration prevented the famed charioteer from participating in the races at the hippodrome the following day.

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165. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 308, brackets added.

166. *Epist.* 51, pp.20-6 was intended by Ambrose to persuade Theodosius to repent for his murderous actions in Thessalonica.

167. Sozomen, *Socrates et Sozomenus*, lines 1493-8, PG 67.

The people were outraged and riots broke out throughout the city. In the end, Butheric was killed. Theodosius learned of the melee and was infuriated. In a moment of rage, he ordered a retaliatory strike against the city in which some seven thousand were killed.

Theodoret recounted the scene:

The emperor was fired with anger when he heard the news, and unable to control the rush of his passion, he did not even use his reason, and out of vengeance . . . slaughtered innocent and guilty alike. No trial preceded the sentence. No condemnation was passed on those responsible for the crime. . . . It is said that seven thousand perished.<sup>168</sup>

McLynn remarks: “The sources stress . . . the *lack* of due deliberation before the massacre, showing Theodosius decreeing this excessively cruel penalty in the heat of anger.”<sup>169</sup>

Analyzing this event through the prism of Ambrose’s *Apology of the Prophet David*, *De Apologia Prophetarum David*, reveals the foundation of his thoughts on the role religious authorities intervening in political matters. The *Apologia*, written in the early 380s, clearly defined the role of the clergy vis-à-vis the emperor. He used the famed encounter between King David and the prophet Nathan who confronted David about his murderous plot against Uriah (2 Samuel 12:1-14). David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent imperial actions that led to Uriah’s slaying made for more than a biblical story.

For Ambrose, Nathan’s actions represented the ecclesial authorities’ dealings with imperial figures. Nathan rebuked the king for his actions and called on him to repent and plead for God’s mercy. He argued that David had sinned and, like all people, David must repent. The role of the prophet Nathan was to remind the king that he was answerable to God. In effect, this

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168. Theodoret, *Omnia SS. Patrum Doctorum Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum*, lines 1493-8, PG 82. *Quo nuntiato accensus imperator irae impetum non tulit, nec freno rationis vim eius repressit, sed vindicate arbitrium illi permisit . . . injustus gladios in omnis distrinxit, et insontes partier cum sontibus trucidavit. Septem enim hominum millia interfecta perhibentur, non praecuntae iudicio, et condemnatis qui dira illa fuerant*; see also, Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 624.

169. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 318.

exposition of David's kingship and his relationship to the religious authority of Nathan as a prophet set the foundation for Ambrose's insistence that the imperial ruler was accountable for his actions to God as represented by the bishop.<sup>170</sup> To that end, the letter Ambrose wrote to Theodosius regarding his actions in Thessalonica provides keen insight into the nature of the relationship between the pastor and the penitent. In Letter 51, Ambrose stated most directly that Theodosius sinned and that God's representative, Ambrose, was holding Theodosius accountable. He wrote: "These things I have written not to disconcert you but that the examples of the kings may stir you to remove this sin from your kingdom, for you will remove it by humbling your soul before God. You are a man, you have met temptation – conquer it. Sin is not removed except by tears and penance."<sup>171</sup>

Prior to the emperor's extreme actions, Ambrose had been banned from all imperial semi-consistories; participants in the consistories were not to divulge any of the confidential findings or nature of the meetings to Ambrose. This was a punitive measure taken by Theodosius in 389-390, because he felt Ambrose overstepped his boundaries in the matter of Callinicum.<sup>172</sup> Theodosius's actions in Thessalonica shocked both church leaders and the empire generally. Ramsey observes: "he devised a punishment that stunned even a world habituated to imperial excesses."<sup>173</sup> People were further taken aback by the emperor's actions because he had been known as a man of clemency and justice. A few years prior to the massacre, there had been an uprising in Antioch in reaction to taxes imposed on the people by imperial representatives. A

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170. See Ambrose of Milan, *De Apologie de David*, SCh 239; trans. Lucidi, for David's sin; see 3.14, 90; David's repentance, 4.15-19, 92-6 and 13.60-63, 60-69; Nathan's role, 5.20-23, 96-100 and 11.56-57, 150-4.

171. *Epist.* 51, 10.51, line 11, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 23-4. *Haec ideo scripsi, non ut te confundam, sed ut regum exempla provocent, ut tollas hoc peccatum de regno tuo; tolles autem humiliando Deo animam tuam. Homo es, et tibi venit tentatio, vince eam.*

172. For details relating to the imperial censure of Ambrose; see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 313-15.

173. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 31.

riot ensued in which imperial images and insignia were desecrated and destroyed. Theodosius had shown great restraint in the matter and refrained from exacting severe punishments on the people. Many felt this would be the case in Thessalonica, but it was not so.

Ambrose felt a sense of obligation to reprimand the emperor because he was in Milan at the time of the actions, thus under Ambrose's jurisdiction.<sup>174</sup> Drawing on the example of the prophet Nathan, Ambrose reached out to the emperor in a private manner. Despite what became common belief, Ambrose did not have a face-to-face encounter with Theodosius on this matter. In Paulinus's account, Ambrose and the emperor had a dialogue in which Ambrose denied the emperor access to the church. Paulinus further wrote that the emperor balked at Ambrose's suggestion that he was akin to David.<sup>175</sup>

In writing, Ambrose rebuked Theodosius's sinful, murderous act and called on the emperor to do public penance to atone for his sins. Ambrose's imposition of a public penance was an essential component to his display of pastoral care for the emperor.<sup>176</sup> The emperor was a Christian who sinned gravely, and like any other Christian, he was commanded to do such acts in order to implore the mercy of God.<sup>177</sup> The argument is straightforward in Paredi's account: "After he had committed a grave offense; it was necessary to impose on that Catholic, even if he was the emperor, a public penance, so that he could be reconciled with God."<sup>178</sup> In order to persuade Theodosius, Ambrose indicated that he would not be able to offer the celebration of the

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174. Theodosius twice established his imperial residence in Milan: 388-91 and 394-5.

175. *Vita Ambr.* paragraph 24, *PL* 14; trans. Ramsey, 206. Moorhead and Drake both conclude that this encounter never occurred; see Moorhead, *Ambrose*, 194; and Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 443-8.

176. Rowan Greer, "Pastoral Care and Discipline," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to c. 600*, vol. 2, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 580.

177. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 80.

178. Paredi, *Politica di S. Ambrogio*, 112. "Dopo che aveva commesso un delitto tanto grave; che era necessario imporre a quell cattolico, anche se era imperatore, una pubblica penitenza, perchè potesse riconciliarsi con Dio."

Mass in Theodosius's presence unless the penance was completed. Ambrose made a bold claim that can be viewed as an ultimatum: "I can claim no reason why I should display contumacy towards you, but I have reason to be afraid on your behalf. I dare not offer the sacrifice, if you intend to be there."<sup>179</sup> Moorhead and McLynn both make the case that this was not a bold act of excommunication on the part of Ambrose. It was a pastoral move to lead the emperor into a contrite posture so as to be reconciled. Was Theodosius ready to surrender his pride and make amends for the wrong he had done? Ambrose gratefully recounted in his funeral oration for Theodosius: "He threw on the ground all the royal attire that he was wearing. He wept publicly in church for his sin, which had stolen upon him through the deceit of others. He prayed for pardon with groans and with tears. . . . yet because the enemy lay fallen in battle he abstained from participation in the sacraments until he recognized the grace of God."<sup>180</sup>

The famed encounter between the two at the doors of the cathedral of Milan is perhaps part of the mythical character of the relationship between the two. It is more plausible that Theodosius, over a period of time, did what was asked of him and then returned to the Church when he had satisfied his penance. Susan Bauer states: "The Christian historians who record this mercy say that Theodosius then confessed his sin, did penance, and was restored."<sup>181</sup> From the outset of Ambrose's letter, he intended the content of it to be a private communication: "Lastly I am writing you with my own hand what you alone are to read."<sup>182</sup> Ambrose acknowledged the

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179. *Epist.* 51, 10.11, line 119, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 268. *Ego, inquam, causam in te contumaciae nullam habeo, sed habeo timoris; offerre non audio sacrificium, si volueris assistere.* See Moorhead, *Ambrose*, 190-2, and McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 326-30.

180. *De Obitu Theo.* 34, lines 2-7, PS 9; trans. DeFerrari, 322. *Stravit omne quo utebatur insigne regium, deflevit in ecclesia publice peccatum suum, quod ei aliorum fraude obrepserat, gemitu et lacrymis oravit veniam . . . tamen qui hostes in acie prostrate sunt, abstinuit a consortio sacramentorum donec Domini circa se gratiam filiorum experiretur adventu?*

181. Susan Bauer, *The History of the Medieval World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 70.

182. *Epist.* 51, 10.11.126, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 268. *Postremo scribe manu mea quod solus legas.* [10.11.126].

fact that by 390 he had been banned from the court earlier by Theodosius, but he could not allow that imperial restriction to stop him from his duty to speak when an injustice had occurred. He wrote:

Was I to hold my tongue? But that would have been the most miserable course of all, for my conscience would have been fettered, my voice silenced. And what about the text stating that if a priest will not admonish the wrongdoer, the wrongdoer will die in his guilt, but the priest will be liable to punishment because he did not warn the wrongdoer?<sup>183</sup>

The conclusion of the letter underlined the pastoral nature of Ambrose's involvement in this highly politically charged affair. He concluded: "I love, I cherish, I attend you with my prayers. If you believe me, follow my advice, if you believe me, I repeat, acknowledge the truth of what I am saying. If you do not believe me, pardon what I am doing, namely that I am putting God first."<sup>184</sup>

Over the course of these encounters, Ambrose and Theodosius were defining the relationship between the bishop and the emperor, and by extension, the Church and the imperial court in the West. The emperor, like all Christians, had a soul that had been entrusted to the care of the pastoral authority of the Church. The bishop, in this case obviously Ambrose, used all methods to safeguard the Church, uphold the faith, and tend to the pastoral care of the people, which included the emperor. Ambrose had made it abundantly clear that nothing would deter him in his efforts. His letters already presented have shown a political and pastoral side of Ambrose. I now turn to his treatise on the obligations of the clergy to highlight the necessary

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183. *Epist.* 51, 11, lines 25-7, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 264. *Tacerem? Sed quod miserrimum foret omnium alligaretur conscientia, vox eriperetur. Et ubi illud? Si sacerdos non dixerit errant, is qui erraverit in sua culpa morietur et sacerdos reus erit poenae, quia non admonuit errantem.*

184. *Epist.* 51, 10.51, lines 165-6, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 269. *Amo diligo orationibus prosequor. Si credis sequere, si, inquam, agnosce quod dico, si non credis ignosce quod facio, in quo Deum praefero.*

virtues of the person charged with pastoral leadership and how these virtues can be applicable to those in political authority.

### 2.2.5: *De Officiis*

An examination of relevant parts of Ambrose's work *De Officiis* offers an interpretive key for putting Ambrose's action in the four incidents into a more theoretical perspective. Although *On Duties*, written circa 391, was primarily a moral guide for young clergy to follow, it is likely that Ambrose did not intend it solely for the clergy. His work also can provide instruction on Christian principles to a wider audience.<sup>185</sup> Commenting on the moral life of the pastoral leader as seen by Ambrose, Rowan Greer writes: "The virtuous life of priests, who are pastors and teachers, is in principle no different from the ideal held before all Christians."<sup>186</sup> Ambrose's exposition examined the virtues required for those in the political state as well as the clerical state of life. It was, therefore, a valuable treatise for one who was a member of the imperial court. Ambrose utilized the structure of Cicero's work by the same title.<sup>187</sup>

Although Ambrose used the basic structure of Cicero's *De Officiis*, the fundamental philosophical ideologies that were unique to Cicero did not make its way into Ambrose's work. It is important to note that Cicero's work was primarily about public and official duties of political officeholders and Ambrose's was for the clergy. Davidson notes: "The claim in this case is that he judiciously selected from Cicero ideas which to him were not at odds with his

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185. Regarding the influence and audience of Ambrose's work; see Ivor Davidson, ed., *Ambrose, De Officiis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96-104. All subsequent English translations and Latin texts for Ambrose's *De Officiis* are from this edition.

186. Greer, "Pastoral Care and Discipline," 570.

187. Davidson, *Ambrose De Officiis*, 33: "Ambrose maintains the basic anatomy of Cicero's text. The classical order of the three books is preserved, and material is generally maintained in the 'right' places: Ambrose avoids transferring major subject-matter from book 1 of Cicero, say, to book 2 in his own text."



Christian beliefs and which fitted his social context, and carefully combined them with ethical ideals drawn from the Scriptures.”<sup>188</sup> In other words, Ambrose tailored his argument from Cicero’s stoic-Platonic philosophy and from Scriptural examples. Ambrose exhorted: “The life of our ancestors ought to be a mirror of moral instruction for us rather than a record of our own ingenuity, and we should show respect by imitating them instead of looking clever in the way we structure arguments. . . . Which of the philosophers lived before Abraham or David or Solomon?”<sup>189</sup>

Since Cicero’s work was the foundation of Ambrose’s, it is important to look at Cicero’s *De Officiis*, which was intended for the political elite.<sup>190</sup> The tripartite division of Cicero’s work is significant. In Book One, he deals with honorable conduct (*honestum*), which was rooted in prudence, justice, beneficence, and temperance. Book Two examines those things which were useful (*utile*) for those in leadership. Book Three reconciles any potential conflict that might arise between that which was honorable and that which was useful. Cicero’s clear presentation on the duties and responsibilities of those holding authority was adapted by Ambrose.

Ambrose applied the tripartite outline of Cicero to his own work. In Book One, Ambrose speaks about those virtues necessary for one involved in governance of the Church, including the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and courage. In Book Two, he presents those things which were beneficial to those in positions of authority. In contrast to Cicero, who defined the beneficial as pleasing to society and rooted in the world, Ambrose claims that what is beneficial is pleasing to God and rooted in the spiritual. Book Three concludes with a

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188. Davidson, *Ambrose De Officiis*, 48.

189. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1. 25, lines 116-118, *CCSL* 15; trans. Davidson, 185-7. *Sit igitur nobis vita maiorum disciplinae speculum, non calliditatis commenatium, imitandi reverential, non dispitandi astutia. . . . Quis enim illorum ante Abraham, David, Salomonem?*

190. Davidson provides a succinct overview of the composition of Ambrose’s work in relation to that of Cicero; see Ambrose, *De Officiis*, Introduction, 33-44.

comparison between the honorable and the beneficial. Ambrose adapted Cicero's work in order to present the character and the responsibilities of the pastoral leader. Cicero presents a definite image of the temporal leader; and Ambrose gave an identity to the spiritual leader.

Cicero highlights the responsibility that those in public office must cultivate in themselves the four cardinal virtues, as presented by Plato. He begins with wisdom, which is the search for truth that promotes happiness and useful knowledge: "Of the four heads under which we have divided the nature and significance of proper behavior, the first, namely knowledge of the truth, comes closest to the essentials of human nature."<sup>191</sup> He begins with wisdom because it is the precursor for prudence, which is discernment necessary for seeking those things which are beneficial and avoiding those things that are detrimental. The underlying quality of that which is beneficial must advance and promote the common good, while that which is harmful must be shunned. Prudence, therefore, is vital for those involved in governance because it enables the leader to determine that what is necessary and good.

In discussing justice, Cicero identifies its two principle aspects: that nobody should suffer at the hands of another and the necessity of maintaining the distinction between the public and private spheres in regard to property and interests. He wrote: "The primary function of justice is to ensure that no one harms his neighbor unless he has himself been unjustly attacked. Its second concern is that communal property should serve communal interests, and private property, private interests."<sup>192</sup> Justice is rooted in the virtue of good faith whereas injustice is in the vices of greed, fear, and ambition. Justice demands that one cannot stand by idle if others are being hurt or taken advantage of in any way. For Cicero, the obligations of justice are higher, from a

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191. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.18, p. 21, LCL 4; trans. Walsh, 8. *Intellegendum autem est, cum proposita sint quattuor e quibus honestas officium que minaret splendidissimum videri quod animo magno elato que humanas que res despiciente factum sit.*

192. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.20, p. 22, LCL 4; trans. Walsh, 9. *Sed iustitiae primum munus est, ut ne cui quis noceat nisi lacessitus iniuria, deinde ut communibus pro communibus utatur, privates ut suis.*

practical point of view, than those of simply seeking to acquire knowledge of the truth for the sake of prudent action. Those in positions of authority must exercise justice and avoid avarice, fear, and ambition, which are the roots of all actions of injustice.

The virtue of beneficence has a three-fold application: one's beneficence should not prove harmful; it should not extend beyond the giver's means; recipients should receive in direct proportion to their worth. He concluded that beneficence, which characterizes magnanimity of the soul, is foundational to all obligations. It must avoid avarice, glory, and pleasure: "So our requirement is that men of courage and greatness of spirit should also be good and guileless, friends of truth and total strangers of deceit."<sup>193</sup>

The virtue of temperance, which Cicero categorized as decorum, is the ability to control base pleasures, avoid obscenity, and embrace sobriety. The only way to control human passions is by reason and being true to one's nature. Every human inclination should be subjected to reason to ensure that any undertaking is fitting and would do no harm or cause injury to our nature. Cicero explained: "First, impulse should obey reason . . . . Second, we should assess the importance of a project we seek to achieve . . . . Third, we must take pains to safeguard all that pertains to the image and standing of a gentleman."<sup>194</sup>

In the end, Cicero stressed that prudence, justice, beneficence, and temperance are the virtues that must govern the actions of those who are chosen to rule. All actions are for the good of society and not individual gain. In his commentary on Cicero's *De Officiis*, P.G. Walsh remarks that, for Cicero, the honorable ruler must realize "that our fellowship with all other men

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193. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.63, p. 64, *LCL* 4; trans. Walsh, 23. *Itaque viros fortes et magnanimous eosdem bonos et simplices, veritatis amicos minimeque fallaces esse volumus.*

194. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.141, p. 144, *LCL* 4; trans. Walsh, 47-48. *Primum ut appetites rationi pareat . . . deinde ut animadvertatur, quanta illa res sit, quam efficere velimus . . . . Tertium est, ut caveamus, ut ea, quae pertinent ad liberalem speciem et dignitatem moderata sint.*

forbids us to exploit any person for our own profit.”<sup>195</sup> Cicero demanded that those in authority serve the common good and not special interests: “At all events, those who are to take over administration of the state must observe the two precepts which Plato lays down: first, they must protect the interests of the citizens . . . . Second, the whole body-politic should be their concern, so that they do not protect one section at the expense of the rest.”<sup>196</sup>

Both pagan and Christian writers made good use of Cicero’s treatise in establishing a foundation for virtuous living and civic ethics, especially for those in the ruling class. This influential work provides a useful foundation of virtues or civic ethics for all people but in particular those who are leaders. Ambrose took the work of Cicero and revolutionized it, by moving the discussion of duties out of the philosophical world and into the world of Sacred Scripture. He asked: “Is it an appropriate theme for us to write about ‘duties?’ Is the word fit only for the schools of the philosophers, or can it be found in the divine Scriptures as well?”<sup>197</sup> After reading the Gospel pertaining to the duties performed by Zacharias (Luke 1:8-23), Ambrose concluded: “From what we read here, then, it is clear that we too are able to speak of *officium*, or ‘duty.’”<sup>198</sup>

Ambrose also interjected examples of the prophets and other Old Testament figures, which took Cicero’s work one step further. For Cicero, the discussion of duty was strictly placed within the world, the here and now of his day. Ambrose added an eschatological dimension to the discussion of duty: all seek that which is just, prudent, courageous, and beneficial in terms of

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195. Cicero, *De Officiis*, Introduction, xxiv.

196. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.85, p. 86, LCL 4; trans Walsh, 30. *Omnino qui rei publicae praefuturi sunt, duo Platonis praecepta teneant, unum et utilitatem civium sic tueantur . . . ut totum corpus rei publicae current, ne, dum partem aliquam tuentur, reliquas deserant.*

197. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.8.25, line 1, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 131-33. *Ipsa conveniat scribere de officiis et utrum hoc nomen philosophorum tantummodo scholae aptum sit an etiam in scripturis reperiatur divinis.*

198. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.8.25, line 9, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 132. *Legimus igitur officium dici a nobis posse.*

salvation. He focused the discussion of duty on the Kingdom of God rather than the world. He believed that there should be little concern for the things of this world: “It was for a future reward, not a present one, that he promised to give: it was in heaven, not on earth.”<sup>199</sup> Again, he defined what separated his sense of duty from Cicero’s:

For we measure duty by a standard quite different from the one that the philosophers apply. They consider the advantages of this world to be good things, whereas we regard them as loss: for the person who receives good things in the world, like the rich man did, ends up tormented in the next, while Lazarus, who endured such terrible evils here, finds consolation over there.<sup>200</sup>

Ambrose’s treatment of the four cardinal virtues allows for some conclusions to be drawn regarding the duties of those in the position of pastoral leadership and how these virtues can be applied in relation to those in political authority. Both Cicero and Ambrose rank prudence as the principal virtue. Ambrose believed prudence is the knowledge of seeking the truth and desiring a more profound experience of that truth. He wrote: “The virtue which counted first and foremost for them (those in positions of authority) was prudence, which makes us seek the truth and instills in us a yearning for ever deeper knowledge.”<sup>201</sup> Taking Abraham as his example, Ambrose introduced a fundamental perspective on the duties of those chosen to rule. Abraham recognized that God was the source of all righteousness and everything was dependent on God. As Ambrose observed: “Prudence certainly came first in the life of holy Abraham. Scripture says this about him: ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ No

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199. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.16.59, line 12, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 153. *Futuram, non praesentem, in cielo, non in terra mercedem promisit esse reddendam.*

200. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.9.29, lines 17-18, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 135. *Quia officium diversa aestimamus regula atque illi aestimaverunt. Illi saeculi commode in bonis ducunt, nos haec etiam in detrimentis, quoniam qui hic recipit bona, ut ille dives, illic cruciatur, et Lazarus, qui mala hic pertulit, illic consolationem invenit.*

201. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.24.115, line 77, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 185, parenthesis added. For Ambrose, those who counted prudence first and foremost were not initially the philosophers, but the Old Testament figures of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, and David. *Quarum primo loco constituerunt prudentiam quae in veri investigatione versatur et scientiae plenioris infundit cupiditatem.*

one can be called prudent who does not know the Lord.”<sup>202</sup> Prudence, for Ambrose, occupies the primary place among the virtues because it acknowledges that all good things come from God, including authority. Rowan Greer stresses: “Ambrose treats prudence as the ‘first source of duty’ because it involves showing ‘devotion and reverence for our Creator’ and because it is ‘also the source from which all the other virtues derive.’”<sup>203</sup> Those in the positions of authority, secular or spiritual, should exercise the virtue of prudence since they acknowledge that their authority is derived from God.

The prudent emperor, then, is the one who recognizes that God is the font of all power, which God delegates to the rulers of this world. The prudent ruler also understands that he has an obligation to God and a commitment to the Church. Ambrose asserted: “Now everyone is in the service of this true God, and he who undertakes to worship God with his innermost spirit offers him neither duplicity, nor prevarication, but zeal and devotion to the faith.”<sup>204</sup> Ambrose stated: “The first source of duty, therefore, is prudence. What better way of fulfilling our duty could there be than to show devotion and reverence for our creator?”<sup>205</sup>

On the matter of justice, Ambrose established a hierarchy of those to whom it was due: first to God, then to the state, parents, and finally to all. True justice is founded on piety and love. From these two principles, Christians understand that they must place others above themselves. Justice requires those in authority must never place their self-interests ahead of the needs of others. The one called to rule is advised: “It is from these beginnings that true love is

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202. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.25.117, lines 9-112, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 185. *Fuit igitur in sancto Abraham primo loco prudentia, de quo dicit scripture: Credidit Abraham Deo et reputatum est ei ad iustitiam. Nemo enim prudens qui Dominum nescit.*

203. Greer, “Pastoral Care and Discipline,” 569.

204. *Epist.* 17, 10.72, line 11, CSEL 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 63. *Huic igitur Deo vero quisque militat, et qui intimo colendum recipit affect, non dissimulationem, non coniventiam, sed fidei stadium et devotionis impendit.*

205. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.28.126, line 1, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 191. *Primus igitur officii fons prudentia est. Quid enim tam plenum officii quam deferre auctori stadium atque reverentiam?*

born, which puts others before itself and does not pursue its own interests; this is where justice has its primary seat.”<sup>206</sup> The Ciceronian sense of justice is two-fold: not injurious to others and respectful of private and public property. Ambrose agreed that all actions should be harmless to others. He disagreed with the sense of private wealth or acquisitions. He demonstrated that in Scripture all things were held in common and the task of the ruler et al. was to be stewards of creation.<sup>207</sup> Ambrose diverged from Cicero: “Nature produced common rights, then, it is greed that has established private rights.”<sup>208</sup>

The Ambrosian ideal of justice, therefore, only makes sense when founded on faith. Recall that for Ambrose there was nothing higher than faith. The just ruler must contemplate and reflect his faith in all deliberations; failure to do so would be contrary to nature. Ambrose took great pains in advising the emperor to never abandon the principles of his faith. Morino highlights this aspect of Ambrose’s thought: “All Christians are bound to observe these norms, whether their actions are politically relevant or not.”<sup>209</sup> His advice to the clergy could be of great value to the emperor. In acting in harmony with justice, one gains the love and respect of the people. To act without justice has dire consequences for the one in authority. Ambrose observed: “Justice, therefore, is a wonderful commendation for men who occupy any kind of responsible position; injustice, on the other hand, induces people to desert them and turn against them.”<sup>210</sup> It is precisely in such acts of justice that any person in authority derives strength and keeps structures intact.

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206. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.28.126, line 17, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 191. *Hinc caritas nascitur, quae alios sibi praefert, non quarens quae sua sunt, in quo est principatus iustitiae.*

207. Acts 2:44, 4:32-35.

208. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.28.132, line 16, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 195. *Natura igitur ius commune generavit, usurpation ius fecit privatum.*

209. Morino, *Church and State in the Teachings of St. Ambrose*, 98.

210. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 2.18.93, line 1, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 321. *Egregie itaque viros alicui praesidentes muneri commendat iustitia et contra iniquitas destituit atque impugnat.*

Courage is the third virtue that Ambrose considers. Like Cicero, Ambrose linked courage with justice, for it was in the natural relationship between these two virtues that evil and wickedness were held at bay. He believed: “where courage is without justice, it leads only to wickedness, for the stronger it is, the readier it is to crush the inferior.”<sup>211</sup> Reflecting on the virtue of courage, Ambrose determined: “For courage of spirit needs to be considered in two different dimensions. There is, first, the courage that counts on external or physical things . . . . There is also, in the second place, the courage that applies the best powers of the mind to the pursuit and realization of everything that is truly important.”<sup>212</sup> In a military expedition, courage is measured by bravery and physical might: “for bravery depends on its own muscle.”<sup>213</sup> For Ambrose, the virtue of courage took a higher ground when it was brought beyond the physical to the spiritual. The spiritual sense of courage was far greater for Ambrose than physical potency: “So the glory of courage, does not consist merely in physical strength or the power of muscle: it is to be found far more in valour of spirit.”<sup>214</sup> On this level, authentic courage is rooted in the ability to control one’s appetites and desires. For one to be deemed courageous, that person needs to acquire self-control: “Real courage, the kind which is truly worthy of the name, is to be seen when an individual masters himself and contains his anger.”<sup>215</sup>

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211. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.35.176, lines 9-11, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 221. *Alioquin fortitude sine iustitia iniquitatis materia est. Quo enim validior est, eo promptior ut inferiorem opprimat.*

212. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.37.182, line 28, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 223. *Quonium in duobus generibus fortitude spectator animi: primo, ut externa corporis pro minimis habeat . . . secundo ut ea quae summa sunt omnesque res in quibus honestas.*

213. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.35.177, line 15, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 221. *Virtus enim suis lacertis.*

214. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.36.179, line 1, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 221. *Non igitur in viribus corporis et lacertis tantummodo fortitudinis Gloria est sed magis in virtute animi, necque in inferenda sed depellenda iniuria lex virtutis est.*

215. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.36.181, line 20, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 223. *Et revera iure ea fortitude vocatur quando unusquisque se ipsum, vincit, iram continent.*



Reflecting on that sense of courage, Ambrose criticized Theodosius's ruthless imperial actions against the people of Thessalonica. In Letter 51, regarding the massacre at Thessalonica, Ambrose chastised the emperor for his unbridled anger: "But you have been born with a passionate nature. When there is somebody around to calm you, you quickly channel it into pity, but if somebody inflames it, you let your passion grow to such a pitch that you can scarcely control it."<sup>216</sup> Ambrose felt it was his duty to be that person who acts as a moral compass to assist the emperor in deliberations. The emperor had proven himself courageous in external matters; yet, had failed to acquire courage interiorly; that was controlling his passions and emotions. Morino endorses Ambrose's overall understanding of the role of the Church in assisting the imperial authorities: "So it is necessary to follow the dictates of religion and listen to those who not only have the right but also the duty of intervening and making known their thoughts."<sup>217</sup> The duty of the Church, then, is to ensure that Christian ethics permeate all aspects of society. This can only be accomplished when the Church is actively involved in both ecclesial and political affairs.

The final virtue that Ambrose considered is temperance, which he defined: "What we look for or seek here are, above all, a tranquility of spirit, a desire for gentleness, the grace of moderation, a concern to what is honourable, and a determination to do what is seemly."<sup>218</sup> In other words, temperance is that virtue which allows self-mastery and, therefore, builds on the virtue of courage. It is courage, in the spiritual sense, which allows a person to control their internal appetites. It is temperance that allows the person to live in harmony with their nature.

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216. *Epist.* 51, 11.4, line 30, *CSEL* 82, Liebschuetz, 264. *Sed habes naturae impetum, quem si quis lenire velit cito vertes ad misericordiam, si quis stimulet in maius exsuscitas ut eum revocare vix possis.*

217. Morino, *Church and State in the Teachings of St. Ambrose*, 131.

218. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.68.210, line 1, *CCSL* 15; trans. Davidson, 241. *In qua maxime tranquillitas animi, stadium mansuetudinis, moderationis gratia, honesti cura, decoris consideratione spectator et quaeritur.*

Human nature is built on the principles of kindness, good will, and generosity. When people are kind, they wish others well and they act well. When people offer goodwill, they desire to be kind before they even perform an act of charity. When people are generous, they give to others in good faith with a right intention.

To act contrary to this principle means people are in opposition to their very nature and are living a less than courageous life. Ambrose asserted: “To behave in a way that is seemly means to live in accordance with nature, and to pass all your days in accordance with nature; to behave in a way that is shameful means to act in any fashion that is contrary to nature.”<sup>219</sup> For Cicero, the only way that one can control any passion is by reason and living in conformity with one’s true nature. Ambrose accepted both of these means as the fulfillment of the virtue of temperance. Reason is fundamental in assisting a person to live in accord with nature. Reason, he added: “is to restrain impulse, to bring it into subjection, to lead it where it will, and to put it through a process of careful instruction, as it were, to make it understand what it needs to do and what it needs to avoid.”<sup>220</sup>

Because Ambrose felt the emperor had acted in an excessive fashion in the two cases examined here, he inserted himself in matters of the state for the good of the emperor and the empire. As he did in his past dealings with Valentinian, so he does now with Theodosius, advising him as a spiritual leader counsels a sinner. He maintained that the only reason he undertook the task of writing letters to the emperor was to advise him spiritually. Ambrose considered it his duty to admonish the emperor and to impose penance before the emperor could return to communion. In doing so, Ambrose believed that Theodosius, by conquering the

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219. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.66.223, line 9, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 247. *Decorum est secundum naturam vivere, secundum naturam degree, et turpe est quod sit contra naturam.*

220. Ambrose, *De Officiis*, 1.67.228, line 17, CCSL 15; trans. Davidson, 249. *Quae tamen vis gemina est: una in appetitu, altera in ratione posita, quae appetitum refrenet et sibi oboedientem praestet et ducat quo velit et tamquam sedulo magisterio edoceat.*

disordered passions that had led to an atrocious act of mass murder, would be living the virtue of temperance.

### 2.3.0: The Ambrosian Paradigm

Ambrose is a foundational figure for articulating the pastoral obligation that justified ecclesial involvement in matters of the state. He was a man of significant political clout. In fact, Diarmaid MacCulloch makes the bold assertion: “It was an extraordinary transformation of fortunes for Christianity that a man *who might easily have become emperor himself* now wielded the spiritual power of the Church against the most powerful ruler in the known world.”<sup>221</sup>

Ambrose’s excellent education and major political assignments made him no ordinary bishop. He had indeed proven himself accomplished; consequently, he carried a certain aura about him that people of his day might have disliked but nonetheless respected. Salzman best summarizes the feelings of modern historians regarding the activities of Ambrose: “As ecclesiastic careers crystallized, such offices increasingly offered opportunities for bishops to acquire prestige and influence in worldly terms. Ambrose perhaps best represents the activist bishop who, as he condemned the punishment meted out by the emperor Theodosius, intervened directly in worldly affairs.”<sup>222</sup> From the events that have been examined and the writings of Ambrose, it is possible to discern a fourth-century political theology that requires ecclesial involvement in matters of the state.

Ambrose constructs a fourth-century paradigm for the relationship of Church and empire. For him, faith is the point of departure that should govern the actions of ecclesial and political

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221. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: the First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2009), 299, emphasis added.

222. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 205.

leaders. Recall Ambrose's words to Valentinian during the events surrounding the Altar of Victory: "There is nothing of greater importance than religion, nothing more exalted than faith."<sup>223</sup> Since faith is held in high regard, both political and religious leaders have an obligation to safeguard and defend it. Through his letters, Ambrose reminded the emperor that his power subsisted in God, source of all authority, who had given Theodosius the right to rule. The leader must govern as a steward because all his deliberations and actions were answerable to God. The emperor was in the unique position to be the defender and the promoter of the faith. To act in a manner contrary to the faith was an offense to God and could have devastating consequences for the emperor. Ambrose conveyed this to Valentinian in the matter of the attempted restoration of the Altar of Victory: "You must see, Sir, that if you decree any such thing, you wrong first God . . . I beg that you will do that which you know will be profitable for your salvation in the sight of God."<sup>224</sup>

From this perspective, Ambrose began to sculpt a paradigm that required him to enter the fray of temporal affairs in order to counsel the emperor on what Ambrose deemed matters of faith. When it came to these matters, Ambrose declared that the ecclesial authority, the bishop, was the competent authority. He strengthened his argument as he compared and contrasted, in his letter on the basilicas, the attitude of Gratian and Valentinian regarding the faith. He claimed that Gratian, even though he was baptized, recognized that he had no formal claim whatsoever over matters of faith. In contrast, he added that Valentinian even though he was not baptized took on matters of faith.<sup>225</sup>

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223. *Epist.* 17, 10.72.12, line 115, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 67. *Nihil maius est religion, nihil sublimius fide.*

224. *Epist.* 17, 10.72.17, line 170, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 198. *Unde cum advertas, imperator, deo primum . . . si quid tale decernas, ego rogo id facias quod saluti tuae apud deum intellegis profuturum.*

225. *Epist.* 21, 10.75.4, line 41, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 137-138.

In his letters, sermons, and treatise *De Officiis*, Ambrose recognized that there were two forms of authority, which were distinct but not dichotomist. Those who represented each form were intimately connected and should recognize the appropriate expertise of the other. The emperor had control over the temporal matters of the empire but benefited from the counsel received from the spiritual authority of the bishop. On matters of faith, the emperor must recognize that he was a member of the Church under the pastoral care and the jurisdiction of the bishop. Ambrose proclaimed in his sermon against Auxentius: “The emperor is within and not above the Church. For a good emperor seeks the assistance of the Church, he does not refuse it.”<sup>226</sup>

Throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, Pope Gelasius I (492-496) was often credited with the advancement of papal supremacy with his doctrine of the “Two Swords.” In his often-quoted letter to the emperor Anastasius in 494, Gelasius claimed that sacred authority superseded imperial authority. The letter recognized that the emperor did exercise temporal authority, but since the Church was ultimately responsible for the salvation of souls, it held a higher supernatural authority which was also Ambrose’s argument. Therefore, all laity, including the emperor, would, in fact, have to submit to the authority of the Church.<sup>227</sup> This theory was first put into practice, however, by Ambrose a century earlier, and he essentially expressed it in his letters and other writings. Ambrose laid the foundation for such a doctrine to be proposed.

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226. *Epist.* 21A, 10.75A.36, line 144, *CSEL* 82; trans. Liebschuetz, 159-160. *Imperator enim intra ecclesiam non supra ecclesiam est; bonus enim imperator quaerit auxilium ecclesiae, non refutat.*

227. Yet, recent scholarship questions that the intent of this doctrine of the “Two Swords” proposed by Gelasius. For a well-constructed argument of the serious study of Gelasius’ letter to Anastasius; see Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy*, 20-25. Relying on the research of Erich Caspar, Walter Ulmann, Francis Dvornik, and A.K. Ziegler, Richards concludes that Gelasius was not attempting to elevate the Church’s position; rather he wanted to ensure that the religious and the imperial spheres respected each other’s authority.

Was Ambrose's intention to assert supremacy over the emperor? He admitted that the emperor did have the right to enact laws on the temporal level. The issue for Ambrose was when those specific actions or orders affected the Church in an adverse fashion. Ambrose believed that he had to defend the Church and show pastoral care, which as he saw it, was to teach, admonish, and reprove all Christians, including the emperor. If the emperor acted in a manner contrary to the faith, it was incumbent on the bishop to speak out as in the cases of Callinicum and Thessalonica. The reason for Ambrose's passionate condemnation was that he judged each act to be damaging to the Church and immoral. According to Ambrose, the Church, in a very real sense, was the moral compass of society. The two spheres, while distinct, certainly intersect. One function of the Church, as demonstrated by Ambrose, was to make certain that those in positions of authority act with prudence, justice, courage, and temperance.

To conclude then, Ambrose considered all his actions to be well within his right and his pastoral duty to perform. He was a pastor who was attempting to secure the salvation of the souls entrusted to his care. Whether he admonished, threatened to withhold sacraments, rebuked, or intervened in political matters, he felt justified. For him, in matters of faith, the end justified the means. Ambrose acted out of principles and motivations that began to define ecclesial involvement in secular affairs from the vantage point of the fourth century. The next chapter focuses on the contribution Leo the Great in the fifth century made to evolving theories regarding the relationship between the Church and the state.

## Chapter Three: A Fifth-Century Ecclesial Paradigm: Leo I

### 3.0.0: Overview

In this chapter, I focus on the fifth-century actions and words of Leo I (440-461) that shed light on his attitude towards secular matters. Although there were similarities between Ambrose's and Leo's approaches to ecclesial involvement, there were striking differences as well. By examining Leo's actions and words, I highlight the religious and civic role of the bishop and further the discussion of the kind of authority bishops wielded in the fifth century.<sup>228</sup> In addition, I analyze the major developments in the relationship of the episcopal and imperial authority in the West a half century after Ambrose's death, which provides the historical context for Gregory's ecclesial involvement in matters of the state.

This chapter analyzes Leo's actions and writings with a specific intention on examining his contribution to the development of a theory of papal primacy. It is out of a sense of enhanced papal prestige that Leo will act as defender of the faith and the city of Rome. I survey the surviving letters and sermons of Leo in order to judge his level of participation in matters of state and his impact on the city of Rome and the western empire. Ultimately, I will examine the Leonine paradigm as it pertains to episcopal involvement with the imperial authority of the empire. Along with the Ambrosian paradigm, the Leonine paradigm will prove useful in determining the *modus operandi* developed by Gregory the Great and understanding the level of ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs by the sixth century.

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228. Bernard Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and J.M. Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity: Leo the Great's Theology of Redemption* (Strathfield: Australian Catholic University, 2005) both Green and Armitage promote the theme of salvation for all citizens and the formation of a civic Christianity.

### 3.1.0: Leo the Great: *Pontifex Maximus*

Ambrose was a bishop of an important city which served as an imperial capital. Leo, on the other hand, conducted his affairs in a significant city that was distant from imperial representatives, all of whom were largely ineffectual. Although Rome, would no longer serve as the imperial seat of the West fifteen years after the death of Leo, the political power that once rested in the hands of the emperor in the West was already in significant decline during Leo's time. In a city battered by barbarians, ruled by a rapid succession of ineffective emperors, and occupied by the Goths, Leo took the reins of leadership and his actions and words restored some of Rome's former glory and increased the political importance of the Church in the city. Leo did this by giving Christianity a civic character in which pagan celebrations were replaced by new Christian liturgical feasts.<sup>229</sup> In doing this, Leo placed the bishop of Rome in a powerful position, making the holder of the episcopal office the most suitable officiant in offering thanksgiving prayers that would ensure divine protection.

As a result, the bishop began to take on ritual roles that had once been reserved for the emperor, the *pontifex maximus*. Leo began to use the title *pontifex maximus* a title that the emperor Gratian (367-383) had abandoned. Michele Salzman comments: "By taking on responsibility for maintaining the goodwill of God, Leo was assuming the symbolic role once held by the emperor as *pontifex maximus*."<sup>230</sup> Over time, Leo's increasing visibility and activity led him to take on the role of maintaining social order. Ultimately his actions preserved the well-

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229. Michele Salzman, "Leo the Great: Responses to Crisis and Shaping of a Christian Cosmopolis," in *The City in the Classical and Post Classical World: Changing Contexts of Power and Identity*, eds. H.A. Drake and Claudia Rupp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 183-201. Here Salzman illustrates the transformation of the pagan ritual into Christian liturgical celebrations. Bronwen Neil also highlights Leo's initiative of replacing pagan and Jewish traditional feasts with Christian ones; see Bronwen Neil, *Leo the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21-6.

230. Salzman, *Leo the Great*, 193. This is another example of the Church adapting purely Roman pagan titles. Paul Pascal traced the adoption of the title *pontifex maximus* and other pagan terms and rituals by the Church, "Mediaeval Uses of Antiquity," *The Classical Journal* 61, no. 5 (February, 1966): 193-7.



being of the city's residents, upheld the faith, and solidified the ecclesial role in civil governance, and exerted political control over matters making him a formidable leader. As a result, Leo was responsible for helping Rome transition from an imperial city to a Christian metropolis. Peter Brown comments: "Rome stood for a sense of order and for a width of horizons, stretching even beyond the frontiers of the Roman empire, which seemed to make the bishops of Rome, as the successors of Peter and Paul, the true heirs of a Roman world order."<sup>231</sup>

There are few contemporary texts detailing the early life of Leo. The only biographical information the *Liber Pontificalis* provides is that Leo was born in the Tuscan region of Italy to a man named Quintianus.<sup>232</sup> Other sources do little to fill in Leo's life prior to his election as bishop of Rome in 440. Leo's own writings provide no tangible facts of his earlier life. What can be said with certainty is that Leo caught the attention of both religious and civil officials. John O'Malley comments: "He was elected *in absentia* while on an imperial diplomatic mission to Gaul. This extraordinary circumstance suggests the esteem in which he was already held in the city."<sup>233</sup> Leo was born circa 400. He was a child during the sieges of Rome by Alaric, the Goth, from 408-410. The papacy of Leo spanned twenty-one years (440-461), during which he witnessed barbarian assaults (452 and 455), weak imperial leaders (Valentinian III, Petronius Maximus, Avitus, and Majorian), and theological disputes (Christological controversies).

Prior to his election to the papacy on September 29, 440, Leo had been ordained as one of the seven deacons of the Church of Rome by Pope Celestine I, a position he held from 432-440. Roman deacons served as Church administrators and undertook diplomatic imperial missions. As a deacon, Leo proved himself to be trustworthy and exemplary. In matters of religion, Leo

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231. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 114-15.

232. Louise Ropes Loomis, trans., *Liber Pontificalis* (New York: Columbia Press, 1916), 97.

233. John O'Malley, *A History of the Popes: From Peter to the Present* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 39. Also J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 43-5, speaks about Leo's election.

was sought out as an emissary to intervene in disputes between Rome and other churches. During the papacy of Zosimus (417-8), for example, the Church, primarily in Rome and North Africa, was engulfed in the Pelagian heresy. It was Leo who was trusted by Zosimus to handle important and confidential correspondence between Rome and Africa. Furthermore, Leo was called on by Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria in 431, to obtain Pope Celestine's (422-32) support in thwarting the plans of the bishop of Jerusalem, Juvenal, who wanted make Jerusalem a patriarchal see by separating it from Caesarea and Antioch. In secular affairs, Leo was just as trustworthy and respected. In the summer of 440, Leo was sent by Valentinian III on a diplomatic mission to Gaul in order to reconcile the divisions between the praetorian prefect of Gaul, Albinus, and an imperial general named Aetius.

As bishop of Rome, Leo steered the western Church through doctrinal controversies and began to construct a plausible argument that paved the way, at least from a western perspective, for an effective Roman primacy. Two councils in particular dominated the mid-fifth century and had an impact on the stability of the Church and the empire. The Council of Ephesus in 431 dealt with, among other things, the controversy between Cyril and Nestorius regarding the question about the person and nature of Christ. In 451, Chalcedon dealt with further Christological controversies as well as ecclesiastical rivalries among Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch, in which the support of Leo was sought. Leo contributed to the Council with his support for Flavian, who was the bishop of Constantinople, and his *Tome*, which did not introduce any new Christological arguments, was read and accepted at the Council.

The Council of Chalcedon was not a complete triumph for Leo or Rome. Against the wishes and arguments of the Roman legates, the bishops at the council re-introduced a canon

from the First Council of Constantinople into the proceedings of Chalcedon.<sup>234</sup> From Constantinople I (381), Canon 3 reads: “Because it is new Rome, the Bishop of Constantinople is to enjoy the privileges of honour after the Bishop of Rome.”<sup>235</sup> At Chalcedon, Canon 28 sought to elevate the status of Constantinople: “reasonably judging that the city which is honoured by the imperial power and senate and enjoying privileges equaling older imperial Rome, should also be elevated to her level in ecclesiastical affairs and take second place after her.”<sup>236</sup> The bishops of the East argued that Rome was once the imperial capital and that its Church held a prominent position but the new seat of imperial authority was Constantinople, thus the church in the East should have a share in the status of Rome. Leo responded by rejecting Canon 28 and asserting the primacy of Rome, to be discussed later in this chapter.

In conjunction with his role as spiritual leader, Leo took on political responsibilities in order to confront the grim realities of the day. A great deal of his political power was derived from the inadequate leadership provided by Valentinian III who was the western emperor. The fragile reign of Valentinian III was followed by three equally ineffective reigns. Within a six-year period, the West had four emperors.<sup>237</sup> This rapid turnover in leadership generated instability in the government, and Rome was seen by its citizens as having been abandoned. The empire in the East was preoccupied with strengthening its eastern borders from attacks and paid

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234. Since it was an eastern Council, few Western bishops and Roman legates were in attendance. Michael Gaddis and Richard Price composed a list of those present at the council which verifies the overwhelming presence of eastern bishops; see *The Acts of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 193-203.

235. Canon 3, p. 32, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, vol. 1; ed. Tanner, 32. *Τὸν μὲν τοι Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἐπίσκοπον ἔχειν τὰ πρέσβεια τῆς τιμᾶς μετὰ τὸν τῆς Ῥώμης ἐπίσκοπος, διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὴν νέαν Ῥώμην.*

236. Canon 3, p. 100, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, vol. 1; ed. Tanner, 100. *καὶ συγκλητῶ τιμηθεῖσαν πόλιν, καὶ τῶν ἴσων ἀπολαύουσαν πρεσβειῶν τῇ πρεσβυτέρᾳ βασιλίδι Ῥώμῃ, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐκκλησιαστικοῖς ὡς ἐκείνην μεγαλύνεσθαι πραγμασι.*

237. After Valentinian was assassinated in 455, the West was treated to the futile attempts of leadership under Petronius Maximus (March to May 455), Avitus (455-456/7), and finally Majorian (456/7 – 461).

very little attention to the happenings in the West. After the sack of Rome in 410, the imperial seat in the West had moved to Ravenna for safety, but by the 430s and 440s, the imperial seat vacillated between Ravenna and Rome.

These factors contributed to the impression that Rome had been neglected. In the wake of ineffective imperial leadership, the senate, which had many Christian members, and the bishop of Rome assumed some level of involvement to ensure the viability of Rome as an imperial Christian capital. The task of defending Rome and maintaining a sense of order, whether it be social or religious or both, was left to those who were there and able to assume leadership. That lot fell to the bishop of Rome, Leo. David Gwynn notes: “The decline of western imperial power by the mid-fifth century had created a vacuum of authority in Italy as elsewhere, and Leo led the defense of the city”<sup>238</sup>

Leo witnessed the decline of the imperial power in the West.<sup>239</sup> Prosper of Aquitaine, in the mid-fifth century, gave a fairly bleak image of the situation: “We have been cut down by the swords of the Vandals and the Goths. No fort set on rocks, no town built atop a high mountain, no city located at a river flowing into the sea has been able to overcome the wiles of the barbarians and their raging weapons: we have suffered all a man can take!”<sup>240</sup> As the government in the West was destabilized, barbarian forces sought to capitalize on this opportunity. At the behest of Valentinian III, the western emperor in Ravenna, Leo, the bishop

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238. David M. Gwynn, “Episcopal Leadership,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 893. Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), describes the development of the role of the bishop in the West during this period, in particular, 19-27.

239. James O’Donnell, *The Ruin of the Roman Empire: A New History* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), provides a scholarly analysis of major factors of the decline that were discussed in chapter one; of particular interest, 47-106. Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* is invaluable in understanding the decline and imperial desertion in the West, 191-250.

240. Prosper of Aquitaine, *De Providentia Dei, Prol*, lines 33-8, *PL* 51; trans. Marcovich, 7. *Vandalicis gladiis sternimur et Geticis: non castellan petris, non oppida montibus altis imposita, aut urbes amnibus aequoreis barbrici superare dolos atque arma furoris evaluere omnes: ultima pertulimus.*

of Rome, entered into affairs of the state when he joined a small Roman delegation in an attempt to negotiate peace with Attila in 452. He may have prevailed on the Vandal king, Gaiseric, not to destroy Rome when he plundered the city in 455. He was not the first bishop of Rome to participate in such matters. With the emperor Honorius in Ravenna, Pope Innocent I (402-417) had attempted to mediate terms of peace with the leader of the Goths, Alaric, who had advanced to Rome three times between 408-410. Innocent did so because as John J. Norwich points out, “the civic authorities were helpless, while Honorius was cowered among the marshes of Ravenna it was left to Pope Innocent I to negotiate with the conqueror and make what terms he could.”<sup>241</sup>

Leo died on October 11, 461. By the ninth century, the title “the Great” had been attached to Leo’s name. Evidence for this is found in a letter that Pope Nicholas I sent to Emperor Michael III in 865. In 1754, Pope Benedict XIV declared him a Doctor of the Church.

### **3.2.0: Leo the Great: Actions and Writings**

In order to understand Leo’s involvement in matters of the state, it is first necessary to discuss the development of his ideas about the primacy of the See of Peter. Leo derived a sense of duty and authority from his position as bishop of Rome. From his understanding of the primacy of the bishop of Rome, I would argue that Leo reached beyond the city to wider ecclesial and secular communities and inserted himself in matters of faith and the empire. In this section, I will focus on how Leo described and developed his understanding of the place and authority of the bishop of Rome and how he exercised it and what ramifications it had within the empire, both East and West. This particular study of Leo will focus on the proceedings from the Council of Chalcedon, the threats posed by Attila the Hun and Gaiseric in the 450s, and his

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241. John Julius Norwich, *The Popes: A History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), 19.

contribution to the pastoral care of Rome that helped identify it as a Christian capital. In order to comprehend Leo's approach to matters both political and ecclesial, I will analyze those sermons that pertain to his imperial relations and spiritual works. After a treatment of a portion of his sermons and letters, a better insight into his involvement can be appreciated and his actions evaluated to assess their influence, if any, on Gregory.

### 3.2.1: Roman Primacy

This section is not intended to be a history of Roman primacy, but will focus on the historical development and exercise of the office of bishop of Rome in the fifth century, as it related to matters in the West and controversies in the East.<sup>242</sup> Recent scholarship has moved the discussion of Roman primacy out of the scriptural world and focused attention on the legal aspect of Leo's argument.

The fifth century saw the Church making significant inroads into secular governance. Salzman traced the advancement of Christians in senatorial and imperial offices from the third to the fifth century. Her studies show that in the early fourth century only 8.6% of Christian males reached the first low office<sup>243</sup> as opposed to 42.9% in the mid-fifth century. Also, Christian males appointed to the highest office<sup>244</sup> in the early fourth century in the West amounted to only

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242. For scholarly works regarding a historical outline of papal primacy; see Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origin to the Present*, trans. John Otto and Linda Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996); Russell Shaw, *Papal Primacy in the Third Millennium* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publisher, 2000), in particular 35-78; Christian Hornung, "Siricius and the Rise of the Papacy," and Geoffrey Dunn, "Innocent I and the First Synod of Toledo," in *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, ed. Geoffrey Dunn (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2015); and Collins, *Keeper of the Keys of Heaven*, 22-72.

243. The low offices included such imperial positions as *praetor*, *questor*, *vicarious*, *comes*, *curator*, and *tribunes*.

244. Such positions in the highest office in the West included the office of praetorian prefects of Italy, Gaul, and Africa as well as urban prefect of Rome, proconsul of Africa, and various high military positions.

2.7% whereas in the mid-fifth century that percentage increased to 50%.<sup>245</sup> By then, Christians had a strong presence in the senate; the Church was actively involved in charitable works; and the bishop of Rome was, in some fashion, responsible for transforming Rome from an imperial capital to an ecclesiastical capital. Rome, because of Christian leadership, was once again *caput mundi* albeit a much smaller *mundus*. It was from ancient Rome that the world received an empire and a legal system that was unprecedented. During the fifth century, that old Rome became strongly associated with the person of its bishop. By the mid-century, bishops of Rome had already begun to assert and attempt to exercise an understanding of primacy over theological and jurisdictional matters. Of particular importance were the contributions to Roman primacy by Damasus I, Siricius, and Innocent I.

During the papacy of Damasus (366-384), Theodosius I convened the First Council of Constantinople in 381. From the perspective of western empire, as previously noted, one of the most contentious and highly controversial decisions of that council was to elevate the status of Constantinople to a patriarchal see. The Council of Nicaea in 325 had recognized and maintained the custom that the sees of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch had jurisdiction over communities in their particular locations.<sup>246</sup> The Council of Nicaea further decreed, based on

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245. Salzman, *The Making of Christian Aristocracy*; see Tables 5.2 and 6.2, pp. 227-9.

246. Canon 6, p. 9, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, vol. 1; ed. Tanner, 9. "The ancient customs of Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis shall be maintained, according to which the bishop of Alexandria has authority over all these places, since a similar custom exists with reference to the bishop of Rome. Similarly the prerogatives of the churches are to be preserved. In general the following principle is evident: if anyone is made bishop without the consent of the metropolitan, the great synod determines that such a one shall not be bishop. If however two or three by reason of personal rivalry dissent from the common vote of all, provided it is reasonable and in accordance with the church's canon, the vote of the majority shall prevail." Τα αρχαία ἐθὴ κρατεῖται τὰ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ καὶ Λιβύῃ καὶ Πενταπόλει, ὥστε τὸν τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐπίσκοπον πάντων τούτων εἶναι τὴν ἐξουσίαν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῷ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ἐπίσκοπῳ τούτο συνθεῖς ἐστὶν ὁμοίως καὶ κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἀλλαῖς ἐπαρχίαις, τὰ πρεσβεία σωζέσθαι ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Καθόλου δὲ προδηλόν ἐκεῖνο, ὅτι εἰ τις χωρὶς γνώμης τοῦ μητροπολίτου γενοῖτο ἐπίσκοπος, τὸν τοιοῦτον ἡ μεγάλη συνόδος ὥρισε μὴ δεῖν εἶναι ἐπίσκοπον. Ἐὰν μὲν τοι τῇ κοινῇ πάντων ψήφῳ, ἐν λόγῳ οὐσῃ καὶ κατὰ κανόνα ἐκκλησιαστικόν, δύο ἢ τρεῖς δι' οὐκ εὐνοίας ἀντιλεγῶσι, κρατεῖται ἡ τῶν πλείονων ψήφος.

established custom, that Jerusalem should be given some measure of honor among the other patriarchal sees, yet it was not raised to the status of a metropolitan see.<sup>247</sup> The argument of the council Fathers in Constantinople was that the pre-eminence of Constantinople had increased because it was now the imperial capital of the empire, it should be recognized as a patriarchal see and ranked after Rome. Damasus argued that Rome exercised primacy because of apostolic tradition and not imperial location.<sup>248</sup> He rejected the desire of the Council to elevate the status of the new imperial city. Damasus firmly planted the primacy of Rome on the tombs of Peter and Paul.<sup>249</sup> It was by virtue of these two saints that the bishop of Rome received primacy according to the argument presented by Damasus. His argument also had a self-preservation motive. He needed to boost the prestige of his office in order to quell the dissidents who felt his election was invalid and later accused him of homicide.<sup>250</sup>

After Damasus, his successor Siricius (384-399) furthered the claim of Roman primacy through a series of decretals. Prior to Siricius, the bishops of Rome sent out encyclicals to various western bishops in order to provide instruction on certain matters such as the treatment of heretics. Siricius concluded that these letters had universal application and should set a uniform standard within the Church for dealing with such matters. Chadwick observes: “In the

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247. Canon 7, p. 65, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, vol. 1; ed. Tanner, 65. “Since there prevails a custom and ancient tradition to the effect that the bishop of Aelia is to be honored, let him be granted everything consequent upon this honour, saving the dignity proper to the metropolitan.” Επειδη συνηθεια κεκρατηκε και παραδοσις αρχαια, ωστε τον εν Αιλια επισκοπον, τιμασθαι. Εχετω την ακολονθιαν της, τιμης, τη μητροπολει σωζομενου τον οικειου αξιωματος. See also, Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 203-5.

248. For a discussion of the apostolic roots of Roman primacy; see Brett Whalen, *The Medieval Papacy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 31-3.

249. In the Roman Synod of 378, Damasus argued that the Roman bishop should have jurisdiction over all other bishops based on the authority given Peter and his successors. The Synod further argued that the bishop of Rome was to be judged by a council of bishops or the emperor. No single bishop had authority to reprove or reprimand the Roman bishop. For the Roman Synod and the jurisdiction of the Roman; see Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 317-8.

250. For the controversy the surrounded the election Damasus; see John-Peter Pham, *Heirs of the Fisherman: Behind the Scenes of Papal Death and Succession* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-9.



archives he found that Liberius had sent out encyclicals addressed to several western provinces . . . . He describes these encyclicals as ‘*generalia decretal.*’<sup>251</sup> Siricius wrote his decretals in similar fashion to imperial decretals which were binding authoritative decrees issued by the emperor.<sup>252</sup> Siricius seized upon the occasion to use the first recognized Roman decretal by responding to a letter sent by bishop Himerius of Tarragona in 385.<sup>253</sup> Bishop Himerius originally wrote to Damasus regarding the validity of baptisms celebrated by heretics, what to do with those who denied their faith during the persecutions, dealings with wayward priests, and other matters affecting Church order. Damasus, however, died prior to responding to Himerius’s concerns. Siricius took up the matters and addressed Himerius and the bishops of the neighboring provinces. He asserted that it was his duty, as bishop of Rome, to address these concerns: “We do not refuse an adequate response to your request for counsel, since in regard to Our duty, We are not free to hide or to remain silent. . . . We carry the weight of all who are oppressed; or, rather those borne in Us by the blessed apostle Peter, who in all things . . . protects

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251. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 325.

252. Hornung, “Siricius and the Rise of the Papacy,” 64, comments that the terms used by Siricius present an official and legal nature to his declarations which were closely identified with imperial legislation. He notes: “Using terms of Roman law, Siricius tries to express his new papal conception of office at the beginning of his episcopate in his first letter.”

253. Alberto Ferreiro asserts that the letter sent to Himerius of Tarragona is considered important to scholars of Roman primacy because it was the first papal decretal and as a decretal it represented a departure from previous encyclicals sent out by the bishop of Rome. His research demonstrates that previous encyclicals had a pastoral tone and Siricius’s decretals struck an authoritative one which distinguished it. Ferreiro claims: “The decretal of Pope Siricius marked an important advancement of Petrine ecclesiology and the authority of the Roman see in the Latin West. . . . Pope Siricius’ decretal not only represents novelty and continuity in the exercise of papal authority in the fourth century. . . . the decretal experienced broad diffusion mainly in the Latin West;” “Pope Siricius and Himerius of Tarragona (385): Provincial Papal Intervention in the Fourth Century,” in *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, ed, Geoffrey Dunn (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), 85. For his argument on the language and use of the decretals by Siricius; see pp. 74-81.

and defends the successors of his ministry.”<sup>254</sup> Siricius’s decretal to Himerius et al. and its definitive tone of authority took on the appearance of imperial decrees and suggested a hierarchical system. By borrowing the format of imperial decretals, Siricius established for himself a hierarchy that mirrored imperial practices. As the emperor was to his imperial court officials, the bishop of Rome hoped to become to his fellow bishops.<sup>255</sup>

Innocent I (402-417) continued the use of decretals, a precedent set by Siricius. His contribution to the development of Roman primacy can be found in a series of decretals that were sent to the bishops of Apulia and Calabria circa 411 regarding the removal of Modestus from episcopal office and to the bishops of Africa in 416 regarding the Pelagian controversy. Although Apulia was under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, who was the metropolitan, Innocent approached the issue of Modestus’s suitability for the episcopate with a certain degree of authority. He established a panel to investigate Modestus. The bishops there felt that Modestus was ambitious and unsuitable for episcopal office. Innocent asserted that if Modestus was found unworthy of the office, Innocent authorized the bishops to remove him. This move of impaneling a delegation for this type of investigation was traditionally the work of a synod. Innocent bypassed such procedure and acted without the consent or even the convocation of a synod. He felt that he possessed the authority as bishop of Rome to settle that matter.<sup>256</sup> Innocent’s decretals to the bishops of Africa provided a further development of his understanding of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. In this decretal, he informed the bishops of

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254. Siricius, *Directa ad decessorem*, Proem 1, line 181, Heinrich Denzinger: *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*; ed. Fastiggi, 71. *Consultationi tuae responsum competens non negamus, quia officii Nostri consideratione non est Nobis dissimulare, non est tacere libertas. . . . Porta musonera omnium qui gravantur; quin immo haec portat in Nobis beatus Apostolus Petrus, qui Nos in omnibus . . . administrationis suae protegit et tuetur heredes.*

255. Hornung, “Siricius and the Rise of the Papacy,” 64-71.

256. For the developing sense of Innocent’s authority, see Geoffrey Dunn, “Innocent I’s Letter to the Bishops of Apulia,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 30-34.

Africa that it was by divine decree and not mere human authority that he acted. Innocent also insisted that all issues of great concern should be decided solely by Rome.

Damasus had based the primacy of Rome on the apostolic tradition; more so he claimed primacy due to the fact that the tombs of Peter and Paul were located within his jurisdiction. Siricius began to develop a juridical foundation for primacy. It was his belief that the bishop of Rome held an eminent legal status over other bishops because of his connection to Peter. Based on the Roman laws of succession, Siricius believed that Peter's charge was passed onto himself, the bishop of Rome, an argument that would be developed by Leo. Innocent advocated that the primacy of the bishop of Rome was conferred by divine decree. Yet it was Leo who provided a legal theory to support the primacy of the bishop of Rome over the Church.

Leo understood that the value of Rome was not its historical past, but the historical reality of the presence of Peter.<sup>257</sup> He asserted that any honor and respect offered to the bishop of Rome were in effect marks of respect and love for Peter:

He [Peter] too rejoices in your affection. He embraces the observance instituted by our Lord among those who have a share in his honor. He approves the very well-ordered charity of the entire Church, which receives as Peter the one who occupies his see which does not grow lukewarm in its love for so great a shepherd, not even in the person of so inferior an heir."<sup>258</sup>

In his sermons on the anniversary of his elevation as bishop of Rome, Leo put forward his understanding of the unique role designated to Peter. Leo preached that the Church was entrusted to Peter and not to the other Apostles: "He was ordained before the others so that, when

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257. George Demacopoulos gives an excellent exposition of the four homilies of Leo that stress the Petrine authority over the other churches as the foundation; see *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourses and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 41-50.

258. Leo I, *Tractus*, 2, lines 35-9, CCL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 20, brackets added. *De uestro itaque et ipse gaudet affect et in consortibus honoris sui obseruantiam dominicae institutionis amplectitur, probans ordinatissiman totius Ecclesiae caritatem quae in Petri sede Petrum suscipit et a tanti amore pastoris nec in persona tam inparis tepescit haeredis.*

he is called rock, declared foundation, installed as doorkeeper for the kingdom of heaven, appointed arbiter of binding and loosing . . . we might know through the very mysteries of these appellations what sort of fellowship he had with Christ.”<sup>259</sup> He continued: “He now manages the things entrusted to him more completely and more effectively. He carries out every aspect of his duties and responsibilities in him and with him through whom he has been glorified.”<sup>260</sup> Leo established for himself in this sermon the foundation of the bishop of Rome as the “heir of Peter.”<sup>261</sup> From this kinship, Leo acquired a strong sense of the primacy of Rome. He accepted as truth that he, like Peter, had been entrusted with a responsibility to govern the Church not only in Rome, but also throughout the world.

The expression “heir of Peter” in the Roman world would have taken on a greater reality over and beyond a religious significance. Walter Ullmann argued that Leo needed to emphasize the intimate relationship between Peter and the bishop of Rome, if the claim of Roman primacy was going to be effective, it needed to be based on a solid juridical foundation. Ullmann contends: “In order to act and to speak as St. Peter would have spoken, it was therefore necessary to rely upon something firmer, something more profound and better grounded than the mere fact of Peter’s death in Rome or his chair or his tomb.”<sup>262</sup> There was a clear juridical component to the status of an heir, namely, the heir was regarded as the living legal continuation of the

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259. *Sermo*. 3, lines 60-5, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 23. *Sic enim prae caeteris ordinatus, ut dum petra dicitur, dum fundamentum pronuntiatur, dum regni caelorum ianitor constituitur, dum ligandorum soluendorumque arbiter . . . mansura etiam in caelis iudiciorum suorum definitione, praeficitur, ipsi cum Christo esset societas, per ipsa appellationum ejus mysteria nosceremus.*

260. *Sermo*. 3, lines 65-71, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 23. *Qui nunc plenius et potentius ea quae sibi commissa sunt peragit . . . Si quid itaque a nobis recte agitur, recteque discernitur, si quid a misericordia Dei . . . illius est operum atque meritorum, cuius in sede sua uiuit potestas.*

261. The terminology of “heir of Peter” was not a concept explicitly introduced by Leo. Kristina Sessa examines writings of several other bishops of Rome and early Church Fathers that spoke about apostolic succession and the role of the bishop of Rome prior to and after Leo. See *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012), 199-205. What is unique about Leo’s approach to the terminology of heir is that he added “unworthy” to the claim of heir of Peter.

262. Walter Ullmann, “Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 11(April 1960), 28.

deceased. Ullmann states: “According to Roman law the heir continues the deceased – this was one of the most fundamental Roman law principles relating to the law of inheritance; it is based on the principle of juristic continuity between the deceased and the heir.”<sup>263</sup> Building on the foundation of Ullmann’s work, Kristina Sessa notes: “In Roman law, the heir was considered to be legally indistinguishable from the testator; he (or she) assumed the deceased’s rights and obligations and was expected to carry them out as if he were the testator himself.”<sup>264</sup> From a legal point of view, the heir assumed the rights and privileges of the deceased. The physical life of a person might come to an end, but their rights and duties continued on in their heirs.

Leo had embraced this aspect of Roman law by the rhetoric he chose. He defined his role as bishop of Rome in conjunction with his relationship to Peter. Leo determined that the power of Peter had been transferred to the bishop of Rome by virtue of succession. He preached: “Regard him as present in the lowliness of my person. Honor him. In him continues to reside the responsibility of all shepherds, along with the protection of those sheep entrusted to them. His dignity does not fade even in an unworthy heir.”<sup>265</sup> As the unworthy heir, Leo believed that he was, in fact, the physical representation of Peter and that Peter lived on through him. The Church was not deprived of the presence of Peter because he resided in the office of the bishop of Rome. Leo commented: “This pattern of truth remains. Persevering in the fortitude he

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263. Ullmann, “Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy,” 33.

264. Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority*, 202. Also, see Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 20-23: the three basic legal rights afforded to Leo: the pope is identical to Peter; the pope is the immediate successor to Peter because he continues the legal persona of Peter; and all papal pronouncements depend not on the person of the bishop but the character of Peter.

265. *Sermo*. 3, line 84, *CCSL* 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 23. *Ut in persona humilitatis meae ille intelligatur, ille hono retur, in quo et omnium pastorum sollicitudo cum commendatarum sibi ouium custodia perseurat, et cuius dignitas etiam in indigno herede non deficit.*

received, blessed Peter does not relinquish his government of the Church.”<sup>266</sup> To further stress the special role and identity of the bishop of Rome, Leo impressed upon the bishops a fundamental aspect of the Roman primacy as he conceived it. Because the bishop of Rome was the “heir to Peter,” when the Roman bishop spoke all were to receive his words as the words of Peter. Leo stated: “When we present our exhortations to your holy ears, consider that you are being addressed by the one in place of whom we exercise this function.”<sup>267</sup>

Leo established a legal and doctrinal foundation for Roman primacy based on an adaptation of a facet of the Roman law that dealt with the transfer of duties and rights of the deceased. In the case of the bishop of Rome, the tomb of Peter is located in that city and the bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter. From a scriptural perspective, Peter was entrusted with the care of the universal flock. While not abandoning Scripture, Leo made the same claim of universal care over the entire Church, both in the East and the West, based on his *quasi*-legal status. For Leo, Roman primacy was not only based in theory, but also in praxis. What follows is Leo’s application of the theory of Roman primacy in matters that involved the churches in the East and West.

### 3.2.2: Leo: *Defensor fidei*

For Leo, Rome was essentially a *corpus Christianum*, a Christian city. He believed that Rome played a significant part in God’s universal plan of salvation. He also believed that as the “heir of Peter,” he had been entrusted with safeguarding the faith and the care of the churches.

Leo must have understood that it was his duty to bring an end to Christological controversies

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266. *Sermo*. 3, lines 58-60, *CCSL* 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 22-3. *Manet ergo dispositio ueritatis, et beatus Petrus in accepta fortitudine perseverans suscepta Ecclesiae gubernacula non relinquit.*

267. *Sermo*. 3, line 93, *CCSL* 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 24. *Cum ergo cohortationes nostras auribus uestrae sanctitatis adhibemus, ipsum uobis cuius uice fungimur, loqui credite.*

because as Neil observes: “it threatened the fabric that held society together. . . . An orthodox faith was essential for communal safety and prosperity.”<sup>268</sup>

One instance in which Leo offered a defense of the faith and asserted the primacy of Rome came in 451 with the Council of Chalcedon. The historical foundation for the Council of Chalcedon in 451 grew out of a council twenty years earlier in 431 at Ephesus. At the Council of Ephesus, the Church experienced the pain of division. This division was based upon theological interpretations and political ideologies, and it would plague future councils and threaten the unity of the Church. One of the most provocative matters of the council was the controversy concerning the title of *Theotokos* for the Blessed Virgin Mary and its ramifications for defining the nature and person of Christ. Although no creed was promulgated from this council, a definitive statement of agreement regarding the Nicene Creed was issued. Aloys Grillmeier concludes: “So for the Fathers of 431 Nicaea provided the really authoritative christological formula, the simple wording of which was once again no more than re-presentation of the apostolic faith and the tradition of the primitive church.”<sup>269</sup>

The Christological controversy regarding the nature and person of Christ continued quietly until it erupted again in 447, leading to a council in the city of Ephesus in 449, and eventually in the convening of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. It was at the later council that Leo attempted to assert his role as Peter. Although Nestorius, deposed patriarch of Constantinople, and the heresy that bore his name, were officially condemned in 431, factions of Nestorianism remained. Dioscorus, successor of Cyril in Alexandria, and the priest-archimandrite, Eutyches, became outspoken critics of this heresy. Dioscorus’s zeal against Nestorianism led him to attempt to eradicate proponents of the heresy around Antioch, which

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268. Neil, *Leo the Great*, 29.

269. Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, rev. ed. (1965; repr. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 486.

was beyond his jurisdiction. Frend notes that this was also a clear violation of the First Council of Constantinople which forbade bishops from interfering in matters of other sees.<sup>270</sup> Dioscorus eventually fell out of favor with Leo because of the active role Dioscorus played in the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, which deposed the patriarch of Constantinople, Flavian.

The relationship between Leo and Eutyches was originally cordial and mutually respectful. It was Eutyches who informed Leo that there appeared to be a revival of Nestorianism in the East. Leo was grateful for the information and wrote: “Your Charity’s letter has brought to our attention the fact that, through the efforts of certain persons, there has been a revival of the Nestorian heresy. We reply that your concern in this matter has pleased us, for the letter we received is an indication of your attitude.”<sup>271</sup> Eutyches bemoaned the fact that Flavian, patriarch of Constantinople, misunderstood his zeal and labeled him a heretic. He informed Leo that he adhered to all that has been put forward by the councils of the Church:

And I am in harmony with the beliefs of the holy and elect of God. . . . All these I have considered Catholic and trustworthy, and I have venerated them as my holy teachers. On the contrary, I condemn Nestorius and Apollinaris, and all heretics back to Simon [Magus] and those who say that the flesh of the Lord came down from heaven rather than the divine Word Himself.<sup>272</sup>

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270. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 764-5.

271. Leo I, *Epist.* 20, line 1, *PL* 76; trans. Hunt, 81. *Ad notitiam nostrum tuae dilectionis epistola retulisti, quod Nestoriana haeresis quorundam rursus studiis pullularet: Sollicitudinem tuam ex hac parie nobis placuisse rescribimus.*

272. *Epist.* 21, line 3, *PL* 76; trans. Hunt, 86. *Et cunctis quaecumque sunt eandem fidem a sancta eadem synodo . . . cujus synodi dux et princeps fuit. . . . Eumet omnes eos orthodoxos et fideles habui, et honoravi tamquam sanctos, et magistros. Anathema autem dico Nestorio et Apollinari et omnibus haeretici usque ad Simonem, et qui dicunt carnem Domini nostri Jesu Christi de coelo descendisse . Ipse enim qui est Verbum Dei descendit de coele sine carne.*



At face value, Eutyches issued strong words of condemnation, emphatic acceptance of the faith, and strict adherence to conciliar teachings. It was no wonder that Leo affectionately wrote:

“May God keep you safe, dearly beloved son.”<sup>273</sup>

Eutyches sought Leo’s help and protection against what he felt was erroneous assertions and assaults by Flavian. Eutyches further condemned Flavian for violating the seventh canon of Ephesus, which prohibited any additions to the Creed.<sup>274</sup> Leo asked Flavian for a complete analysis of the charges brought against Eutyches. Flavian complied and sent an initial report to Leo. What Leo learned from Flavian’s account must have sent him into utter disbelief. George Demacopoulos describes Leo’s reaction: “When Leo was informed of Eutyches’ teaching, the pontiff was aghast.”<sup>275</sup>

Flavian informed Leo that he had been duped: “These men first of all seem to be from us, but they are not from us. . . . it is necessary to be forewarned about their wickedness, lest some are led away from their own steadfastness.”<sup>276</sup> Flavian sent Leo the report of the findings of the local synod that was held in Constantinople in which Eutyches was given an ample opportunity to defend himself. At this synod, it was decided that Eutyches had promoted heretical beliefs

273. *Epist.* 20, line 1, *PL* 76; trans. Hunt, 81. *Deus te custodiat incolumem, dilectissime fili.*

274. Canon 7, p. 65, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, vol. 1; ed. Tanner, 65. “When these documents had been read out, the holy synod decreed the following. It is not permitted to produce or write or compose any other creed except the one which was defined by the holy fathers who were gathered together in the holy Spirit at Nicæa. Any who dare to compose or bring forth or produce another creed for the benefit of those who wish to turn from Hellenism or Judaism or some other to the knowledge of the truth, if they are bishops or clerics they should be deprived of their respective charges and if they are laymen they are to be anathematized.” Ωρισεν η αγια συνοδος, ετεραν πιστιν μηδενι εξειναι προφερειν, ηγουν συγγραφειν η συντιθεναι, παρα την ορισθεισαν παρα των αγιων πατερων των εν τη Νικαεων συναχθεντων πολει, ουν Αγιω Πνευματι. Τους δε τολμωντας η συντιθεναι πιστιν ετεραν, ηγουν προκομιζειν τοις θελουσιν επιστρεφειν εις επιγνωσιν της αληθειας, η εξ ελληνισμον, η εξ Ιουδαϊσμού, ήγουν εξ αιρεσεως οιασδηποτε, τούτους, ει μεν ειεν επίσκοποι ή κληρικοί, αλλόττριους τους επισκόπους της επισκοπής, καί τους κληρικούς του κλήρου'ει δε λαϊκοί ειεν, άναθεματίζεσθαι.

275. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 60.

276. *Epist.* 22, line 2, *PL* 76; translation my own. *Isti primo quidem videntur ex nobis esse, sed non sunt ex nobis. . . . quos oportet praescientes cavere, ne malitia eorum quidam seducti abscindantur a propria firmitate.*

regarding the nature of Jesus Christ. Flavian described Eutyches's position: "Openly in the heart of our holy Synod he affirmed, saying: our Lord Jesus Christ should not be understood as having two natures after the incarnation, in one substance and in one person . . . but the Lord's body indeed was not the body of a man."<sup>277</sup>

Leo learned the actual content of Eutyches's beliefs. In an attempt to curb any support for Eutyches, Leo wrote to the emperor Theodosius II. He appealed first to the emperor's love for the Church and faithfulness to the Church's teachings. He reminded the emperor that it was in his best interest to defend and protect the Church, which provided stability for his empire. Leo noted: "For your realm is in the best possible position when men serve the eternal and unchangeable Trinity while professing but one divinity."<sup>278</sup> Theodosius II responded to Leo by convening a council in Ephesus. On being informed of the imperial decision to convene a council, Leo sent notification that he was to be represented by the bishop Julius, the priest Renatus, who died while travelling to the council, the deacon Hilary, and a papal notary Dulcitus. Along with these three legates who carried with them Leo's authority over the matter of Eutyches, Flavian received a letter from Leo, referred to as his *Tome*, to be read at the council. Leo's *Tome* was a treatise on the Incarnation of Christ as well as a letter of support for Flavian. As far as reading the letter on the council floor, his legates were not permitted to do so.

The Council opened in 449. By imperial decree, Dioscorus, the bishop of Alexandria, was selected to be the convener. As previously noted, Dioscorus was in league with Eutyches, and prior to the council meeting, he restored the good name of Eutyches by declaring his views

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277. *Epist.* 22, line 3, *PL* 76; translation my own. *Aperte coram sancta synodo nostra affirmabat, dicens: Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum non oportere ex duabus naturis post inhumanationem, in una subsistentia et in una persona a nobis agnoscendum. . . . sed Domini corpus non esse quidem corpus hominis.*

278. *Epist.* 24, line 1, *PL* 76; trans. Hunt, 89. *Quia tunc est optimus regni vestri status, quando sempiternae et incommutabili Trinitati in unius Divinitatis confessione servitur.*

were not heretical. As the council proceeded, Flavian was deposed and sent into exile.<sup>279</sup> In his stead, Anatolius, who was a friend of Eutyches and Dioscorus, was made Patriarch of Constantinople. It was reported by Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, in a letter to Leo that Dioscorus acted in a less than desirable manner. As a result, Leo dismissed the council and disavowed its proceedings. He immediately censured the council and called it a *latrocinium*, a larceny or robbery. The Second Council of Ephesus is known as the “Robber Council” because Leo felt a travesty had taken place.<sup>280</sup>

After Leo denounced Dioscorus and Anatolius, he sent an appeal to Theodosius exposing the abusive conduct of Dioscorus.<sup>281</sup> He further asked the emperor to convene another council so as to undo the damage inflicted on the Church by the “Robber Council.” Leo requested a council be convened in Italy:

The sacraments are being block by a few imprudent men, all of our churches and all the people under our care with tears implore you, so that your loyalty may be reclaimed, give Flavian the rank of bishop, and celebrate with joy a general Synod in Italy, in order that all the offenses can be expelled . . . and that there may be doubt in the Faith.<sup>282</sup>

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279. The cause of Flavian’s deposition was based on the fact that Dioscorus believed he added to the Creed. The First Council of Ephesus strictly prohibited any additions or subtractions from the Creed; see Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 561.

280. George Demacopoulos summarizes the council in these words: “From Leo’s perspective, The Synod of Ephesus in 449 was a complete disaster: Eutyches was restored to his prior position; the archbishop of Constantinople, Flavian, was condemned; the Roman representatives were barred from participating; and Leo’s *Tome* was completely ignored. Not only had the council authenticated a Christological position that was fundamentally different from his own view, but Roman ecclesiastical authority had also been humiliated on an international scale;” *The Invention of Peter*, 60.

281. Leo writes to the emperor on two occasions to inform him about Dioscorus’ behavior at the council, refer to *Epsit* 44, 122-6; *Epsit* 48, 127.

282. *Epist.* 43, line 3, *PL* 76; translation my own. *Cui sacramento, quia impie nunc a paucis imprudentibus obviator, omnes partium nostrarum Ecclesiae, omnes mansuetadini vestrae cum genitibus et lacrymis supplicant sacerdotes, ut quia et nostri fideliter reclamationis, et eisdem libellum appellationis Flavianus episcopus dedit, generalem synodum jubeatis intra Italiam celebrari, quae omnes offensiones ita aut repellat . . . ne ultra aliquid sit vel in fide dubium.*

Leo drew on the political and religious alliance initiated by the emperor's older sister, Pulcheria,<sup>283</sup> and sent to her a copy of the letter remitted to the emperor, but it never reached her. Theodosius II died in a freak accident when he was thrown from his horse, before the calling of such a council. Flavian also died before he was rightfully restored to his see. Leo was adamant that the injustice done to Flavian at Ephesus II be adjudicated.

At Theodosius's untimely passing in 450, his sister Pulcheria assumed control of the empire. Later that year she married a Thracian soldier named Marcian, who was proclaimed the new Augustus. Leo's desire for a new council was fulfilled when, following Pulcheria's wishes, Marcian called for it; yet, Leo was dismayed to learn that the new emperor was to open this council in the East and not the West. It was Leo's contention that a new council in the East might be a repeat of the events of Ephesus II; therefore, he attempted to delay the council, but to no avail.

Prior to this council actually being convened, Leo established a western ecclesiastical position in the East that would have an effect on matters both religious and political. He set up an ambassadorial post that was to be a liaison between the pope and the emperor. The office that Leo founded was the position of *apocrisiarius*, a post that Gregory the Great would hold in the sixth century. The primary function of the *apocrisiarius* was to represent the interests of the western Church in the eastern imperial court. Julian, from the Greek island Cos, was the first *apocrisiarius* sent to Constantinople and was to act on behalf of Leo. By virtue of his position,

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283. She was an important ally to Leo because she opposed Eutyches and Theodosius II's support for the monophysitis.

Julian was a confident of Leo and a close collaborator.<sup>284</sup> Leo called on him to influence and advise the emperor and other imperial officials,<sup>285</sup> to set into motion in Constantinople policies and procedures that were already in effect in Rome,<sup>286</sup> and to reprimand heretical teachings.<sup>287</sup>

The new council opened in Chalcedon in 451. The original *Tome* that Leo had submitted to the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 was read at Chalcedon and accepted but not taken as an authoritative statement to which it was bound. The council declared that the creed promulgated at Constantinople I was the official creed of the Church and suitable for worship and defining the faith. Leo might have enjoyed basking in a hard fought victory had it not been for the final section of the council's report. In recognizing Leo's primacy of honor, they appealed to him to ratify a major decision they reached. They notified him: "We inform you of other things that we have decided for order and stability of the church, we are confident that your holiness once you learn about them will accept and confirm them."<sup>288</sup>

The council Fathers, in a session without the presence of the Roman delegates, reaffirmed the declaration that "the See of Constantinople have honor, being placed second in order to Rome."<sup>289</sup> This re-assertion of primacy of honor, known as Canon 28, was obviously denied by Leo. His rationale for denying their appeal was strikingly similar to the argument used by Damasus in responding to the original Canon 3 from Constantinople which claimed that Rome's

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284. Even though Julian was to act on behalf of Leo, the relationship between the two had become strained after the council when Julian tried to persuade Leo into accepting Canon 28 of Chalcedon. Julian was trying to secure unity both politically and religiously between the East and the West. He felt that Leo's acceptance of the canon would open the door to a possible dialogue of unity. Leo adamantly disagreed; see Leo, *Epist* 117. For the nature of the relationship between Leo and Julian; see Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 333-339.

285. *Epist.* 109; 113; 117; 118; and 140

286. *Epist.* 35 and 109

287. *Epist.* 34; 35; 86; and 109.

288. *Epist.* 98, line 4, *PL* 76; translation my own. *Indicamus vero quia et altera quaedam pro rerum ipsarum ordinate quiete, et propter ecclesiasticorum statutorum definitivimus firmitatem, scientes quia et vestra sanctitas addiscens et probatura et confirmatura est eadem.*

289. *Epist.* 98, line 4, *PL* 76; translation my own, brackets added. *Honorem habere Constantinopolitanam quae secunda est ordinata.*

status was conferred by God and not a council or the location of the imperial court.<sup>290</sup> Leo professed that he did not have the right or authority to grant Constantinople a higher status. He acknowledged that indeed on a secular level the “new Rome” in the East was prominent. This, however, was a political or imperial prominence not a spiritual one. According to Leo, Rome was the *caput ecclesiarum*: “Nevertheless, things secular and things religious do not have the same basis; nothing erected is going to be stable apart from the rock which the Lord placed in the foundation.”<sup>291</sup> In other words, both Canon 3 of Constantinople and Canon 28 of Chalcedon argue for the elevation of Constantinople on the basis of its imperial and secular importance. The status of the Church, however, was not determined by imperial authority or position. Leo felt that the Church in Rome was given primacy by Jesus and not by any political entity or even conciliar decrees. This was so vital to Leo’s claim of Roman primacy that he was willing to risk undermining acceptance of the rest of the councils work for almost two years. Yet, what did his understanding of Roman primacy reveal about what he envisioned the role of the bishop of Rome to be? A closer look at his involvement in affairs of the state will shed insight in Leo’s vision of the duties and responsibilities of the bishop of Rome.

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290. See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 428-9 and Aidan Nicholas, *Rome and the Eastern Churches* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 201-3 for Damasus’s response to Canon 3.

291. *Epist.* 104, line 3, *PL* 76; trans. Hunt, 179. *Alia tamen ratio est rerum saecularium, alia divinarum; nec praeter illa, petram quam Dominus in fundamento posuit (Matt. xvi, 18), stabilis erit ulla construction.*

### 3.2.3: Leo: *Defensor Urbis*

Leo maintained that the Roman empire was a useful instrument in the hands of God from its inception.<sup>292</sup> According to Leo, the empire grew quickly because God provided for its growth. On the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, he preached:

The good and just and omnipotent God. . . and this “Word made flesh,” . . . *united* the divine nature to the human in such a way that his abasement to the lowest depths, became our ascent to the heights. *So that the effect of this inexpressible grace might be spread throughout the whole world, divine Providence prepared the Roman Empire with such growth to its boundaries.*<sup>293</sup>

As the empire was reaching greater heights, Christianity was given a vehicle by which it could also grow, allowing bishops to influence both the spiritual and secular worlds. David Gwynn states: “The emergence of the Christian bishop as a figure of fundamental religious, social, and political importance is one of the defining characteristics of Late Antiquity.”<sup>294</sup> Emperors acquired more lands, which meant Christianity would have access to new worlds. As the empire expanded, an infrastructure developed that made all parts of the empire accessible. Roman roads were built primarily for communication, commerce, travel, and military needs, but the roads also provided means for spreading Christianity. Wessels states: “Imperial Rome, in particular, was thought to promote the spread of Christianity by linking neighboring regions and kingdoms under a single rule, thereby making ideas and proclamations spread more quickly and efficiently throughout the vast expanse of the Roman empire.”<sup>295</sup> Again Leo stated: “*The work, divinely*

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292. Neil, *Leo the Great*, 27-9 and Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great*, 87-93 offer insight into Leo’s perception of the importance of Rome in the economy of salvation. Both make the argument that Rome played a vital role in the development of the empire and just as important was Rome’s involvement in the expansion of Christianity.

293. *Sermo*. 82, lines 31-482, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 353. *Deus namque bonus, iustus, omnipotens. . . . Ut illius ad infima inclinatio, nostra fieret ad summa prouectio. Ut autem huius inenarrabilis gratiae per totum mundum diffunderetur effectus, Romanum regnum divina providentia praeeparavit cuius ad eos limites.*

294. Gwynn, “Episcopal Leadership,” 876.

295. Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 365.

*planned, was especially suitable to the incorporation of many kingdoms under one rule. A general proclamation would quickly reach all the people whom the government of one city was protecting.”*<sup>296</sup>

Wessel asserts that Leo introduced a theology of history that demonstrates he grasped the reality of the political and religious importance of Rome. Yet, for Leo, imperial Rome was replaced or transformed by spiritual Rome. She argues that Leo recognized that all signs pointed to the eventual renewal of the imperial city into a Christian one. According to Wessel, the signs included that Rome was the city of the Apostles to which the chief Apostle was sent, where he built up the Church, and was buried. Since Peter was the leader of the Apostles and left Antioch for Rome, the city became the place divinely chosen as the head of the Church and world.<sup>297</sup> As part of a theology of history, it can be seen that Leo felt that Alaric departed in 410 from the city of Rome due to divine intervention. In Leo’s estimation, the city was spared because of the direct involvement of the saints: “Who restored this city to safety? Who snatched it from captivity? Who protected it from slaughter? Was it the games of the circus, or the watchful care of the saints? Assuredly, it was by their prayers that the sentence of divine judgment was appeased, so that we who deserved wrath might be saved for forgiveness.”<sup>298</sup>

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296. *Sermo*. 82, lines 48-55, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 353. *Dispositio enim divinitus operi maxime cogruebat, ut multa regna uno confoederarentur imperio, et cito pervios haberet populos praedicatio generalis, quos unius teneret regimen civitatis.*

297. Here Wessel cites the work of Philip McShane, *La Romanitas et le Pape Léon le Grand: l’apport culturel des institutions impériales à la formation des structures ecclésiastiques*, *Gregorianum* 61, no. 3 (1980): 87-91. Also she distinguishes Leo’s notion of the historical importance of the city of Rome from that of Augustine and Eusebius; see *Leo the Great*, 357-76.

298. *Sermo*. 84, lines 15-19, 48-55, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 361. *Quis hanc urbem reformavit saluti? Quis a captivitate eruit? Quis a caede defendit? Ludus Circensium, an cura sanctorum, quorum utique precibus divinae censurae flexa sententia est, ut qui merebamur iram servaremur ad veniam?* Green comments that Leo, in this anniversary homily commemorating Alaric’s retreat from the city, lamented that little attention was focused on God’s triumph over Alaric. Leo felt that proper credit was not forthcoming for the role of the saints, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great*, 164-5. Neil echoed this and pointed out that Leo considered the withdrawal of Alaric a victory of good over evil or a victory of the saints over the demons; see *Leo the Great*, 118-9.



Leo further believed that there was one person responsible and instrumental in achieving God's plan of salvation. That person was none other than Peter: "Blessed Peter, chief of the order of the apostles, was assigned to the citadel of the Roman empire. The light of Truth, which was revealed for the salvation of all the nations, would then pour itself out more effectively from the head itself through the whole body of the world."<sup>299</sup>

For Leo, Rome is not simply *caput mundi*; but, it is also *caput corporis*. As Leo saw it Peter was sent to Rome to build the Church as instructed by Christ. In order to accomplish this task, he had to promote the faith and have it permeate the city. Once the city was infused with Christianity, it would be a beacon of hope and an example for other communities. Wessel claims: "the Christian faith paved the way for Rome to be transformed into the Christian city it was meant to be. . . . Leo envisioned the terrestrial city, Rome, as so thoroughly transformed by its encounter with the Christian faith as to make the Christian city of Rome the template for understanding how divine providence interacted with the world."<sup>300</sup> Leo delineated the work that lay ahead for Peter:

In this place the opinions of philosophy were about to be trampled on, in this place the emptiness of earthly wisdom was to be dissolved, here the worship of demons was to be overthrown, here the wickedness of all profanation was to be destroyed, where whatever had been established anywhere was enclosed, gathered together by a very diligent superstition.<sup>301</sup>

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299. *Sermo* 82, lines 69-72, 48-55, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 354. *Beatissimus Petrus, apostolici princeps (princeps apostolici ordinis), ad arcem Romani destinatur imperii: ut lux veritatis quae in omnium gentium revelabatur salute, efficacius se ab ipso capite per totum mundi corpus effunderet.*

300. Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 369.

301. *Sermo*. 82, lines 77-87, 48-55, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 354. *Hic conculcandae philosophiae opiniones, hic dissolvende erant terrenae sapientiae vanitates, hic confutandus daemonum cultus, hic omnium sacrificiorum impietas destruenda, ubi diligentissima superstio habebatur collectum quidquid usquam fuerat variis erroribus institutum.*

The Church was entrusted to Peter's care; this city now was handed over to his successor for safe keeping. By virtue of God's plan and Peter's role in that plan, Leo came to appreciate his duty as the "heir of Peter."<sup>302</sup>

Leo's role as bishop in the city that was the *caput mundi* would increase exponentially as he assumed the role of its protector and defender. Because Germanic tribes were moving westward, Leo was now fighting for the heart and the soul of the very city that figured into the salvific mission that was entrusted to Peter and by extension to his heir. Two moments are noteworthy in the overall picture of Leo's ecclesiastical engagement in temporal matters. A great deal of myth surrounds these famous encounters, in which Leo is portrayed as successfully negotiating with Attila the Hun in 452 and somewhat less successfully attempting to spare Rome from destruction at the hands of Gaiseric and the Vandals. Accounts of both instances place Leo at the center of negotiations, seeking terms and conditions of peace on behalf of the people of Rome.<sup>303</sup> Although no concrete historical data exists to verify these encounters, Leo is often portrayed as a commanding figure wielding ecclesial and political power over barbarian leaders. While these depictions make for great story-telling, they distort whatever can be known about these events. A longstanding practice within the Roman empire was for Romans to negotiate terms of peace with enemies.<sup>304</sup> Michael Whitby notes: "It was usually to [its] advantage to confirm the cessation of hostilities with a formal agreement . . . written treaties became

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302. Salzman demonstrated that sermons 82 and 84 clearly indicated that Leo felt a certain responsibility for the spiritual and physical care of the city of Rome; see "Leo the Great: Responses to Crisis," 193-6.

303. See Prosper, *Chronicum Integrum in Dua Partes Distributum*, 2, line 754, PL 51; ed. Stevenson, 431. Prosper reports that Leo met with Gaiseric and convinced him not to burn and destroy the city.

304. Neil observes that it was an acceptable practice for bishops to be used in negotiations of peace treaties, terms for the ransom of prisoners, and even pay the tribute; see *Leo the Great*, 9. Here she cites the work of W. Klingshirn, "Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the Ransoming of Captives in sub-Roman Gaul," *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985): 183-203, as an example of this practice.

increasingly more specific during the fifth century.”<sup>305</sup> Along with the terms of peace, monetary settlements known as tributes were commonly attached. The imperial government considered the tributes examples of diplomacy and Roman generosity. Some may have thought that the payments were unnecessary and a financial strain on the economy, but it remained a vital aspect of negotiating and maintaining peace.<sup>306</sup> The practice of tribute payment was all but abandoned in the early 450s by the new emperor of the East, Marcian. His decision to stop paying the tribute to the Huns was about to wreak havoc in the West and had dire consequences for the city of Rome.

Along with the cessation of the tribute, Attila suffered a defeat in the early summer of 451 at the hands of the Roman commander Aetius, who had once sought the assistance of the Huns.<sup>307</sup> By 452, humiliated by the defeat on the Catalaunian fields in Gaul, angered by the cessation of payment by Marcian, and the broken promise of a bride, Attila mounted a military campaign that took him from the northern regions of Italy straight to the doorstep of Rome. Along with trying to secure tribute money, Attila sought to receive Honoria, the sister of Valentinian III, as his wife. Honoria was secretly romantically involved with one of her servants, Eugenius.<sup>308</sup> Valentinian was fearful that if Honoria married Eugenius they might

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305. Michael Whitby, “War,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare: Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire*, vol. 2, eds. Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 321, brackets added.

306. Humphries articulates the purpose and rationale behind tribute payments as a part of peace settlements. For its ideological foundation; see Mark Humphries, “International Relations,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare: Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire*, vol. 2, eds. Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 259-262.

307. The army of the Huns played a significant role in the career of Aetius as early as 425. It was, however, in 432 that the Huns helped Aetius regain and secure power in the West with military aid that lasted well into the late 430s. For the military aid and role of the Huns in the West; see Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 281-8 and Susan Wessel, “Religious Doctrine and Ecclesiastical Change in the Time of Leo the Great,” in *The Cambridge Companion in the Age of Attila*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 327-8.

308. Neil, *Leo the Great*, 8.

present a challenge to his authority and seize the imperial throne. He devised an insidious plot in which Eugenius would be killed. After Eugenius's death, Valentinian arranged his sister's marriage to a Roman senator who was deeply loyal to him. Honoria, angered at her brother's actions sought help from Attila.

Conscious of the role that Rome played in God's salvific plan, Leo joined a small delegation of Roman aristocrats that met with Attila near Mantua.<sup>309</sup> According to Prosper of Aquitaine, Leo was able to successfully protect the city from annihilation. An anonymous source recounted the effect Leo had on Attila:

No better plan presented itself to the Emperor, Senate, and People, than to send an embassy to seek peace with the savage king. With Avienus, a man of consular rank, and Trigetius, a praetorian prefect, Leo the Pope, relying on God's help which he knew had never failed to aid the actions of the faithful, undertook this task. . . . The king so pleased at the presence of the chief Christian priest . . . gave orders to desist from the war, and, with a promise of peace, departed across the Danube.<sup>310</sup>

There are conflicting accounts of the actual reason why Attila did not continue his advance and cross the Apennines to attack the city. Some accounts claimed that Attila was aware that Alaric had died soon after he attacked Rome and Attila did not want to meet the same fate. Others contended that a vision of Saints Peter and Paul marching with Pope Leo as he went to meet Attila persuaded him to abandon his attack on Rome.<sup>311</sup> These accounts, while making

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309. See Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 204 n.8 and Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 45. Also, Christopher Kelly, "Neither Conquest nor Settlement: Attila's Empire and Its Impact," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. Michael Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 202.

310. Prosper, *Chronicum Integrum in Dua Partes Distributum*, 2, lines 751-2, PL 51; ed. Stevenson, 430-1. *Nihilque inter omnia consilia principis ac senatue, populi que Romani salubrious visum est, quam ut per legatus pax truculentissimi regis expteretur. Suscepit hoc negotium cum viro consular Avieno, et viro praefectorio Trigetio beatissimus papa Leo auxilio Dei fretus, quem sciret numquam piorum laboribus defuisse. . . . ita summi sacerdotis . . . ut bello abstineri praeciperet, et ultra Danubium promissa pace discederet.* Susan Wessel maintains that the missions itself happened, but not the legendary accretions; see *Leo the Great*, 46.

311. Loomis, *Liber Pontificalis*, 101.

for good stories, have little basis in the actual historical reality of the time. Famine, unfavorable weather conditions, and other factors were more likely the cause of Attila's retreat.<sup>312</sup> There are conflicting accounts of the actual reason why Attila did not continue his advance and cross the Apennines to attack the city.

It seems more plausible, however, that military factors caused Attila to halt his advance and withdraw from Italy. His armies had already felt the strain and fatigue of the campaign and were worn out due to famine and disease. By the time the Hunnic army was in Milan, exhaustion had set in and became a major obstacle for any successful advance. Even though the East was focused on its own military campaigns, Marcian had sent aid to his general Aetius, which proved to be extremely beneficial in further weakening the resolve of Attila's army by striking the region of the Danube that was the center of the Hunnic empire. Heather claims: "The combination was deadly, and as in the previous year, the Hun had no choice but to retreat. With some kind of peace or truce in operation, his army rolled back into central Europe."<sup>313</sup>

In 455, the empress Eudoxia was forced into marriage by Maximus, a powerful Roman senator, who was now emperor. After their marriage, she realized he had been responsible for planning the assassination of her husband, Valentinian III. She sought help from Gaiseric and the Vandals in exacting revenge for her murdered husband. Gaiseric likely was already planning to invade Italy, but Eudoxia's letter may have been an added incentive for his campaign. In 442, Valentinian had entered into a peace treaty with Gaiseric that included a promise of marriage

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312. For additional likely factors of Atilla's reversal; see Patrick Howarth, *Attila, King of the Huns: The Man and the Myth* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1994), 134.

313. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 341. The previous year's battle that Heather referred to was Attila's defeat on the Catalaunian fields. See also Norwich, *The Popes*, 23-24.

between his daughter, Eudocia, to Gaiseric's son, Huneric.<sup>314</sup> Nevertheless, Maximus, the new emperor, had his son, Palladius marry Eudocia. With Eudoxia's request for help, and angered by Maximus's actions, Gaiseric sailed to Rome from Africa.<sup>315</sup> Maximus was murdered before the Vandals reached Rome. Lacking any imperial presence, Leo sought to negotiate with this latest aggressor. He was not able to prevent the pillaging of the city, but he may have helped prevent its complete destruction and the slaughter of its inhabitants.<sup>316</sup>

It was Leo's view that Rome had been placed in his hands by virtue of his status as successor and "heir of Peter." He felt that he was charged with maintaining and securing that which had been handed on to him. Leo's understanding of his role as bishop of Rome developed over time. It entailed remaining steadfast in the claim of Roman primacy, promoting orthodoxy in all aspects of the empire, and defending the city that played a role in God's mission. Another key aspect to Leo's perception of the Roman bishop's role was tending to the physical in addition to the spiritual needs of the people in his care. It is this latter aspect of his ministry to the people of Rome that is now examined.

### 3.2.4: Leo: *Cura Animarum et Cura Romae*

In the wake of these troubles in Rome, Leo sought to assure the people that God's kindness and mercy would remain with them. Through a series of sermons and letters, he called on Christians not to be mere spectators or passive agents of the faith. They had to be fully vested

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314. Primarily, Gaiseric and the Vandals were given Carthage. In a later agreement, Valentinian offered his daughter to the son of Gaiseric; see Frank M. Clover, "Gaiseric and Attila," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 1, 1st Quarter (1973): 106-109.

315. Information regarding the breach of agreement by Maximus is found in Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 88.

316. Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 48, notes that little could have been done to stop Gaiseric from pillaging the city. In fact, she references Prosper who realized that Leo could not prevent the Vandals from having free rein of the city.

in the faith and show acts of charity in order to warrant God's mercy and protection for them and the city. For this reason, Leo encouraged them to hold steadfast to the faith by turning away from pagan rituals and turning to God: "Let all the mist of earthly reasoning be driven far off, let the smoke of worldly wisdom be cleared away from the "eyes of the enlightened" faith. . . . Teaching that we follow comes from God."<sup>317</sup> To facilitate that recognition, Leo called for a deeper commitment to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for those who were Christian. These three actions of the individual were the pillars on which Leo would not only reinforce the Christianization of the city, but also highlight Rome's role in the economy of salvation. He declared: "Propitiation of God is sought by prayer, concupiscence of the flesh is extinguished by fasting, and 'sins are redeemed by almsgiving'."<sup>318</sup> Prayer and the fasting were what the individual must do to assist in remaining faithful to God, whereas almsgiving enabled the person to act in similar fashion to God.

Although Leo highlighted all three religious actions, he paid particular attention to that of almsgiving. For Leo, the *cura animarum* allowed him the opportunity to exercise his *cura Romae*. Almsgiving offered Leo means by which the physical needs of the people might be met. The resources gathered through a schedule of Church collections provided for the needs of the less fortunate. In Leo's estimation those who were less fortunate constituted two distinct groups of people. The first group was constituted of those who were sick, weak, orphans, widows, and the destitute. He called on Christians to tend to their needs: "Let us rejoice in refreshing the poor. . . . Let us be happy in clothing those whose nakedness we have covered with the needed

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317. *Sermo*. 27, lines 7-10, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 110. *Abigatur procul terrenarum caligo rationum, et ab illuminatae fidei oculis mundanae sapientiae fumus abscedat . . . credimus divina est doctrina quam sequimur.*

318. *Sermo*. 12 lines 104-5, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 53. *Oratione enim propitatio Dei quaeritur, ieiunio concupiscentia carnis exstinguitur, elemosynis peccata redimuntur.*

garments. Let our human kindness touch the sick in their confinement, the feeble in their weakness . . . orphans in their destitution, and widows in the sorrow of their loneliness.”<sup>319</sup>

The second category of the less fortunate was a group known as the “shame-faced” poor. This group was distinct from the destitute poor of the city. Those belonging to this category were once well-to-do citizens who had encountered financial woes. Leo also made an effort to include those who were “exiles in their suffering”<sup>320</sup> in the charitable program of the Church.<sup>321</sup> As to the number of those who were poor in the city, contemporary scholars agree that exact numbers are difficult to determine because the population of the city in the mid-fifth century is unknown. Brown speculates that significant numbers of the people fell into either of the two categories: “Yet, Leo’s ‘poor’ were strangely faceless. His sermons gave no sense of a city filled with large crowds of the destitute. It is a significant silence.”<sup>322</sup> Wessel maintains: “We can estimate the poor in Rome during the time of Leo . . . counted in the thousands.”<sup>323</sup>

Recognizing that there were large numbers of poor in the city of Rome, Leo undertook a charitable program to tend to their needs. He developed a theology of charity that was rooted in an awareness of the true nature of the human person. Leo preached that all people were created in the *imago Dei*: “If we reflect upon the beginning of our creation with faith and wisdom, dearly beloved, we shall come to the realization that human beings have been formed according to the image of God precisely with a view that they might imitate their Designer. Our race has this

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319. *Sermo*. 40, lines 104-11, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 175. *Laetemur in refectonibus pauperum. . . . Iocundemur in vestitu eorum quorum nuditatem indumentis necessariis texerimus. Sentiant humanitatem nostrum aegritudines decumbentium, inbecillitates debiliu . . . destitutio pupillorum, et desolatarum maestitudo viduarum.*

320. *Sermo*. 40, line 108, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 175.

321. Peter Brown cites this term as denoting nobles and citizens who had fallen on difficult times; *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 466-9.

322. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 467.

323. Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 182.



dignity of nature, so long as the figure of divine goodness continues to be reflected in us as in a kind of mirror.”<sup>324</sup> The theme of the true nature of the human person was a recurring one for Leo and formed the basis on which he was to act. He continually preached: “Wake up then, O friend, and acknowledge the dignity of your nature. Recall that you have been made “according to the image of God.” This nature, although it had been corrupted in Adam, has nevertheless been re-fashioned in Christ.”<sup>325</sup>

With this awareness of the image of God, Leo embarked on a program that by nature was social and spiritual and was established on the fundamental concept of love. For Leo, love was the point of departure for a program that would seek to help others recoup the dignity of that image of God. Leo said: “It is by loving that God re-fashions us to his image. That he might find in us the image of goodness, he gives us the very means by which we can perform the works that we do . . . so that we might love not only him but also whatever he loves.”<sup>326</sup> Love, then for Leo, became the means by which he fostered both the *cura animarum* and the *cura Romae*. He stated: “It can only have been that the values of charitable works are figured into the balance. When human beings love what God himself cherishes, they deserve to ascend into his kingdom since they have already passed over into his heart.”<sup>327</sup> Working, then, from the belief that love was the driving force that called people to action, Leo introduced a program that would help take

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324. *Sermo*. 12, lines 1-5, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 49. *Si fideliter, dilectissimi, atque sapienter creationis nostrae intelligamus exordium, inuenimus hominem ideo ad imaginem Dei conditum ut imitator sui esset auctoris, et hanc esse naturalem nostri generis dignitatem, si in nobis quasi in quodam speculo divinae benignitatis forma resplendeat.*

325. *Sermo*. 27, lines 121-3, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 114. *Expergiscere, o homo, et dignitatem tuae agnosce naturae. Recordare te factum ad imaginem Dei, quae etsi in Adam corrupta, in Christo tamen est reformata.* [27.121-23, 137].

326. *Sermo*. 12, lines 20-5, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 50. *Diligendo itaque nos Deus, ad imaginem suam reparat, et ut in nobis formam suae bonitatis inueniat, dat unde ipsi quoque quod operator operemur . . . ut non solum ipsum, sed etiam quidquid diligit diligamus.*

327. *Sermo*. 9, lines 66-8, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 40. *Nisi quae pondera operum caritatis statera pensantur, et cum amatur ab homine quod Deus diligit, merito in eius ascenditur regnum in cuius transitur affectum?*

care of the needs of those in the city that were poor. The source and object of that love was primarily God, and love for God must then be translated into charity for our brothers and sisters. Since the limits of God's love knew no bounds, the love of each person must be never-ending. Again from Leo: "Instead, the broad scope of Christian grace has given us greater reasons for loving our neighbor. It extends to every part of the whole earth, despairing of no one and teaching that no one must be left out."<sup>328</sup>

Although the specific nature and the overall make up of the program and the number of its recipients are unknown, Leo's writings do give insights into its general contours. Leo's social programs targeted both the wealthy and the poor. He exhorted the wealthy by assuring them that their almsgiving was a means through which they would be redeemed: "Food for someone in need is the cost of purchasing the kingdom of heaven, and the one who is generous with temporal things is made heir of the eternal."<sup>329</sup> In this sermon, Leo used the word "heir." Knowing his understanding of both the legal and spiritual meaning of that word, we can begin to see that for Leo those who acted in charity were uniting themselves strongly to the *imago Dei* that their actions implied God's presence. The reward for such actions was great: "In this way might you be able to earn that happiness in which the one 'who has regard for the needy and the poor' will delight without end. . . . It is in our care of the poor that we are to be admitted into fellowship with the kingdom of heaven."<sup>330</sup> Performing acts of charity helped the individuals with the means to appreciate their proper role of stewardship. Leo encouraged those before him: "Not

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328. *Sermo*. 12, lines 54-7, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 51. *Dedit autem nobis maiores diligendi proximi causas christianae gratiae latitude, quae se per omnes partes totius orbis extendens, neminem despectat, dum docet neminem negligendum.*

329. *Sermo*. 9, lines 63-4, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 40. *Cibus egeni, regni caelestis est pretium; et largitor temporalium haeres efficitur aeternorum.*

330. *Sermo*. 9, lines 162-3, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 41. *Ut possitis illam beatitudinem promereri, in qua sine fine gaudebit qui intellegit super egenum et pauperem. . . . et pro pauperis cura, regni caelestis consortis inserendi.*

only are spiritual provisions and heavenly gifts received through the bounty of God, but earthly and bodily resources issue from his largesse. . . . We must therefore use the gifts of God with justice and prudence. . . . riches. . . . offer many advantages to human society when they are in the possession of generous benefactors.”<sup>331</sup>

He also called on those who had little to participate in his program of almsgiving. He reminded his listeners that it was not the value or the amount of money given that was significant; rather it was the sincere intention in which the gift was offered: “He would give a reward for just a cup of cold water. Because he scrutinizes hearts so justly, he will requite not only the actual expenditure involved in the work, but the intentions of the one who performed it as well.”<sup>332</sup> In encouraging all to give alms, Leo was sure to point out that no one was required to give beyond their means. He told the people: “We ask nothing difficult of anyone, nothing harsh, nor, as far as we are concerned, do we suggest anything that exceeds your powers, either in the discipline of abstinence or in the generosity of alms. You all know what you can do and what you cannot.”<sup>333</sup>

Stewardship was the hallmark for Leo’s presentation of almsgiving. Sessa observes: “Leo’s presentation of wealth management followed classical lines: wealth was a means, not an end, and should be administered by solicitous attention to investment and growth.”<sup>334</sup> Leo

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331. *Sermo*. 10, lines 15-23, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 43. *Non solum enim spiritalis opes et dona caelestia Deo donante capiuntur, sed etiam terrenae et corporae facultates ex ipsius largitate proveniunt. . . . Muneribus igitur Dei iuste et sapienter utendum est . . . Nam divitiae . . . et humanae societati plurimum prosunt.*

332. *Sermo*. 14, lines 36-9, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 55-6. *Ut etiam pro calice aquae frigidae sit praemium redditurus, Quia iustus inspector est animarum, non impendium solum operis, sed etiam affertur est remuneraturus operantis.*

333. *Sermo*. 88, lines 77-81, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 374-5. *Nihil a quoquam, nihil asperum quaeritur, nec aliquid nobis quod vires nostras excedat indictur, sive in abstinentiae castigatio, sive in elemosinae largitate. Sciunt singuli quid possint quid ve non possint.*

334. Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority*, 71. The investment and growth that Sessa refers to is not financial but humanitarian.

maintained: “What could be more suitable to faith, what more helpful to compassion, than assuaging the poverty of those in need, undertaking care of the sick, succoring needs of the brethren, and recalling our own condition in the distress of others.”<sup>335</sup>

The crux of Leo’s program of care was based on the actions of the benefactor. This was not unique to Leo - people have always been called upon to help serve the needs of others by offering funds and food.<sup>336</sup> What was distinctive in Leo’s approach was the overwhelming amount of time and energy he gave to encouraging those to give from their surplus by telling them that material loss was equivalent to spiritual gain.<sup>337</sup> Almsgiving aided in the salvation of the giver, which allowed them to act in the *imago Dei*, and restored the *imago Dei* in the recipient. Leo also made it clear to those who failed to give alms that there would be dire consequences: “Since only the hardest heart would fail to be moved by any misery at all among those in distress, and since someone who has means but does not help the afflicted must be considered as unjust as the one who crushes the weak, what hope remains for sinners who do not

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335. *Sermo*. 10, lines 10-13, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 43. *Quid autem tam aptum fidei, quid tam conveniens pietati, quam egentium iuvare paupertiem, infirmorum curam recipere, fraternis necessitatibus, subvenire, et conditionis propriae in aliorum labore meminisse?*

336. Geoffrey Dunn’s analysis of the three sieges of Alaric describes the charitable actions of the wealthy during a critical period in Rome, *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church: Poverty and Riches* (Queensland: St. Paul’s Publications, 2009), 319-33. Peter Brown examined the connection between almsgiving and repentance and notes that the giving of alms is done with the desire of spiritual gain for the giver. He claims: “The gesture of reaching out the hand in mercy to the poor was held to echo . . . the gesture . . . from God himself- that his hand, also, would stretch out to offer the supreme gift of forgiveness;” *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 69. See also Richard Finn’s comprehensive history of episcopal almsgiving throughout the early centuries; *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice 313-450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 34-89.

337. Kristina Sessa notes that almost fifty percent of Leo’s surviving sermons deal with charity and almsgiving. She reports: “Of Leo’s ninety-six extant sermons, forty deal with charity and almsgiving;” *The Formation of Papal Authority*, 70-1. Green comments that: “Probably no bishop dwelt on almsgiving as much as Leo. Out of his ninety-six sermons, forty include exhortations to charity;” *The Soteriology of Leo the Great*, 85.

even show mercy ‘for the sake of obtaining it themselves.’”<sup>338</sup> Leo took on the social programs of the day and spiritualized them.<sup>339</sup> Neil claims: “Leo was the first bishop in the West to institutionalize giving to the poor through a series of collections throughout the seven regions of the city.”<sup>340</sup>

The programs not only benefitted the needy, but also were advantageous to the donor. Leo ultimately felt that the city of Rome would be preserved if it remained faithful to God’s commands. To that end, Leo preached the importance of a life of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. He conveyed to the people:

This love then . . . is strengthened by the habit of good works. . . . We undertake fasts for this reason, we protect chastity, we increase alms *generosity*, we pray often, and it comes about that the desire of each is the prayer of all. Labor nourishes patience, mildness quenches wrath, kindness spurns envy . . . avarice is driven out by generosity, and the burdens of the rich become instruments of virtue.<sup>341</sup>

By his social program of feeding the poor and caring for the needy, Leo fostered a sense of responsibility among those who were able to tend to the needs of others. This program brought great spiritual benefit to those who displayed love for God and neighbor, as well as significant material benefit to those in need.

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338. *Sermo*. 11, lines 24-8, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 47. *Cum enim durissimi cordis sit quacumque laborantium miseria non moveri, et habens auxiliandi copiam tam iniquus sit qui non iuvit adflictum, quam qui obpressit infirmum, quae spes superses peccatori, qui nec ideo miseretur, ut misericordiam consequatur?*

339. For the dual beneficial aspects of almsgiving; see Wessel, *Leo the Great*, 185: the giver received atonement from giving and the recipient received the necessary material needs they desired. She notes that this atonement aspect of almsgiving is what distinguished Leo’s program of giving from those of his predecessors.

340. Neil, *Leo the Great*, 18. Brown details the dates and the seasons of each of the collections. He notes that Leo based the collections around the summer months which the heat and food scarcities caused great physical needs for the people; see *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 465-6.

341. *Sermo*. 90, lines 87-103, CCSL 138-138A; trans. Freeland, 382. *Hic igitur affectus . . . bonorum operum consuetudine roboratur. . . . Adsumitur ergo ieiunium, multiplicatur largitio, frequentatur oratio, fitque ut singulorum desiderium sit unum omnium votum. Nutrit patientiam labor, mansuetudo exstinguit iram, benevolentia calcat invidiam . . . avaritia liberalitate depellitur, et onera divitiarum fiunt instrumenta virtutum.*

### 3.3.0: The Leonine Paradigm

Having examined the actions and words of Leo it is possible to propose a paradigm for understanding how Leo tended to the material needs of the city and what he did in his negotiations with the Huns and the Vandals. From there, we can go on to determine whether, in the sixth century, Gregory the Great used, modified, even knew about, or discarded this ecclesial paradigm as well as the one presented by Ambrose. The essential principles for Leo were Roman primacy, orthodoxy, civic leadership, and pastoral care.

Like Ambrose before him, Leo was an ardent defender of the faith and depended on the governmental officials to uphold his pressure on those not adhering to the faith: “A good many have immersed themselves deeply in error that no assistance could come to their aid, having been subjected to the laws that have been promulgated, according to the Christian princes . . . civil judges have sent them into perpetual exile.”<sup>342</sup> Leo continued to recognize that the protection of the faith was a duty of those in public authority.<sup>343</sup> He implored the emperor in the East, Theodosius II, to adhere to the faith handed down by Peter and promulgated through the councils. He sought to persuade the emperor to denounce the decrees and the procedures from the “Robber Synod” in Ephesus. He even implored the emperor’s cousin Valentinian III, the emperor’s mother Galla Placidia, and the emperor’s wife Aelia Eudocia to assist in calling for a

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342. *Epist.* 7, line 1; translation my own. *Aliquantum vero, qui ita se demerserant, ut nullam his auxilientis posset remedium subvenire, subditi legibus, secundum Christianorum principum constituta . . . per publicos iudices perpetuo sunt exsilio relegate.* Again Bronwen Neil emphasizes the important role religion played within society. She writes: “Thus, heresy and schism . . . had to be stamped out at all costs, even by use of imperial forces. . . . An emperor’s failure to pursue such infringements was seen as a dereliction of his Christian and imperial duty.” *Leo the Great*, 30.

343. Book 16 of the Theodosian Code spells out the responsibilities of the emperor and other members of the imperial court regarding the Catholic faith. This section of the *Codex* displays the imperial attitude toward bishops, churches, clerics, heretics, apostates, the sacraments, and the promulgation of the faith; see *The Theodosian Code*, trans. Clyde Pharr, 16.1-11, 440-76.

new council.<sup>344</sup> The new council was ultimately called but was assembled in the East in Chalcedon as opposed to Leo's desire that it be in Rome.

Leo believed he was entrusted with the care for the people under his immediate protection. This protection was both spiritual and secular. Leo was well aware of his sacramental, catechetical, and pastoral responsibilities. He further recognized that the *cura animarum* must extend beyond the walls of any ecclesiastical institution and involve the *cura corporum*, which was realized in the charitable programs to the poor, widowed, and orphaned. He was, therefore, called on to look after the material needs of those within the limits of the city.

In conclusion, Leo demonstrated a level of concern for the city of Rome and its spiritual and material well-being, exercised pastoral care for the citizens, defended the faith, and upheld Roman primacy because he believed and declared that this was what God expected of him. An awesome responsibility had been thrust upon his shoulders, and he would not neglect what was entrusted to him. He would employ all means at his disposal in order to accomplish his task. The focus of the following chapters lies in determining whether or not Ambrose's fourth-century and Leo's fifth-century paradigms of pastoral care had any impact on the sixth-century papacy of Gregory.

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344. In the collection of Leo's letters, a series of letters are included by each of the imperial relatives that Leo asks to write the emperor of the East: *From Valentinian the Emperor to Theodosius Augustus*, *From Galla Placidia Augusta to Theodosius Augustus*, *From Lucinia Eudoxia to Theodosius Augustus*; all demonstrate the influence Leo had on these imperial figures.

## **Chapter Four: The Historiography of Gregory's Sixth-Century World**

### **4.0.0: Overview**

The previous chapters analyzed actions and words of Ambrose and Leo in order to provide a context for Gregory's own response to the conditions of the West in the sixth century. In this chapter, I first provide biographical information of Gregory and then survey the current scholarship that brings into focus the life and work of Gregory the Great and his influence in the secular sphere. This chapter has two foci: the weakening of functioning secular authority and the emerging strength of ecclesiastical authority in the West; and the development of the bishop of Rome's relationship to the city in matters both spiritual and secular. The first focus examines the contours of current scholarship regarding the political situation of Rome after Justinian's reunification campaign and the context of ongoing migrations and invasions of new peoples into the former western Roman empire. The second focus sorts out contemporary research regarding Gregory's rationale and stated intentions for why he was involved in temporal affairs. These two points will converge and shed light on what Gregory was doing and what is known about his purposes and rationales.

### **4.1.0: Gregory: A Biographical Portrait**

As the fifth century unfolded, the lines between secular and ecclesiastical authority became muddled because of the political situation of the West and the physical conditions in Rome. By this period, particularly in the West, the empire had been shattered, first by the attacks of the Goths in the early 400s and then the Huns and Vandals in the 450s. Political, social, religious, and military unrest had a significant impact on the mode of governance in the



West, which reached its culmination in the abdication of the western emperor Romulus Augustulus in 476.<sup>345</sup>

At the beginning of the sixth century, Italy had enjoyed a period of relative stability and peace under the king of the Visigoths, Theodoric (493-526). At the behest of the eastern emperor Zeno (474-91), Theodoric set out to overthrow the barbarian king Odoacer, who had assumed leadership in the West when Romulus Augustulus abdicated. In 493, Theodoric seized control of Italy and, reluctantly, the eastern emperor Anastasius (491-518) recognized his reign.

Various groups competed for control of the West, until the eastern emperor Justinian attempted to reconquer western territory and incorporate it again into the Roman empire. The Pragmatic Sanction, issued on August 13, 554, sought to re-establish imperial control in the West. Judith Herrin, among other scholars, recognizes that this plan was flawed and doomed from the beginning. She argues that this was not a realistic goal: "The old system was re-imposed as if nothing had happened. . . . the 27 articles of the Pragmatic Sanction insisted on a return to pre-war conditions. Clearly this was not possible."<sup>346</sup> Justinian's dream proved to be costly and impossible to achieve, and turned into a nightmare for the West, particularly Italy.

When Justinian became emperor in the East in 527, his desire for reunification ushered in a period of war and instability between the eastern empire and the Ostrogothic monarchy in Italy

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345. Although 476 was the recognized year of the abdication of Romulus Augustulus, some contemporary historians argue that 480 is a more accurate date for the end of the western imperial seat. It was then that the deposed emperor Julius Nepos, legitimate heir to the West, died in exile; see Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 425-459; and Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000*, 85-98.

346. Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 145. P. Llewellyn is among those who agree that Justinian's recovery was disastrous for the West: "The reconquest of Italy had been disastrous for Rome; economically ruined, its nobility largely dispersed, it was sinking to the condition of a flood-prone, fever-ridden death trap. Reunion with the empire had brought association with Justinian's theological exercises [which] brought, also, obloquy and humiliation to two successive popes, Virgilius and Pelagius I;" P.A.B. Llewellyn, "The Church in the Seventh Century: The Legacy of Gregory the Great," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25 (1974): 368, brackets added.

which lasted over twenty years. Rome bore the brunt of this extremely turbulent turn of events. The city was occupied and besieged by eastern troops attempting to first remove Totila (541-552), king of the Ostrogoths, from power. Finally, with the defeat of Totila's successor, Teias, Justinian was able to advance and control several major western locales. After the fall of Brescia and Verona in 562, he declared Italy restored to the empire.<sup>347</sup>

The story, however, did not end there. He dreamt of a united empire rid of heretics and barbarians, but his restoration brought great turmoil to Italy. The wars and sieges resulted in the destruction of the countryside, a decline in population, and a further breakdown of an already down spiraling economy. Richard Krautheimer offers staggering numbers to support the claim of the steady decline that occurred in Rome during the fifth and sixth centuries. He notes that from 400 – 452 the population in Rome dropped about 300,000 people and by the end of the fifth century there were only 100,000 inhabitants in Rome. He further claims that the flooding of the Tiber River in the sixth century continued to effect Rome's dwindling population. Due to the political unrest in the region, many fled to either Ravenna or further points east for protection. By doing so, they abandoned their properties which contributed to the overall neglect and collapse of the city's buildings and infrastructure.<sup>348</sup>

Within six years, Italy was wrested away from the East by the Lombards under their king named Alboin.<sup>349</sup> The Lombard military offensives begun in 568 abruptly halted the efforts of reunification. J.D. Randers-Pehrson comments: "The Lombards poured into northern Italy in

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347. Walter Pohl presents a comprehensive survey of the impact of Justinian's reign and victories over the barbarian kings who controlled key sections of Italy and the West in general. See Walter Pohl, "Justinian and the Barbarian Kingdoms," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 448-476.

348. Richard Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 109.

349. Paul the Deacon recounted the military campaign of Alboin and detailed the conquests and their significant locations, *History of the Lombards*, ed. Edward Peters, trans. William Foulke, rev. ed. (1907; repr, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 50-83.

568, just a brief sixteen years after Narses's reconquest of the peninsula in the emperor's name. . . . Their presence put forces into play that far exceeded their own disruptive power. They came in as conquerors, meeting little opposition."<sup>350</sup> By 569, the Lombards captured Milan and a significant portion of territory around Aquileia and Venice. Within a decade, they reached Rome and thwarted Justinian's desire for reunification. Mark Humphries observes:

United or not, the Lombards proved a fatal blow to Byzantine dreams of a united Italy under imperial rule. Time after time, Byzantine armies failed to contain Lombard advance, and by the end of the century, the territorial encroachment of Lombard power was seriously threatening the integrity of those remaining Byzantine possessions in Italy.<sup>351</sup>

This was a complex period of Italian history. To attempt to decipher who was in charge is difficult. At most, by the end of the sixth century the regions in northern Italy east and south of Rome were under the jurisdiction of the Lombards. The lands around Rome, Ravenna, and points to the extreme south of Italy were under the nominal control of Constantinople by an exarch. Donald Logan asserts:

Viewed from Constantinople, Italy was seen as a remote province at the periphery of their world. Effective imperial power in Italy, now weak where it existed, was soon to disappear and with it the last vestiges of the ancient political structures in Italy. The West and the Western Church were to continue on their way now with little reference to the empire, to its east, whose people still called themselves Romans.<sup>352</sup>

Into this world Gregorius Anicius was born. Gregory was born in 540 to an old aristocratic Roman family with important political and religious connections. His father, Gordianus, was a layman charged with the administration of the temporal property of the church

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350. Justine Davis Randers-Pehrson, *Barbarians and Roman: The Birth Struggle of Europe, A.D. 400-700* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 218. See also, J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 95-6.

351. Humphries, "Italy," 536.

352. F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 36.

in Rome.<sup>353</sup> His mother, Sylvia, joined a religious community of women at the death of her husband. It was apparent from the outset that both the temporal and religious spheres were important to Gregory. As the Venerable Bede wrote: “Gregory was Roman-born, son of Gordian, and descended from ancestors not only noble but devout. Among them was Felix, once bishop of the same apostolic see, a man of high distinction in the Church of Christ, and Gregory maintained this family tradition by the nobility and devotion of his religious life.”<sup>354</sup> It was Gregory himself who alluded to the fact that Felix III (483-492) was his relative. In explaining the departure of his aunt, who became a nun, Gregory wrote: “To this woman, Felix, my grandfather, sometime bishop of this see of Rome, appeared in a vision, and shewed her the habitation of everlasting light.”<sup>355</sup> Gregory was the second of three sons born to Gordianus and Sylvia. His older brother Palatinus remained in Rome after Gregory became the city’s bishop, Martyn infers that Palatinus held the office of city prefect after Gregory. His younger brother seems to have resided in Otranto, Sicily to manage the family’s Sicilian estates.<sup>356</sup>

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353. F. Holmes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905). Although Dudden’s work is dated, he drew on John the Deacon, Paul the Deacon, and Bede for biographical sources; see 3-15. Dudden’s work is valuable because his was perhaps the first serious English study of Gregory.

354. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 2.2, lines 1-4, *SCh* 489; trans. Sherley-Price, 98. *Erat autem natione Romanus, ex patre Gordiano, genus a proavis non solum nobile sed et religiosum ducens. Denique Felix eiusdem apostolicae sedis quondam episcopus, vir magnae gloriae in Christo et ecclesia, eius fuit atavus.*

355. Edmund Gardner noted that Gregory’s three paternal aunts, Aemilia, Gordiana, and Tarsilla all became nuns. Gordiana eventually left the convent and married; see *Dial* 4.17, line 7, *SCh* 3; ed. Gardner, 198; and no. 271-72. *Huic per visionem Felix atavus meus, huius Romanae ecclesiae antistes, apparuit, eique mansionem perpetuae claritatis ostendit.* . Of particular importance was the reference that Gregory made to Felix III, Gardner claimed that prior to taking priestly vows, Felix III was married, yet the exact nature of his relationship to Gregory remains uncertain.

356. John Martyn provides very minimal information regarding Gregory’s brothers Palatinus and the unnamed younger brother because little information is available. See *Gregory and Leander: An Analysis of the Special Friendship between Pope Gregory the Great and Leander, Archbishop of Seville* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 21.

F. Holmes Dudden speculates that Gregory had access to the best possible education available because of Gordianus's affluence and influence.<sup>357</sup> He further notes that Gregory not only availed himself of the general education system, but that he was schooled in religious matters, which had a great impact on his life: "But it must not be forgotten that the strongest influences brought to bear upon his youthful mind probably lay outside the schools, in the religious atmosphere of his home."<sup>358</sup> Recent scholarship confirms that Gregory received an education befitting a person of his family's stature and excelled in his course of studies.<sup>359</sup> Andrew Ekonomou claims: "The most that can be said with any degree of assurance, however, is that Gregory received a private education that was commensurate with that of a "Roman patrician" of his time."<sup>360</sup> Even though Gregory may have done extremely well in his studies, he himself admitted that he lacked a sufficient command of Greek.<sup>361</sup>

Despite the claim of Ekonomou and others, Martyn contests the fact that Gregory did not know Greek. Martyn claims that Gregory often made use of Greek and had such a command of the language that Gregory was able to use technical Greek terms.<sup>362</sup> G.R. Evans claims that despite Gregory's own admission of a lack of proficiency in the Greek language, he made use of Greek philosophical ideas and tradition such as the interplay of physics and metaphysics or the

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357. Dudden outlined the general course of study that Gregory likely had done. He listed such studies as reading, writing, rhetoric, grammar, dialectic, and mathematical sciences among other lessons; *Gregory the Great*, 69-79.

358. Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, 79.

359. George Demacopoulos reminds us that the specifics of Gregory's education are difficult to know, because Gregory never spoke of his education and details of the Roman education system in his time are uncertain; see *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) 127-8.

360. Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590-752* (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 6.

361. Gregory, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, vol. 3, bks. 10-14, trans. John R.C. Martyn (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004), *Epistola* 11.28, 771-7 [Gregory to Isaac, bishop of Jerusalem, February 601]; refer to Introduction, 102-3, see Martyn, *Gregory and Leander*, 23-5.

362. Ekonomou supports the claim that Gregory's knowledge of Greek was limited; see *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes*, 14-5

Greek understanding of the interaction between the spiritual and physical worlds.<sup>363</sup> The interaction of the two worlds had a great influence on Gregory's overall understanding of the relationship between the Church and the state which will be discussed in later in this chapter.

Dudden admits that there was a gap in historical sources between the earlier life of Gregory and the time in which he became the legal officer (*praetor urbanus*) of Rome in the 570s and, eventually, the prefect of Rome (*praefectus urbis Romanae*).<sup>364</sup> Martyn supports Dudden in regard to the lack of information regarding Gregory's earlier years: "We know nothing definite about Gregory's formative years, but thanks to his thorough training in mathematics and rhetoric and law, combined with the influence of his very wealthy parents, he appears to have held the usual junior positions in the imperial service, and entered the still surviving senate, where he first served as *quaestor*, in 572."<sup>365</sup> The position of *praefectus urbis Romanae* was one of great importance. The *praefectus* was responsible for duties such as maintaining public law and order, exercising juridical authority over the senate and the Roman guilds, and conducting and presiding over senatorial meetings.<sup>366</sup>

With the death of his father in 574, Gregory left his post and used his wealth to establish six monasteries in Sicily and one in Rome on the site of his family home on the Caelian Hill. At the Roman monastery dedicated to Saint Andrew, the young Gregory entered monastic life.

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363. Gillian R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 10-12.

364. John Martyn gives a concise and scholarly sketch of Gregory's secular career, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, vol. 1, bks. 1-4, trans. John R.C. Martyn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004), 1-17. While acknowledging that incorrect dates have been suggested regarding Gregory's civil and papal appointments, Martyn proposes the following: Gregory's birth 540, *praetor urbanus* 573, *praefectus urbis Romanae* 574, enters St. Andrew's monastery 576, ordained a deacon 578, *apocrisiarius* 579-585, elected Pope 590, and died 604. For a concise biographical sketch of the life and legacy of Gregory; see also Philippe Levillain, ed., *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia*, vol.2 (New York: Routledge, 2002), 639-41; and Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven*, 98-104.

365. Martyn, *Gregory and Leander*, 25.

366. Robert Markus presents a detailed account of the duties and responsibilities of this highest office, politically speaking, in the city of Rome; see *Gregory the Great and His World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9.

Bede reports: “For he suddenly retired from secular life and sought admission to a monastery. There he entered upon a life of such perfection in grace that in later years he used to recall with tears how his mind was set on high things, soaring above all that is transitory, and how he was able to devote himself entirely to thoughts of heaven.”<sup>367</sup> Gregory greatly valued the life of contemplation that was afforded him through the monastic life. His stay at the monastery was short-lived, because in 578 he was ordained a deacon by Pope Boniface I and served as a papal advisor and coordinator of temporal affairs in one of the city’s districts.<sup>368</sup> During the papacy of Pope Pelagius II (579-90), he was sent to Constantinople as the papal *apocrisiarius* (ambassador), a position created by Leo I. Martyn comments that Gregory was best suited for such a position: “With his very successful career in the senate, considerable success in the monastic system, and skill as a negotiator, he must have stood out as the ideal person to send there.”<sup>369</sup>

While in Constantinople, Gregory’s task was to seek imperial assistance in military, political, and economic matters. The greatest of these matters was the invasion of the Lombards. Gregory was unsuccessful in convincing the emperor to send military support to Italy; but he gained recognition and respect from emperor Tiberius’s successor, Maurice. Gregory seemed to carry great favor with Maurice as attested by the fact that Gregory became godfather in 584 to Maurice’s eldest son, Theodosius.<sup>370</sup> While in Constantinople, Gregory became acquainted with

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367. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 2.2, lines 9-13, *SCh* 489; trans. Sherley-Price, 98-9. *Nam mutata repente habitu saeculari monasterium petiit, in quo tanta perfectionis gratia coepit conuersari ut, sicut ipse postea flendo solebat adtestari, animo illius labentia cincta subteressent, ut rebus omnibus quae voluuntur emereret, ut nulla nisi caelestia cogitare soleret.* See also Martyn, Gregory and Leander, 26-7.

368. For Gregory’s administrative abilities both secular and religious; see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 59-72.

369. Martyn, *Gregory and Leander*, 43,

370. The rapport between Gregory and Maurice began when the soon-to-be emperor was commander of the imperial guard for his father-in-law, the emperor Tiberius; see Martyn, *The Letters*, 8.

Leander, the exiled bishop of Seville. In the dedicatory letter to the *Moralia In Iob*, Gregory recalled fondly the time he and Leander spent together in Constantinople and the reasons they both found themselves in the imperial city: “It is a long time now, most blessed brother, since I first met you in the city of Constantinople, where the interests of the Apostolic See had detained me and where the obligation to intercede on behalf of the Visigoth faith had led you.”<sup>371</sup>

Gregory was there as an emissary of the pope and Leander was first there for similar reasons and then later was exiled for his role in the conversion and support of Prince Hermenegild.<sup>372</sup>

Gregory returned to Rome in 586 and became an adviser to Pope Pelagius II. Although he desired to re-enter the monastery of Saint Andrew, Gregory was called on to help deal with the Istrian Schism caused by the Three Chapters. In 589, the river *Tevere* flooded, resulting in an outbreak of the plague, which claimed many victims, including Pope Pelagius II. The Romans recognized the great administrative qualities and spiritual virtues of Gregory and elected him, by acclamation, to the papacy, making him the first monk elected to the office. Gregory attempted by all means possible to decline the nomination. He even sent a letter to the emperor Maurice in Constantinople pleading that the emperor not consent to the demands of the people. Maurice denied the request of his friend, and in September 590, Gregory was consecrated pope. Conrad Leyser comments: “More recently, Gregory has been seen as a holy man in power against his

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371. *Moralia, ad Leandrum*, 1, lines 1-4, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Kerns, 47. *Dudum te, frater beatissime, in constantinopolitana urbe cognoscens, cum me illic sedis apostolicae response constringerent et te illuc pro causis fidei wisigotharum legatio perduxisset.*

372. The father of Hermenegild, King Leovigild, was an Arian who battled his newly converted Catholic son for control of Spain. Leander was sent to Constantinople to persuade the emperor for support in fighting off the aggressive advances of Leovigild. Although troops were sent, they were bribed by Leovigild. The troops returned to Constantinople and the prince was defeated and killed by his father. After the defeat, Leander was exiled to the East for his part in the affair. Martyn, *Gregory and Leander*, 43-5.



will. He became pope ‘in spite of himself’; in office he was ‘anxious, anguished, tired’.<sup>373</sup> I suspect that at the heart of Gregory’s reluctance was the inner struggle of maintaining a balance between the active and the contemplative life. Gregory would have been content to live out his days in the solitude of the monastery; yet, duty-bound, he accepted his new position with humility and charity. He stated: “When the virtue of obedience was alleged to get me to accept the ministry at the holy altar, I took up that burden under the auspices of the church, which could be avoided by another resort to flight if it were allowed.”<sup>374</sup>

Gregory’s years as pope were marred by sickness. He wrote in a letter dated August 599: “I do not find that I am reporting to you about myself other than what I should report, except that, thanks to my sins, behold, it is now eleven months since I have only been able to rise from my bed on very rare occasions, just now and then.”<sup>375</sup> Not only was his papacy filled with physical ailments, but it was also imbued with political turmoil. In a homily on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel that was delivered toward the end of 593, he lamented over the deplorable conditions in the West, particularly the state of affairs in Rome that was once the *caput mundi*:

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373. Conrad Leyser, “Expertise and Authority in Gregory the Great: The Social Function of Peritia,” in *Gregory the Great: A Symposium*, ed. John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), 38-61,

374. *Moralia, ad Leandrum*, 1, lines 20-30, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Kerns, 47-8. *Nam cum mihi ad percipiendum sacri altaris ministerium, oboedientiae virtus opponitur, hoc sub Ecclesiae colore susceptum est.*

375. *Epist.* 9.232, lines 4-7, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 705-7. *Haec autem dicens nec ego vobis de me ipso inuenio aliud quod debeam nuntiare, nisi quod peccatis meis facientibus ecce iam undecim menses sunt, quod valde rarum est, si de lecto surgere aliquando potuero.* For Gregory’s illness; see also, *Moralia, ad Leandrum*, 5, lines 189-95, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Kerns, 54. “Actually, I have for many years now suffered from constant stomach pauns; at every hour and even every minute I am exhausted because my appetite is gone; because of a fever, low indeed is my constant, I breathe with difficulty. . . The more depressed I am by present suffering, the more consoled I am by the certain promises of eternal life.” *Multa quippe annorum iam curricula devoluuntur, quod crebris uiscerum doloribus crucior, horis momentis que omnibus fracta stomachi virtute lassescio, lentis quidem, sed tamen continuis febribus anhele . . . quo malis praesentibus durius deprimor, eo de aeterna certius praesumptione respire.*

Everywhere we see lamentation, on all sides we hear groans.  
 Cities lie in ruin, fortresses are razed, fields deserted, the earth is  
 returned to solitude. No countryman has remained in the fields,  
 hardly any inhabitant in the towns. . . . Yet you see what sort of  
 Rome remains, she who once was mistress of the world . . .  
 immeasurable suffering . . . desolation of her citizens . . .  
 oppression by her enemies.<sup>376</sup>

In addition, he inquired about where the political leaders entrusted with the welfare of the people had gone. From this perspective, he raised the question, “*Ubi enim senatus?*”<sup>377</sup> The profound question, “Where is the senate?” spoke to a larger issue than the actual physical presence of the senatorial class. The world in which Gregory was born into has already been discussed; yet, what can be said concerning the world in which Gregory operated? Two major lines of interpretation have developed among scholars attempting to understand the sixth-century geopolitical conditions of Italy. A study of these schools of thought will help us identify the role and the influence of the bishop of Rome and his de facto political authority along with his episcopal and ecclesiastical authority.

#### 4.2.0: Sixth-Century Rome

As one can well imagine, a clear portrait of the actual physical and political shape of Rome by the sixth century is not easily definable. Certainly the city was only a shadow of its former self. The days of the glory of Rome were undeniably over; the imperial icon of the West faded. Two questions need to be addressed prior to any discussion of the influence and impact of

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376. Gregory, *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.22, lines 524-537; CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 370. In Homily 6 on Ezekiel 24:3-5, Gregory spoke of a Rome which once gathered the nations together and which others drew strength from was in a dilapidated state and nobody any longer flocked to her for Rome was desolate. *Ubique luctus aspicimus, undique gemitus audimus. Destructae urbes, euersa sunt castra, depopulate agri, in solitudine terra redacta est. Nullus in agris incola, pene nullus in urbibus habitator remansit. . . . Ipsa autem quae aliquando mundi domina esse videbatur quails remanserit Roma conspicitis. Immensis doloribus multipliciter attrita, desolation ciuium, impression hostium.*

377. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.22, 371.

Gregory's papacy on the city of Rome. The first question: was the city in complete ruin or in a phase of re-development? The second question: to what extent did the emperor in Constantinople and the exarch in Ravenna exert imperial leadership and exercise authority in the city of Rome? To answer these questions, I will look at the historiography of this period and analyze contemporary scholarship regarding the main lines of interpretation of the physical condition of the city of Rome. I will be looking at the specifics of the contrasting views presented by Richard Krautheimer and Robert Markus against those of Mark Humphries and Carole Straw.

Richard Krautheimer and Robert Markus represent a school of thought that depicts a dilapidated Rome in which the papacy intervened in the aftermath of imperial withdrawal from the city. Krautheimer portrays the Church as the ultimate authority in the West due to the condition of Rome by the sixth century. Markus operates out of an understanding that by the time of Gregory only one institution, the Church, was a viable means of authority in the West. Whereas Mark Humphries and Carole Straw present a Rome that was weakened but not completely destroyed, they acknowledge that the papacy became a source of authority but not the only one. Humphries demonstrates that the emperor in Constantinople was still the definitive leader of the empire, East and West. The Church did get involved in secular matters but never became the undisputed authority in the West. Straw further develops the idea that the religious and secular institutions worked together in a complementary fashion. The Church and state might have seemed to be in opposition with each other, but in reality they worked in tandem.

David Hipshon comments that these two schools of thought reveal that much work still needs to be done in understanding Gregory's impact on and attitude toward the secular sphere and governance in the West. He remarks: "There is currently no consensus among scholars with

regard to Gregory the Great's 'political thought. While Gregory's views have been considered in relation to secular affairs . . . Gregory did not really consider secular institutions and government as separate from ecclesiastical order."<sup>378</sup> These two schools of thought represent two different historical interpretations of the Church's involvement in secular affairs: one locates leadership in the hands of the bishop of Rome; the other has the Church and imperial authorities seeking to reach a common ground in doling out authority.

#### **4.2.1: Weakening of Secular Authority & Emergence of Ecclesiastical Authority in the West**

In *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308*, Richard Krautheimer sets out to determine what the impetus was behind the transformation of the city that was once the heart of the Roman empire into the city of the papacy. At the outset of his work, he writes: "I have tried in this book to sketch a profile of Rome as a living organism from the time of Constantine . . . to the removal of the papacy to Avignon . . . how the ancient city . . . became the see of the papacy and gradually the spiritual and political focus of the West."<sup>379</sup> In his chapter dedicated to the period of Gregory's papacy, he reconstructed the dire conditions presented in Rome.

In his portrayal of Rome, Krautheimer represents those scholars who believe that an imperial or monarchical papacy overshadowed the reign of the emperors beginning in the fifth century, or possibly as early as the fourth century. Supporting Krautheimer's claim of the development of papal power after the events of 476, John Thompson argues: "But as the spiritual power of the Papacy grew, its political and material influence was also developing. By the time that the last Western emperor was deposed in 476. . . . In the period the Papacy inherited an

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378. Hipshon, "Gregory the Great's 'Political Thought':"439.

379. Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308*, preface.

intangible aura from the memory of the Roman Empire, and represented a strong element of continuity from imperial times.”<sup>380</sup> The papacy, according to Krautheimer, responded to the challenges of the day in an exceptional and inspirational fashion. His view of papal power is based on the notion that a shift occurred in which ecclesiastical authority surpassed secular power. Claire Sotinel places the responsibility for this shift on the emperor and not the Church: “The failure of perfect complementarity between Church and State came about, rather, through the default of the ruler. It was this failure . . . that compelled the Church to assume all aspects of power.”<sup>381</sup>

It is Krautheimer’s contention that the immediate tasks Gregory faced were both administrative and diplomatic.<sup>382</sup> The papacy was compelled to create order out of the chaos Rome was engrossed in since the “collapse” of the fifth century. Krautheimer was convinced that Gregory brought about a complete overhaul of the civic programs of the city: “In the city, provisioning was reorganized, public services and the welfare system maintained, re-established, and improved.”<sup>383</sup> It was Gregory’s task not only to re-structure the civic programs, but also protect the assets of the papal lands, which were exposed to a series of barbarian threats. Krautheimer advocates that since assistance of the East was nearly non-existent, the papacy stepped into the role of protector and defender of Rome and of all papal territories.

Gregory had to be extremely diplomatic in his approach because Rome technically was still under the leadership of the emperor in the East and not the barbarians occupying lands in the

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380. John Thompson, *The Western Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Hodder Arnold Publishers, 1998), 39.

381. Claire Sotinel, *Church and Society in Late Antique Italy and Beyond*, rev. ed. (1998; rePR, Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 22.

382. W.H.C. Frend delineates three types of pastoral activities undertaken by Gregory that allowed him the ability to take a leading role both politically and spiritually in Rome: (1). feeding and caring for the poor in Rome and maintaining the city’s defense; (2). Maintaining control over affairs of the Church; (3). Administering the papal estates. See Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 884-886.

383. Krautheimer, *Rome*, 60.

West. Gregory had to placate both forms of governance present in Rome. Krautheimer notes: “As things stood, he [Gregory] had to navigate between the claims of Byzantium, since 552 in legitimate occupation of Italy, and the imminent presence of the Longobard invaders, from 568 in possession of ever larger parts of the peninsula.”<sup>384</sup> Specifically in Rome, the absence of strong imperial leadership either from Constantinople or Ravenna left the papacy as the only entity in a position to make provisions for the distribution of grain and the supply of water, to ensure an adequate welfare system, to act as a liaison between Constantinople and the Lombards, and to maintain diplomatic relations between East and West. Krautheimer maintains that the papacy accepted these responsibilities due to the lack of political power: “In Rome, Byzantine officials were in evidence, a powerless and inefficient, if at times rapacious, nuisance. Occasionally, the exarch from Ravenna would put in an appearance, if only to loot the papal treasury.”<sup>385</sup> Yet, what did the city of Rome look like by the sixth century?

Krautheimer claims: “By Gregory’s time, to be sure, Rome was in bad shape.”<sup>386</sup> He offers a picture of a city that was only a shell of the dream that once was Rome.<sup>387</sup> Barbarian assaults beginning in the early-fifth century wore down the resolve of the Italian people. War, looting, and pillaging of regions in Italy, which seemed an everyday occurrence, were not the only factors that contributed to land being compromised. The river *Tevere* was responsible, in part, for the ongoing issues that plagued Rome. With the floods that occurred three or more times a year, Rome witnessed literal waves of destruction of her grain supplies and livestock. A further consequence of the floods that ravaged the city was the outbreak of the plague, malaria,

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384. Krautheimer, *Rome*, 60, brackets added.

385. *Ibid.*

386. *Ibid.*, 62. For details of the actual physical condition of Rome; see Krautheimer, *Rome*, 59-87. Many of the depictions from this section are presented in this paragraph.

387. Peter Brown supports Krautheimer regarding the demise of Rome in the fifth and sixth centuries: “This was a view of the heart of classical Rome. And it was dead.” Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 198.

and cholera.<sup>388</sup> Stephen Mitchell argues that these outbreaks lowered the population dramatically: “The frequent recurrence of plague through the sixth and early seventh centuries surely pushed population levels down, especially in the cities.”<sup>389</sup> Not only did the plague have devastating consequences for the population, but also impacted food production. Don and Patricia Brothwell did extensive research on diets and disease, and they conclude: “Severe malnutrition . . . resulted from one, or a combination, of the following; detrimental climatic conditions, disease, political strife resulting in agricultural neglect, food destruction, of the breakdown of food distribution.”<sup>390</sup> Beyond famine and malnutrition, the physical foundations of many Roman buildings were neglected, which caused these dilapidated structures to collapse. All of these factors accounted for the catastrophic breakdown of the Roman economy.

Krautheimer states:

The impression is that everything had collapsed. The natural catastrophe is depicted as the worst ever to hit the city and the breakdown of services and the physical deterioration of Rome as having taken place over the preceding fifty-odd years, caused the succession of wars and invasions during that time.<sup>391</sup>

In this period, Gregory the Great ascended to the papacy. For Krautheimer, Gregory is the culmination of ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs. Yet, why Gregory and why at this moment? Krautheimer constructs a well orchestrated argument in which the time was suitable for Gregory and the papacy to commandeer control of the West. Krautheimer argues that it was undeniable that Rome was down but not out. In the midst of the devastation, the

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388. Citing the research of Pauline Allen, “The Justinianic Plague,” *Byzantion* 49 (1979): 5-20, Demacopoulos estimates along with others that one-third of the population died during the plague; see *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 127, no. 2.

389. Stephen Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire: AD 284-641* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 375. For the long-term effects of the plague and other natural disasters in the western empire in the sixth century; see pp. 372-8.

390. Don Brothwell and Patricia Brothwell, *Food in Antiquity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 176.

391. Krautheimer, *Rome*, 62.

foundation of the city remained viable, although tattered. He maintains: “The skeleton of the urban fabric had survived, shabby and damaged, but fundamentally intact.”<sup>392</sup> This splinter of hope was all that was necessary for the rebuilding of Rome. For him, Gregory, not the emperor, did the rebuilding. Not even the exarch in Ravenna proved to be particularly useful simply because he was isolated from events and did not know the needs particular to Rome.<sup>393</sup>

Krautheimer contends that in the absence of the imperial presence in Rome the papacy took responsibility for the city and provided structure and stability to the region. Political, social, and economic programs were assumed by the papacy.<sup>394</sup> Theoretically, the Byzantine empire was the legitimate imperial government, but it was Gregory, according to Krautheimer, who took on the tasks of government officials. Jeffery Richards contends that Gregory offered tactical advice when Rome was threatened by the Lombard duke of Spoleto, he organized provisions to be distributed to the people of Rome, he paid the salaries of the troops, he negotiated terms of peace with the Lombards, he appointed those responsible for the restoration of the aqueduct and sewer systems in Rome, he built and maintained an administrative system that provided essential services to the people, and he tended to the spiritual well-being of his flock.<sup>395</sup> Richards observes that: “Gregory consistently took a leading role in negotiating treaties and truces, paying

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392. Krautheimer, *Rome*, 67.

393. As a result of the invasions and the Lombard presence in Italy, lines of communication were severed between Rome and Ravenna. With no means of communication, the citizenry looked to local leaders for guidance. The papacy provided such guidance.

394. Raymond Van Dam, “Bishops and society,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to c. 600*, vol. 2, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 357-63.

395. For an analysis of Gregory’s involvement in secular affairs; see Jeffrey Richards, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 85-107. Here Richards examines a sampling of Gregory’s letters to demonstrate his level of engagement in the central administration of the West in areas of war, finances, infrastructure, and food supply, which will be discussed in chapter seven. He also extensively cites Paul the Deacon and John the Deacon as sources to Gregory’s involvement in secular affairs.



the troops, directing the actions of imperial generals, even appointing temporary commanders to threatened outposts.”<sup>396</sup> Within that same argument, Krautheimer reports:

In short, the Church increasingly assumed, and was forced to take on, the functions and responsibilities of a temporal, independent ruler of Rome and of the Lands of Saint Peter, from Central Italy and Tuscany to Sicily. By and under Gregory, this development was, if not completed, well advanced.<sup>397</sup>

Krautheimer acknowledges that there was no imperial presence in Rome, in the form of the emperor, the senate, or the exarch. He notes that although Gregory did not take on any ecclesial building programs during his reign as pope, his predecessors and successors undertook significant programs of development in the heart of the imperial city which gradually showed the Church eclipsing the imperial presence.<sup>398</sup> By 530, the grand audience hall that had once been used by the urban prefect was converted into a Church under the patronage of Saints Cosmos and Damian. Several decades later, adjacent to the Forum and at the base of the Palatine Hill, another Church, *Santa Maria Antiqua*, was developed out of an imperial ceremonial hall. Andrea Augenti argues that the transformation that occurred between late antiquity and the early medieval period is symbolically significant. Using and transforming buildings that were once so identified with the imperial regime sent a clear message regarding the seat of power and authority, Augenti writes: “But the history of the Palatine is also the history of the gradual conquest, that achieved by the Church. The ecclesiastical administration took over the hill. . . .

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396. Richards, *Consul of God*, 86.

397. Krautheimer, *Rome*, 71.

398. Krautheimer believes that by Gregory’s time the Church’s building program, along the *Via Sacra*, the Palatine Hill, and the area of the Roman Forum, was the result of the enhancement of papal power. Arja Karivieri offers insight into the Church’s building program of converting pagan and secular buildings which began as early as the fourth century. In short, Karivieri concludes that the reuse of secular buildings and the reintegration of pagan temples demonstrate: “a manifestation of Christianity. . . . a symbol of *Ecclesia triumphans*.” Arja Karivieri, “From Pagan Shrines to Christian Churches,” in *Ecclesiae Urbis: Atti Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulle Chiese di Roma (IV-X secolo)*, eds. Federico and Alessandra Guidobaldi (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2002) pp. 77-84.

from the sixth century, more central structures linked with the public administration were converted into sacred places.”<sup>399</sup>

The fatal combination of an ineffective senate and declining governmental power would come after Pope Gregory’s death, with the conversion of the senate building and the High Court of the senate into the Churches of Saint Adriano and Saint Martina, respectively. These building programs demonstrated the gradual transition of Rome from an imperial to an ecclesiastical city. In the transformation of the city, the papacy cast a shadow over the role of the imperial authorities whether they were the exarch or even the emperor. Krautheimer claims: “Intensifying pastoral care and facilitating the work of overall administration were no doubt guiding elements in this building program. In fact, the new churches appear to have been distributed very deliberately in conformity with the administrative regions of Rome as established by Augustus.”<sup>400</sup>

Krautheimer supports the theory that after 476, the papacy was responsible for the development and the governance of the West. Since the emperor was located in Constantinople and an imperial representative was in Ravenna, the Church in Rome increased its involvement in temporal affairs. Krautheimer concludes: “The Church was the only efficient organization left to maintain the economic, social, and indeed the political fabric of Rome.”<sup>401</sup> Markus concurs with Krautheimer and argues that Gregory showed little interest, if any at all, in politics, given the simple fact that by the sixth century the Church was the only recognizable institution in the West. Markus claims the secular sphere had dwindled and collapsed to the point that the Church remained the single voice of authority. He underscores Krautheimer’s research: “Richard

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399. Andrea Augenti, “Continuity and discontinuity of a seat of power: the Palatine Hill from the fifth to the tenth century,” in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in honor of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. Julia M. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 49.

400. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, 100.

401. Krautheimer, *Rome*, 69.

Krautheimer has given a fine survey of the deterioration of the urban fabric in the late-sixth century, and, though it was not as catastrophic as Gregory's apocalyptic rhetoric would suggest, there is no doubt that secular buildings and services were in bad shape."<sup>402</sup> In accepting Krautheimer's conclusions, Markus asserts that the Church exercised authority simply because there truly was no secular institution available or able to do so. He readily affirms Krautheimer's research and conclusion: "Where the secular world and its institutions should be, there, in Gregory's thought-world, is a gap, and the Church has overflowed to fill it."<sup>403</sup>

Markus develops his argument on the basis of what he terms the "de-secularization" of society, which for him was the transformation of a political city into a religious one.<sup>404</sup> He traces the process of this de-secularization beginning with the late-fourth century and concluded in the sixth century. He concentrates his research on Augustine as the point of departure for the process of de-secularization and uses Gregory as the point of arrival. For him, the fourth century was the time in which secular culture began a transformation into Christian culture that culminated in the late-sixth century papacy of Gregory. Liebeschuetz notes that the increase in ecclesial influence became a significant factor in de-secularization: "The steadily expanding influence of the bishop in urban affairs was an aspect of the de-secularization of social life, one of the most extraordinary features of Christianization in Late Antiquity."<sup>405</sup>

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402. Robert Markus, "The Sacred and the Secular: From Augustine to Gregory the Great," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 36 (1985), 88.

403. Robert Markus, "Gregory the Great on Kings: Rulers and Preachers in the Commentary on I Kings," in *The Church and Sovereignty c.590-1918: Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks*, ed. Diana Wood (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 18. This essay along with "The Sacred and the Secular" conveys Markus's understanding of Gregory's view regarding the religious and temporal entities of the sixth century.

404. A useful article which clearly defines Markus's position of the often neglected process of "de-secularization" of the West is "The Sacred and the Secular," 84-96.

405. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 137.

Markus characterizes the change as a movement from the city as *plebs Romana* to *plebs Dei*. In the process, the nature of its leadership must have also changed. As *plebs Romana*, the imperial authority of the emperor, or the imperial representative, the exarch, was the recognized authoritative power. As *plebs Dei*, the focus was placed in God, or the divine representative, the pope; yet, that does not mean that this authority was effectively exercised. I do not think that Markus felt that the Church usurped control over the government. The basic premise of his argument is that there was no recognizable form of government and the Church stepped into the role. Liebeschuetz qualifies Markus's position and observes that the Church was not responsible for a take-over of government: "The first thing to note is that we are not dealing with a 'revolutionary' process. The 'rise of the bishop' did not involve the deliberate overturning of secular institutions to replace them by Christian ones."<sup>406</sup>

Markus juxtaposes the worlds and the writings of Augustine and Gregory in order to document this transformation from a secular to a Christian polity and culture that took place in the West during these centuries. He notes that Augustine and Gregory dealt with the secular or profane in completely different fashions. Augustine focused his attention on institutions, while Gregory concentrated on individuals in positions of authority and the day-to-day realities of tending to the needs of the people. Also, Augustine's work set out to establish the true identity of a Christian. Gregory's focus was on the moral conduct and virtues necessary for leadership in this Christian city. The divergence in approaches does not mean that one was more effective than the other. The reason for the different approaches was that by Gregory's time the secular

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406. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 138.

institutions were not existent and Gregory needed to make sure those in pastoral leadership possessed the essential qualities in order to assist the people.<sup>407</sup> To this point, Markus writes:

In a significant sense ‘secular’ authority and institutions had vanished from Gregory’s world. In saying this I want to pass rather lightly over the commonplaces concerning the collapse of secular authority, especially in Italy in the period of Justinian, and over the vastly enhanced role that bishops were acquiring in the maintenance of the life of their cities.<sup>408</sup>

Since Markus’s contention was that the secular sphere had deteriorated, Gregory’s primary concern was the moral conduct of the spiritual leaders. He cites copiously from Gregory’s *Moralia*, and *Pastoral Rule* [*Liber Regula Pastoralis*] in order to underline the importance Gregory placed on the formation of a moral code of conduct for Church leaders.<sup>409</sup> He emphasizes: “The constant preoccupation with this theme [the moral conduct of pastoral leaders] indicates the importance it had for Gregory throughout his life. Working on a systematic exposition of it in the *Regula Pastoralis* was the therapy that brought about this reconciliation to his office, and became his profession of faith for the new life he now followed.”<sup>410</sup> Markus unhesitatingly claims that Gregory’s concerns were not political in nature: “Very rarely, if ever . . . does Gregory show any interest in political matters. . . . His interests lie elsewhere: in matters such as the way the Christian life should be lived.”<sup>411</sup>

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407. Since Gregory is the focus of this dissertation, the research that Markus conducted on Augustine will not be examined here. Our primary goal is to examine Gregory and his approach to the secular sphere as presented by Markus.

408. Markus, “The Sacred and the Secular,” 87.

409. Markus, “Gregory the Great on Kings,” 7-21.

410. Robert Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 21, brackets added.

411. *Ibid.*, 8.

The real focus of authority, from Gregory's perspective, was the Church. Markus takes the argument to the next level by recognizing that power was consolidated in the Church.<sup>412</sup> According to him, since the secular sphere was of little significance, a case needed to be made that the authority Gregory wielded, even the practical and mundane business of the day, was a spiritual or moral authority. He was not governing in the sense of an earthly leader – yes he was feeding the city's hungry, establishing farming communities to ensure sufficient provisions, negotiation peace, and providing for educational opportunities,<sup>413</sup> but he was also helping souls into the heavenly kingdom. The task or quest for Gregory became moral in nature and not political for the simple fact that the bishop was God's representative on earth, as seen with Ambrose. Again it was Markus who concludes: "All 'secular' office had become radically transformed by being set within a religious context, to be understood, ultimately, only within a religious dimension."<sup>414</sup>

George Demacopoulos maintains: "Markus appreciates Gregory's pastoral concerns despite his involvement in politics. Certainly, Gregory extended the political and jurisdictional reach of the Roman Church."<sup>415</sup> Krautheimer and Markus have already established the demise of functioning secular institutions in the West, which resulted in Gregory venturing into a role of secular leadership. Although Gregory dealt on the spiritual level and involved himself in matters of moral conduct and the discipline of faith, he also set into motion policies and procedures that were once the responsibility of the imperial authorities.

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412. Here Markus builds on the research of Averil Cameron in emphasizing the transformation that occurred and the consolidation of power; see A. Cameron, "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," *Past & Present* 84 (August 1979), 3-33.

413. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 158-67.

414. Markus, "Gregory the Great on Kings," 19.

415. George Demacopoulos, "A Monk in Shepherd's Clothing: Pope Gregory I and the Asceticizing of Pastoral Direction" (PhD diss, Chapel Hill, 2001), 127.

Gregory's programs and involvement were ultimately driven by an overwhelming sense that the end of the world was coming and the role of leadership was to prepare the people for what was to come.<sup>416</sup> If anything, Gregory developed a "political eschatology" based on the simple reality that the world around him was in dire straits. Gregory saw the ongoing Lombard invasions, the ruination witnessed throughout Rome, the desolation and de-population of Italy, the spreading of heresy, betrayal of ecclesial ministers, and friction between the imperial authority and the Church as signs of the imminent end of the world. His task was spiritual - he as the spiritual leader needed to assist the people in ordering themselves, their lives, in the face of such chaos before it was too late. According to Markus, Gregory's eschatology was based on the actuality of "the crumbling ruin that Rome and her world have become, seen as visible manifestations of the end."<sup>417</sup> Gregory's ideal for leadership was to prepare the people for the end times. Jane Baun notes: "Eschatological awareness weaves a matrix of stern expectation, aspiration, and motivation that undergirds Gregory's thought-world like a steel mesh. . . . Gregory's conviction that all must face the Judge – *soon* – infused his every word and deed with urgency."<sup>418</sup> It might have appeared expedient to simply do nothing, but Gregory felt the role of the Church was to ensure that the people were ready for such an end, and at the same time the Church could not overlook the physical daily needs of the people in the city.

In the end, according to Markus, the road that Gregory traveled was one of detachment from this world. Although he never neglected the physical needs of the people, Gregory helped them to direct their gaze heavenward. Detachment from the fleeting reality of the world signaled yet another transformation in the lives and culture of the West. According to Markus,

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416. A clear analysis of Gregory's eschatology can be found in Markus, "*Appropinquante mundi termino: the world in its old age*," in *Gregory the Great and His World*, 51-67.

417. Markus, "The Sacred and the Secular," 95.

418. Jane Baun, "Gregory's Eschatology," in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 158.

detachment from the world means an attachment to something in its place, namely the religious sphere and in due course to heaven. The goal of spiritual authority was to gather as many people as possible into the embrace of the Church.<sup>419</sup> Politics no longer motivated those in a position of authority: salvation did.

#### **4.2.2: Limited Imperial Functions and Emergence of the Authority of the Bishop of Rome.**

The condition of Rome presented by Krautheimer and the interpretation of Gregory's world that Markus offers is one-dimensional, maintaining that the Church was the only viable institution that could offer what the people truly needed - salvation. Mark Humphries and Carole Straw present a two-dimensional interpretation that clearly indicates the secular realm was still functioning and that both the sacred and the secular could work in concert for the well-being and betterment of the people. The Church as the only efficient organization, as claimed by Krautheimer, or as the usurper of political control of the West, as popularly thought, has been challenged by the recent scholarship of Mark Humphries. He represents those historians whose research yields a different conclusion than the hypothesis that as early as the late-fourth century the governance of the West fell into the hands of the papacy.

Humphries argues that absolute papal control in the West was never the case, but strong papal authority was realized centuries later than Krautheimer's hypothesis regarding papal authority. He proposes:

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419. Conrad Leyser supports the eschatological dimension of Markus's argument and agrees that the Church was the only institution readily available to offer the order and direction the people needed in order to reach salvation. See "Expertise and Authority," 41-46.



It is beginning to look as if the self-conscious creation of a papal Rome was a much later development than Krautheimer (who was writing, of course, before these new data became available) tended to think, rather than belonging to the fifth, sixth, or even seventh century, the project of creating a 'papal' Rome only came to fruition in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>420</sup>

Humphries opens up the contemporary debate about political control of the West with a refutation of Krautheimer's assumption that the papacy controlled political affairs, in an absolute fashion, from the fourth century onward. Humphries contends that new archaeological data refutes earlier claims of a papal acquisition of Rome as early as the fourth century.<sup>421</sup> He argues that coinage from these periods and excavation of buildings in Rome present evidence that would challenge the notion and presupposition of Krautheimer. He claims:

The actors in Krautheimer's drama after Constantine are the popes, not emperors. For him – and indeed for other scholars – late antiquity ushered in a new era in the history of the city: Rome became the stage upon which the popes acted the leading part, and this was a role that they were to continue to play until they were shunted aside by the forces of the nascent modern Italian state.<sup>422</sup>

Humphries does not dispute the claim that Rome was severely damaged by the barbarian invasions and Justinian's re-conquest initiative.<sup>423</sup> He does, however, emphatically assert that the Church, specifically the papacy, did not act with immediacy in taking the reins of power. Although the Church from the time of Constantine was involved in political affairs and bishops assisted in matters of the state, one should not infer that the Church was unquestionably the sole keeper of political power. Humphries asserts: "Thus late antiquity (and the early middle ages)

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420. Humphries, "From emperor to pope?," 21-56 with particular emphasis on 24-25.

421. Even though Humphries cites archaeological findings to refute papal domination, Liebeschuetz emphasizes that archaeology supports the claim of decay, abandonment, and adaptation that occurred between the fourth and the sixth centuries; Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 369-74.

422. Humphries, "From emperor to pope," 22. Here Humphries also mentions other historians who assert that as early as the reign of Diocletian the imperial greatness of Rome was waning. See footnote 4 for his comments on the works of Jones and Pietri.

423. *Ibid.*, 24.

was a period when the authority of the bishop of Rome was only one of several shaping the city: however much the institutional power of the church increased after the fourth century, Rome did not swiftly become the pope's to mould as he pleased."<sup>424</sup>

Involvement in secular affairs did not consequently denote that the popes held absolute power. Liebeschuetz observes: "That a bishop might have, or be well on the way to having, such power did not mean that he automatically became an integral part of the city's government."<sup>425</sup> Even though the city was wracked and destruction was all around, this did not necessarily indicate that a lack of imperial presence or a form of governance in the West existed.<sup>426</sup> Liebeschuetz further argues that bishops did not overshadow the established system of government as other scholars had assumed. He contends: "The rise of the bishop was not paralleled by the elimination of secular institutions."<sup>427</sup>

Although Rome took on the identity of a Christian city, political authority entered a period of a protracted alteration rather than annihilation. Against claims that Rome experienced a dramatic transformation in which the Church seized control in the wake of the abdication of political leadership, Humphries argues that the Church never took control, despite moving from periphery to center in affairs of the state. Liebeschuetz concurs: "In the fifth century, the bishop's power generally increased . . . . As far as the administration of the cities was concerned,

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424. Humphries, "From emperor to pope," 25.

425. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, "Administration and Politics in the Cities of the Fifth to the mid Seventh Century: 425-640," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 14, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 218. For the growth of the bishop's political power; see Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 217-19.

426. For the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on Gregory's governance role in the West, and the pressures put on it by the Lombards, but not the Lombard kingdom as such. When governance in the West is discussed the intention is to speak of imperial governance. I will include the impact of the Lombard presence but do not specifically address the Lombard system of government.

427. Liebeschuetz, "Administration and Politics," 231.

there was a power vacuum into which the bishop was naturally drawn. But the extent to which the bishop was drawn into routine civic affairs varied.”<sup>428</sup>

Humphries notes other political entities were still present and active in the period between the fourth to the sixth centuries, in particular the roles that the exarch and senate still played in affairs in the West. The senate continued to function, albeit, in a diminished capacity at least into the seventh century, but this did not necessarily translate into an imperial vacuum in the West.<sup>429</sup> Humphries agrees that popes were called on to be defenders of the city of Rome and stewards of the people: “The papacy was coming to fill the role once performed by the emperors.”<sup>430</sup> He recognizes that the Church gradually replaced old Roman civic centers throughout the West, aided in defense, administered the food supply, in particular corn and grain distribution, negotiated with foreign aggressors, and looked after other duties and responsibilities that were entrusted to government officials. Although the Church played a part in the overall transformation of the political domain of the West, for Humphries it was only one factor in the overall schema of leadership that dealt with political, social, and economic issues.

There were other entities that were responsible for political administration in the West, principally in the sixth century. While acknowledging that the emperor was the sole authority, Michael McCormick asserts that the eastern imperial court was the means and the center of imperial power. He argues that many “human elements,” as he called them, wielded significant influence and power. Among the members of the court that he gave special recognition and credit to is the empress, the praetorian prefect, *quaestor*, certain members of the military,

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428. Liebeschuetz, “Administration and Politics,” 219.

429. For the changes in senatorial functions; see Humphries, “Italy,” 539. His basic argument is that the changes in senatorial functions were a direct result of barbarian control of imperial lands in the West that resulted in fewer government positions available to members of the senate.

430. Ibid., 541. Here Humphries delineates the ongoing increase of ecclesial activity on a secular scale; see also Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 540-44.

eunuchs, as well as the bishop of Rome and his *apocrisarius*.<sup>431</sup> Most of all, the imperial officials that he mentioned resided in close proximity to the emperor in the East. There was, however, an imperial presence in the West that possessed a degree of power. That presence was in Ravenna in the office of the exarch. The emperor in the East delegated authority over Italy to the exarch in Ravenna. The seat of imperial government, as previously discussed, had moved from Rome to Milan and then eventually settled in Ravenna.

In Ravenna, the office carried with it full civil and military authority in the West and acted as an agent of the emperor and in the person of the emperor. In fact, the exarch was accountable to nobody but the emperor.<sup>432</sup> The exarch had originally been a military leader, but the position slowly evolved and the exarch took on civil responsibilities in the late sixth century. It was in the aftermath of the failed attempt of the Pragmatic Sanction that the exarch overshadowed the duties of the civic administrators in the West. John Moorhead makes the argument that the role of the exarch actually developed out of a system already in place in Italy during the reign of the Ostrogoths.<sup>433</sup> Donald Bullough describes the role of the exarch as follows: “The exarchs who exercised supreme military and civil authority in the emperor’s name and with the trappings of a modified imperial ceremonial were . . . predominantly high-ranking palace officials who were sent to Italy for a short time only.”<sup>434</sup> In taking hold of civic duties, the office of the exarch marked an important transformation in the western sphere. During his

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431. For an analysis of the power behind the emperors; see Michael McCormick, “Emperor and Court,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors A.D. 425-600*, vol. 14, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135-63.

432. For a breakdown of civic and military duties of the exarch; see Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome*, 42-43.

433. For the development and evolution of the office of the exarch; see John Moorhead, “Ostrogothic Italy and the Lombard Invasions,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History c.500-700*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 157-158.

434. Donald Bullough, “Empire and emperordom from late antiquity to 799,” *Early Medieval Europe* 12 (December 2003), 380.

papacy, Gregory sought to nurture a relationship with the exarch. Krautheimer maintains that Gregory was the pinnacle of papal authority over imperial rule in this period. Humphries takes Krautheimer to task for this. It is undeniable that during the papacy of Gregory the Great, provisions were made available to the people, troops were organized, and diplomatic missions were undertaken. The emperor and his exarch, however, were still in command because in many of those ventures Gregory sought their advice and approval.<sup>435</sup>

The point of departure for Humphries is somewhat of a diptych painting, one side displayed the question Gregory asked in his homily in 593, “*Ubi enim senatus?*”;<sup>436</sup> the other side portrayed Gregory a decade later at the Lateran Palace with individual senators at his side, receiving the image of the new emperor Phocas. The scene on the balcony of the Lateran Palace when that image was welcomed showed the existence of the senate still performing at least ceremonial duties.<sup>437</sup> Humphries disagrees with other historians who portray the non-existent nature of the senate. He further remarks: “Far from being a moribund political anachronism, then, the senate in Rome continued to act as a major partner in the running of the Empire throughout the last centuries of Roman rule in the West.”<sup>438</sup> He argues that even beyond those final centuries, the senate still had value and dignity. One of the primary tasks of the senate was to receive the imperial presence of the emperor. Whenever the emperor or his image came to a province, there was great fanfare. One of the primary obligations of the senate was to greet the

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435. For early evidence that the papacy in the sixth century was still very much under imperial rule; see Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy*, 139-61.

436. At the outset of this work, I expanded the question of Gregory to include his relationship to imperial rule in general. The senate was a product or instrument of the emperor. Therefore, I feel confident that this extension to include imperial rule falls within the scope of Gregory’s inquiry.

437. Mark Humphries, “Roman Senators and Absent Emperors in Late Antiquity,” *Acta ad archaeologiam et atrium historiam pertinentia* 17 (August 31, 2006), 29.

438. *Ibid.*, 27.

emperor or his image during the *adventus*. Gregory and a senatorial delegation were at the Lateran Palace in 603 to fulfill those duties and obligations required of them.

The *adventus* of Phocas's image is a reminder that the senate still existed. Also, the fact that the image was brought to Rome signified that Rome still held a place of importance in the eyes of the emperor. Humphries concludes that this moment cannot be dismissed or overlooked because it provides concrete evidence that disputes Krautheimer's claim of the absence of the imperial presence in the West. He contends: "Even so, the notion that Rome had become somehow peripheral to the concerns of emperors, or indeed that emperors had become peripheral to the concerns of Rome, should be rejected."<sup>439</sup> That Phocas sent the imperial image to Rome and that Gregory and the senate received it signified that the emperor maintained a symbolic presence in the city. Humphries recognizes that the imperial presence in the late-fifth and early-sixth century was not as strong as it had been in the past. Yet, it did not essentially mean that the Church snatched imperial power and fabricated a rival system of government. The caveat Humphries issues is simple: "we should resist the temptation to regard the popes as the only authority in the city by the second half of the sixth century."<sup>440</sup>

Humphries concludes his argument by returning to the event in the Lateran Palace in April of 603. His treatment of the reception of the imperial image underscores the presence of the senate in Rome in the early-seventh century. The senatorial functions had changed, but the senate was not yet extinct. Even though Gregory led the ceremony of receiving the imperial image, not the senate, it did not imply that the pope had complete authority in the West or even in Rome. Humphries concludes that the ceremony at the Lateran Palace proved not that the

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439. Humphries, "From emperor to pope," 30.

440. Ibid., 53. Here he challenges Krautheimer: "Again, the assumption underpins Krautheimer's analysis. Of the sixth century he remarks that the church was the only *efficient* organization left to maintain the economic, social, and indeed the political fabric of Rome," n. 106.

papacy was in complete control of matters in the West, but that it was still subject to the Byzantine emperor: “That was what Gregory, the clergy, and the senate were doing in 603: as the elite of the city of Rome, they were signaling their submission to the new regime.”<sup>441</sup>

Krautheimer claims that prior to the fifth century, political authority was already shifting into the hands of the papacy. Humphries refutes that claim with his argument that political authority in Rome was reluctantly granted to the papacy, but during the late-eighth or early ninth century not the sixth century. Humphries calls Krautheimer’s view an anachronistic political theory of Gregory’s papacy and secular power. In its stead, he asserts that during the disputed period of the fifth and sixth centuries the emperor of the East and his exarch located in the West held imperial authority, not the papacy. Humphries clearly recognizes that two sources of authority existed in the West during the time of Gregory: the imperial (with the emperor in Constantinople and the exarch in Ravenna) and the ecclesial (the bishop of Rome and the Church in the West).

In contrast to Robert Markus, who advocates that secular authority had ceased and that the Church had assumed political leadership in the West, Carole Straw puts forward the idea that the imperial regime was still effective in the time of Gregory. She makes the case that Gregory recognized two *loci* regarding authority in the West: one spiritual, which resided in the hands of the Church, and the other physical or secular that was situated in the eastern imperial court. It is her contention that Gregory acknowledged a both/and approach to the role of leadership, particularly in the West. Despite Markus’s claim that Gregory showed no interest of a political nature, Straw contends that Gregory in fact did. For her, the heart of Gregory’s political thought was a desire for the spiritual and secular realms to co-exist. Effective leadership required that the Church and state work together toward a common goal for the people.

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441. Humphries, “From emperor to pope,” 57.

In Straw's estimation, the common goal was to enhance the role of the Church and direct the people to salvation while not forgetting such physical needs as grain distribution, oil supplies, public work projects, and education. The secular leadership was called on to assist the Church in helping people get to Heaven. She argues: "Both Church and prince are invested with the duty of advancing the kingdom of heaven and supporting the Christian republic."<sup>442</sup> Her argument is rooted in the reality that the secular leader recognized that all authority was derived from God, and as a consequence, secular rulers owed a debt of gratitude to God which was best expressed in defense of the Church.

The Church also had the obligation to promote the well-being of the emperor and to provide for the spiritual and material needs of the people. Straw argues that the guiding principle for Gregory is *caritatis*. In charity, the Church had a moral obligation to tend to the needs of others, that is, one's neighbor. Straw argues that charity was the key that unlocked the door to the Church's civic responsibility. Gregory, himself, exhorted: "the way to prove holiness is not to perform miracles, but to love every man as one's self; and concerning God to think what is true, and of his fellow-creature to think better things than to himself. For that true power lies in love."<sup>443</sup>

Straw recognizes that it was important, from Gregory's perspective, for the two institutions to work as one. She argues that Gregory expected a mutuality to exist in the relationship between the Church and state: "Gregory sees direct links and dependencies between

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442. Carole Straw, "Gregory's Politics: theory and practice," in *Gregorio Magno e il suo Tempo: XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità christina in collaborazione con l'Ercole Française de Rome* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1991), 54.

443. *Moralia*, 21.20.7, lines 23-6, CCSL 143B; trans. Parker, 460. *Probatio quippe sanctitatis non est signa facere, sed unumquemque ut se diligere, de Deo aut vera, de proximo vero meliora quam de semetipso sentire.*



the two orders of reality, carnal and spiritual.”<sup>444</sup> Based on this, she believes that there was a reciprocal responsibility that underlined the necessity of the Church and state working as a cohesive unity. Straw contends that Gregory believed bringing these two *loci* together was his paramount duty. Although both realms are distinct, there is a mutual respect and interdependence of one with the other.<sup>445</sup>

How Gregory perceived the world influenced his understanding of the relationship between the two institutions. Gregory operated from a world that was accustomed to dealing with and was steeped in paradoxes, distinctions, and apparent contradictions. On the spiritual level, Gregory tried to reconcile certain paradoxes that existed between the Church and the world of late antiquity. Straw demonstrates that Gregory took that which seemed to be contradictory and uncovered their complementary nature. His world was one of oppositions, such as action/contemplation, religious/secular, supernatural/natural, visible/invisible, spiritual/carnal, and Divine/human. For Gregory, each of these inconsistencies actually proved to be advantageous as he tried to come to an understanding of the appropriate role of leadership in the Church and the state. Straw writes: “By discovering the hidden logic of comparisons and associations and tracing the various interconnections of ideas, one can determine the criteria defining various mental categories and discern the function of specific ideas in the whole network of thought.”<sup>446</sup>

Straw maintains that Gregory realized that these incongruous realities produce a harmony of thought or balance that on a *micro* scale is reflected in one’s life; and on a *macro* scale is manifested in society. There are two levels at play: one of opposition, and one of

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444. Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 11.

445. Straw, “Gregory’s Politics,” 50-54. Here she cites Marc Reydellet as further evidence to validate the importance of the rapport between the Church and the state. See Marc Reydellet, *La Royauté dans la Littérature Latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville* (Paris: De Boccard, 1981), 474-79.

446. Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 17.

complementarity. Gregory to a certain degree employed an Aristotelian notion of virtue, which was the balance or the mean between two extremes.<sup>447</sup> The foundation of virtue was discovered when one comprehended, on the one hand, that an excess of a virtue led to vice, on the other a deficiency resulted in a vice. How did Gregory use this method in his approach in dealing with spiritual matters? In the example of the contemplative and active life, Gregory acknowledged that complete devotion to the contemplative life was a dangerous endeavor, whereas, an abandonment of contemplation for the pursuit of the active life was equally dangerous. There needed to be a balance within the realms of the two. The contemplative life should draw from the active life and *vice versa*. Straw concurs: “For instance, the active life and the contemplative life are at odds: activity destroys the self-collection of contemplative repose. But, on the other hand, they also reinforce one another.”<sup>448</sup>

In Gregory’s theory of complementarity, the one paradox come together to form a cohesive unity. Straw’s argument is that in the diversity of a set of ideals a unity exists. Paul Meyvaert also believes that Gregory perfected an understanding of unity existing in diversity. He further demonstrates this prevalent theme in Gregory’s writings and life. Although Meyvaert originally discusses this concept in regard to diverse liturgical practices, he stresses that the theme of diversity in unity is applicable in all aspects of Gregory’s thought. He emphasizes this point: “Whatever may have been the attitude of other popes, St. Gregory the Great emerges from his writings as the one who, in a particular way, cherished the theme of ‘diversity within unity’

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447. See Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, rev. ed. (1941; rePR, New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2001), in particular *The Nicomachean Ethics* Book 2 – Book 5, pp. 952-1022.

448. Straw, “Gregory’s Politics,” 59.

in the Church. Diversity he believed to be present on all levels, not excluding that of liturgical ritual.”<sup>449</sup>

For Gregory’s theory of complementarity, Straw points to the apparent paradox in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the example *par excellence* of the theory of complementarity because Jesus possesses a divine and a human nature that coexist in one person without opposition. Straw uses the example of Christ to show that two realities, which at first glance seem strictly paradoxical are in harmony. Straw and Meyvaert demonstrate that on a spiritual level, opposition and complementarity are endorsed and woven through the works of Gregory. According to Straw, Gregory maintained that what was applicable on a spiritual level was easily valid on a secular scale. Gregory utilized the same principles of opposition and complementarity to discuss the relationship that should exist between the Church and state. Straw shows that Gregory viewed the temporal world through the same lenses of distinctions and seemingly paradoxical tensions. To bring balance and unity was at the heart of Gregory’s overall project for pastoral and secular leadership. She states: “The pairs work together and ideally strike a balance. Also, there are contrasts of the negative extremes generated when each pole is not checked by its complement, such as zeal and laxness, or pride and despair.”<sup>450</sup>

Gregory did not view this duality strictly in terms of spiritual and secular. He also dealt with it on a personal level as he struggled to reconcile his place within the Church and the world. Jeffrey Richards introduces another scholarly approach to Gregory’s theory of complementarity. He discusses two terms which he feels best describe the personal life and struggles of Gregory. The duality of striking a balance between the active and contemplative life reveal a deeper

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449. Paul Meyvaert, “Diversity within Unity, a Gregorian Theme,” in *Benedict, Gregory, Bede, and Others* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1997), 162. This chapter was original an article first printed in 1963, *The Heythrop Journal*, 4, 141-62.

450. Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 21.

duality for Gregory. Richards describes the two distinctions that characterized Gregory as *Christianitas* and *Romanitatis*. *Christianitas* represented Gregory's love for the Church; *Romanitatis* corresponded to his admiration for Rome and the empire in general.<sup>451</sup> The struggle for Gregory was to bring about a balance between the interior and exterior life.<sup>452</sup> The exterior life was necessarily rooted in the cares of the world, while the interior life was rooted in contemplation. Gregory had to reconcile both of these lives within himself, in order to make a credible attempt to show the possibility that the religious and the secular worlds could collaborate. Roger Tweed maintains that for Gregory the outer life was one of activity and taking care of the needs of the people, and the inner life was personal. It was primarily concerned with spiritual well-being, meditation, contemplation which could only be accomplished by detachment from worldly cares. Gregory recognized the value of both in the life of the pastoral leader, yet admonished those in authority not to be overly attentive to one at the expense of the other. Tweeds concludes: "In a historical sense, the significance of Gregory's contribution to this inner-outer distinction lies in his emphasis . . . on care for both the inner *and* outer."<sup>453</sup>

Gregory's sense of duty was not only for the Church, but also for Rome, which he had served with honor and excellence as *praetor urbanis*, *praefectus urbis Romanae*, and *apocrisarius*. Although he no longer held those positions, he still felt a sense of civic duty and responsibility to the people of Rome. It has already been noted that from the outset of his papacy, Gregory felt the end times were imminent. What was set before his eyes in Rome was for him the fulfillment of the apocalyptic literature of the Bible. This thought dominated his

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451. Richards, *Consul of God*, pp. 51-69.

452. Roger Tweed, "The Psychology of Gregory the Great (A.D. 540-A.D. 604), *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 7, no. 2 (November 2009), 101-110.

453. Tweed, "The Psychology of Gregory the Great," 104, original emphasis.

works and writings. At the heart of his civic duty and responsibility was the *cura animarum*. He undertook the mission of preparing souls for heaven. In doing so, he realized he could not neglect caring for the bodies on earth. Gillian Evans summarizes the foundation of Gregory's sense of *Christianitas* and *Romanitatis*: "A Christian must love God and his neighbor. He must be both contemplative and active in living a fully Christian life. And just as in the Christian life, contemplation gives rise to action in good works."<sup>454</sup>

#### 4.3.0: Conclusion

An analysis of the two major schools of thought concerning the condition of sixth-century Rome and the relationship between the imperial authorities and the bishop of Rome shows that both approaches acknowledge that the bishop of Rome entered into secular affairs. To what extent the bishop entered into those matters remains contested. The purpose of examining the two schools is to highlight what both perceive Gregory's role to be in maintaining and developing a model for ecclesiastical involvement in the secular arena. This sets the stage for investigating how Gregory's perceptions function in the exercise of the office of bishop of Rome. This will help determine whether he introduced an ecclesiastical paradigm that was already in place by the time of his papacy, adapted a prior one to accommodate the situation in the sixth century, or if he fashioned something altogether new.

The following chapters examine Gregory's understanding of the emergence of the Church and the development of the responsibilities of the bishop of Rome in the secular governance of the West. In order to get a clear picture of Gregory's leadership, I analyze the

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454. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great*, 130. Here Evans contends that the love for God and the contemplative life reflects the *Christianitas* and the love of neighbor and the active life corresponds to the *Romanitatis*.

virtues and characteristics that Gregory felt were essential for those seeking authority. By examining his homilies, pastoral treatise, and scriptural reflections, Gregory's ideal of a leader, secular or religious is demonstrated. According to Gregory, these virtues were vital to any one in a position of authority. The virtues set a foundation of Gregory's thought about the relationship between the secular and religious worlds. The virtues become the vehicle that highlight the need to integrate the contemplative and the active life of the pastoral leader. Krautheimer and Humphries offered their perspectives on the condition of the city, and Markus and Straw delineated their insights into Gregory's general understanding of involvement in spiritual and secular levels. I now examine Gregory's actions and words to assess the impact of his papacy of the Church and the empire.

## Chapter Five: The Gregorian World<sup>455</sup>

### 5.0.0: Overview

This and the following chapters analyze a number of Gregory's homilies, his *Pastoral Rule*, along with occasional citations from his mammoth treatise on the *Moralia in Iob* in order to determine if they provide criteria or rationales for an ecclesiastical leader entering into secular affairs. The overall focus of this chapter is to lay a foundation that pieces together what Gregory did and said in regard to his pastoral and practical involvement in affairs of the state. To this end, I will analyze, in this chapter and the next, what I consider to be the principles that Gregory used to guide his actions and thoughts. These principles are the moral intention of the leader; the virtues of charity, humility, and detachment; and, finally, the interplay of the dual lives of action and contemplation. Gregory has a great deal to say on these matters, and from his actions and words we can determine whether or not traces or influences from other earlier models are detectable and what is original to Gregory.

### 5.1.0: Rome and the Eschaton

Motivated by the notion of the imminent end of the world, Gregory believed that the attacks against Rome and the tumult that existed within the city were sure signs that the final days were quickly approaching. Markus treats Gregory's understanding of the apocalyptic signs foretelling the end of the temporal world. It is his contention that Gregory operates out of a sense of urgency because all of the scriptural writings concerning the end times were unfolding

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455. This chapter introduces the key elements that Gregory employed in constructing a basis for ecclesial involvement in temporal affairs. While referring to current trends in scholarship, I intend to rely primarily on Gregory's homilies, pastoral manual, and scriptural commentaries to see what Gregory did and said in specific situations.

before Gregory's eyes.<sup>456</sup> Gregory noted that a prophecy regarding the end times by Saint Benedict was being fulfilled. In a conversation between Benedict and Bishop Camisina regarding King Totila, Benedict foretold the devastation that Rome would experience not only from outside forces, but also from powers within the city. He maintained: "Rome . . . shall not be utterly destroyed by strangers: but shall be so shaken with tempests, lightnings, whirlwinds, and earthquakes, that it will fall to decay."<sup>457</sup> Although Gregory never specifically indicated when this singular event would occur, he did imply through his homilies and the *Moralia* that it was pending.

The forty homilies he preached on the Gospel, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, were either delivered by Gregory or by others on his behalf. The first of these homilies were given in 590 at Saint Peter's Basilica during Advent. He concluded his treatment on the Gospels in 593 at Saint Lawrence's Basilica after the Feast of Pentecost. In his presentation of these homilies, Gregory used Sacred Scripture as a guide for the Christian's every action. In Scripture, the Christian not only discovered a meaningful expression for an encounter with Jesus Christ, but also realized a manner of acting morally in the world.<sup>458</sup>

There indeed existed a strong link between these homilies and the *Moralia*. The *Moralia* pointed to Gregory's understanding of the end times. It was composed by Gregory while he was travelling in 579 to Constantinople as the papal *apocrisiarius*. Gregory was not alone on his eastward journey. Several monks from the monastery of Saint Andrew accompanied him on that

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456. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 51-67. See also, Kevin L. Hester, *Eschatology and Pain in St. Gregory the Great: The Christological Synthesis of Gregory's Morals on the Book of Job* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 1-54.

457. *Dial.* 2.15, lines 23-5, *SCh* 2; trans. Gardner, 75. *Roma . . . non exterminabitur, sed tempestatibus, coruscis et turbinibus ac terrae motu fatigata, marcescet in semetipsa.*

458. Gregory, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Dom David Hurst (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 1-4. In his introduction, Dom Hurst explores Gregory's use and dependence on Scripture for providing both a moral code of conduct and an experience of a personal encounter with God.



sojourn. While they travelled to Constantinople, Gregory and his companions were adamant about maintaining monastic discipline. As part of their spiritual exercises, the monks who went along with Gregory insisted he take up an exposition of the Book of Job. This account of the Book of Job was not to be an ordinary exegesis of the text. The monks wanted Gregory to take the allegories and metaphors presented by the text on Job and offer a moral teaching that would be a type of handbook or manual of ethics. According to Gregory: “They added as well that I should not only search the literal words for the allegorical sense but that I should then bend the allegorical sense to the exercise of moral action.”<sup>459</sup> Both sets of writings reflect on Gregory’s understanding of the imminent eschaton:

We see some of these things already coming to pass, and dread that the rest are soon to follow. We see nation rising against nation and the distress that follows on earth. . . . we have suffered pestilence without relief, we do not yet clearly see the signs in the sun and moon and stars, but from the change in the air now we gather that these are not far off. . . . The accomplishment of things past is a clear indication of things to come.<sup>460</sup>

Gregory’s Rome had noticeably deteriorated and was almost unrecognizable as what had once been the *caput mundi*. In his Homilies on the Prophet Ezekiel, he described his beloved city as desolate, barren, in complete shambles, and defeated. The *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, delivered to a mixed audience of monks, clergy, and laity, depicted the physical and spiritual

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459. *Moralia, ad Leandrum*, 1, lines 46-50, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Kerns, 49. *Qui hoc quoque mihi in onere suae petitionis addiderunt, ut non solum verba historiae per allegoriarum sensus excuterem, sed allegoriarum sensus protinus in exercitium moralitatis inclinarem*. See Wilken, “Interpreting Job allegorically,” 213-26. In his article, Wilken offers some fundamental tools or instruments which assist the reader in understanding Gregory’s explanations of the metaphors used in the Book of Job.

460. *Hom. Evan.* 1.1, lines 14-27, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 15-16 [Lk. 21:25-33]. *Nam gentem super gentem exsurgere, earumque pressuram terries insistere . . . Pestilentias sine cessatione patimur. Signa vero in sole, et luna, et stellis, adhuc aperte minime videmus, sed quia et haec non longe sint. . . . quia sequentium rerum certitudo est praeteritarum exhibitio*. In reflecting on these verses, Gregory uses the atmospheric signs as a signal of the end times. He makes direct reference to Luke 21:10-11. There is a discrepancy between the numbering of the Gospel homilies in English and Latin, I have decided to use the Latin homily numbers.

state of Rome as the city was besieged by the Lombards between the years of 592-593. These homilies were originally composed in note form, but after eight years a group of brothers insisted that Gregory revisit his words and present the homilies as a manuscript. Although the brothers are not identified, Theodosia Tomkinson refers to the group: “Eight years later, at the Brothers’ request, he asked for [the notes], looked them over, and corrected them in preparation for their reproduction in a manuscript that could be conveniently read.”<sup>461</sup> The homilies were then divided into two books. The first book of his homilies dealt with the passages from Ezekiel 1:1-4:3 and the second book concentrated strictly on Ezekiel 40:1-24.

Through these homilies, Gregory presented a Rome in pain: “Everywhere we see lamentation, on all sides we hear groans. Cities lie in ruin, fortresses are razed. Fields are deserted, the earth is returned to solitude. No countrymen remain in the fields, hardly any inhabitants in the towns . . . the small remnant of the human race is still punished without ceasing.”<sup>462</sup> Gregory then allegorically compared Rome to the pot presented in Ezekiel. For Ezekiel, the people of Jerusalem were compared to meat boiling in a pot, which symbolized their punishment from God and lack of divine protection. For Gregory, this image initially was the foreshadowing of the establishment of Rome. Gregory believed the water mentioned was an indication of the greatness of Rome and the many who gathered to the city. As the water boiled, Rome entered into glory and fame, then the boiling waters consumed the city and it suffered, leaving it burned and empty. Here, Gregory cleverly used allegory to convey his thoughts. Allegory had a great value for Gregory because it draws the person into the virtue of discernment. It is through allegory that one moves from the literal sense of the text in order to

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461. Gregory, *Homilies on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 19, brackets added.

462. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.22, lines 524-29, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 369-70 [Ezekiel 24:3-6]. *Ubique luctus aspicimus, undique gemitus audimus. Destructae urbes, eversa sunt castra, depopulate agri, in solitudinem terra redacta est. Nullus in agris incola, pene nullus in urbibus habitator remansit; et tamen ipsae parvae generis humani reliniquiae adhuc quotidie et sine cessation feriuntur.*

reap the spiritual message.<sup>463</sup> Gregory continued to explore this eschatology by reflecting on the evils and the signs that would precede the destruction of the world, which he believed were already evident in the lives of the people. He dissected the pericope of Luke's Gospel in order to delineate the impending doom.<sup>464</sup> For Gregory, *nation will rise against nation* (Lk. 21:10) was a clear indication of the chaos seen within the city and the empire, particularly the ongoing assaults by the Lombards.

The political turmoil and the distressed economic and social conditions, which have already been discussed, were also clear signs suggesting the fulfillment of this prophesy. When reflecting on the *great earthquakes in various regions* (Lk. 21:11), he concluded that they undoubtedly revealed the coming wrath of God, which was to occur on the last day. Although Gregory was reiterating what Luke said, he pointed to the natural disasters of his day that denoted the chaos that would ensue as the world came to an end. Gregory briefly recounted those "signs of disorder" that would come from God, the elements of the atmosphere, and human intervention.<sup>465</sup> The heart of his argument is that the wrath of God is deserved because of the manner in which humanity has taken all God has offered and corrupted it.<sup>466</sup> Humanity, instead of being dutiful stewards of creation, used the virtues given by God and turned them into vices and occasions to sin. The turbulence in the city is both physical (foreign groups attacking the city) and spiritual (the moral decay of the people).<sup>467</sup>

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463. For Gregory's use of allegory; see Robert Louis Wilken, "Interpreting Job Allegorically: The *Moralia* of Gregory the Great," *Pro Ecclesia* 10, no. 2 (2001): 213-26.

464. Even though Gregory does not explicitly comment on other Gospel passages that reflect the signs that will accompany the end times, he appears to be familiar with both Mt. 24:6-7 and Mk.13:7-8.

465. *Hom Evan.* 2.35, lines 23-34, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 302 [Lk. 21:9-19]. Here Gregory elaborates on the signs that will accompany the end times as well as their origins.

466. *Hom Evan.* 1.1, line 6, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 15.

467. For a well documented argument regarding the correlation between temporal suffering and human sinfulness; see Baun, "Gregory's Eschatology," 160-64.

Regarding human conflict, Gregory was not simply referring to attacks by the Lombards, but also recognized that the immoral and unjust actions of the people were equally to blame. He spoke of divine retribution for those who had committed grievous acts. That retribution for Gregory would come at the end of the world. Gregory wanted to convey a profound sense of urgency by focusing attention so strongly on the eschaton. Baun's research reveals that three out of every four Gospel homilies ended with an explicit comment on the Final Judgment and a possible suggestion for atonement. Also a third of the other homilies he preached spoke about judgment and reparation. Even his commentaries, particularly the *Moralia*, and homilies on feast days of saints, such as martyrs, expanded on this theme of the end times and what it accompanied.<sup>468</sup> He warned:

When the wicked inflict evils upon the good, if they see them to be shaken from the interior hope, they are overjoyed at their deceiving taking effect, for they account the spread of their error to be the greatest gain. . . . the good man's hope is rooted within, and never bent to the ground by outward evils. . . . At once he looks at the blessing of the Retribution to come . . . and . . . what an arraignment awaits the wicked.<sup>469</sup>

As Gregory elaborated on his eschatological understanding, he compared the city to a body that had advanced in age:<sup>470</sup>

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468. See Baun, "Gregory's Eschatology," 167.

469. *Moralia* 31.46, lines 1-19, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Parker, 401-2. *Cum bonis mala reprobis ingerunt, si hos a spe intima labefactari, effectu deceptionis hilaescunt. . . . erroris sui propagationem deputant . . . . Cum vero bonorum spes interius figitur, et nequaquam mails exterioribus ad ima reclinatur . . . . Unde et mox venturae retributionis bona quasi jam praesentia conspiciunt, et qui reatus in iudicio reprobos maneat attendit, sundens.* Also see *Moralia* 14.51 lines 1-23, for continued concentration on Divine retribution and Judgment of sinful actions of the wicked.

470. The *senectus mundi* was not a theme coined by Gregory. Augustine used the same metaphor to characterize the decline or old age of the Roman empire in the fifth century. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 285-96.

In youth the body is vigorous, the chest remains strong and healthy, the neck is straight, the arms muscular; in later years the body is bent, the neck scrawny and withered . . . strength is failing. . . . So too the world was strong in its early years, as in its youth. . . . Now it is weighed down by its old age, and as troubles increase it is oppressed as if by the proximity of its demise.”<sup>471</sup>

Although Gregory acknowledged that the world was in the final days, he saw the work that needed to be done in the midst of that devastation. All was not lost. Using the analogy of the eight steps of the vestibule of the outer court from the vision of the temple as presented in Ezekiel 40:31, Gregory was able to convey that the destruction of the world closely mirrored the days required for its creation. In seven days, according to the Book of Genesis, God created the world. By analogy, it was precisely in those seven days that the world would encounter its demise. The eighth day was the key to Gregory because this was the day which symbolized the Resurrection. Out of the dust and ash heap of Rome, humanity will rise: “For on that day ends all the time which unfolds in seven days, and because the day follows the seventh, it is rightly called the eighth. On that day our flesh rises again from the dust to receive from Truth its desserts, whether good or evil.”<sup>472</sup> The people need to be prepared for that day. This became his task, his calling, his duty. In speaking of a sense of duty, Gregory deemed it necessary to be involved in secular matters for strictly spiritual reasons. Bronwen Neil stresses that the spiritual nature of his duty is the *leitmotif* of Gregory’s involvement in secular affairs. In short, any involvement in the political arena is for the salvation of souls. Neil comments: “His first concern

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471. *Hom Evan.* 1.1, lines 105-14, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 18-19 [Lk. 21:9-19]. *Sicut enim in juventute viget corpus, forte et incolome manet pectus, torosa cervix, plena sunt bronchia; in annis autem senilibus statura curvature, cervix exsiccate deponitur . . . virtus deficit . . . ita mundus in annis prioribus velut in juventute viguit . . . at nunc ipsa sua senectute deprimitur, et quasi ad vicinam mortem molestiis crescentibus urgetur.*

472. *Hom Hiez.* 2.8.5, lines 141-4, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 399 [Ezek. 40:27-31]. *In quo videlicet die omne hoc tempus finitur quod septem diebus evolvitur. Quia autem post septem dies sequitur, jure octavus appellatur. In quo et caro nostra, resurget ex pulvere, ut sive bona, sive mala quae egit, recipiat a Veritate.* See also Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 53.

was the preservation of the social order in order to facilitate the salvation of souls.”<sup>473</sup>

Aside from the geophysical disasters and the military advances of Germanic kingdoms, Gregory centered attention on the sinful actions of people and the reality that the Divine Judge will seek wrath and retribution. In light of the looming termination of all things, Gregory embarked on a task that would help prepare souls for the final judgment. The supernatural goal of the *cura animarum* was thus the primary responsibility not only for Gregory, but also for all others in positions of pastoral leadership. To that point, Gregory reminded his listeners: “Time is quickly running out. Let us prepare with haste for seeing our judge soon; our good deeds are impelling us towards Him with great urgency.”<sup>474</sup> Elsewhere, Gregory reminded the people that good deeds do not necessarily benefit the person in this life, but were more or less undertaken so as to profit the person in light of the future hope of heaven. He wrote: “So when a good deed is done for our neighbor it . . . does not seek the reward of present grace but trusts in the future promise.”<sup>475</sup>

This very act of preparation, he believed, was at the heart of the role of those in positions of authority. It was, therefore, the task of the pastoral leader to ensure that the people are duly warned of the impending final judgment that will take place on the eighth day and the true happiness that awaited those in heaven. Claudio Fauci notes Gregory’s preoccupation with the end times, which he used to prepare the people for the Second Coming of Christ, and writes that the preparation was facilitated by conversion and an observance of moral order: “What matters is

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473. Bronwen Neil, “The Papacy in the Age of Gregory the Great,” in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 4.

474. *Hom. Evan.* 1.4, lines 145-8, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 125 [Mt. 10:5-8]. *Cum velocitate tempora fugiunt. Ad videndum ergo citius iudicem nostrum quia cum magna importunitate impellimur, ei bonis actibus cum festinatione praeparemur.*

475. *Hom. Hiez.* 2.5.14, lines 413-16, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 345 [Ezek. 40:12-17]. *Itaque cum bonum opus erga proximum agitur . . . si non praesentis gratiae retributionem quaerit, sed spem suam animus ad futuram promissionem tendit.*

the moral lesson, the stimulus to conversion, which draws on the old age of the world and the announcement of the Second Coming. Christ, preaching of the terrible events that will accompany His return, wanted to teach humanity its responsibility and then to educate on how to avoid arriving at a stage of being unprepared.”<sup>476</sup>

In a homily addressed to the bishops and the clergy in 591 regarding the pastoral office, Gregory admonished them: “We must ponder the fact that everyone, as much as he can, as much as he is in the position to, should strive zealously to make known to the Church he has undertaken to serve both the dreadfulness of the coming judgment and the sweetness of the kingdom.”<sup>477</sup> While the *cura animarum* had a supernatural tone, Gregory recognized that the physical needs of the people could not be ignored. Donald Logan documents the many secular activities of Gregory and even makes note that these were endeavors that the imperial government should have been performing, such as defending the city when the Lombard duke of Spoleto threatened to attack, appointing commandants to key military posts in Lepe and Naples, paying the Roman garrison, negotiating peace treaties, feeding the city’s hungry, and maintaining the aqueducts. He was quick to note that in each secular activity Gregory had a singular purpose: the *cura animarum*. Logan writes: “Not even the harshest critics of the medieval popes suggest that Gregory took advantage of the situation to enlarge the power of the papacy. . . . it can be said that many made power plays with little spiritual justification, but not of

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476. Claudio Fauci, *Il Senso della Vita, il Destino dell’Uomo: La Teologia della Storia nelle Epistole ed Omelie di Gregorio Magno* (Naples: Grafite Editrice, 2000), 113. *Ciò che conta è la lezione morale, lo stimolo alla conversione, che si trae dalla vecchiaia del mondo e dell’annuncio della parusia. Cristo, predicando i terribili avvenimenti che accompagneranno il suo ritorno, ha voluto educare l’umanità alla responsabilità del proprio operato e quindi ad evitare di arrivarvi impreparati.*

477. *Hom. Evan.* 1.17, lines 174-6, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 140 [Lk. 10:1-7]. *Proinde considerandum nobis est ut, in quantum valet quisque, in quantum sufficit, et terrorem venturae iudicii, et dulcedinem regni, susceptae Ecclesiae insinuare contendat.*

the monk-pope in the Lateran Palace.”<sup>478</sup>

Gregory provided a path for the people to escape the divine wrath of God. He firmly believed, stressing God’s judgment and fury, that God was loving, merciful, and full of compassion. Baun observes: “In his commentary on Job, as well as in his Ezekiel and gospel homilies, more so than in his letters, Gregory tends to balance the fear of judgment and hell with a pastorally-minded hope of heaven as a motivating force.”<sup>479</sup> As this chapter will show, Gregory believed that people needed to be instructed on the manner by which they would gain entrance into the happiness of the Kingdom of God.

### 5.2.0: Profile of Leadership<sup>480</sup>

To understand what Gregory considered to be the qualities and characteristics needed to be an effective leader, attention on his *Pastoral Rule*, in union with his homilies and *Moralia* is necessary. We cannot set aside the importance of Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule* in the life of the sixth-century Church. This treatise is important to this research because through it Gregory was able to combine his experience as a civil servant, papal envoy, monk, and now bishop in order to present a detailed description of leadership. Christopher Beeley stresses that Gregory’s work had a significant impact not only within ecclesial circles, but also imperial ones, which makes it invaluable to understanding his ecclesiastical paradigm. He notes: “Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule* . . .

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478. Logan, *History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 48. See also Bronwen Neil, “The Papacy in the Age of Gregory the Great,” 20-2.

479. Baun, “Gregory’s Eschatology,” 163. See *Forty Gospel Homilies*, Homily 3 and 31 as an example of Gregory’s pervading sense of hope in the face of the impending judgment.

480. In this section, I use three figures used by Gregory in order to highlight his understanding of the duties and responsibilities of pastoral leadership. For a more comprehensive development of Gregory’s idea of pastoral leadership, refer to George Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great: Ascetic, Pastor, and First Man of Rome* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 70-81. Here Demacopoulos presents such tasks as preaching and interpreting the Gospel, discernment, moral reform, proper example, and the administration of the sacraments.



became the chief manual on church leadership, and a work of wider social and political importance, in the eastern and western Middle Ages.”<sup>481</sup>

Sofia Boesh-Gajano notes that many benefitted from the pastoral treatise of Gregory: “the work had a large circulation . . . Leander was not in fact the only one to enjoy the work; some noted correspondents were also Colombano, Liciniano of Carthage, Venanzio, bishop of Luni, and the priest Colombo, but it is most likely that the work was utilized by Gregory himself as a manual.”<sup>482</sup> It is not, therefore, an exaggeration to claim that his *Pastoral Rule* was of such great value that it was widely used and circulated not only in his own day but well beyond. Rita Lizzi underscores the value of Gregory’s pastoral care manual as she recounts how it was used in Gregory’s time by Leander and brought to England during the establishment of the mission to the Anglo Saxons. Beyond the time of Gregory, it was translated in the eighth century and used by Saint Boniface as well as being in circulation during the Carolingian Age.<sup>483</sup> It was also distributed throughout the empire. Matthew dal Santo studies the impact of Gregory on the emperor and in the empire. He points out that the *Pastoral Rule* was translated into Greek at the request of the Emperor Maurice and dispensed to the bishops of the East. He writes: “He had a reputation as an esteemed spiritual writer: Anatolius . . . thought it worthwhile to present a copy to the Emperor Maurice, who was ‘seeking and ordering a copy’ . . . while Gregory’s friend,

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481. Christopher Beeley, *Leading God’s People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), xi.

482. Sofia Gajano, *Gregorio Magno: Alle Origini del Medioevo* (Rome: Viella, 2004), 77: *L’opera ebbe una larga circolazione . . . Leandro non fu infatti il solo a fruire dell’opera; I corrispondenti noti furono anche Colombano, Liciniano di Cartagine, Venanzio, vescovo di Luni, e il presbitero Colombo, ma è molto probabile che l’opera fosse utilizzata dallo stesso Gregorio come manual*, translation my own.

483. Rita Lizzi, “La Traduzione Greca delle Opere,” in *Gregorio Magno e il suo Tempo: XIX Incontro di studiosi dell’antichità christina in collaborazione con l’Ecole Française de Rome* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1991), 48. See also John Leinenweber, *Pastoral Practice: Books 3 and 4 of the Regula Pastoralis* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), ix-xiii, for further confirmation that Gregory’s work was not only effective in his time but throughout the ninth century and into the thirteenth century (France), fourteenth century (Italy), and into the sixteenth century (Spain).

Anastasius of Antioch translated it into Greek.”<sup>484</sup>

It was in this treatise on pastoral care that Gregory revealed a comprehensive understanding of the virtues, behaviors, and attitudes that were necessary for those who undertook the role of pastoral leadership. Written in 591, Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule* became the guide of pastoral authority for bishops and all entrusted with the care of souls. Here, Gregory used the virtues of charity and humility to provide the means in which the clergy were able to accomplish their task. The *Pastoral Rule* was, in a certain sense, a code of conduct and behavior for the clergy. Carole Straw describes it as an indispensable resource for those exercising pastoral power. She comments: “Gregory gave a blueprint for the good ruler: the qualities he must possess, and how exactly he should exercise power to achieve his goals.”<sup>485</sup> The manner in which they were to lead was through the example of their lives. Gregory delineated in a systematic fashion the appropriate behavior that was desired for the clergy. The task of the clergy was simple; yet, profound. They were to strike a balance between the contemplative and active life.

In February of 591, Gregory sent a copy to his friend John who was the Archbishop of Ravenna. In his opening letter to John, Gregory spelled out what leadership entailed in order to dissuade those who have no skills, personal qualities, or experience. Demacopoulos states that the *Pastoral Rule* was the most detailed pastoral writing of the time: “Gregory distinguishes between who should and who should not “shepherd” the flock, he identifies many of the priest’s daily responsibilities, and he anticipates many pastoral challenges.”<sup>486</sup> Gregory also admonished

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484. Matthew dal Santo, “Gregory the Great, the Empire, and the Emperor,” in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 72. See also, Rita Luzzi, “La Traduzione Greca delle Opere,” 49-50.

485. Carole Straw, “Gregory the Great,” vol. IV of *Authors of the Middle Ages: Historical and Religious Writers of the Latin West*, ed. Patrick Geary (Vermont: Variorum, 1996), 15.

486. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 130.

those already in authority. Gregory wrote: “I write this present book to express my opinion of the severity of their weight so that he who is free of these burdens might not recklessly pursue them and he who has already attained them might tremble for having done so.”<sup>487</sup> He advocated that all those in leadership positions should approach the authority entrusted them with great care and skill.

Paul Meyvaert concludes that this work was authored for three specific reasons: to be an instrument to those entrusted with the care of souls, to act as a blueprint for Gregory’s overall pastoral plan as bishop of Rome, and act as an *apologia* to John of Ravenna. Meyvaert contends: “It was no doubt a work intended to be of use to others entrusted with the government of souls, but it was also a personal reflection on the nature of his own position, and an attempt to chart his own course of action; in addition, it served as an apology for the efforts he had made upon his election to escape the weight of such responsibility.”<sup>488</sup>

Gregory further addressed those responsible for appointing others to positions of authority. Pastoral leaders should scrutinize the lives, teachings, and conduct of those seeking leadership positions. In a certain sense, Gregory must have seen the treatise as a critique on the current atmosphere found in the Church and in the empire. It was an assessment of the character of those entrusted with the *cura animarum*. Gregory told John:

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487. PR. 1.praef,lines 3-9, SCh 281-2; Demacopoulos, 27. *Praesenti libri stylo exprimo de eorum gravedine omne quod penso, ut et haec qui vacat, incaute non expetat; et qui incaute expetit, adeptum se esse pertimescat.*

488. Meyvaert, “Diversity within Unity,” in *Benedict, Gregory, Bede, and Others*, 5.

Necessity demands that one should carefully examine who it is that comes to the position and how he should live; and living well, how he should teach; and teaching rightly, with what kind of self-examination he should learn of his own weakness. Necessity also demands that humility does not flee when the office is assumed, nor the way of life contradict the assumption of the office, nor teaching abandon the way of life, nor assumption outshine teaching.<sup>489</sup>

It was in the context of his letter to John that Gregory introduced his three-pronged approach to leadership; namely, the manner in which the pastoral leader lives, teaches, and examines himself. Even though the *Pastoral Rule* was meant as a guide for the proper conduct of bishops, priests, and abbots, it could also be useful for Christian rulers and others in positions of authority.

Gregory believed leaders were to see their singular roles as a father figure and not a tyrannical autocrat. He observed: “Many, when they receive a position of ruling . . . demonstrate the terror of authority, and harm those they ought to assist. Because they have no love in their hearts, they are eager to appear to be masters, and fail to recall that they are fathers.”<sup>490</sup> With Gregory, tyranny was never to be endorsed as a form of leadership. He sternly warned those in authority to have no other intention than the good of souls. Power, greed, coercion, and pride should never gain access to the exercise of authority. Meyvaert expands on the intrusion of these and other vices into the life of the pastoral leader. Gregory asserted that original sin has indeed played a crippling role in the life of all people, himself included. The person in authority must help others to reach God while recognizing that he too is in need because he has been affected by original sin. He writes:

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489. *PR. 1.praef*, lines 12-9, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 27. *Nam dum rerum necessitas exposcit, pensandum valde est ad culmen quisque regiminis qualiter veniat; atque ad hoc rite perveniens, qualiter vivat; et bene vivens, qualiter doceat; et recte docens, infirmitatem suam quotidie quanta consideratio cognoscant, ne aut humilitas accessum fugiat, aut perventioni vita contradicat; aut vitam doctrina destituat; aut doctrinam praesumptio extollat.*

490. *Hom Evan. 1.17*, lines 55-9, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 136 [Lk. 10:1-7]. *Multi autem cum regiminis jura suscipiunt . . . terrorem potestatis exhibent, et quibus prodesse debuerant, nocent. Et quia charitatis viscera non habent, domini videri appetunt, patres se esse minime recognoscunt.*

Authority has therefore become a necessary means, in the plan of Providence, to bring men back to God, to keep men close to God. But authority is always wielded by men, each one himself bearing the wounds of original sin . . . Gregory seems to have been keenly aware that he himself was but a man, no better than others, fully subjected to the human predicament prone to pride, to anger, to vainglory.<sup>491</sup>

For Gregory, any form of authority, religious or secular, was to be exercised in a compassionate manner. The effective leader was the one who showed love and sought the *cura animarum* that was at the heart of Gregory's thoughts and actions concerning authority. Amnon Linder, while criticizing Jeffrey Richards for failing to elaborate on Gregory's literary and spiritual legacy, does acknowledge that the "Gregorian Programme" as presented by Richards was shaped by Gregory's eschatology and his "preoccupation" with the *cura animarum*.<sup>492</sup> The souls entrusted to his care, and ultimately to the Church, were in need of preparation for the *Parousia*. This specific type of preparation was to be accomplished by the formation of several groups of people entrusted with varying degrees of leadership: a pastoral episcopate, trained and skilled preachers, missionaries, and wise teachers. To this point, Robert Markus comments: "Their business is to build the house of the Lord, by preaching and by the example of their holy lives, and, when required, by help."<sup>493</sup>

Gregory identified pastoral leaders as rectors, a term attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus. J.H. Burns comments that it was in Gregory of Nazianzus's *Apologeticus* that Gregory the Great had encountered the term rector which he applied to those in the position of pastoral leadership. It denotes ruler, superior, or one possessing authority. Burns acknowledges that further research

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491. Meyvaert, "Diversity within Unity," in *Benedict, Gregory, Bede, and Others*, 6.

492. See Amnon Linder, "Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great," review of *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great*, by Jeffrey Richards, *Numen* 28 (December, 1981), 262-65.

493. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 27. It is understood that the primary focus of building the house of the Lord was not a physical concept; rather, this building was of a spiritual nature.

is needed to support this theory.<sup>494</sup> Although Gregory often used the word rector, he did employ other terms such as preacher and spiritual director. In agreement with Burns and Markus, Paul Meyvaert notes that Gregory uses several different terms to denote the one designated with pastoral authority.

I will use the terms rector, spiritual leader, leader, spiritual director, and pastoral guide interchangeably as did Gregory, depending on the particular focus of the spiritual activity. Meyvaert suggests “‘rector’, ‘praelatus’, praedicator’, ‘doctor’, all terms used to designate authority in the Church . . . . Nevertheless in the *Pastoral Care* all the essential points are touched on in one place or another, and it is evident that from the very outset of his pontificate Gregory’s psychological insight was already keen.”<sup>495</sup> Gregory reminded rectors: “For he is justly numbered among the hypocrites who turns the ministry of spiritual direction into an opportunity for domination.”<sup>496</sup> The intentionality of all pastoral leadership was to be modeled on the example of Jesus Christ. It went without saying that this example was rooted in the commandment to love God and neighbor.<sup>497</sup>

For Gregory, the exercise of love for one’s neighbor was rooted in treating others with dignity, care, respect, and equality. The model for this equality is found in the person of Christ as presented by Saint Paul: “Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being

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494. See Robert Markus, “The Latin Fathers,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought: 350-1450*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 119.

495. Meyvaert, “Diversity within Unity,” in *Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others*, 6. Cf. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 27. Markus understands that the term rector is related to the exercise of morality and equivalent to *magister*, *pastor*, *praedicator*, and *praepositus*.

496. PR. 1.2.6, lines 161-3, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 66. *Inter hypocritas enim jure deputatur, qui ex simulation disciplinae ministerium regiminis vertit in usum dominationis*.

497. See Beeley, *Leading God’s People*, 39-43, for his exposition on how love for God translates into a love for one’s brothers and sisters and its importance to the office of pastoral leader.

born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6-7).<sup>498</sup> With this understanding, Gregory believed that the pastoral leader was able to go outside of himself and recognize the needs of others. Peter Brown comments that the *kenosis* of Christ was fundamental to Gregory’s understanding of humility. Brown spoke of *kenosis* in terms of *condescensio* because both signify the process by which one was able to view others with respect, dignity, and mutuality. He notes: “*Condescensio*, a compassionate stepping down to the level of every person . . . was the key to Gregory’s notion of spiritual power.”<sup>499</sup> For Gregory, mutuality was an essential piece of the overall image of the life of the leader. He saw it as the instrument by which pride was quelled. He strongly urged those in positions of authority to maintain humility and to work to establish a bond of unity and companionship with those entrusted to their care and guidance. He acknowledged that unchecked authority could open the door to corruption: “For often when the soul is inflated because of the authority it holds . . . it becomes corrupted and moved to pride by the allure of power.”<sup>500</sup>

As a result, the rector was placed in a position to help those entrusted to his care and not rule over them as a lord and master.<sup>501</sup> The proper disposition, therefore, of authority was to aid and not hinder the people, in the case of the rector, the laity. To further his point, Gregory introduced this belief by using St. Peter as an example. Peter tempered his zeal of superiority so that he could help those he was leading. He was not over them but one of them. Peter served and did not dominate the people with whom he came into contact. Gregory used this example to demonstrate that the leader is not in the position for power, but because he had that which was

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498. See *PR*, 1.2.6, lines 1-214, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 61-8.

499. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 208.

500. *PR*, 1.2.6, lines 75-7, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 63. *Plerumque ergo dum ex subjectorum affluentia animus inflator . . . in fluxum superbiae ipso potentiae fastigio lenocinante corrumpitur.*

501. See *Hom Evan.* 1.17.4, lines 53-63, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 136 [Lk. 10: 1-7].

needed to help others on their journey to God.<sup>502</sup>

Yet, for Gregory, the overarching feature of the life of the rector was compassion, which allowed the rector to show concern for those they were called to lead. Austin Doran has put together a concise and thoughtful presentation of what that compassion to others looked like from Gregory's perspective: a willingness to help others,<sup>503</sup> thoughtful insight into the needs of others,<sup>504</sup> and reaching out to those in need.<sup>505</sup> For Doran, these three factors rooted in compassion are integral to human engagement: "Compassion is a parallel sphere of engagement in that, while it is related to the particular virtue of mercy, compassion is not just merciful deeds, but may be said to embrace the entire human capacity for receptivity to and response to those who are weak and suffering."<sup>506</sup> Again, Gregory introduced the dual lives of contemplation and action of the spiritual leader. While sternly warning the rector not to abandon the heights of contemplation, Gregory recognized that out of compassion the rector might have to suspend contemplation to tend to the needs of others. This was at the heart of his model of leadership. He called on spiritual leaders to "devote themselves to the internal matters of the laity, but . . . not fail to provide for their external life as well."<sup>507</sup>

According to Gregory, the leader needed to reach beyond himself, so that he might be available to assist the needs of others. It was incumbent on the rector to find the proper balance between action and contemplation. Failure to do so ran the risk of destroying both. Gregory staunchly supported the idea that being consumed by external affairs would ruin one's

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502. *PR.* 1.2.6, lines 87-175, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 64-7.

503. *PR.* 1.2.3, lines 1-84, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 51-4.

504. *PR.* 1.2.8, lines 1-75, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 74-6.

505. *PR.* 1.2.7, lines 1-175, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 68-74.

506. Austin Doran, "Contemplation and Compassion in the Life of the Pastor: A Commentary on Chapter Five of Part Two of the *Regula Pastoralis* of Gregory the Great" (Diss., *Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe*, 1990.), 24-5.

507. *PR.* 1.2.7, lines 128-30, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 72. *Quae interna studia subditorum suorum ferveant . . . quatenus in eis exterioris quoque vitae providentiam non relinquunt.*



contemplation. He further noted that neglecting external matters could be a violation of that charity which was owed to one's neighbor. Gregory argued that this balance was achievable if the rector embodied the attributes of purity, morality, equality, humility, and compassion.

Once the pastoral leader was able to recognize the needs of others, they were able to venture out into the world of external cares. In doing so, they must ensure that tending to the wants of those in the temporal sphere did not jeopardize their own need to return to the spiritual sphere. Simply stated, Gregory encouraged pastoral leaders to be active in secular affairs, which primarily dealt with basic human needs such as food, shelter, protection, and political negotiations. In tolerating and recommending, with conditions and cautions, the entry of pastoral leaders into secular cares, Gregory issued a specific caveat that was essential in understanding the Church's involvement in those secular matters. He stated: "In performing these things, directors should be vigilant; otherwise, as they are preoccupied with care of external matters, they will be drawn away from their concern for the internal life. . . . Therefore, it is necessary that the attention that is given to the external concerns of the laity must be kept to a certain limit."<sup>508</sup> For those who went out in the world and were involved in temporal matters, two provisions needed to be observed.

The first provision concerned the motive of the spiritual leader. If that leader was motivated by a love of his neighbor, then he was to enter the secular sphere to tend to the needs of the community. Humility was the standard by which to examine whether the intention of the person was pure. Gregory keenly observed: "Secular employments, though they may be

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508. PR. 1.2.7, lines 148-55, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 73. *Inter haec itaque metuendum semper est, et vigilanter intuendum ne dum cura ab eis exterior agitur, ab interna intentione mergantur. . . . Sollicitudo ergo quae subditis exterius impenditur, sub certa necesse est mensura teneatur.*

tolerated occasionally out of compassion, should not be pursued out of a desire for them.”<sup>509</sup>

Here, Gregory was admonishing those in pastoral authority not to act in external matters out of pride. He was aware that some would use their positions for such vain purposes. He recognized: “By divine order, everyone in a position of authority in the present age is disposed to reverence religion, but there are many who through the temptation of authority in the holy Church aspire to the glory of honor.”<sup>510</sup>

The second provision was that the activity in secular affairs should be temporary. Those who involved themselves in the secular arena should curtail their activity and return to the contemplative state as soon as the times allowed. They should complete the task at hand and return to the bosom of the Church. He sternly admonished: “In other words, attention to the temporal concerns should extend as far as necessary, but these concerns should also be cut short so that they do not grow immoderately.”<sup>511</sup>

Thus far, from the *Pastoral Rule*, we can see that representatives of the religious sphere must be involved to a certain degree in the temporal affairs of the city. Gregory bemoaned the fact that he not only had to tend to the spiritual needs of the people, but also had to contend with those external cares he had long attempted to avoid. Although he would have preferred to remain in the monastery away from secular matters, Gregory saw that part of his responsibility was to “now to bear certain troubles of the citizens, now to groan over the attacking swords of

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509. PR. 1.2.7, lines 111-2, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 72. *Saecularia itaque negotia aliquando ex compassione toleranda sunt, numquam vero ex amore requirenda.*

510. PR. 1.1.1, lines 10-13, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 29. *Sed quia auctore Deo ad religionis reverentiam omne jam praesentis saeculi culmen inclinatur, sunt nonnulli qui intra sanctam Ecclesiam per speciem regiminis gloriam affectant honoris.*

511. PR. 1.2.7, lines 170-3, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 74. *Ut videlicet curae temporalis sollicitudinis et quantum necesse est prodeant, et tamen recidantur citius, ne immoderatus excrescent.*

the barbarians, and fear the wolves lying in wait for the flock committed to me.”<sup>512</sup> When Gregory finally acquiesced and accepted his election as pope, he embraced the fact that a great burden was placed on his shoulders. Christopher Egger remarks: “Already shortly after his election, Gregory the Great complained about the huge burden of secular business which threatened to overwhelm him and diverted his thoughts from what really mattered.”<sup>513</sup> He quickly realized that he needed to respond to both the spiritual and physical needs of the people. As Markus observes: “Humility made him accept the burden laid upon him; and having accepted it, he had to formulate - for himself, in the first place - the principles that were to guide the pastor’s life and work.”<sup>514</sup>

Since the exercise of authority can never be based on fear or terror for Gregory, the profile of the leader above all else was to be focused on and defined by the image of a servant. Gregory’s frequent use of the title *servus servorum Dei* was a clear indication of his understanding of who a leader was. Gregory first used the title, *servus servorum Dei*, when writing to his sub-deacon Peter on March 16, 591, providing a rationale that ecclesial involvement in secular cares is to be permitted to help and defend the poor. In the same letter, Gregory instructed Peter to tend also to Church matters in Sicily.<sup>515</sup> It is, however, his use of the title in response to John the Faster’s (John IV), Patriarch of Constantinople’s, claim to be the

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512. *Hom Hiez.* 1.11.6, line 102-4, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 216 [Ezek. 3:15-28], brackets added. *Modo quaedam civium negotia sustinere, modo irruentibus barbarorum gladiis gemere, et commisso gregi insidiantes lupos timere.*

513. Christopher Egger, “The Growling of the Lion and the Humming of the Fly: Gregory the Great and Innocent III,” in *Pope, Church, and City: Essays in Honour of Brenda M. Bolton*, eds. Frances Andrews, Christopher Egger, and Constance M. Rousseau (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2004), 27.

514. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 72.

515. See *Epist.* 1.38, lines 44-5, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 157 [Gregory to Felix, bishop of Messina, March 591].

“Universal Patriarch” that is most noteworthy.<sup>516</sup> Beeley notes that Gregory’s idea of the rector being a servant resembles that of Augustine: “Gregory the Great reiterated Augustine’s point in one of his most memorable sayings: bishops are the ‘servants of the servants of God.’”<sup>517</sup>

Gregory presented a “code of conduct” for those who exercised any form of authority. He readily made known that such a person should live a life that was worthy of emulation. The rector, in a true and profound sense, should set a standard by which others would be measured and held accountable. In setting that standard, however, they must guarantee that there was no duplicity in the manner in which they, themselves, lived their lives.

It was clear that Gregory expected a certain demeanor and behavior from those responsible for the *cura animarum*. Here I will concentrate on those virtues and characteristics that Gregory deemed necessary for pastoral leadership. By analyzing a selection of homilies, the *Pastoral Rule*, and relevant portions of the *Moralia*, Gregory’s understanding of the qualities and characteristics that a person in authority should possess becomes evident. The rest of this chapter will focus on Gregory’s understanding of the moral intent of the person in pastoral authority. In understanding Gregory’s ideal of the spirit in which pastoral leaders are to act, his rationale for pastoral leaders’ engagement in political affairs can begin to come into focus.

### 5.3.0: Moral Conduct and Right Intention of the Pastoral Leader

The styles of leadership immersed in compassion and mercy were the ones that Gregory praised. His idea of authority was set in the images of a servant and father-like figure who

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516. Gregory believed that John’s claim to be the “Universal Patriarch” was rooted in pride, which will be discussed in chapter seven. George Demacopoulos explores the exchange that took place between Gregory and John concerning John’s use of the ecumenical title; see “Gregory the Great and the Sixth-Century Dispute Over the Ecumenical Title,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 70 (2009): 600-21.

517. Beeley, *Leading God’s People*, 11.

demonstrated a certain level of love and respect for those entrusted to his care. In conjunction with these images, Gregory's leader was also the person who closely embodied the qualities of a shepherd. By presenting Christ as that Good Shepherd, Gregory offered a particular model of leadership he deemed appropriate. He asserted: "You have heard, my friends, in the Gospel reading something meant for your instruction . . . He [Jesus] adds the character of this goodness, which we are to imitate, saying, '*The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep*'. He did what he taught, he gave an example of what he commanded."<sup>518</sup> The form of leadership that he denounced was rooted in pride and the desire of self-aggrandizement. That kind of leader acts not out of love for others, but rather, love for self, which closes one's eyes to the needs of others. They had little or no concern for the needs of their neighbor. From Gregory's perspective, a consequence of focusing on self was a style of leadership that sought to preserve, at all costs, power and glory. In many instances, the means of preservation were executed with coercive measures and tyrannical practices which indeed ensured the insatiable appetite for glory.

That brand of leadership, for Gregory, was incompatible with his image of a leader. It rendered one incapable of fulfilling the overall task of seeking, preparing, and saving souls. By the sixth century, the Church had amassed significant portions of land in the papal patrimony. With acquisition of property, the leaders of the Church enjoyed an increase in wealth and status. Gregory, as the first monk-pope, saw it as his task to keep this sense of power in check. He desired that the leaders of the Church would always act in an exemplary fashion. As Markus concludes: "Invariably what is uppermost in his mind are questions about the rector's

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518. *Hom. Evan. 1.14*, lines 1-65, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 107, [Jn. 10:11-16] brackets added. *Audit, fratres charissimi, ex lectione evangelica eruditionem vestram . . . Atque ejusdem bonitatis formam quam nos imitemur, adjungit, dicens: Bonus pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis.*

conduct.”<sup>519</sup> One can never lose sight of the fact that the leader’s role was pastoral. Bishops and priests were guardians of souls and protectors of the faith. They were not to live or act like power-hungry individuals seeking their own best interests. I would argue that Gregory placed a strong emphasis on eschatology because it opened the door to the inherent obligations of those in positions of leadership.

In the *Moralia*, Gregory used the life of Job not only to communicate effectively the idea of the eschaton, but also to show the importance of the moral conduct of the individual. Gregory detailed that Job suffered great losses and extreme hardships. Yet, by his endurance, moral conduct, and unwavering faith, Job was able to recover. In his recovery, he was raised up again to greater glory and vast rewards. Gregory used Job as an allegory for the present grave situation confronting the Church and the world. Just as Job was restored to grandeur, so also would the Church and the state emerge from the conditions of the times. He claimed: “For Holy Church to rejoice over each of us, as both the blessedness of our soul, and the incorruption of our body, is for her to receive double at her end.”<sup>520</sup>

Gregory wrote in the *Moralia*: “It is well that after the losses of his substances, after the death of his children, after the tortures of his wounds, after the strife and conflict of words, he is raised up again with a double reward . . . Holy Church . . . will afterwards receive a double recompense . . . when the toils of this present time are over, she rises not only to the joy of souls, but to a blessed estate of bodies.”<sup>521</sup> It was precisely the task of pastoral leaders to guide the souls entrusted to them to this blessed state. Through the contemplation of the *Moralia*, Gregory

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519. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 29.

520. *Moralia*, 35.14, lines 28-39, CCSL 143B; trans. Parker, 678. *Sanctae Ecclesiae in fine suo duplum recipere est in singulis nobis et de beatitudine animae, et de carnis incorruptione gaudere.*

521. *Moralia*, praef.10, lines 1-11, CCSL 143B; trans. Kerns, 29-30. *Bene autem post damna rerum, post funera pignorum, post cruciatus vulnerum, post certamina pugnasque verborum, duplici remuneratione sublevatur . . . sancta Ecclesia . . . duplicia et postmodum recipient: quia finite labore praesentis temporis, non solum ad animarum gaudium, sed etiam ad beatitudinem corporum ascendit.*

provided a moral framework that he applied to the conduct and the actions of all pastoral leaders. The Church's obligation was heightened due to the simple fact that the end was imminent. As Leyser observes: "The one institution that mattered was the Church: it was the task of all those in authority to gather together as many believers as possible, in anticipation of the Last Days."<sup>522</sup> All efforts that the Church and pastoral leaders undertook were for this one simple yet profound function.

To that end, Gregory believed that the fundamental requirement for the pastoral leader was to lead a life of holiness. At the core of this lifestyle was the moral rectitude of the person. Gregory asserted that the spirit in which the pastoral leader acted was of the utmost importance. The true intention of the person might be hidden from the eyes of people; yet, never from the eyes of God. God judged the spirit by which each act was done. Speaking about the virtue of one's action, Gregory avowed: "For a man is often involved secretly in many sins, and seems great in some one virtue. . . . even that very virtue is no virtue in the eyes of God, while it conceals that which displeases, puts forward that which pleases Him. . . . Another is busy in almsgiving, he distributes his own goods; but he is yet a slave to many acts of injustice."<sup>523</sup> It was vital that the actions of the pastoral leader be upright and guided by a pastoral morality that always seeks after the needs of the other. Through his reflection on the *Moralia*, Gregory emphasized that the spirit behind the leader's actions must always be rooted in love of neighbor. Charity safeguarded the true intention of each act.

To this point Gregory commented: "we were to look upon ourselves as on a neighbor

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522. Leyser, "Expertise and Authority," 39.

523. *Moralia*, 34.15, lines 90-101, CCSL 143B; trans. Parker, 641. *Saepe namque homo multis occulte peccatis involvitur, et in una aliqua virtute magnus videtur. . . . Unde fit ut et ipsa virtus ante Dei oculos virtus non sit, dum abscondit quod displicet, prodit quod placet. . . . Alius eleemosynis vacat, propria distribuit; sed tamen multis injustitiis servit.*

... We were to look on our neighbor as ourselves.”<sup>524</sup> For Gregory, the litmus test that the spiritual leader could use and others could use to judge him regarding moral decision making was straightforward: was there an eagerness for souls or zeal for personal gain? In addressing the right intention of any leader, Gregory relied on the images of the shepherd and the hireling as presented in John’s Gospel as the standard for judgment. Here the good shepherd willingly lays down his life; whereas the hireling, the hired one, shows little regard for the flock and in the presence of danger flees.<sup>525</sup> This was a key distinction for Gregory because it revealed the divergent actions of the shepherd and the hireling. The shepherd tending to the flock was an act of love and concern, whereas, the hired hand was there only for personal reward and temporal gain. According to Gregory’s assumption, at the sight of difficulty or personal danger, the hired hand would abandon all responsibility so as to preserve his own well-being. The shepherd remains and defends the flock at all costs even to the point of death. Pastoral leaders must tend to and safeguard those entrusted to their care. They could never abandon their post or duties. Gregory commented: “He is called a hireling and not a shepherd because he does not pasture the Lord’s sheep out of his deep love for them but for a temporal reward. . . . He is eager for earthly advantages, rejoices in the honor of preferment, feeds on temporal gain, and enjoys the deference offered him by other people.”<sup>526</sup> If the pastoral leader was not concerned for and acted not on behalf of the people, then Gregory felt he should not lead or guide God’s flock.

The leader showed whether or not he governed as a shepherd or hireling when he was challenged. Gregory further commented: “But we cannot truly know whether anyone is a

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524. *Hom Hiez.* 1.4.9, lines 236-8, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 80 [Ezek. 1:10-12]. *Si enim nos sicut proximum aspiceremus . . . Et rursus si proximum aspiceremus ut nos.*

525. See Jn. 10:11-13.

526. *Hom Evan.* 1.14, lines 24-9, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 108 [Jn. 10:11-16]. *Non pastor, sed mercenarius vocatur, qui non pro amore intimo oves dominicas, sed ad temporales mercedes pascit. . . . terrenis commodis inhiat, honore praelationis gaudet, temporalibus lucris pascitur, impensa sibi ab hominibus reverentia laetatur.*



shepherd or a hireling if there is no occasion to test him. During times of peace even a hireling frequently stands for the protection of the flock like a true shepherd. When the wolf comes, each one shows . . . his intention.”<sup>527</sup> The underlying principle of the true intention was brought to light when the person made a stand for the betterment and security of others. Gregory stressed that the one in authority who seeks honor, esteem, and temporal gains only defend those things which might be taken away or forfeited.<sup>528</sup> If one sought honor, esteem, and/or earthly rewards, then he was not acting in a manner that Gregory, and presumably God, expected.

When a person in authority sought only earthly advancement and did not act with a moral or right intention, souls were neglected and even lost. Gregory cried out: “Souls are perishing, and he enjoys his earthly advantages. . . . No zeal rouses the hireling against these temptations, no love excites him. He seeks only the outward advantages and carelessly allows the inward injury to his flock.”<sup>529</sup> Gregory was adamant that the person in authority must be there for no other reason than to advance the salvation of all others even before themselves. The intention of the pastoral leader must be such that they govern out of love and compassion and never seek to turn that love inward. In order to accomplish such a selfless act, the moral leader must at all times display an incredible amount of control over desires and appetites for power.

Self-control was an important quality for those exercising pastoral leadership. The

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527. *Hom Evan.* 1.14, lines 31-5, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 108 [Jn. 10:11-16]. *Utrum vero pastor sit, an mercenarius, cognosci veraciter non potest, si occasionem necessitates deest. Tranquillitatis enim tempore, plerumque ad gregis custodiam sicut verus pastor, sic etiam mercenarius stat; sed lupus veniens indicat quo quisque animo.*

528. Here Gregory stated: “Because he esteems honor, because he enjoys his temporal advantages, he is afraid to oppose the danger lest he lose what he loves.” *Hom Evan.* 1.14, lines 70-3, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 109. *Dum enim honorem amplectitur, dum temporalibus commodis laetatur, opponere se contra periculum trepidat, ne hoc quod diligit amittat.* See *Moralia*, 21.10, lines 1-17, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Parker, 527-8.

529. *Hom Evan.* 1.14, lines 56-64, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 109. *Animae pereunt, et ipse de terrenis commodis laetatur. . . . Sed contra haec mercenarius nullo zelo accenditur, nullo fervor dilectionis excitatur: quia dum sola exterior commode requirit, interior gregis damna negligenter patitur.* See *Moralia*, 22.21, lines 1-64, CCSL 143A; trans. Parker, 591-3.

impatient person responds to people and situations in a hasty manner. This person is impetuous and, as a result, acts imprudently without first assessing the consequences of their actions.

Gregory remarked: “impetuousness drives the mind where it does not want to go. . . . Afterwards they rarely are aware of what they have done.”<sup>530</sup> This reckless behavior, according to Gregory, was a clear indication that there was a lack of charity. Gregory made it abundantly clear that due to the lack of charity in the lives of such people vice would inevitably take root in their life.

Impatient people, who lack the virtue of charity, were among the first to welcome the vices of arrogance and pride. Gregory maintained: “For the very virtue of charity, which is the mother and guardian of all virtues, is lost through impatience.”<sup>531</sup> Arrogance and pride were responsible for the destruction of all that was good and useful for others. They were offensive to God and detrimental to any subordinate.

For Gregory, impulsive people think little of others and primarily of themselves. The impatient person has no time to think about what ought to be done, such people lack the use of reason. Gregory was quick to establish a direct connection between the virtue of charity and the disposition of patience as he quotes Scripture: “Love is patient” (1Cor. 13:4a). He urged the leader of the people to embody patience because it would lead to sound reasoning that can only be fueled by a deep abiding love for others. He insisted that the leader take the opportunity to learn everything possible about those entrusted to his care and forgo his own desires and wants. Gregory stressed the idea that a pastoral leader is the moral compass of the people. He dissects the word for ruler in Greek, *basileus*, to prove his point. He explains the etymology of the word for them. *Laós* (λαός) means people and *basis* (βάσις) means base which he translates into the

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530. PR. 2.3.9, lines 6-8, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 102. *Quia videlicet mentem impellit furor quo non trahit desiderium. . . . unde post doleat sciens.*

531. PR. 2.3.9, lines 15-7, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 102. *Ipsa namque quae mater est omnium custosque virtutum, per impatientiae vitium virtus amittitur caritatis.*

Latin *basis populi*, the base of the people. The leader is exactly the basis or standard of the people.<sup>532</sup> At all times, he must practice restraint and look at the needs and desires of others before his own.

Gregory introduced the characteristic necessary for one to monitor desires. If one was to examine the spirit of his actions, then discernment would be advantageous in doing so. He called on the rector to discern in silence prior to making a decision about or executing an activity whatsoever. Discernment allowed the rector to assess a situation and think before any action was undertaken and guaranteed that he would not make rash decisions or be quick to judgment. It allowed for an examination of a particular situation as well as the time and energy to adequately weigh its options and consequences. The silence required for such discernment was not to be interpreted as fleeing from a situation or activity, but allowed the rector to judge the most opportune time for deliberate action or speech. Gregory feared that without discernment great harm could be done. Straw sees discernment as absolutely essential to Gregory's ideal of leadership. She writes: "*Discretio* was the key virtue of the pragmatic pope Gregory, for it made action and accommodation possible. Based on realistic assessment of possibilities, discretion fostered a creative flexibility that enabled Gregory to make the most advantageous (and moral) choices."<sup>533</sup> Gregory contended: "Accordingly, the spiritual director should be discerning . . . otherwise he might say something that should have been suppressed or suppress something that should have been said."<sup>534</sup> Demacopoulos argues that for Gregory *discretio* was also essential in assisting the pastoral leader in discerning a true virtue from a vice masked as a virtue.<sup>535</sup>

Since the life of the rector was to be an example for others and was to be above reproach,

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532. See *Moralia*, 9.16, lines 93-108; CCSL 143; trans. Kerns, 225.

533. Straw, "Gregory the Great," 14.

534. *PR*. 1.2.4, lines 2-3, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 54. *Sit rector discretus . . . ne aut tacenda proferat, aut proferenda reticescat.*

535. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 135.

his actions and words needed to correspond. There was nothing more detrimental to leadership than to have a person in charge living in a manner that was not consistent with his words or actions. Rectors could not call others to a life of morality while they were practicing vices. Gregory was doing away with any hint of hypocrisy in the life of the rectors. He warned: “For indeed the one who is compelled by his position to speak of the highest things is also compelled, by necessity, to show the highest things by his example.”<sup>536</sup>

By drawing others in by his words and deeds, the rector helped those entrusted to his care reach heaven. Gregory stated: “The spiritual director should be the first in service so that by his way of life he might show the laity how to live and so that the flock (which follows the voice and the behavior of its shepherd) may advance all the better by his example than by his words alone.”<sup>537</sup> Using the example of Job’s sons and daughters eating in the house of their elder sibling, Gregory commented that they followed the lead of the eldest brother and ate and drank in excess. As a result, the roof had collapsed and all died. The death was designed to test Job. Gregory, however, used it as an example that the bad habits of the ruler affect the behavior and lives of the people. He described the scene as:

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536. PR. 1.2.3, lines 5-6, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 51. *Qui enim loci sui necessitate exigitur summa dicere, hac eadem necessitate compellitur summa monstrare.*

537. PR. 1.2.3, lines 2-4, SCh 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 51. *Sit rector operatione praecipuus, ut vitae viam subditis vivendo denuntiet, et grex qui pastoris vocem moresque sequitur, per exempla melius quam per verba gradiatur.*

To speak then of our own concerns and not of theirs [those under authority], the lesson we ought to learn is, that what the younger ones do for pleasure's sake is checked by the control of the elder, but when the elders are themselves the followers of pleasure, then, we may be sure, the reins of license are let loose for the younger; for who would keep himself under the control of authority, when even the very persons, who receive the right of control, freely give themselves to their pleasures?<sup>538</sup>

Possessing the virtue of purity helped to keep the pastoral leader's actions free from any form of corruption. He cautioned: "The spiritual director should always be pure in thought, inasmuch as no impurity ought to pollute the one who has assumed the responsibility of cleansing the hearts of others. For it is necessary that the hand that would cleanse must itself be cleansed, otherwise it will soil everything that it touches because it is itself dirty."<sup>539</sup> By acting with pure intent, the rectors were to convey to others the intentionality of their actions.<sup>540</sup> This was to reduce or even eliminate the risk of perverting the work that was being carried out and the authority that had been entrusted. With this virtue, the rector was ensuring that all he undertook would be done with the purest of intentions. Recognizing that purity was a prerequisite for holiness, Gregory did not narrow his attention toward purity to a chaste lifestyle. The pastoral leader was indeed expected to live the virtue of chastity but the purity, in this case, was not limited in scope. Gregory also contended that the quality of purity had more to do with the spirit in which the rector acted.

Gregory insisted that there could never be a double standard applied in any manner of

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538. *Moralia*, 2.15, lines 54-9, CCSL 143; trans. Parker, 86, brackets added. *Ut ergo nostra, non illorum loquamur, sciendum nobis est quia quod a minoribus voluptuose agitur, majorum disciplina cohibetur; cum vero majores ipsi voluptati deserviunt, nimirum minoribus lasciviae frena laxantur. Quis enim sub disciplinae se constrictione retineat, quando et ipsi, qui jus constrictionis accipiunt, sese voluptibus relaxant?*

539. *PR*. 1.2.2, lines 2-7, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 49. *Rector semper cogitatione sit mundus . . . nulla hunc immunditia polluat, qui hoc suscepit officii, ut in alienis quoque cordibus pollutionis maculas tergat, quia necesse est ut esse munda studeat manus, quae diluere sordes curat: ne tacta quaeque deterius inquinet, si sordida inseguens lutum tenet.*

540. See Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 88.

authority. The pastoral leader was called first to assess and even scrutinize his own actions prior to criticizing the actions of others. The leader should take into consideration, first and foremost, his own short-comings and faults before acting in judgment against another. Gregory remarked: “Therefore, we should carefully examine ourselves as we do others and place our very selves, so to speak, before our eyes . . . lest we be ignorant of what we are doing, we always walk before our face.”<sup>541</sup> Gregory further commented in the *Moralia* that people in authority were to inspect their character, intentions, and actions in comparison to the holy ones of Scripture. He particularly called to the attention of those in authority to the Book of Revelation, Song of Songs, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and Saint Paul.

We have already seen that, Gregory liked to view the world in dichotomist categories. In speaking of moral conduct and right intention, Gregory employed the same dualistic principle based on the intention of the one in a position of authority. The impulse that drove the person was either of a spiritual or corporeal nature.<sup>542</sup> The one who acted out of charity for others was guided by the Holy Spirit whereas the one who acted out of self-interest was guided by the flesh. He noted: “Impulses diverge between the elect and the reprobate. Indeed among the elect the impulse is of the spirit, and among the reprobate it is from the flesh.”<sup>543</sup> In the *Moralia*, Gregory spoke directly of the impact these impulses had over the person. The elect were the ones who chose to act in accord with the Spirit and the wicked obviously chose the impulses of the flesh

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541. *Hom Hiez.* 1.4.9, lines 253-6, *CCSL* 142; trans Tomkinson, 81 [Ezek. 1:10-12]. *Debemus ergo nosmetipsos solliciti sicut alios videre, nosque ipsos, ut dictum est, ante nos ponere . . . ne nesciamus quid agimus, coram facie nostra semper ambulemus.*

542. Carole Straw interprets Gregory’s dualistic view in the context of his eschatology. She claims that, due to his sense of urgency, Gregory viewed life as a battle between good (Spirit) and evil (flesh). She cites philosophers, Church Fathers, Stoicism, and Pauline letters in making this case. See Carole Straw, “Gregory’s Moral Theology,” in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 177-204.

543. *Hom Hiez.* 1.5.2, line 15-6, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 83 [Ezek. 1:12]. *In electis et reprobis diversi sunt impetus. In electis videlicet impetus spiritus in reprobis impetus carnis.*

which, according to Gregory, was destruction of the soul.<sup>544</sup>

The leader who listened according to the Holy Spirit, in order to determine whether his impulse was good or bad, was guided by virtue and acted with a certain sense of moral rectitude. The person who entertained impulses from the flesh was guided by pride, greed, and selfishness, which were centered in a very egotistical manner on personal gain and earthly esteem. They only served to cloud one's perceptions and, ultimately, one's actions. Learning to discern these impulses and their origins was a task that all Christians were called to undertake but in particular pastoral leaders.

To highlight his discussion on the discernment of the impulses, Gregory, who forever used common images to provoke thought, drew on the metaphor of burning coals and lamps. In this allegory, Gregory presented a key distinction regarding the actions of the individual. The coal generated a certain amount of heat and was capable of even burning without a flame. The lamp, however, shed its light not only in the spot it stood, but also illuminated far and wide. Although the coal assisted a person in a moment, it did little for one on a journey, but the lamp was of great benefit to one who moved about in the dark. A good leader prompted by the Spirit was likened to a lamp, for Gregory stated: "Truly lamps shed their light afar, and when they are in the one place are shining in another. . . . they become lamps for their journey, lest they rush headlong into the darkness of their sins. . . . lamps, because they shine with great light of flames, put to flight the encompassing gloom."<sup>545</sup>

Although he did not directly refer to the coal as an example of responding to the impulses

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544. *Moralia*, 10.24, lines 1019, *CCSL* 143; trans. Parker, 610. See also, Straw, "Gregory's Moral Theology," 184-85 for the cause and effect nature of the spirit and the flesh.

545. *Hom Hiez.* 1.5.6, lines 84-97, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 85-86 [Ezek. 1:12-13]. *Lampades vero lucem suam longius spargunt, et cum in alio loco sint, in alio resplendent. . . . eorum itineri, ne in peccati tenebras corruant, lampades fiunt. . . . lampades autem, quia magno flammaram lumine resplendent, diffusas circumquaque tenebras effugant.*

of the flesh, he made it abundantly clear that the coal only benefited itself. It let off a small amount of heat but did not provide any form of illumination that would be advantageous to others. He observed: “coals indeed burn but do not expel the darkness from the place in which they lie.”<sup>546</sup> This was easily applicable to the impulse of the flesh, simply because these impulses were of little advantage to anybody aside from the individual. He continued about the person who was likened to the coal by saying: “Then a man . . . is of very little help for the advancement of another, is a coal.”<sup>547</sup>

Gregory was keenly aware that in order to live a moral life with the right intention in words and deeds, a leader must act with charity and humility. These two specific virtues, as well as a host of others, helped to form the conscience of the leader. For Gregory, a well-formed and informed conscience translated into moral choices and right intentions. One’s conduct and actions displayed one’s true intentionality. While reflecting on Ezekiel’s image of the lower gate and the measurement of one hundred cubits, Gregory explored the nature of one’s intentions. We read: “Then he measured the distance from the inner front of the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, one hundred cubits” (Ezekiel 40:19). The lower gate, in Gregory’s reflection, allegorically referred to faith, which was best understood through practice, particularly in charity shown to one’s neighbor. The measurement of one hundred cubits denoted perfection, which was to be realized in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>548</sup>

Gregory believed one received spiritual benefits by practicing the faith. The benefit was only possible when one engaged in charitable actions for the right reason. Gregory

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546. *Hom Hiez.* 1.5.6, lines 94-6, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 86. *Quod carbones ardent quidem, sed ejus loci in quo jacuerint tenebras non expellunt.*

547. *Hom Hiez.* 1.5.6, lines 109-11, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 86. *Qui igitur . . . sed alieno propectui minime proficit, carbo est.*

548. See *Hiez.* 2.6.1-24, lines 1-619, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 353-72 [Ezek. 24: 3-11 and 40:17-19], for his detailed depiction of the lower gate, the inner court, as well as his understanding of the measurement of the cubits, see Tomkinson, *Homilies of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 365-67.



acknowledged the fact that some undertook charitable deeds for a neighbor yet, due to pride, their true intent was actually self-promotion. He admonished: “But many placed in the faith seem to do good works, but are not measured as a hundred cubits because they seek earthly glory through what they do.”<sup>549</sup> It was Gregory’s belief that the intention of a true leader could not be tainted by pride or any other vice. One needed right judgment in all courses of action. We recall that Job’s friend Elihu, who despite being a believer, was consumed with pride. His pride rendered his actions unacceptable in the eyes of God. Gregory wrote: “Now by Heliu, who speaks indeed with right sense, yet runs down into words of foolish pride, is set forth a representation of every proud person. . . . Too proud to put forward in a right manner the right sentiments.”<sup>550</sup> It was only when fed by pride and other vices that a person reacted in an immoral and unethical fashion.

The path that led to destruction was paved by the vice of pride, because one’s carnal intentions were not controlled or restrained. Gregory continued to strongly rebuke those who are consumed by pride. One’s disordered intention, from a temporal point of view, was an insult to one’s neighbor. That same disordered intention, from a spiritual point of view, was an affront against God. In a powerfully worded reflection, Gregory condemned those acting on the impulses of the flesh: “Our sons curse God in their hearts, when our righteous deeds proceed from unrighteous thoughts, when they put forth good deeds in public, but in secret devise

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549. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.17, lines 432-4, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 366 [Ezek. 40:19]. *Multi etenim videntur in fide positi magna operari, sed in centum cubitis non mesurantur, quia per ipsa quae faciunt terrenam gloriam quaerunt.*

550. *Moralia*, praef.9, lines 1-6, CCSL 143; trans. Parker, 29. *Per Heliu autem, qui rectis quidem sensibus loquitur, sed ad stulta elationis verba derivatur, persona uniuscujusque arrogantis exprimitur. . . . recta quae sapient recte proferre contemnunt.*

mischievous. Thus they curse God.”<sup>551</sup> Responsible leaders, therefore, not only discerned the impulses of their actions, but also scrutinized their own deeds and the intention behind them.

Gregory introduced the ill-effect of pride by reflecting on the following two passages: “And the whole body was full of eyes round about all the four” (Ezekiel 1:18) and “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income” (Lk. 18:11-12). From these passages, Gregory concluded that even in the midst of good actions, if there was a lack of humility, a great fall was most likely to occur. Referencing the *Moralia*,<sup>552</sup> Markus discusses the identity of the ruler as an office of *magisterium humilitatis*. He argues that since Gregory uses Christ as the model *par excellence* for authority the office must be founded on humility. He calls to mind that Gregory himself embodied the humble title “servant of the servants of God.” For those reasons, the leader is characterized as one who exercises humble authority.<sup>553</sup> The Pharisee, according to Gregory, abstained, showed mercy, and was grateful. Each of those actions corresponded to one of the eyes alluded to in Ezekiel. All of these were good actions and the Pharisee kept himself disciplined, yet his pride, the fourth eye, went unchecked. If intentions were not properly ordered and impulses restrained, then one was likely to succumb to selfish tendencies. Gregory commented: “Behold the Pharisee had an eye to practicing abstinence, expending mercy, and offering thanks to God, but had no eye for the preservation of humility. . . . But because he did not watch the one gate to himself of pride, there he submitted to the enemy where he closed his

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551. *Moralia*, 1.36, lines 2-5, CCSL 143; trans. Parker, 60. *Filii in cordibus maledicunt, cum recta nostra opera a non rectis cogitationibus prodeunt; cum bona in aperto exerunt, sed in occult noxia moliuntur. Deo quippe maledicunt.*

552. See *Moralia* 2.69, 46-91, CCSL 143; trans. Parker, 119-21.

553. See Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 30-1.

eyes through neglect.”<sup>554</sup>

The moral intent of the leader’s actions provided the foundation of a life that is worthwhile and readily imitated. Aside from the rector’s actions, Gregory also contended that his teachings were an important aspect of leadership, and Gregory placed great emphasis on the consistency of the actions and the words of the rector. Although he set forth a standard, it is not about what sort of person is best suited to assume authority, but rather about that person’s credibility. If the actions of the leader were not compatible with his teachings, then the words were empty and the actions were without virtue, which made his authority less credible. For Gregory, it was essential for the rector to teach by examples as much as by the virtues necessary in tending to the *cura animarum*. The care of souls is the focal point of the next chapter.

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554. *Hom Hiez.* 1.7.6, lines 101-3, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 116 [Ezek. 1:18-23]. *Ecce ad exhibendam abstinenciam, ad impendendam misericordiam, ad referenda Deo gratias oculum Pharisaeus habuerat, sed ad humilitatis custodiam oculum non habebat. . . . Sed quia unum in se foramen superbiae non attendit, ibi hostem pertulit, ubi per negligentiam oculum clausit.*

## Chapter Six: The Gregorian Paradigm: The Character of Pastoral Leadership

### 6.0.0: Overview

By means of Gregory's works, words and writings, I have argued earlier that the profile of leadership as presented by him is closely linked to the morality and the pure intentions of the rector. The moral conduct of the person in authority comprised only one aspect of the Gregorian paradigm of pastoral authority. This chapter now explores other aspects necessary for one who assumes the role of pastoral leadership, such as the pastoral leader as teacher, the three virtues of humility, detachment, and charity, which are vital to pastoral leadership, and an examination of Gregory's belief that a sense of balance between action and contemplation is necessary for the pastoral leader.

Gregory felt that anybody who lacks knowledge or experience should be prohibited from having authority over others. At the very beginning of his *Pastoral Rule*, Gregory singled out those who are inexperienced. It was foolish and irresponsible for a person to think that he could undertake leadership if he had few or no qualifications. For Gregory, it was commonsense that a person did not aspire to a position for which he had no expertise. His premise was that: "No one presumes to teach an art that he has not first mastered through study. How foolish it is therefore for the inexperienced to assume pastoral authority when the care of souls is the art of arts."<sup>555</sup> One cannot teach what one does not know.

Since the overall task of the pastoral leader was the *cura animarum*, it was extremely important for the pastoral leader to direct all souls toward salvation. He was to help those under his care to recognize that temporal glory was transitory and that they should stay focused on the

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555. *PR.* 1.1.1, lines 2-5, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 29. *Nulla ars doceri praesumitur, nisi intent prius meditatione discatur. Ab imperitis ergo pastorale magisterium qua temeritate suscipitur, quando ars est atrium regimen animarum.*

ultimate goal namely, heaven, which was everlasting. For Gregory, this was the end for which all persons in authority were to be governed.<sup>556</sup>

The virtues, as presented by Gregory, shed light on his ideal of a pastoral leader with the ultimate goal of understanding his own pastoral leadership. The virtues are vital in order to gain a clear picture of what Gregory thought the conduct and teaching of the rector should be and how to form rectors in order to form the people. I now focus on a treatment of the virtues of humility, detachment, and charity so as to complete the profile of leadership as presented by Gregory. These are by no means the only virtues a person in leadership is to display and possess. Along with the virtues necessary for leadership, Gregory also identifies those characteristics or qualities a leader should possess, such as experience in spiritual matters, devotion to good living, death to passions so as to be alive spiritually, the embrace of adversity, a positive influence in the lives of others, the willingness to incorporate what has been learned in teaching others, and avoidance of evil acts.<sup>557</sup> Humility, detachment, and charity do, however, provide the foundation for Gregory's profile of the pastoral leader.<sup>558</sup>

### 6.1.0: The Key Virtues for Leadership

In analyzing Gregory's thought on the place and practice of virtues in the formation and life of the pastoral leader, it is necessary to keep in mind that he defines virtue as a means to

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556. See *PR*. 2.3, lines 1-95, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 131-34.

557. See *PR*. 1.10, lines 1-39, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 43-8.

558. Gregory does not limit his scope to only three virtues. I have selected the virtues of humility, charity, and detachment because they are foundational to the Gregorian ideal of leadership. In the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, he also speaks of pure intention, exemplary conduct, discernment, prudence, fortitude, zeal, compassion, and wisdom. See *PR*, 1.2.1-11, lines 1-55, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 49-85.

correct vices.<sup>559</sup> The point of examining Gregory's understanding of virtue provides a basis for looking at the larger context of how he worked out a theory and practice founded on the relationship between the spiritual and material aspects of pastoral care and how that relationship was manifest in his interactions with the material and secular conditions of the city and its people, those Christian and the non-Christians who benefited from his secular engagements.

The virtues of humility, charity, and detachment are important in exploring Gregory's *modus operandi* that justified ecclesiastical involvement in temporal affairs. Humility ensured that pastoral leaders would not be led down a destructive path paved by greed and pride.<sup>560</sup> Detachment made certain that they would not be deluded by the entrapments of this world. Gregory's basic premise was that, yes, the Church resided in the world yet, the Church must deny the gratifications of this life and focus on the Eternal Kingdom.<sup>561</sup> Contemplating God was the means to avoid entrapment and deny certain types of gratification. According to Gregory: "Now the Preacher of God, in order that he might show that by the abasement whereby he had cast himself down in humbling himself he has now become such, that neither he longed after the world, nor the world after him."<sup>562</sup> For Gregory, however, detachment from worldly entrapments did not translate into an abandonment of one's pastoral and secular responsibilities that leads to charity.

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559. See *Moralia*, 2.49, lines 34-5, *CCSL* 143-143A; trans. Parker, 119. Like earlier church fathers, Gregory recognizes that virtue is rooted within the context of the Christian faith. It is virtue that allows the leader to live a moral life and engage in good acts. Refer to Henrik Lagerlund, ed. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500-1500*, vol.1. (London: Springer, 2011), 1366 and Jean Porter, "Virtue Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed., Robin Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92.

560. See *Moralia*, 14.13, lines 1-34, *CCSL* 143-143A; trans. Parker, 125-6, for humility as the custodian of virtues.

561. See *Hom Evan.* 1.5, lines 31-9, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 11[Mt. 4:18-22], for Christ as the example of detachment.

562. *Moralia*, 18.54, lines 83-6, *CCSL* 143-143<sup>a</sup>; trans. Parker, 389. *Praedicator autem Dei ut ostenderet quia per abjectionem qua se humiliando dejecerat, talis jam factus esset, ut nec ipse mundum, nec mundus ipsum concupisceret.*

By humbly contemplating God's word, the pastoral leader was motivated to a profound love of neighbor.<sup>563</sup> In charity, leaders had a moral obligation to tend to the needs of others. Thus, charity was the key motivating factor for those exercising pastoral leadership. He wrote: "The way to prove holiness is not to perform miracles, but to love every man as one's self; and concerning God to think what is true, and of his fellow-creature to think better things than of himself. For that true power lies in love."<sup>564</sup> In order to achieve this level of love and holiness, one must live virtuously. I turn, then, to three virtues needed for those seeking or exercising any form of authority or leadership.

### 6.1.1: Humility

Gregory reminded pastoral leaders that great responsibility had been placed on them. The entrusting of others' souls to them could not be taken lightly. Rectors did not have the luxury of living a leisurely existence. Gregory conveyed to them that once they assumed authority their lives were not their own. They were accountable to others and must exercise their authority with utmost care. He declared: "For to pledge yourself to a friend is to take responsibility of the soul of another on the risk of your own behavior."<sup>565</sup> Notice the careful selection of the term friend. In a very direct fashion, he was reminding the person in authority of the standard of equality that needed to be a part of the pastoral leader's relationships. At the heart of this equality, Gregory saw that even though the leader and the subordinate exercised

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563. See *Hom Hiez.* 2.7.5, lines 140-68, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 377-78[Ezk. 40:22]. for the spiritual structure of the two-fold nature of charity.

564. *Moralia*, 20.7, lines 23-6, *CCSL* 143-143<sup>a</sup>; trans. Parker, 460. *Probatio quippe sanctitatis non est signa facere, sed unumquemque ut se diligere, de Deo autem vera, de proximo vero meliora quam de semetipso sentire. Nam quia vera virtus in amore est.*

565. *PR.* 2.3.4, lines 31-2, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 94. *Spondere namque pro amico, est alienam animam in periculo suae conversationis accipere.* Here Gregory quotes directly from the Book of Proverbs: "My child, if you have given your pledge to your neighbor, if you have bound yourself to another. . . . come into your neighbor's power: go, hurry . . . give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber" (Prov. 6:1-4).

different functions, they shared in a common human nature. For Gregory, equality was based on a simple fact: “masters should not forget that they share the same [fallen] condition of their servants.”<sup>566</sup> As part of his responsibility, the rector needed to seek those things that were most beneficial to those over whom they exercised authority. That was why he asserted that the charge to care for souls demanded that rectors set aside their own ambitions or desires.

It should come as no surprise that Gregory relied on Scripture for understanding and examples of humility. In order to identify the virtue for the consideration of his hearers, Gregory introduced the figures of Saints John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and Stephen. By no means are these the only figures of the Bible that Gregory used. They are simply a sampling to help us identify Gregory’s understanding of humility. Adam could just as easily be an example that demonstrated the antithesis of humility, which was pride.<sup>567</sup> As each of these saints contributed to Gregory’s development of humility, they also serve as beneficial models for anybody in a position of authority. Each revealed a quality of humility that Gregory felt was valuable for leaders. Straw points out that Gregory bound together the vices of self-love, pleasure, and pride. She comments: “Seeking autonomy, [Adam] rebels against God’s authority, throwing off the heavenly government necessary for order and harmony. Like the devil, Adam believed he could find satisfaction in himself, so he sought to be his own law to gratify his selfish desires.”<sup>568</sup> John showed that humility was the guardian of knowledge; Peter demonstrated that humility opened one to the truth; Paul revealed that humility inspires others to press forward; and Stephen displayed that humility instills courage in a person motivated by love.

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566. *PR. 2.3.5*, lines 4-5, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 97. *Domini vero, ut naturae suae quae aequaliter sunt cum servis conditi.*

567. Gregory speaks of the selfishness of Adam who sought to be controlled by nobody, not even God; see *Moralia* 34.22, lines 1-16, *CCSL* 143B; trans. Parker, 649-50.

568. Straw, “Gregory’s Moral Theology,” 187-88, brackets added.



Meyvaert asserts that humility was a great preoccupation for Gregory and an essential virtue for any form of authority. He writes: “to stress one particular point, for instance the need for humility in the exercise of authority, the more we can be certain that this was a real preoccupation with him, something he concerned himself about and considered important.”<sup>569</sup> Humility is essential to the understanding and the progress of those striving to live with moral rectitude. To achieve humility one must practice it. In the practice of humility, it is advantageous for the leader to know his strengths and weaknesses as well as to be able to control appetites and desires. Gregory commented: “On the one hand they consider their weakness; on the other their hearts are not exalted in regard to that in which they are perfect. Knowledge is a virtue, but it has humility as its guardian.”<sup>570</sup> As with all virtues, there existed an accompanying vice. In this case, it was pride. Pride was what weighed the person down. It prohibited a person from attaining true knowledge. The proud person will never have the ability to honestly examine their actions and intentions. They were not concerned with their weaknesses but only sought to exalt their strengths.<sup>571</sup> Meyvaert claims that for Gregory the individual is ultimately responsible for the temptations of pride and other vices. While acknowledging that the devil does have a role in the person’s choice of pride, the full liability belongs to the person. He comments: “Gregory

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569. Meyvaert, “Gregory the Great & Authority,” 5.

570. *Hom. Evan.* 1.4, lines 129-31, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 25 [Jn. 1:19-27]. *Ex ea parte qua perfectus est eorum se animus non extollat. Scientia etenim virtus est, humilitas etiam custos virtutis.*

571. Fauci defines pride in a quite expressive fashion. He states: “The proud king, an instrument of the devil, enlists under the insignia of the groups of priests who denounce humility, demonstrating how deep his malice and power is to repeat the revolt of the falling angel.” *Il re’orogoglio, strumento del demonio, arruola sotto le sue insigne schiere di sacerdoti che rinnegano l’umiltà, dimostrando quanto profonda sia la sua malizia e potenza ne ripetere la rivolta dell’angelo caduto, Il Senso della Vita, Il Destino dell’Uomo*, 118, translation my own.

developed a more refined view of the role played by the devil, giving him some initiative but leaving the full responsibility for consent to the individual.”<sup>572</sup>

Gregory proposed that John revealed humility as the guardian of all knowledge. This knowledge, from Gregory’s perspective, was an understanding of one’s leadership role in God’s plan. John had gathered scores of people to himself at the banks of the Jordan. There he displayed his authority as the one sent by God to baptize with water. As many people flocked to John, he never allowed their esteem for him to deter his mission or cloud his understanding. He was not the Christ, and he was adamant in his denial: “I am not the Messiah” (John 1:20). Who was he, then? According to John: “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord” (John 1:23). Gregory saw in these words of John an acknowledgment of his humility. By rejecting the esteem of others and not seeking the glory of his actions, John demonstrated he knew his identity and his role.<sup>573</sup> He was simply that voice announcing the Word (Jesus). At no point did John pretend to be the Word. He was the harbinger who clearly understood his duty and responsibility.

John was a useful example for all leaders to emulate because he never allowed pride to inflate his ego, nor did he run the risk of losing all things to his pride. His actions were pleasing in the sight of God, the fount of all authority, because he demonstrated the virtue of humility and did not pervert his actions.<sup>574</sup> It was seven simple, yet profound, words that John uttered that confirmed, for Gregory, the humility necessary for one to possess authority. John proclaimed: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:29). Gregory stated: “John . . . continued to be

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572. Paul Meyvaert, “Uncovering a Lost Work of Gregory the Great: Fragments of the Early Commentary on Job,” *Traditio*, 50 (1995): 59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27831910>. (accessed November 25, 2014).

573. See Jn. 1:27, 29, 34, 36; 3:29-30 for continued examples in which John humbly demonstrated his knowledge of self and of the Christ.

574. See *Moralia*, 2.52, lines 36-60, *CCSL* 143; trans. Parker, 125, for attributing all one’s goodness to God.

humble of heart, and many people have fallen because they swelled up their own sight through proud thoughts.”<sup>575</sup> Any person in the position of authority must acknowledge that pride exalted self at the expense of others. It was humility that granted a realistic view of self and made one an effective ruler.

Gregory knew all too well that there were some in positions of spiritual leadership who did not belong there. He recognized that the lure of secular affairs and the accoutrements of municipal offices often attracted individuals to seek spiritual authority. He felt that his obligation was to safeguard the ecclesial office and the people who sought guidance and instruction from these leaders. Leinenweber comments: “In the troubled circumstances of the time – Rome was being afflicted with enormous political and natural disasters – bishops were becoming in effect civil as well as religious leaders, and as a result the office was attracting men for the wrong reason.”<sup>576</sup> Leinenweber argues that Gregory’s work was instrumental in establishing the norms and moral behavior of spiritual leaders in this new world.

Gregory condemned those who assumed positions of authority either by force and coercion or through simony.<sup>577</sup> In either case, they were unsuitable to lead others because they were motivated by pride. They invalidated their own position by the manner in which they achieved it. Pride rendered them incapable of giving proper instruction to others because humility could not be reached through vanity. They could not help souls to Christ if they themselves did not know the way. He reproved them: “They are all the more unable to minister worthily to the office of pastoral care because they have come to the position of teaching

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575. *Hom Evan.* 1.20, lines 107-10, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 39 [Lk. 3:1-11]. *Igitur quoniam et idem Joannes ideo in sanctitate perstitit, quia in cordis humilitate perduravit; et multi idcirco ceciderunt, quia apud semetipsos elata cogitatione tumuerunt.*

576. Leinenweber, *Pastoral Practice*, x.

577. See Acts 8:18-24 for the scriptural reference of the condemnation of the buying and selling of spiritual power.

humility solely by the means of vanity.”<sup>578</sup> In each of these cases, the person acting as leader was serving his own self-interests rather than the people. If, in fact, they had come to power by their own raw ambitions and seized their office by unconventional means, then they would lead the people to destruction.

Gregory warned against this and called on those in subordinate positions to take an active role and not follow with blind faith all those who were in positions of pastoral authority.<sup>579</sup> Gregory instructed the people that if such a prideful leader was found, they had an option not to follow such leadership. He gave them a license to scrutinize the actions and the motives of their leaders in order to ascertain if they were true leaders: shepherds following after the example of Christ. If they reached the conclusion that those in authority were not worthy of such power, then, they were told not to follow their examples and to avoid their teachings. Along with the harm the unqualified leader could inflict, they were also a cause for scandal. Gregory lamented: “No one does more harm in the Church than he who has the title or rank of holiness and acts perversely.”<sup>580</sup>

Gregory placed Simon Magus on the opposite end of the spectrum from John the Baptist. For Gregory, Simon’s only desire in purchasing such power was to win the esteem of others. He denounced Simon: “Simon was far removed from the times of the Antichrist, and yet joined himself to his pride, by perversely seeking for the power of miracles. Thus, a wicked body is united to its head, thus limbs to limbs, when they both know not each other by acquaintance, and

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578. PR. 1.1.1, lines 16-18, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 29-30. *Qui susceptum curae pastoralis officium ministrare digne tanto magis nequeunt, quanto ad humilitatis magisterium ex sola elation pervenerunt.*

579. Referring to Matthew’s Gospel, Gregory warns that such leaders will lead those who follow them into the abominable pit: “And if one blind person leads another, both will fall into a pit” (Mt. 15:14b).

580. PR. 1.1.2, lines 26-7, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 32. *Nemo quipped amplius in Ecclesia nocet, quam qui perverse agens, nomen vel ordinem sanctitatis habet.*

yet are joined together by wicked doings.”<sup>581</sup> Gregory’s harsh judgment was confirmed by church law: “Hence the holy canons condemn the heresy of simony, and order that those who seek pay . . . be deprived of their priesthood.”<sup>582</sup> In contrast stood John, what John had freely received, he freely gave. The proper disposition was humility. By means of this virtue, those who lead come to know the source of their authority and the context of their power.

Turning to the figure of Peter, Gregory continued to stress that the appropriate temperament for leadership was humility. Demacopoulos notes that Gregory was unique in the fact that he used the failings of Peter in order to provide an example of humility: “Gregory was unique among the late-ancient bishops of Rome in his willingness to hold up the errors, sins, and shortcomings of Peter. . . . so as to provide a saintly exemplar for the power of humility.”<sup>583</sup> Peter was a lover of truth and exemplified this love by his demeanor in the exchange with Paul regarding justification by faith or works of the law.<sup>584</sup> According to Gregory, Peter, the undisputed leader of Christians, was humble when confronted with the truth, even when the truth was presented by an inferior recent convert to the faith, Paul. Gregory stated: “And he yielded even to his lesser brother for harmony and thereby became a follower of his inferior so that he even excelled in this, in that he who was first in the leadership of the Apostles was also first in humility.”<sup>585</sup> Peter listened to the words of rebuke from Paul and accepted what he had presented. In a congratulatory tone Gregory observed: “Peter . . . had overcome the authority of

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581. *Moralia*, 29.7, line 15, CCSL 143B; trans. Parker, 311. *Simon divisus longe ab Antichristi temporibus exstitit, et tamen ejus se superbiae, miraculorum potentiam perverse appetendo, conjunxit (Act. viii, 19). Sic iniquum corpus suo capiti, sic membris membra junguntur, cum et cognitione se nesciunt, et tamen prava sibi actione copulantur.*

582. *Hom. Evan.* 1.17, lines 277-8. CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 143-4 [Lk. 10:1-7]. *Hinc est quod sacri canones simoniacam haeresim damnant, et eos privari sacerdotio praecipunt.*

583. Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 27; see also 154.

584. See Gal. 2:1-21.

585. *Hom. Hiez.* 2.6.9, lines 208-11, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 359 [Ezek. 40:18]. *Seque etiam minori fratri ad consensum dedit, atque in eadem re factus est spectator minoris sui, ut eitam in hoc praeiret, quatenus qui primus erat in apostolatus culmine esset primus et in humilitate.*

rulers by the freedom of his words, listened, through humility of heart, to Paul's advice about not circumcising the Gentiles. . . . In the conduct then of Peter a line of authority and humility is extended as it were before our eyes."<sup>586</sup> The important fact that Gregory noted was that Peter, the superior, accepted the correction from Paul, the inferior, with no ill-will. If Peter did not practice humility, then Paul's words could have indeed been inflammatory.

Pride would have led Peter to be angered by Paul's insinuations. Instead of being blinded with rage, Peter listened to Paul's thoughts on the matter and acquiesced to his position. Peter practiced great restraint in the admonition given by Paul. Gregory further commented, had anybody else, himself included, been present the outcome would have been far different. He observed: "if anyone were to rebuke us for our actions we immediately become angry, we silently regard ourselves as great, we summon to our spirit virtues, even such as we do not possess."<sup>587</sup> It was altogether conceivable that if Peter acted out of pride a rift would have occurred within the early Christian community. This did not happen because, according to Gregory, Peter was a lover of the truth.

The valuable lesson for all leaders was that they were to listen humbly to the arguments of others, and act accordingly. This would ensure that the leader would not be proud or act out of anger, dismissal, and even perhaps revenge. For Gregory, this was a dangerous prospect in the sense that pride closes one to the truth, and made it impossible to lead effectively. The only remedy was humility which allowed the pathway to truth to remain open.

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586. *Moralia*, 28.11, line 27, CCSL 143B; trans. Parker, 283-84. *Petrus . . . qui postquam libertate vocis auctoritatem principum pressit, per humilitatem cordis de non circumcidendis gentibus Pauli consilium audivit (Act. xv, 7). . . . In factis igitur Petri quaedam ante oculos nostros auctoritatis et humilitatis linea tenditur.*

587. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.9, lines 228-31, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 360. *Et si quis nos fortasse de actione nostra reprehenderit, statim intumescimus, magnos quosdam nos tacite cogitamus, virtutes nobis ad animum reducimus, etiam quas non habemus.*

In speaking of Paul, Gregory brought to light that one with the proper disposition would always lead hearts forward. Paul was a beneficial model for any person in leadership.<sup>588</sup> Gregory introduced Paul as an example of that aspect of humility that inspired others and won hearts. In the exchange presented between Peter and Paul, Gregory stressed that in the entire ordeal Paul displayed a great zeal and fervent passion for his argument but maintained a disposition of meekness. This was a quality that Gregory highlighted in his discussion of humility. Paul, because of the manner in which he approached Peter and others, was able to win hearts over to his side and even help them advance in understanding aspects of the faith. Gregory remarked: “Paul had spoken many things to his hearers with humility, but it was still with more humility that he busied himself to appease them about that humble exhortation itself.”<sup>589</sup>

Gregory briefly commented on the hardships Paul endured only to reveal the patience he exhibited in the face of persecution.<sup>590</sup> After all that Paul had undergone, he neither boasted of his triumph nor bragged about his accomplishments. In humility, Paul made the claim: “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. . . . So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell within me” (II Cor. 11:30-12:9). Suffering did not instill in him a desire for revenge nor stir up a great sense of wrath, but made him humble, merciful, even more committed to preaching and teaching the faith, and an ever deeper respect and love for Christ, which he desired to communicate to others. This made Paul an effective posthumous mentor to all religious leaders. In the end, Paul was able to accomplish

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588. Gregory speaks extensively of Paul’s conversion; see *Moralia*, 11.10, lines 45-75; 19.6, lines 56-85; 28.29, lines 68-90; 29.20, lines 23-86; 31.16, lines 1-51; 31.19, lines 21-45; and 33.29, lines 1-49, *CCSL* 143B.

589. *Moralia*, 5.11, lines 206-7, *CCSL* 143; trans. Parker. *Paulus auditoribus suis multa humiliter dixerat; sed de ipsa exhortatione humiliter placare eos adhuc humiliter satagebat.*

590. See II Cor. 11:21b-33; 12:1-10. See *Moralia*, 21.40, lines 14-58, *CCSL* 143, for an exegesis of the sufferings of Paul and his humble patience, fortitude, and humility in the face of them.

great things because he practiced humility. In concluding his thoughts on Paul, Gregory said: “But Paul, set firm through meekness on the peak of the virtues, persevered, preached, loved, and completed the good work he had begun, and by bearing and persevering led the hearts of his disciples to compassion.”<sup>591</sup>

A final example that Gregory used to help define his notion of humility was the brief example of Stephen, the martyr who displayed a humility that was rooted in love and courage.<sup>592</sup> Gregory was mesmerized by the torments Stephen endured and the agonies he experienced. Gregory was quick to point out that at no time in Stephen’s speech to the Council or its enraged response to his words did this saint taunt or insult his listeners. Gregory maintained: “pride begets hatred, humility only love.”<sup>593</sup> In Christ-like fashion, Stephen did not condemn those who were persecuting him, rather he prayed for them.<sup>594</sup> Humility led Stephen to love and because he was humble God gave him the courage to endure any hardship. Gregory affirmed: “But Stephen could do this through the grace of Almighty God because *the gate was rising to the height*.”<sup>595</sup> Gregory asks the rhetorical question: “but what if he lacked meekness?”<sup>596</sup>

The person who practiced the virtue of humility responded out of compassion because he was filled not with indignation but zeal to place Christ and others ahead of self. Even when inflicted with great pain and misery, the humble person responded with love. Gregory asked:

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591. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.13, lines 315-8, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 363 [II Cor. 3:4]. *Sed Paulus per mansuetudinem in virtutum vertice solidatus perstitit, praedicavit, dilexit, et bonum quod coeperat explevit, atque portando et persistendo discipulorum corda ad misericordiam perduxit.*

592. See Acts 7:1-60.

593. *Moralia*, 7.35, lines 98-9, *CCSL* 143; trans. Parker, 407. *Superbia quippe odium generat, humilitas amorem.*

594. In Lk. 23:34, Jesus prayed for His tormentors and in Acts 7:60b, Stephen forgave those who were stoning him to death.

595. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.14, lines 356-8, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 364 [Acts 7:51]. *Sed hoc Stephanus ex omnipotentis Dei gratia potuit, quia surgens in altitudinem porta fuit.* Italics added to denote that this is a common phrase that Gregory used when speaking of the humility of both Peter and Paul. See *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.9, line 95 and 2.6.13, line 98, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 358-64.

596. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.14, lines 350-1, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 364. *Ac si mansuetudinis nihil haberet.*



“Accordingly, how could Stephen utter reproach in pride, who with bended knee prayed for those whom he reproached, when they went on to worse and stoned him, saying, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*”<sup>597</sup> Gregory would also include Paul in this type of humility. Out of pride Paul harbored murderous threats against the Church, but after his conversion humbly “lowered” himself for others. He concluded the discussion of humility by mentioning Peter and how he was able to humbly reprove those in authority but always with meekness and pity.

Gregory’s reflections on these examples of humility contributed to a composite portrait of the pastoral leader who lived according to this virtue. He firmly advocated that all people in positions of authority were called to practice the virtue of humility as delineated by the four examples. If people practiced this virtue, then they would possess a self-knowledge that allowed them to correct their faults and scrutinize their intentions. Humility, the guardian of knowledge as seen in the example of John, was the sentinel that held the person accountable for living with moral rectitude. The person acting out of humility recognized the intentionality of his actions. As a result, he was able to enter into an authentic dialogue with others. If, after they examined themselves and listened attentively to any form of rebuke or reprimand, as seen in the case of Peter where humility opens one to the truth, than any error in judgment or action can be revealed. Humility granted the leader who endured hardships, as seen in the case of Paul, to be an inspiration for others to press forward. The person will have the courage to do so only if they are motivated, like Stephen, by love. It is in this aspect of humility that a deeper sense of courage is instilled.

Gregory maintained that a person corrupted by vices could not be allowed to exert dominion over others. Such a person thwarted the actual goal of pastoral work and undermined

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597. *Moralia*, 7.35, lines 100-3, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Parker, 407. *Quomodo ergo Stephanus proferre increpationem per elationem potuit, qui pro eisdem quos increpaverat, ad deteriora crescentibus, seque lapidantibus, flexis genibus oravit, dicens: Domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum?*

the very authority he had obtained. He pleaded: “Accordingly, everyone should gauge himself so that he dare not assume the place of spiritual leadership, while vice that leads to damnation continues to reign in him, or else the one who is corrupted by his own crimes will strive to become an intercessor for the sins of others.”<sup>598</sup>

Finally, humility softens a heart. The humble heart never responds out of anger or hatred. It never seeks to destroy or avenge. The proper disposition of a humble heart was to be filled with compassion for others, regardless of who they were or what they represented. Gregory believed that any person undertaking the responsibility of leadership must be a person of humility because humility paved the path for charity. Stressing the magnitude of humility in Gregory’s thought, Meyvaert observes: “The themes of authority, pride, humility are so closely intertwined and recur so often in his works that there can be little doubt that they form a central point in Gregory’s thought, in which he is drawing on his own personal experience.”<sup>599</sup> In order to live humility well, Gregory believed that the virtue of detachment was compulsory.

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598. *PR. 1.1.11*, lines 2-5, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 44-5. *Solertur ergo se quisque metiatur ne locum regiminis assumere audeat, si adhuc in se vitium damnabiliter regnat, ne is quem crimen depravat proprium, intercessor fieri appetat pro culpis aliorum.* In the *Pastoral Rule*, Gregory used the analogy of the body and physical ailments to explain the ill-effects on those corrupted by vices. The blind were those ignorant of the benefit of contemplation. Since they were unable to engage themselves in this endeavor, Gregory rightly concluded they were unable to draw in others. Those with “mutilated faces” were incapable of spiritual discernment. Gregory focused more on the nose than the whole mutilated face. He felt that the nose deciphered smells as one in authority needed to be able to decipher virtues and vices. Those with a “broken foot/hand” were unable to walk the path to God due to the circumstances of their lives. As a result of this incapacity, they proved useless in leading others along the path to salvation. “Hunchbacks” were people weighed down by the cares/burdens of the world. They were unable to look up to the heavens in contemplation because they were so steeped in secular affairs. Those with “diseased eyes” were the ones who desired the truth but were side-tracked by carnal deeds. Their vision was obscured, and they were not capable of seeing what was truly beneficial for themselves and more importantly others. Those with “the itching and scratching” were likened to those overcome by the vice of greed. Finally, the “ruptured body” denoted a person consumed with lustful thoughts and someone rendered incapable of performing any deeds; such a person was weighed down by a shameful burden.

599. Meyvaert, “Gregory the Great & Authority,” 8.

### 6.1.2: Detachment

A poignant example to illustrate Gregory's notion of detachment can be found in his *Dialogues*. The story was told of the monk, Justus, who was responsible for the care of the ill and aged monks within the monastery. Justus took ill himself and knew that he was going to die. He instructed Copiosus, his blood-brother, to retrieve the gold coins he had hidden in the medicine in the monastery infirmary. Disturbed by Justus's secret, Copiosus made known his discovery. Gregory, who had founded that particular monastery, was grieved and disturbed that this monk had not relinquished all his possessions. In fact, he was angry that Justus held something back for himself. He ordered that no monk was to visit with Justus and even on his death bed, nobody was to go to him except his brother. Dominique Iogna-Prat commented: "On his deathbed, he sought his brethren's assistance, but none dared approach him. His natural brother, Copiosus, eventually revealed to him why he was despised by all. On Gregory's orders, Justus's body was denied burial and thrown into a manure pit."<sup>600</sup> Justus was to be told that he was despised for retaining the gold coins. At his death, he was buried in manure and the gold coins were tossed in the grave with him.<sup>601</sup> This extreme and startling story was told by Gregory in order to thwart any other monks from holding on to any of the possessions of their former lives.

At the heart of Gregory's message was that earthly things were to be despised in order to allow the person to love the things of heaven. Love of earthly things enslaved the person and incited within the heart a sense of pride and greed. Gillian Evans stresses the importance of detachment for the first monk-pope. Pastoral leaders need to remain detached from the world in

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600. Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order & Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam, 1000-1150*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), 232.

601. See *Dial.* 4.55, lines 173-177, *SCh* 3; trans. Gardner, 250-2.

order to provide a moral example to expose corruption and other social evils.<sup>602</sup> These vices had no place in the heart of one called to the necessary role of authority. Gregory was quick to mention that one who was immersed in the cares, desires, and temporal goods offered of this world ran the risk of being spiritually barren. He preached: “despise all transitory things, seek nothing finite in this world, and disdain all its joys as arid.”<sup>603</sup> Relying on several accounts presented in Scripture, particularly Jesus’ claim of not serving two masters, Gregory argued that love for transient things did not allow for love of things eternal.<sup>604</sup> In fact, he commented that the mind of the pastoral leader was compromised when it was set on earthly desires and cares: “When its preoccupation with the actions of the world hardens it, it cannot be softened for the things that pertain to God’s love.”<sup>605</sup> Even though Gregory was specifically referring to earthly cares and business matters, this is easily applicable to temporal goods. His spirit of detachment was sought in all matters pertaining to the transitory world. Pride prevents the person, like Justus, from casting off the things of this world.

Possessions force individuals to turn inward and, as a result, become preoccupied by their belongings; they are rendered incapable of seeing and tending to the needs of others. According to Gregory and other spiritual authors, if the person was looking downward at their possessions, then they could not look upward to God.<sup>606</sup> He questioned: “Why then do you love what is left

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602. See Evans, “Gregory the Great on Faith and Order,” 162.

603. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.3, lines 61-3, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 355 [I Pt. 1:3-4]. *Ut transitoria cuncta despiciant, nihil in hoc mundo qui fine clauditur appetent, cuncta ejus gaudia velut arida contemptant.* [2.6.3.61-3].

604. In Mt. 6:24, Jesus makes the claim that one could not serve God and wealth; see also Lk. 16:13, I Jn. 2:15, and Gal. 1:10.

605. *Hom Evan.* 1.17, lines 310-13, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 145 [Lk. 10:1-7]. *Usu quippe curae terrenae a coelesti desiderio obdurescit animus; et dum ipso suo usu durus efficitur per actionem saeculi, ad ea emolliri non valet quae pertinent ad caritatem Dei.*

606. Some three centuries earlier, the story is told of Saint Martin of Tours who desired to gaze upward to heaven as opposed to looking down at the earthly things. See Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, *SCh.* I feel that this story, although not mentioned by Gregory, illustrates beautifully the virtue of detachment.

behind? Why do you neglect what conveys where you are going?”<sup>607</sup> It was shameful to love that which was fleeting over that which was eternal. For Gregory, possessions defiled the person and slowly brought about one’s demise. He warned: “They smother because they choke our minds by the constant thoughts they arouse.”<sup>608</sup>

In speaking about detachment, Gregory first called to mind the image of Christ. The spiritual leader should use Christ, who was in the flesh, as the primary model, because he avoided all forms of temporal glory. He was the example *par excellence* proving that the true avenue to humility was fleeing the trappings of this world. He humbled Himself, and spiritual leaders were to imitate this form of humility and avoid any form of pride or avarice. Gregory reminded his audience that it was Christ who was the most qualified for the role of leadership. He demonstrated exactly how Christ led by example. Christ showed the people that sacrifice would be demanded of them. He did not embrace the comfort and the ostentatious dwellings of a palace; rather, He willingly lived a modest life among the people teaching and sacrificing. Gregory noted: “But He appeared in the flesh . . . through the passion . . . offering Himself as an example for those who would follow Him.”<sup>609</sup> Christ shunned the glory of the world and refused to be mastered by the accolades of the people. He fled the accoutrements of royalty in order to be free to grasp the Cross.

Gregory showed that Christ rejected prosperity in the temporal realm by fleeing the praises of the world. Christ’s rejection of worldly riches brought him adversity. For Gregory, the leader should be a friend of adversity and an enemy of prosperity. Gregory wanted to

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607. *Hom Evan.* 1.15, lines 34-5, *CCSL* 142; trans. Hurst, 89 [Lk. 8:4-15]. *Cur ergo amatur quod relinquitur? Cur illud negligitur quo pervenitur?*

608. *Hom Evan.* 1.15, lines 66-7, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 90. *Suffocant enim, quia importunes cogitationibus suis guttur mentis strangulant.*

609. *PR.* 1.1.3, lines 15-8, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 33. *Sed quia idcirco in carne venerat . . . per passionem exemplum se sequentibus praebeens.*

ensure that the heart of the person in authority was not compromised by worldly wealth. His remedy was for the pastoral leader to be humble and accepting of hardships with courage and restraint. He offered the following advice: “This final concern [i.e. prosperity] often corrupts the heart through pride, while adversities purge it through suffering. In the one the soul becomes conceited; while in the other . . . it humbles itself. In the one the man forgets who he is, while in the other, he is recalled, even unwillingly, to know what he is.”<sup>610</sup> The leader must not allow the fleeting opulence of this world to cloud his perception or draw him away from spiritual contemplation. As a consequence, the leader could jeopardize the good works he was initially called to undertake. Christ provided the model for leadership, since the leader was called to a modest, humble life of sacrifice for others even to the point of confronting and welcoming adversity.<sup>611</sup>

Gregory used Peter and Andrew to convey the fact that detachment from things in this life freed a person to attach himself to the things that matter in the kingdom of God. Peter and Andrew gave up their nets, boats, and their livelihood in order to follow the Lord.<sup>612</sup> Detachment from those things allowed them to seek after the goods that were divine and eternal. Gregory reminded those listening that this also allowed leaders the freedom to love God and love neighbor. Once detached from the things of this world, the leader was in a position in which he would not crave or seek after the things that belonged to his neighbor. Demacopoulos points out that envy and greed for Gregory were the means used to divide people: “The ‘ancient enemy . . . uses our envy and greed to drive a wedge between us and our neighbor. Whereas Christians

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610. PR. 1.1.3, lines 23-8, SCh 21-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 33. *Quia et ista saepe per tumorem cor inquinant, et illa per dolorem purgant. In istis se animus erigit, in illis autem . . . se erexerit, sternit. In istis sese homo obliviscitur, in illis vero ad sui memoriam nolens etiam coactusque revocatur.*

611. Straw presents a succinct development of the benefits of adversity as displayed in the writings of Gregory. She pays special attention to the *Moralia*; see *Gregory the Great*, 197-212.

612. See Mt. 4:18-22.

should sacrifice all that they have, even for their enemies, most Christians resist their enemies because they fear the loss of possessions through enemies.”<sup>613</sup> Envy and greed are defeated by the virtue of detachment. Once this was accomplished, one was able to humbly see the needs of others and be moved to serve them and not oneself. Humility was so interwoven with detachment that a true leader must observe the one in order to live the other.

Detachment meant that one had given up all things for the sake of God and others. Demacopoulos notes that this stirs up in a person a readiness to sacrifice and suffer for others: As they progress from the abandonment of desire for another’s goods (i.e., greed) to the abandonment of desire for one’s goods (i.e., charity), which ultimately leads to a willingness to suffer for others.”<sup>614</sup> It allowed leaders to conquer their pride, put order into their lives, and be readily available to serve others. This was the hallmark of leadership; namely, to be a servant to others. Once the person was detached from temporal riches, he was free to live a life steeped in charity. For Gregory, this was perhaps the highest duty of one in authority. In order to maintain focus on the primary goal of souls, leaders needed to separate themselves from glory and earthly pleasures. Straw comments that the enticements of the world were detrimental to the spiritual authority of those seeking the good of souls. Representing Gregory’s views, she comments: “Gregory is keenly aware of how the appetite for pleasure can pervert man’s life. Bewitched by pleasure, man becomes bound to the external world and to its transient delights.”<sup>615</sup> The fundamental task of a spiritual leader was tending to the spiritual needs of the souls entrusted to them.

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613. Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 18.

614. Ibid., 17-18. Here Demacopoulos introduces Gregory’s theology of asceticism. He asserts that the only possible way one could truly embrace detachment was through an ascetic discipline. See *Gregory the Great*, pp. 13-30, for the nuances that Demacopoulos presents that differentiates Gregory’s asceticism from earlier Christians of the Patristic Era.

615. Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 110.

### 6.1.3: Charity

At the very outset of his homily on Luke 10:1-7, Gregory introduced the fundamental virtue that all those in authority needed to nurture: charity.<sup>616</sup> He immediately reminded the bishops and the clergy of the commandment of love issued by Christ which the pastoral leader was to exercise. Carole Straw, with clear and comprehensive citations, highlights the significance of charity in Gregory's thinking; she writes: "Gregory's understanding of charity is the key to his understanding of all the virtues. Charity is the 'root,' 'source,' 'mother,' and 'guardian' of all virtues."<sup>617</sup> Relying on Paul's Letter to the Galatians,<sup>618</sup> Gregory rooted the virtue of charity in the life and teachings of Christ. He commented: "For the law of Christ is charity, because it is from this that he bestowed his bountiful gifts upon us and endured our sins with equanimity."<sup>619</sup> He embraced the sentiments expressed elsewhere by Saint Paul: "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 13:13). Following Paul, he stressed in the *Moralia* the importance of love, because every command from Christ was rooted in love. Gregory takes the opportunity in the *Moralia* to define charity through the lens of Saint Paul. By meditating on Paul's Letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 13:4-13), Gregory describes charity as the embodiment of suffering, modesty, trust, compassion, purity, and good.<sup>620</sup>

Gregory reflected on this Pauline interpretation of John 15:12: "*This is my commandment that you love one another*. Concerning it Paul says, *Love is the fulfilling of the law*. Concerning it he said again, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill ye the Law of Christ*. For what can

616. See *Hom Evan.* 1.17, lines 1-449, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 134-5 [Lk. 10:1-7].

617. Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 92 with attention to no. 8.

618. See Gal. 6:2.

619. *PR.* 2.3.27, lines 47-9, *SCh* 181-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 170. *Lex quippe Christi caritas est; quia ex illo nobis et largiter sua bona contulit, et aequanimiter mala nostra portavit.*

620. See *Moralia*, 10.6, lines 173-210, *CCSL* 143-143A.



the Law of Christ be more fitly understood to mean than charity . . . the principle of love?”<sup>621</sup>

For Gregory, love was the foundational virtue in which all other virtues were rooted. He acknowledged that the Lord had given many commands to the people, and each of the commands had love as its basis. He described: “As a tree’s many branches come from one root, so do many virtues come forth from love alone. The branch which is our good works has no sap unless it remains attached to the root of love.”<sup>622</sup> How Gregory defined and guided others in implementing this great virtue from which all others stem now follows.

Gregory used the sending of the disciples, who went out two by two, as a clear indication that the virtue of charity had a two-fold nature.<sup>623</sup> He reflected with those present: “He sent his disciples to preach two by two because there are two commandments of love, of God and neighbor.”<sup>624</sup> In order to emphasize the dual nature of charity, Gregory used the metaphor of a woolen cloth that was formed as two pieces of wool were sewn together to make one. The commandment of love was expressed in the manner by which one loves God and others.<sup>625</sup>

Both measures of love were calculated by the degree that one gave of self. Gregory urged pastoral leaders to give themselves completely, without holding back anything and to do so without resentment. For Gregory, charity was only achieved when one was able to surrender to God in service to others. Charitable zeal meant providing for the needs of others. True

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621. *Moralia*, 10.6, lines 46-51, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Parker, 580-1. *Hoc est praeceptum meum ut diligatis invicem (Joan. XV, 12). De hac Paulus ait: Plenitudo legis, dilectio (Rom. XIII, 10). De hac iterum dicit: Invicem onera vestra portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi (Galat. VI, 2). Lex eteniam Christi quid congruentius intelligi quam caritas potest . . . ex amore toleramus.*

622. *Hom Evan.* 2.27, lines, 6-8, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 212 [Jn. 15:12-16]. *Ut enim multi arboris rami ex una radice prodeunt, sic multae virtutes ex una caritate generantur. Nec habet aliquod viriditatis ramus boni operis, si non manet in radice caritatis.*

623. See Lk. 10:1.

624. *Hom Evan.* 1.14, lines 4-6, CCSL 141; trans. Hurst, 134 [Lk. 10:1-7]. *Ecce enim binos in praedicationem discipulos mittit, quia duo sunt praecepta caritatis, Dei videlicet amor, et proximi.*

625. See *Hom Evan.* 2.38, lines 239-75, CCSL 141 [Mt. 22:2-14]. Gregory also used this fabric metaphor for charity in *The Pastoral Rule*, where he compares the twice dyed scarlet to charity; see *PR*, 2.2.3, line 25, *SCh* 281-2.

leaders, or in Gregory's words the Lord's laborers, "think not of their own concerns but of the Lord's . . . who hasten to bring others with them in life."<sup>626</sup> Self-absorption fostered by pride makes one complacent and uninterested in the needs of others. The remedy for this attitude, according to Gregory, was a reflection on charity. Once the proud truly reflected on this gift from God, they were able to recognize its worth. Charity calls all people outside of themselves and places them at the service of others. He insisted: "Therefore, let the envious consider how great is the virtue of charity, which makes the labor of others our own without any work on our part."<sup>627</sup> The attitude of self-absorption leads one to serve his own needs at any cost while neglecting the needs of others.

True charity enflames the heart and motivates the leader to demonstrate love for God and neighbor. Gregory recognized that love was the driving force behind our actions: "But herein it is necessary to know, that . . . love stimulates inactive souls to work. . . . For the force of love is an engine of the soul, while it draws it out of the world, lifts it on high."<sup>628</sup> Gregory understood that love could only be achieved in a reciprocal relationship in which the love for God was exhibited in love for others and *vice versa*.<sup>629</sup> Charity must be at the heart of the Church's responsibility to tend to the spiritual and physical needs of the people. By seeking to tend to the physical wants of the people, the pastoral leader would necessarily need to enter the temporal sphere to accomplish such a task. Here is the inroad that Gregory needed to begin an argument that would allow the pastoral leadership to have authority in the secular realm. Straw notes:

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626. *Hom Evan.* 1.19, lines 61-3, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 80 [Mt. 20:1-6]. *Qui non sua, sed lucre dominica cogitant . . . perducere et alios secum ad vitam festinant.*

627. *PR.* 2.3.10, lines 46-8, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 108. *Hinc ergo pensent invidi, caritas quanta virtutis est, quae alieni laboris opera, nostra sine labore facit.*

628. *Moralia*, 6.37, lines 110-9, *CCSL* 143-143<sup>a</sup>; trans. Parker, 58. *Sed inter haec sciendum est quia amor ad opus excitat . . . Machina quippe mentis est vis amoris, quae hanc dum a mundo extrahit in alta sustollit.*

629. See *Hom Evan.* 2.26, lines 1-296 [Jn. 20:19-29] and 2.30, lines 1-316 [Jn. 14:23-27], *CCSL* 141. See also *Moralia*, 7.24, lines 1-20, *CCSL* 143-143A.

“Although the holy man’s primary concern is the spiritual well-being of others, he also has compassion for their physical needs, for he is the instrument of God’s compassion in the world and the suffering of others cannot be ignored. . . . power extends over physical circumstances, making life safer and easier for others,”<sup>630</sup> Charity was the key that unlocked the door to the Church’s moral obligation to be involved in the lives of all those within the domain of the empire.

Gregory found the point of departure for this task in the Gospel scene in which Jesus asked Saint Peter three times if he loved Him.<sup>631</sup> The repetition of the question underscored the importance of charity, and whether or not Peter understood its importance. The implementation of charity comes in the form of the command that Jesus issued to Peter to tend to the needs of the flock, explicitly demonstrating the intimate connection between love for God and love for neighbor. Gregory emphatically argued that failure to tend to the needs of others was paramount to a denial of one’s love for God.

Reflecting on Lk. 12:13-35, Gregory used the Gospel scene of the road to Emmaus to illustrate a fundamental aspect of charity. The two disciples who were walking that road were completely oblivious to the fact that Christ was in their midst. They conversed with this Him and even invited Him into their lodgings and shared a meal. These two men offered a simple act of hospitality, which stemmed from charity. Without even realizing the magnitude of their actions, these men demonstrated that a simple act of hospitality done out of charity opens the

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630. Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 99.

631. See Jn. 21:15-17.

door to an even greater gift.<sup>632</sup> Authentic love shown to a stranger has spiritual benefits for the one who acts thus. Gregory assured those who act hospitably to others that charity would ultimately be extended to them. At another time, he preached: “Receive Christ at your tables so that you can be received by Him at the eternal banquet. Offer hospitality now to Christ the stranger, that at the judgment you may not be a stranger, unknown to him, but may be received into his kingdom as one of his own.”<sup>633</sup> Even though there was spiritual gain from acts of charity, Gregory admonished that spiritual gains should not pervert the intention of one’s actions. The person doing the act always must bear in mind that the act was to prepare souls and assist them in achieving heaven. Any spiritual gain for the active person is secondary to the primary role and activity. Attention shown to others had to be more than a perfunctory act. Care needed to be taken to ensure there was no personal ulterior motive and that the sense of duty or service that Gregory advocated in looking after others had to be more than just mere false piety. Good works done for others out of charity nourished one’s heart. Gregory observed that: “The body is fed by food, the spirit sustained by good works.”<sup>634</sup>

Gregory maintained that true charity was a reflection of the love that was within the person’s heart. True charity is always expressive, whether it was directed to God or others. In this ideal of charity, there is joy and peace. The one who acted out of pride and self-love was

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632. Gregory relies on five particular New Testament readings to instruct his listeners about the value of hospitality and its direct connection to charity. See Rm. 2:13, Heb. 13:1-2, I Pt. 4:9, and Mt. 25:35 and 25:40. He also told a story about an encounter between Christ and a humble man who always showed hospitality to others. The man washed the hands of a stranger who he had invited to his table. One day, a stranger was welcomed and as the man drew the water, the invited stranger disappeared from sight. It was only afterwards the man encountered Christ who revealed that He was the stranger and commended the man for his hospitality. This story solidifies for Gregory the fact that charity to others is charity to Christ. See *Hom Evan.* 2.23, lines 30-58, *CCSL* 141 [Lk. 24:13-35].

633. *Hom Evan.* 2.23, lines 55-8, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 178 [Lk. 24:13-35]. *Ad mensas vestras Christum suscipite, ut vos ab eo suscipi ad convivium aeterna valeatis. Praebete modo peregrino Christo hospitium, ut vos in iudicio non quasi peregrinos nesciat, sed ut proprios recipiat ad regnum.* .

634. *Hom Evan.* 1.4, lines 134-5, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 124 [Mt. 10:5-8]. *Cibo corpus pascitur, pio opere spiritus nutriatur.*

incapable of reaching peace. In fact, those who governed without a true sense of charity found authority burdensome. As a result, there was no peace reflected in the practices and burdens they themselves laid on others. Gregory noted that this lack of charity led to discord and eventually it would undermine the works of the pastoral leader that were being done for others. He admonished leaders to safeguard charity for it was constantly under attack: “And because nothing is more revered by God than the virtue of charity, nothing is more desired by the devil than the extinction of charity.”<sup>635</sup> For Gregory, a person tending to the needs of others was a good and benevolent ruler while the one who lacked charity became a tyrannical dictator. In the end, Gregory reminded those listening that judgment was not on our words or even the act itself. Judgment was on the qualitative level of charity that was within the heart at the moment the good act was initiated. The right intention, therefore, was required to be firmly rooted in charity. Gregory said: “But the Judge of our souls considers our hearts rather than our words.”<sup>636</sup> The love behind every action, therefore, ought to be examined carefully. The pastoral leader must scrutinize his motives and intentions in order to authenticate charity. The scrutiny was to be done by none other than the one who was doing the particular work for it is next to impossible for others to know the true intent of another’s actions.

Gregory did not miss the opportunity to continually remind pastoral leaders that charity needed to be replenished. Since all acts draw from love, it was extremely important to ensure that love was renewed. This was only possible when the person recognized that God was the source of love and that all actions needed to be firmly rooted in God. Through contemplation,

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635. *PR. 2.3.23*, lines 33-5, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 155. *Quia autem nihil pretiosius est Deo virtute dilectionis, nil est desiderabilius diabolo extinctione caritatis*. See Gregory’s treatment on peace and discord in *PR. 2.3*, lines 22-23 *SCh* 281-2.

636. *Hom Evan. 2.27*, lines 199-201, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 219 [Jn. 15:12-16]. *Sed quia internus iudex mentem potius quam verba considerat, pro inimico nil postulat, qui pro eo ex caritate non orat*.

the leader turned to God, the source of charity, was reinvigorated, and returned to perform acts of charity. Commenting on the holy ones of Scripture, Gregory said: “But in everything which they do, they therefore always return to the praise of the Creator, in order that they may persevere with true steadfastness in this virtue which they receive.”<sup>637</sup> If those acting out of pride believed that their actions depended on themselves, then their actions were superficial. Gregory used the metaphor of a river returning to its source to be replenished and remain vibrant.

Returning to the source of charity was an expression of both faith and love. Returning to God in quiet contemplation manifested love, which was based on a faith relationship with God. Gregory had a simple syllogism that stressed faith as the necessary component to our acts of charity. He asserts: “So charity does not precede faith but faith charity. No one can love what he has not believed.”<sup>638</sup> In fostering a deeper sense of charity, Gregory adhered to the insight that this was accomplished through moments of contemplation after which the person was called to return to the exercise of charity. The reciprocity of contemplation and action was at the very heart of Gregory’s understanding of authority.

When preaching on the intimate connection between the two objects of one’s love, namely, God and neighbor, Gregory exhorted that there needed to be a balance between the outward and inward manifestations of that love. In every act the person must make sure that the level was proportionate. The love shown to God cannot be so extreme that it caused one to neglect the needs of others. By the same token, the leader should not shower his neighbor with such an overabundance of love that it became detrimental to the pastoral leaders relationship with God.

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637. *Hom Hiez.* 1.5.16, lines 299-301, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 93 [Eccles. 1:7]. *In omne autem quod faciunt, idcirco semper ad laudem Creatoris redeunt, ut in ea virtute quam accipiunt, vera stabilitate persistent.*

638. *Hom Hiez.* 2.4.13, lines 377-9, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 327 [Ezk. 40:12]. *Non enim caritas fidem, sed fides charitatem praecedit. Nemo enim potest amare quod non crediderit.*

According to Gregory, it is through contemplation that one is made aware of the obligations imposed by the commandments. Keeping the commandments unites the spiritual and physical parts of the self. Each of the commandments is fueled by our love for God and that love is expressed in actions toward others. Gregory observed: “Indeed the active and the contemplative life are simultaneously united in the commandments of the Decalogue because the observance of both love of God and love of neighbor are there enjoined.”<sup>639</sup> Love for God is revealed through contemplation and love for neighbor through acts of charity. Love is at the heart of all spiritual endeavors as well as at the core of all civic undertakings. As it is charity that draws people closer to God, so it is charity that relieves the burdens and the wants of one’s neighbor. Spiritual leaders are called on to assist those entrusted to their care. Gregory based the rationale for entrance into the political domain on the fact that love enkindles the heart to serve the needs of all. Pastoral leaders cannot simply have the luxury of being like the man in the parable who buried his talent.<sup>640</sup> Contemplation will bear fruit, and will have a moral obligation to share that fruit with others in order to teach, preach, and prepare souls.<sup>641</sup> How Gregory balances the contemplative and the active life is considered in the following section.

### **6.2.0: The Contemplative and Active Life**

The purpose of this study of Gregory is to analyze his ecclesiastical paradigm and how it allowed for those in positions of spiritual authority to act in the temporal realm. The virtues discussed above provided the parameters he used to guide the lives of those in authority. It was precisely there, tempered with the virtues of humility, detachment, and charity, which I believe

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639. *Hom Hiez.* 2.6.5, lines 87-90, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 355 [Ezek. 40:17]. *Activa etenim ac contemplative vita simul in Decalogi mandatis conjuncta est, quia in eo et amor Dei, et amor servari proximi jubetur.*

640. See Mt. 25:14-30.

641. See *Moralia*, 6.37, lines 1-55, *CCSL* 143-143A.

Gregory began to present a rationale for involvement in affairs of the state. As discussed in chapter four, Gregory recognized the duality that existed in the life of the pastoral leader, who is a person of both action and contemplation.

The active and contemplative lives fueled the pastoral leaders' sense of duty to be active in tending to the physical needs of the people. In prescribing how the pastoral leader should exercise his duties, Gregory stressed the balance that was vital between the contemplative and active life. His discussion of the relationship between action and contemplation explained the means through which pastoral leaders should enter secular affairs, things in Gregory's day that ranged from tending to the physical needs of the people to involvement in political and administrative matters. I would argue that Gregory's statement regarding the duty of a spiritual director can be applied to all forms of pastoral leadership. He wrote:

The spiritual director should not reduce his attention to the internal life because of external occupations, nor should he relinquish his care for external matters because of his anxiety for the internal life. Otherwise, he will either ruin his meditation because he is occupied by external concerns or else he will not give his neighbors what he owes to them because he has devoted himself to the inner life only.<sup>642</sup>

To further his point, Gregory turned to the person of Job. He made an interesting claim that external concerns present a unique opportunity for one to think of those who are closest. Commenting on Job, he observed that the external tribulations Job encountered caused him to be concerned for his wife. His concern for her welfare and that of his family provided him with the incentive to prevail and reclaim what was once a state of blessedness and so benefit from that concern. It is easy to see that Job showed care to those endangered and acted accordingly;

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642. *PR.* 1.2.7, lines 4-8, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 68. *Sit rector internorum curam in exteriorum occupatione non minuens, exteriorum providentiam in internorum sollicitudine non relinquens; ne aut exterioribus deditus ab intimis corruat, aut solis interioribus occupatus, quae foris debet proximis non impendat.*



therefore, the pastoral leader who sees a need for charitable assistance should act. He observed: “For so from external wars we are instructed to think of those within. For an enraged enemy, that holds a city encircled by his surrounding armies, upon perceiving its fortifications to remain unshaken, betakes himself to the other methods of attack.”<sup>643</sup> The analogy of this passage applied to the current situation that Gregory faced in Rome with the siege of the city, the tribulations, and the military occupations that had occurred, and provided a call for action that made it possible for him to enter the temporal realm.

For Gregory, it was extremely important for the pastoral leader to strike a balance between these two lives so that one life did not overshadow or lead to the destruction of the other. Gregory sought to arrive at an understanding of how the two lives of the pastoral leader should be integrated.

Although he felt that the contemplative life was far superior to the active, the active life could not be abandoned. Gregory elaborated on this sentiment by using the example of Martha and her sister, Mary.<sup>644</sup> Martha represented, in a true sense, the anxieties that accompany the external ministry to the world. She hurriedly tended to the details of hospitality. Mary, who illustrated the internal ministry, sat humbly at the feet of Christ hanging on His every word. Jesus reminded Martha that Mary had indeed chosen the better state. Gregory concluded: “For the merits of the active life are great, but of the contemplative, far better.”<sup>645</sup> He was not however dismissive of the active life. At no point in the Gospel encounter did Christ denounce

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643. *Moralia, praef.4*, lines 19-22, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Parker, 22. *Ex bellis enim exterioribus discimus quid de interioribus sentiamus. Inimicus namque saeviens, et urbem circumfuses exercitibus vallans, si ejus munimina invicta conspexerit, ad alia se pugnandi argument convertit.*

644. See Lk. 10:38-42. Unlike other ascetic authors Gregory used both Martha and Mary to promote the importance of both the active and contemplative; see Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 66-7.

645. *Moralia*, 6.37, lines 302-3, CCSL 143-143A; trans. Parker, 361. *Quia magna sunt activae vitae merita, sed contemplativae potiora.*

Martha's activity or call her to cease from doing what she was doing. He only stated that Mary chose the better path. Action was good, but contemplation was better, the higher of the two activities.<sup>646</sup> Gregory agreed that Mary's part was superior for the simple reason that the active life was closely tied to the body and remained in the temporal dominion. The contemplative life, on the other hand, was associated with the spiritual realm and lasted far beyond this transitory world. In point of fact, Gregory acknowledged that the responsibilities of the Church drew a person in authority from contemplation into the active life of the world.

In chapter five, we saw that the tasks of pastoral leadership could be defined as defending, preparing, and teaching souls. For Gregory, this was only possible if pastoral leaders were involved in the lives of those entrusted to their care, both physically and spiritually. He advised all spiritual leaders to: "Instill a concern for the internal life . . . provide for external necessities as well."<sup>647</sup> Gregory used the examples of two other women, Leah and Rachel, this time from the Old Testament, to emphasize the two lives of a pastoral leader.<sup>648</sup> Leah was symbolic of the active life, Rachel, who was childless, represented the contemplative life. Her barrenness did not indicate that the contemplative life was unproductive; rather, it demonstrated the silent, quiet nature necessary for contemplation. Jacob first went to Leah but was desirous of Rachel. The stories of these women denoted the life of all pastoral leaders. Gregory extracted from this example a simple fact that the life of the pastoral leader involved passing from one state to the other, a life that was in constant motion. He reflected:

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646. See *Moralia*, 143.6.37, lines 176-215, *CCSL* 143-143A

647. *PR*. 1.2.7, lines 126-8, *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 72. *Unde rectorem necesse est ut interior posit infundere, cogitatione innoxia etiam exterior providere.*

648. See Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 67.

But it must be understood that just as a good order of life is to strive from the active to the contemplative, so the spirit frequently reverts from the contemplative to the active, so that the active life may be lived more perfectly because the contemplative has kindled the mind. Therefore we must pass from the active to the contemplative . . . sometimes . . . it is better to withdraw from the contemplative to the active.<sup>649</sup>

Action and contemplation work together within the life of the pastoral leader. The two lives must never be seen in opposition nor should either be allowed to negate the activity of the other. This was important to Gregory's overall development of a paradigm of secular involvement by church leaders. As the imagery he used suggested, contemplation and action were complementary lifestyles.<sup>650</sup> In order to be effective in leadership, the pastoral leader needed to discover a way to balance these two modes of life. Gregory stated: "For he is no perfect preacher, who either, from devotion to contemplation, neglects works that ought to be done, or, from urgency in business, puts aside the duties of contemplation."<sup>651</sup>

The issue was how to balance action and contemplation. Gregory's concern was that tending to the physical needs of the people could cause one to abandon prayer and the duty of preaching, which were priorities for all pastoral leaders. He admonished: "We have strayed into business of the world; we undertake one thing as an honor, and offer ourselves for another under the pretext of a need to take action. We abandon the ministry of preaching. . . . Those entrusted

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649. *Hom Hiez.* 2.2.11, lines 260-6, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 287-8 [Ezek. 40:4-5]. *Sed sciendum est quia sicut bonus ordo vivendi est ut ab activa in contemplativam tendatur, ita plerumque utiliter a contemplativa animus ad activam reflectitur, ut per hoc quod contemplativa mentem accenderit, perfectius activa teneatur. . . . aliquando ex . . . contemplativa melius ad activam revocare.*

650. See *Moralia*, 6.37, lines 56-109, CCSL 143-143A. Here he employs the metaphor of two eyes on one face.

651. *Moralia*, 6.37, lines 56-109, CCSL 143-143A ; trans. Parker, 355. *Neque enim oerfectus praedicator est, qui vel propter contemplationis stadium operand negligit, vel propter operationis instantiam contemplanda postponit.*

to us abandon God, they are involved in wicked deeds, and we do not reprove them.”<sup>652</sup> To emphasize the importance of balance, Gregory described, in a metaphorical manner, the contemplative state as a spiritual grave. The person engaged in contemplation was, to a degree, dead to the world. While that person was in this spiritual grave, he was not distracted by the allurements of the world. Gregory commented: “For what is denoted by the name of the grave, saving a life of contemplation? Which as it were buries us, dead to the world, in that it hides us in the interior world away from all earthly desires. For they being dead to the exterior life, were also buried by contemplation.”<sup>653</sup> Gregory illustrated the danger that could occur if one were to take their attention off contemplating God. He used the story of a wayward monk who forsook his prayers and concentrated on those things that led him away from God: “when the other monks knelt down to serve God, his manner was to go forth, and there with wandering mind to busy himself about some earthly and transitory things.”<sup>654</sup>

A consequence of warmly and strictly embracing the active over the contemplative life was that one became enslaved to the world. The antidote to prevent such an entrapment of the leader was to temper his actions with contemplation. It was by means of contemplation that one was able to observe the everlasting affairs of heaven, which then moved the leader from the

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652. *Hom Evan.* 1.17, line 14, *CCSL* 141; trans. Hurst, 144 [Luke 10:1-7]. *Ad exterior enim negotia delapsi sumus, et aliud ex honore suscepimus, atque aliud officio actionis exhibemus. Ministerium praedicationis relinquimus . . . Relinquunt namque Deum . . . Quotidie per multas nequitias pereunt, et eos ad infernum tendere negligenter videmus.* Although the exact occasion for this homily was not specified, D. David Hurst concluded that it was most likely addressed to bishops gathered in Rome for a synod.

653. *Moralia*, 6.37, lines 2-6, *CCSL* 143-143A ; trans. Parker, 355. *Quid enim sepulcri nomine, nisi contemplativa vita signatur, quae nos quasi ab hoc mundo mortuos sepelit, dum a terrenis desideriis susceptos in intimis abscondit? Ab exterior quipped vita mortui etiam sepulti per contemplationem fuerant.* Cf. 148.5.6.1-24, *CCSL* 143-143A.

654. *Dial.* 2.4, lines 3-5, *SCh* 2; trans. Gardner, 61. *Sed mox ut se fratres ad orationis stadium inclinassent, ipse egrediebatur foras et mente uaga terrena aliqua et transitoria agebat.* This monk was eventually reformed only after the dark desires that competed for his attention were exposed and banished.

active state, which focused on transitory things, to the contemplative state. This shift was accomplished through the virtue of detachment.

Gregory was equally cautious when it came to ensuring that the contemplative state did not overshadow the active. In preaching to the Christian faithful, he advocated maintaining enthusiasm for both lives so that each fueled the activity of the other. He commented: “For it often happens that one who is unduly occupied with earthly riches is not as zealous in prayer as he should be. And it frequently happens that one who, divested of all the burdens of the world, devotes himself to prayer to God lacks the sustenance of life.”<sup>655</sup>

While regarding the contemplative life as loftier, Gregory insisted that the pastoral leader enter into the realm of the active. The need was real and urgent for one to be involved in secular affairs, which Gregory felt included material assistance to individuals and administrative intervention in political affairs. He highlighted two fundamental reasons for one to enter into the secular sphere. The first was that by entering the secular arena, the person in authority tended to the needs of others. Here is where Gregory’s understanding of love of neighbor is essential. Some of those activities that he encouraged in the active life are to feed, to correct, to prepare, to care, and to sustain. He said: “So the active life is to give bread to the hungry, to teach the ignorant . . . to set aright the lost, to recall the proud neighbor to the life of humility, to care for the weak . . . to provide wherewithal of subsistence for those entrusted to us.”<sup>656</sup> The second reason was that goods acts assisted contemplation.

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655. *Hom Hiez.* 1.7.21, lines 457-60, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 128 [Ezek. 1:22-23]. *Fit autem saepe ut qui terrena substantia nimis occupatur orationi non quantum debet invigilet. Et fit plerumque ut is qui ad exorandum Dominum cunctis mundi oneribus exutus vacat sustentationem vivendi non habeat.*

656. *Hom Hiez.* 2.2.8, lines, 187-91, CCSL 142; trans. Tomkinson, 285 [Ezek. 40:4-5]. *Activa enim vita est, panem esurienti tribuere . . . nescientem docere . . . errantem corrigere, ad humilitatis viam superbientem proximum revocare, infirmantis curam gerere . . . et commissis nobis qualiter subsistere valeant providere.*

Failure to enter the active life when necessary was roundly condemned by Gregory. The leader who chose to remain rigorously in the contemplative state was not fulfilling the duty required of him. Demacopoulos argues that Gregory felt it was important for pastoral leaders to be men of action: “The contemplative life was important – even fundamentally necessary – in Gregory’s eyes. But Gregory distinguished himself from other late-ancient ascetics . . . with the idea that no one could achieve perfection in the stillness of contemplation alone. One had to be willing to suspend those spiritual joys for the sake of others.”<sup>657</sup> Gregory used a comparison of different animals to illustrate the styles of leadership that he saw as problematic. The wild ass was the leader who sought freedom from all secular cares.<sup>658</sup> The ostrich was the leader who sought things of the world had feathers/wings that were beautiful to behold yet it was weighed down and unable to take to flight. The things of the world, while beautiful, could have a tendency to weigh one down.<sup>659</sup> The rhinoceros, which symbolized pride, was equated to those who undertook tasks in order to seek glory and esteem. Yet, if the rhinoceros lost the swelling of pride and collapsed to the ground in humility, then he was able to lend great strength to those in need.<sup>660</sup> Gregory viewed the conversion of Saint Paul as the classic example of such a phenomenon. He also used other metaphors of animals as favorable examples of leadership. The horse is understood in a favorable light. The horse represents temporal dignity and strength. Also, the horse’s neigh is a metaphor for the words of the pastoral leader bellowing out to save and prepare souls. First, the strength of the horse gathers and, then, it begins to neigh loudly for all to hear and learn.<sup>661</sup>

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657. Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 29.

658. *Moralia*, 30.15, lines 1-27, *CCSL* 143-143A.

659. *Moralia*, 31.8, lines 1-39, *CCSL* 143-143A.

660. *Moralia*, 31.16, lines 1-51, *CCSL* 143B.

661. *Moralia*, 31.24, lines 78-110, *CCSL* 143B.

He also mentioned the locusts that plagued Egypt, but also represented the Resurrection of Christ. The activity of the locust soaring high is the call for those in authority to excel and reach the height of perfection both in the active and contemplative life.<sup>662</sup> Finally he compared the eagle as flying to the carcass ready to devour to the pastoral leader who hovered over those who have fallen into sin. They are called to enter the temporal order to consume sinners and bring them to righteousness.<sup>663</sup> Within the balance, the one who contemplates was able to examine the works that were done. Through contemplation, one was made aware of the needs of others, and a deep concern to serve the needs of others was always present. Good contemplation actually was what produced the good works of the leader. Since the contemplation was good and holy, the pastoral leader, who listened to and received the promptings was prevented from performing bad works or unjust actions. Contemplation was necessary for achieving this end.

Faith was the fundamental element in fostering both contemplation and action. Both states of life were possible only by the grace of God. They were gifts to the person, particularly the pastoral leader. Yet, by faith each of the gifts was to be firmly established. In the contemplative life, Gregory reminded his audience that all depends on faith. The virtues of humility, charity, and detachment did not precede faith. The virtues were discovered and lived only after they were illuminated by the gift of faith. He was keenly aware that: “For we do not come via virtues to faith but we arrive at the virtues through faith.”<sup>664</sup>

Similarly, the works brought about by the active life were only possible in the context of faith. In speaking of the centurion Cornelius from Acts 10, Gregory reminded his readers that:

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662. *Moralia*, 31.25, lines 65-118, *CCSL* 143B.

663. *Moralia*, 31.53, lines, 10-33, *CCSL* 143B.

664. *Hom Hiez.* 2.7.9, lines 264-5, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 381. *Non enim per virtutibus venit ad fidem, sed per fidem pertingitur ad virtutes.*

“Cornelius . . . did not come by his works to faith but by faith came to works.”<sup>665</sup> Faith was the binding force that maintained the balance between the two lives of the pastoral leader. It was by faith that the leader was aware of the work that needed to be accomplished. The works, therefore, depended on faith, and the works themselves helped to reveal the faith. Gregory continually stressed that there was tension between the contemplative and the active life. He equally highlighted that those engaged in the contemplative life were also required to leave contemplation in order to tend to the physical needs of the city and its people. The leader, however, must see the value and necessity of returning to the contemplative life in order not only to contemplate what was done, but also to elevate his mind to an awareness of God, which nurtures the virtue of charity.

Gregory reminded all that both types of lives have significance and dignity. Both must be maintained and respected. Each did have a specific task that should not infringe on the activities of the other. Gregory spoke to the monks travelling with him to Constantinople about the value of both lives. Using the image of a lightning bolt, which came forth from God and returned to God, he reflected:

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665. *Hom Hiez.* 2.7.9, lines 265-7, *CCSL* 142; trans. Tomkinson, 381. *Cornelius . . . non operibus venit ad fidem, sed fide venit ad opera.*



The lightning therefore went forth, when Peter worked a miracle, it returned when he attributed what he had done, not to himself but to its Author. . . . For holy men, as was said before, are sent and go forth as lightings, when they come forth from the retirement of contemplation, to the public life of employment. They are sent and they go . . . they spread forth into the wide space of active life. But they return . . . because after the outward works they perform, they always return to the bosom of contemplation, there to retrieve the Flame of their zeal, and to glow as it were from the touch of heavenly brightness.<sup>666</sup>

After analyzing Gregory's preaching and theological treatises in order to identify key virtues for leadership and the need for the pastoral leader to balance the active and contemplative types of life, I now concentrate on Gregory's secular activities as presented in the *Registrum Epistolarum*, his official correspondence. It is vital to do so in order to discern any possible patterns in the kinds of activities he engaged in or authorized others to do that would offer rationales or explicit criteria that Gregory might have used that allowed for ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs. Also, it is important to understand whether his paradigm draws on teachings and experiences of his predecessors, or is it something distinctively his own?

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666. *Moralia*, 30.2, lines 48-61, CCSL 143B; trans. Parker, 366. *Ivit ergo fulgur cum Petrus miraculum fecit, rediit cum non sibi tribuit, sed auctori quod fecit. . . . sancti viri mittuntur et eunt cum a secreto contemplationis ad publicum operationis exeunt. Mittuntur et vadunt cum ex abscondito speculationis intimae in activae vitae latitudinem diffunduntur. Sed revertentes dicunt Deo, adsumus, quia post opera exterior quae peragunt semper ad sinum contemplationis recurrunt, ut illic ardoris sui flammam reficiant, et quasi ex tactu supernae claritatis ignescant.*

## Chapter Seven: The Gregorian Paradigm: Pastoral Leadership in Action

### 7.0.0: Overview

Gregory wrote extensively in his homilies and pastoral treatises on the virtues and qualities that those in pastoral authority need in order to be effective leaders. I now turn to his letters, first to analyze what they tell us about the kinds of situations in which Gregory became involved in secular affairs or other pastoral leaders did so at his request; and, second, to see how Gregory explained his decisions and to examine what rationales and scriptural references he offered to justify becoming involved in secular affairs. His correspondence with the clergy, emperors, empresses, members of the imperial household, and imperial representatives all served to show why and how Gregory or his representatives were involved into secular matters of the empire.

His letters present a firsthand account of religious, political, social, and economic issues prior to and during his papacy. They reflect the climate of his times and the various people addressed show the scope of issues that were pertinent at the time. G. Rapisarda observes: “The epistolary writings of Gregory the Great represent a precious and valid source for the reconstruction of life in the high Middle Ages. Gregory entertained an epistolary relationship with numerous and various people of the day and diverse social backgrounds of culture and heterogeneous nationality.”<sup>667</sup> I have organized a sampling of his letters into three basic categories to shed light on his secular activities. The focus of this chapter is Gregory’s social

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667. G. Rapisarda, “*I Doni nell’Epistolario di Gregorio Magno*,” in *Gregorio Magno e il Suo Tempo* 34 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1991), 285. (translation my own). “*L’epistolario di Gregorio Magno rappresenta una preziosa e valida fonte per la ricostruzione della vita dell’Alto Medio Evo. Gregorio intrattenne rapporto epistolare con numerosi e variati personaggi di aria e diversa estrazione sociale, di cultura, e nazionalità eterogenee.*” Here Rapisarda also gives an overview of the scope of the letters and addresses along with the issues they faced in Gregory’s letters. See pages 285-287 for a concise list of addressees and issues Gregory concentrated on.

programs, his involvement in affairs with the Lombards and the Franks, and finally his interaction with specific members of the Imperial court.<sup>668</sup>

### 7.1.0: Gregory's Understanding of the Source of Pastoral Authority

In sixth-century Rome, it was assumed there were two spheres of leadership: *secular* and *spiritual*. In the *secular* sphere, the emperor stood as the definite leader, whereas in the *spiritual*, the bishop of Rome, the pope, assumed the role of leader. For centuries, ecclesiastical leaders recognized that authority, both secular and spiritual, derived from God. Gregory continued to advocate that God was the font from which all authority, both secular and spiritual, received its power and dominion. From this perspective, the bishop of Rome was sanctioned by God to lead the people in all matters spiritual. Gregory also acknowledged that all bishops, and not just the bishop of Rome, were entrusted with maintaining the deposit of faith that had been handed down from the Apostles. Pastoral leaders had the authority to safeguard the tenets of faith from heretical and schismatic movements. He also held that the emperor's own authority was derived from God. Gregory reminded the emperor Maurice that his imperial rule originated and depended on God: "For power over all men has been given by Heaven to my Lordship's piety."<sup>669</sup> Yet, what if the matters assigned to the secular authorities were being neglected and not carried out?

That question is the point of departure for my examination of the way in which Gregory thought and wrote about his own responsibilities in secular matters. Gregory described his sense

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668. John Martyn provides an invaluable tool for insight into the letters of Gregory, a complete list of the names of letter-bearers and a comprehensive list of the content of the letters. See Martyn, *Pope Gregory's Letter-Bearers* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

669. *Epist.* 3.61, lines, 29-31, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 281. *Ad hoc enim potestas super omnes homines dominorum meorum pietati coelitus data est.* See also *Epist.* 5.37, line 1, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 351 as Gregory states: "Our most pious Lordship, appointed by God." *Piissimus atque a Deo constitute dominus noster.*

of obligation in taking over the responsibilities for the city of Rome that had once been done by civic leaders. He unwillingly took it upon himself to undertake certain functions that were not being attended to by the pertinent officials, since he was fearful that such activity would draw him away from the true desire of his soul, contemplation. Christoph Egger notes: “The more Gregory is occupied by secular matters the less he is able to focus on heavenly things. Duties and obligations are leading him away from his inner-self, they are separating him from what he really is.”<sup>670</sup> Gregory expressed this sentiment in a letter he sent to Andrew, a close advisor to the emperor, Maurice.<sup>671</sup> In that letter, he lamented: “For here the occupations of this world are so great that I see that I have almost separated from the love of God by this Episcopal rank.”<sup>672</sup> His entrance into the secular arena clearly became for him a risk to the contemplative life. It was one risk, however, he felt must be taken.

In a world dominated by emperors, barbarian kings, and imperial representatives, an ecclesial leader stood who felt strongly enough about the welfare of the people, in his region, that he took matters into his own hands. In similar fashion to Leo the Great, Gregory saw to it that the city of Rome was defended against the assaults and invasions of barbarian kings. Straw argues: “Gregory’s concern was for Rome, and Gregory must be credited with helping preserve Rome by undertaking successfully the various responsibilities that normally befell secular rulers, including twice saving the city from being sacked by the Lombards.”<sup>673</sup> These, however, were not the only moments that Gregory was called on to help secure the city. As *apocrisiarius* for

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670. Egger, “Gregory the Great and Innocent III,” 28. See Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, pp. 102-3.

671. After Phocas overthrew Maurice in 605, Maurice, his family, and his closest advisors were slaughtered. Andrew was among those killed by Phocas.

672. *Epist.* 1.29, lines 6-7, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 150. *Quia hic huius mundi tantae occupationae sunt, ut per episcopalis ordine ab amore Dei me videam esse separatum.* See also *Epist.* 5.53, lines 1-17; *Epist.* 9.228, lines 1-69 for Gregory’s lament of the burdens due to external cares.

673. Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 19.

Pope Pelagius II (circa 580s) Gregory attempted to persuade the emperor Tiberius II and the eastern court to send financial and military support to Rome. Although these efforts were largely unsuccessful, they demonstrate a willingness on Gregory's part to attempt to secure protection for the city.

These instances that help illustrate Gregory's interest in the defense of the city of Rome concerned financial compensation for the troops and peace negotiations with the Lombards. In order to guarantee that the military was adequately supported both spiritually and financially, Gregory wrote to Theodore, the municipal curator<sup>674</sup> of Ravenna: "Thus, with your patronage, they should not need to suffer any unreasonable delay or trouble there, but whatever is appropriate let the aforesaid . . . be entitled without difficulty, to receive the bounty of your glory."<sup>675</sup> In order to bring stability to the region, Gregory entered into peace negotiations and treaties with the Lombard king, Agilulf. Roger Collins notes that Gregory took on a more active role in military preparedness and peace negotiations than any ecclesiastical leader prior to him.<sup>676</sup>

As Gregory took on secular responsibilities, his approach was extremely pastoral. I propose that Gregory's entrance into the secular affairs of his day was not a means to increase papal authority or control; rather, it was to take care of the needs of the people and to provide a moral foundation to execute authority in a just way. In this I agree with Neil, who argues that Gregory's actions had more to do with pastoral care and the well-being of the citizens of Rome

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674. The curator was a civil magistrate that was in charge of the corn supply and distribution.

675. *Epist.* 9.134, lines 7-10, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 621. *Quatenus vobis patrocinantibus nec moram illic contra rationem nec laborem debeant sustinere sed quicquid praedicto . . . competit, gloriae vuestrae opitulatione sine difficultate percipiant.* In *Epist.* 9.132, lines 1-17, Gregory asked the bishop of Ravenna, Marinianus, to intercede also on behalf of the military and approach Menas, the notary in Ravenna, in order to elicit support.

676. See Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven*, 101.

than with any desire to augment or intensify the power of the bishop of Rome.<sup>677</sup> Remembering that Gregory was preoccupied with the impending end of the world, a foundation for his line of reasoning comes into focus. His concern for the moral conduct and right intention of the pastoral leader was three-fold: it protected his soul from the impending judgment; it reaffirmed that he was responsible to God, who was the source of authority; and it reminded him that his life was to be an example for those entrusted to their spiritual care.

Gregory also stressed that civic leaders should realize that their offices were to be instruments of justice. Gregory, acting on behalf of God, felt that he was the moral compass that held both civic and religious leaders accountable, and that they were ready to face their own final judgment. This aspect of Gregory's thought highlights his concern that those who exercised authority do so in an honorable fashion. In a letter to Justin, the praetor of Sicily,<sup>678</sup> Gregory appealed to him to remain upright and just because the time to make an accounting for his actions was quickly approaching: "Let no bribes draw you to injustice, and let no one's threats or friendships deflect you from the path of righteousness. Look at how brief life is, contemplate before what judge you are going to appear, and how soon, you who exercise judicial power."<sup>679</sup> Gregory was reminding Justin and other leaders that the eschaton is, in fact, a call for moral rectitude. The morality that Gregory sought was meant to guarantee that no leaders succumb to

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677. See Neil, "The Papacy in the Age of Gregory the Great," 22. She cites Donald Logan's argument that Gregory represents a dramatic shift of the medieval model of ecclesial leadership.

678. Martyn observes that from the time of the eastern emperor Justinian, the imperial province of Sicily was under the administration of a praetor who was selected by the emperor; see *The Letters*, 120 n.5.

679. *Epist.* 1.2, lines 15-9, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 120. *Nulla vos lucre ad injustitiam perirabant, nullius velminae, velamicitiae, ab itinere rectitudinis deflectant. Quam sit vita brevis aspiciate; ad quem quando que ituri estis judicem, qui judicariam potestatem geritis, cogitate.* Jane Baun introduces several other significant citations of Gregory's eschatological dimension in his *Registrum*. See Baun, "Gregory's Eschatology," 158-59 especially the commentaries in the footnotes. Gregory specifically alludes to the Final Judgment in *Epist.* 7.26, lines 1-50; *Epist.* 10.20, lines 1-46; and *Epist.* 13.33, lines 1-17.

the lures of pride or avarice and the people would not suffer unjustly at the hands of those in authority.

### 7.1.1. The *Cura Animarum*

Gregory believed that the ultimate reason for pastoral leaders to enter into political affairs was for the sake of the *cura animarum*, and therefore centered his rationale for entering into secular matters around this responsibility. Love was the virtue that grounded and directed this endeavor. He instructed the bishop of Alexandria, Eulogius: “Love, the mother and guardian of all good things, binds together the hearts of many by uniting them.”<sup>680</sup> He believed that love is so powerful that it could accomplish great things. He eloquently recalled: “The power of love is truly amazing . . . it brought down the mighty, raised up the humble . . . made the ferocious gentle . . . repaired what was torn . . . bound together many nations of men.”<sup>681</sup> It was love that commanded Peter to feed the sheep that Christ entrusted to his care.<sup>682</sup> Love for the flock propelled Gregory into matters of the state because he believed it was at the heart of the ministry of Christ and His vicars.

Gregory undertook a comprehensive program to deal with both the spiritual needs of the people as well as their physical needs. He oversaw distribution of grain to the hungry, provided tax relief to widows, and assisted farmers in maintaining and managing the fields. His civic-minded program also implemented a welfare system that looked after orphans, provided salaries

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680. *Epist.* 6.61, lines 1-2, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 444. *Mater et custos bonorum omnium charitas, quae multorum corda uniendo constringit.*

681. *Epist.* 6.63, lines 1-9, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 447. *Vere mirabilis charitatis virtus est . . . ut sublimia inclinaret, humilia sublimaret . . . ferocia mansue faceret . . . sarciret . . . spati acclimatum que diversitatibus hominum nationes.*

682. See Jn. 21:15-18; also, *Epist.* 7.37, lines 1-59.

for troops, and helped maintain and established religious communities.<sup>683</sup> The care of the soul, which was funded by Gregory, included tending to the physical needs of the people, which had been neglected by the imperial regime, especially the exarch in Ravenna.

The *cura animarum* led Gregory deeper into political matters more than he would have liked. He undertook peace negotiations with the Lombards in order to secure peace and stability for Rome, even if these efforts were ill received by the imperial authorities. He reached out to the Lombard queen, Theodelinda, to deepen her faith and used her as an ally in winning over the Arian Lombards. He sought to expose the injustices of the imperial court that had done a disservice to the people of the West, in particular, the people of Rome. The *cura animarum* brought Gregory into the very heart of the government of the empire.

### **7.2.0: Pastoral Care and Leadership from within the Church**

Gregory's approach to spiritual leadership was founded on his understanding of the two-fold nature of the virtue of charity, love of God and neighbor. Spiritual leadership was a means by which Gregory could confidently display that love for God, by seeking unity in God's Church, and love of neighbor, by seeking the salvation of souls. Gregory was already involved in matters of church administration that took time away from spiritual leadership and contemplation such as the appointment of bishops, the establishment of convents and monasteries, the overseeing of the administration of the sacraments, and the pastoral care of the Church. His greatest concern, however, was that secular affairs would compromise the primary functions of the pastoral leader, namely preaching, moral example, detachment, and humility.

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683. See Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 103.



Pastoral leaders were called primarily to save souls. Gregory sternly reminded Januarius, the bishop of Sardinians: “Realize that you have undertaken the care not of earthly things, but men’s souls. And so you should fix your heart there, show concern there, pay all your attention there and think more diligently about winning souls.”<sup>684</sup> The people deserved leaders that fulfilled a simple criterion of doing service for others. As previously seen, Gregory was worried about ambitious clerics and the lure of secular power. Straw points out: “Given his own personal struggles against the dangers of secular life, Gregory was especially sensitive to those who sought to find a career and worldly success in the Church, such carnal-minded Christians had no place in the Church.”<sup>685</sup> On July 5, 595, Gregory issued a decree from Saint Peter’s regarding the proper conduct and duties of clerical leaders. This ecclesiastical decree aimed at correcting inappropriate and scandalous behavior of pastoral leaders.<sup>686</sup>

The first canon of this decree focused on the importance of the duty of preaching. In it, he reprimanded church officials who placed people in positions of leadership in the liturgy based not on their ability to preach the Word, but rather on the quality of their singing voices. He denounced such practices with a harsh rebuke: “In this Holy Church of Rome . . . an extremely reprehensible custom arose some time ago, that certain singers are chosen for service at the holy altar, and having been appointed to the rank of deacon attend to the modulation of their voices,

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684. *Epist.* 9.11, lines 30-3, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 552-3. *Non terrenarum rerum curam, sed animarum te ducatum suscepisse cognoscas. Ibi ergo cofigere, ibi sollicitudinem, ibi totum debes studium adhibere, atque de caram lucro diligentius cogitare.* See also *Epist.* 3.13, lines 1-38; 4.24, lines 1-53; and 9.18, lines 1-16 for more examples of Gregory’s profound sensitivity for this great pastoral duty and concern.

685. Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 20.

686. *Epist.* 5.57a, lines 388-92, *CCSL* 140-140A. Since this decree is not contained in Norberg, all subsequent Latin citations of this decree are from *MGH*, and cited by book, letter, line. Latin texts are in brackets cited as book, letter, and line. See Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 19-25, she discusses the six canons of the decree in relation to each other and adds that there were more extensive reform decrees not included in these six.

when they should have been given time for the office of preaching and concerns of charity.”<sup>687</sup>

Gregory’s concentration on preaching highlighted the necessity that pastoral leaders prepare souls for the final judgment. Ministry at the holy altar was not a moment for the preacher to flaunt his musical abilities, but rather the opportunity to teach and prepare.

The third and fifth canons concentrated on the virtue of detachment in a pastoral leader. In the third canon, Gregory forbade the printing of titles and deeds that transferred civic properties to the Church. He discovered that this practice was a hardship to the poor, who were excluded, many times by force, from having access to ownership. It was, in his estimation, a scheme for those in pastoral authority to increase their revenue by acquiring properties. He banned clerics from taking part in such practices: “Therefore . . . if anyone working for the Church ever presumes of his own accord to place titles on a country or a city property, he should be anathema.”<sup>688</sup> The fifth canon prohibited clerics from collecting a fee for the sacraments or the offering of the pallium. In preventing such practices, he directly attacked simony. A sum of money should never be a criterion for the acquisition of an ecclesial office. The quality of the character and the holiness of the person should be the determining factors. He assured those who sought to gain leadership in such a fashion: “From those payments . . . if anyone should perchance presume to demand or seek something under the title of ‘a reward,’ he will be subjected to a charge by a strict examination of almighty God.”<sup>689</sup>

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687. *Epist. 5.57a*, lines 5-7, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 388-9. *In sancta hac Romana ecclesia . . . dudum consuetude est valde reprehensibilis exorta, ut quidam ad sacri altaris ministerium cantores eligantur et in diaconatus ordine constituit modulation vocis serviant, quos as praedicationis officium elemosinarumque studium vacare congruebat.*

688. *Epist. 5.57a*, lines 7-8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 389. *Proinde . . . si quis ecclesiasticorum umquam titulos ponere sive in rusticō sive in urbano praedio sua sponte praesumpserit, anathema sit.*

689. *Epist. 5.57a*, lines 6-8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 390. *Ex quibus praedictis rebus si quis hunc aliquid commode appellatio exigere vel petere forte praesumpserit, in districta examination Dei omnipotentis reatui subiacebit.*

With this decree, Gregory stressed the duties and characteristics of pastoral leaders. He wanted to weed out any hint of arrogance in the lives of prominent church leaders in an attempt to rid the Church of corruption and abuses of power. He believed the ideal pastoral leaders were those who concentrated on teaching and preparing souls while making sure their lives, both private and public, exemplified holiness and illustrated the virtues. The sanctity and salvation of the people entrusted to the pastoral care of the Church was to be the paramount concern of spiritual leaders. Despite his fear that secular cares would take a pastoral leader away from his primary duty, Gregory was as deeply committed to the care of the physical needs of the poor as he was to the spiritual needs of the flock, and he wanted his clergy to be likewise.

### **7.3.0: Gregory's Social Program**

Climate change and the effects of the plague in the early 540s led to famine and another outbreak of the plague in the late 580s, taking a significant toll on the population of the western empire. These factors, coupled with the devastation left in the wake of Justinian's reunification of Italy significantly contributed to the impoverishment of the West, particularly the city of Rome.<sup>690</sup> In conjunction with these factors Liebeschuetz also examined the desecularization of municipal administrations and concluded: "The bishop would therefore seem to have been the natural leader and spokesmen for his city. It is therefore not surprising that in civic emergencies we often find the local bishop in precisely that position. . . . as cities shrank and secular government declined, whatever administrative tasks remained tended to fall to the bishop."<sup>691</sup>

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690. Colt Anderson, *The Great Catholic Reformers: From Gregory the Great to Dorothy Day* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 6. Anderson assesses the effects of Justinian's efforts and states that the region was unrecognizable because of the looting and pillaging of the Byzantine forces, the destruction due to war, and the plague and famine that entered the region due to the conditions.

691. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 137. For the developing role of the bishop in secular affairs from Constantine to the Merovingian Empire; see pp. 137-68.

Out of concern for the welfare of the people, the bishops of the Church undertook charitable programs, as well as spiritual ones, to alleviate the sufferings and burdens of the people.

Gregory continued to remind bishops that the preparation of souls was the primary duty of the pastoral leader. He did, however, attend to the physical welfare of the people by developing an effective system of social programs to relieve the physical needs of the poor.<sup>692</sup>

The social programs he developed tended to the physical needs of the people. His programs included provisions of grain (*annona*) and food supplies, adequate water resources, peace and stability in the region, and housing and land allocations. Gregory had a distinct advantage that allowed him to be a competent administrator and an effective organizer of social programs. Prior to his entrance into the monastery, Gregory had been the legal officer (*praetor urbanus*) of Rome and eventually became the Prefect of Rome (*praefectus urbis Romanae*). Martyn comments that Gregory was already predisposed to tackle social issues because of his political background. He states: “Gregory’s response to the social issues that required his attention was consistent and wide-ranging. His earlier training as a senior Roman magistrate had prepared him well for a detailed administration of the dole.”<sup>693</sup> He knew the minutiae of public administration and order, knowledge that would prove indispensable when it came to establishing programs for farmers, support to widows, grain for the hungry, and funding for troops. The Theodosian Code delineated the specific tasks entrusted to the *praefectus urbis*. Among them was the supervision of the *annona*, military executions within the City, and care of

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692. Michel Mollat distinguishes two basic operational categories regarding the poor: material poverty and spiritual poverty. Material poverty made the person susceptible to disease, malnutrition, inadequate housing, and low life expectancy. Spiritual poverty was a prerequisite for holiness, which was rooted in the virtue of detachment. The spiritual poor were those who were in need of pastoral guidance and religious education; see, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*, trans, Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 15-23.

693. Martyn, *The Letters*, 97.

the city's infrastructure.<sup>694</sup> Apart from his public administrative abilities, Gregory himself relied on the virtue of charity, which was rooted in the love of neighbor, in the carrying out of his programs for the poor. He reminded the sub-deacon Peter: "The commandments of God exhort us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and when they order us to love them with this charity, how much more ought we to help them with subsidies for their bodily necessities . . . at least with a few provisions."<sup>695</sup>

Gregory's social programs targeted both secular and religious problems.<sup>696</sup> He showed great care and love for widows and orphans, whether they were Christians or not. He wanted to make certain that they received what, in justice, was theirs. He acknowledged that in some cases the death of a husband dealt a great financial blow to a family. He instructed bishops and priests to look after the needs of the widows who found themselves in financial distress and to provide whatever support was warranted. He explained to Dominic, the bishop of Civitavecchia, his desire regarding the care of widows: "It is indeed part of a priest's duty that you are obliged to provide assistance for widows and for women bereft of a husband's support, so that where in this world they are deprived of a truly human life, they can find remedies under the protection of a priest."<sup>697</sup>

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694. *Imperatoris Theodosii Codex*, 1.6, lines 1-12, *CCSL* 5.

695. *Epist.* 1.44, lines 1-6, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 170. *Divina praecepta nos admonent diligere proximos sicut nos me ipsos; et cum hac eos praecipiamur charitate diligere, quanto magis debemus his in subsidiis necessitatum carnalium subvenire . . . mali quibus sustenta culis sublevemus?* See also, *Epist.* 1.65, lines 1-12 regarding the guiding principle of charity to neighbor.

696. Gregory did in fact provide financial support to religious individuals, communities, and institutions. Martyn gives an account of those religious who were recipients of Gregory's generosity; see *The Letters*, 97 especially n. 259, for pertinent details of the specific needs and payments made to those in the spiritual sphere.

697. *Epist.* 1.13, lines 1-5, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 129. *Officii quidem sacerdotalis est ut viduis ac maritali regimine desolatis impertiri solacia debeatis, ut unde in hoc mundo humana conditione privantur, sacerdotali praesidiō possint remedia reperire.* He clearly makes known his wish that the needs of this particular widow, Luminosa, the wife of Zemarcus, who was the tribune of Civitavecchia and responsible for that city's administrative and judicial systems, were met and that no hardship or injustice against her was to be tolerated.

He was equally concerned that orphans not be treated unfairly, and personally vowed to look after their economic, spiritual, and emotional needs. One example was demonstrated in his letter to John, the bishop of Syracuse, instructing him to personally see to it that the property that belonged to Venantius, a government official and friend of Gregory, was secured for Venantius's daughters.<sup>698</sup> Gregory made a personal pledge to Venantius that he would care for the daughters. It was, however, his programs for the distribution of grain and financial allocations that revealed the heart of his concern for the poor.

### 7.3.1: Food Allocation

Gregory recognized that supplying food to the hungry was a well-established practice of the Church: "Yet it has always been the normal custom for that the Church to give bread to all men."<sup>699</sup> He went beyond simply following customary function. His letters show that he advocated the building and stocking of grain facilities in the city and its environs. Since a good amount of grain was produced on papal lands in Sicily, Gregory wanted to ensure that the administration of the grain supply was done properly and that adequate granaries were built. He wrote to Justin, praetor of Sicily, to insist that he work with the clergy to take care of the needs of the people in general. He admonished that great care needed to be taken regarding the public

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698. See *Epist.* 11.25, lines 1-56, *CCSL* 140-140A.

699. *Epist.* 6.33, lines 17-8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 427. *Panem dare omnibus illi Ecclesiae semper familiae fuit.* Collins notes that the Church in Rome, as early as the third-century, took on great responsibilities that were once reserved for the Roman aristocracy. One such responsibility was the feeding of the Roman populace. See *Keepers of the Keys*, pp. 100-1. Collins notes that the Church in Rome, as early as the third-century, took on great responsibilities that were once reserved for the Roman aristocracy. One such responsibility was the feeding of the Roman populace; see *Keepers of the Keys*, pp. 100-1.

distribution of grain. Gregory's concern was that if improper amounts of grain left Sicily, then the rations distributed would be effected causing further hardship on the people.<sup>700</sup>

Furthermore, Gregory took painstaking care to ensure that grain supplies in Sicily were adequately replenished so as to provide for future needs of the people. He instructed the sub-deacon Peter, who was charged with the administration of the churches throughout Sicily,<sup>701</sup> on the times in which the demand for grain was highest and lowest. He wanted Peter to make sure that in the months in which demand was particularly high all inquiries made by the people for grain were fulfilled by those entrusted with its distribution. It was Gregory's initiative that set a schedule for grain distribution. He instructed Peter to send a certain amount of corn to Rome at that moment for the fall distribution but, thinking ahead he told Peter to use fifty gold pounds of church funds to buy corn and store it in Sicily. When winter arrived in Rome, Gregory would send ships to retrieve that corn and distribute it to the people of the city.<sup>702</sup> His aim in the distribution and supply of grain was to sustain lives in both Rome and Sicily.

Gregory also challenged what he considered unjust taxations and fraudulent pricing of grain charged to the farmers and the poor in Sicily. He wrote to Peter and condemned the practices of the corn merchants who charged the locals more than was being charged in Rome. He also questioned why farmers were being charged a tax on grain that was lost at sea during transportation. He felt this was an unfair practice because the farmers had no control over the atmospheric conditions that caused shipwrecks and should not be held accountable for them.<sup>703</sup> Gregory addressed a variety of abuses in this letter and admonished Peter to reach out to local officials and correct what he felt were abusive practices, such as a tax charged on grain even

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700. *Epist.* 1.2, lines 1-34, *CCSL* 140-140A.

701. *Epist.* 1.1, lines 1-22, *CCSL* 140-140A.

702. *Epist.* 1.70, lines 1-31, *CCSL* 140-140A.

703. *Epist.* 1.42, lines 21-43, *CCSL* 140-140A.

before it was sold, property seized at the death of a farmer, property used for bribery, a property tax collected twice, and funds and property stolen from farmers. These abuses took place at the hands of local and church officials, placing a burden on the farmers and causing great hardships. Gregory wrote: “See that the writings I have sent about the farmers are read throughout all the Church domains . . . . You have heard what I want. See what you must do.”<sup>704</sup>

In a letter to Cyriacus, the bishop of Constantinople, Gregory articulated the foundation for his social program of food distribution.<sup>705</sup> For Gregory, the heart of his program was rooted in the Gospel directive to feed the flock (Jn. 21:17), in this case the people of Rome. Gregory believed failure to alleviate the hunger of others was a blatant disregard for God. He told Cyriacus: “If someone who is able to do so refuses to feed the sheep of our almighty God, he shows that he does not love the supreme shepherd at all.”<sup>706</sup> Gregory, therefore, made certain that those in a position of pastoral care were aware of the Lord’s mandate to look after the physical needs of others, such as when Gregory employed Secundus, a monk, to remind the bishop of Ravenna that he is commanded to tend to the physical hungers of others.<sup>707</sup> In that

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704. *Epist.* 1.42, lines 34-42, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 69. *Scripta mea ad rusticos quae direxi, per omnes massas fac relegi . . . . Vide ut omnia absque imminutione custodias . . . . Audisti quod volo, vide quid agas.* This strongly worded letter of Gregory, pp. 162-69, that details his dismay and plan for restitution should be read in conjunction with *Epist.* 13.35, lines 1-41. See Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 24.

705. Gregory wrote to Cyriacus after he received a synodical letter brought to him from the patriarch of Constantinople. The occasion for the letter was the consecration of Cyriacus to the See of Constantinople. Martyn comments that this letter should be read in connection with Gregory’s previous letter to John of Constantinople, Eulogius of Alexandria, Gregory of Antioch, John of Jerusalem, and Anastasius ex-patriarch of Antioch. Martyn explained that customarily a letter was sent by those consecrated to a patriarchal See to other patriarchs as a sign of communion and faith; see *Epist.* 1.24, lines 1-381, *CCSL* 140-140A.

706. *Epist.* 7.5, lines 18-20, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 454. *Quia si is qui valet omnipotentis Dei oves renuit pascere, ostendit se Pastorem summum minime amare.* See Martyn, *The Letters*, 72-4 regarding the commandment to feed the flock and the consequences for those who fail to do so.

707. See *Epist.* 6.33, lines 1-34, *CCSL* 140-140A.



same vein, Gregory wrote to Romanus, the defender of Sicily,<sup>708</sup> that he should release some church funds to help lift a certain Gaudiosus out of poverty. Gregory made the request because “the eloquence of divine commands advises us to provide the church’s assistance to those suffering need.”<sup>709</sup> It is here that Gregory highlighted the two-fold aspect of charity. One cannot, in the eyes of Gregory, have a love for God while neglecting the concerns and the needs of others.

The needs of others were not strictly relegated to alleviating the hunger of the people. Gregory knew that he not only had an obligation to feed the flock, but also had a responsibility to provide financial assistance to help those who were “constricted by the indigence of poverty.”<sup>710</sup> His earlier experiences in the prefectures of Rome, which acquainted him with fiscal structures, gave him an advantage in setting up a financial network that would prove beneficial to residents of the city. Gregory’s programs and assistance were not reserved for Christians alone. His help, spiritual and financial, was for those who were most in need of it. In aiding those who were not Christian, Gregory was perhaps also opening the door for their conversion as the eschaton approached.

### 7.3.2: Economic Relief

Gregory developed an economic strategy that incorporated tax relief, monetary incentives, and economic reform. Straw describes Gregory’s economic policy: “He appears to have had two economic goals: to better production in order to accumulate provisions; and to

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708. The ecclesiastical position of the *defensores* was significant in maintaining the Church’s patrimony. These *defensores* were lawyers who were employed to defend the concerns and the interests of the Church. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 496-7.

709. *Epist.* 9.110, lines 1-2, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 608. *Divinorum nos admonent eloquia praeceptorum necessitate patientibus ecclesiasticum praebere subsidium.*

710. *Epist.* 9.110, lines 5-6, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 609. *Paupertatis asseruit inopia constringe.*

provide justice to peasants so that they would be interested in cultivating the land.”<sup>711</sup> In recognizing the financial needs of the sons of Urbicus, the late defender from Tivoli, who died in great debt, Gregory allocated the lands that had been his but were now in the possession of the Church, to Urbicus’s two sons. In acting in such a manner, Gregory explained that it was his responsibility to make certain that the poor were helped: “It is part of my duty to give advice to those who have lost their parents, so that I can give some help in those miseries of theirs that are justly the responsibility of the Church, thereby alleviating them.”<sup>712</sup> Elsewhere, we find that Gregory doled out a large sum of money to a blind man whose father was a onetime farmer<sup>713</sup> and granted wages to a farmer who had returned to the faith.<sup>714</sup>

Gregory showed a keen sense of fiscal matters, which was coupled with the virtue of charity. He charged those in pastoral office to seek out means that would alleviate the crushing taxes leveled against the people.<sup>715</sup> In order to accomplish this he gave license to ecclesial leaders to use Church funds to help those who were living in impoverished conditions. He instructed Peter, his sub-deacon in Sicily, to use Church money to assist the former governor of Samnium who had come on hard times.<sup>716</sup> He further asked Peter to use money from his own account to see to it that Anastasius, abbot of a monastery in Palermo, and the mother of Urbicus were helped.<sup>717</sup>

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711. Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 22.

712. *Epist.* 3.21, lines 2-5, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 249. *Officii nostri est orbatis ita parentibus ferre consultum, quatenus aliquid de his, quae iuste debentur ecclesiae, relaxantes, eorum possimus subvenire miseriis.*

713. *Epist.* 4.28, lines 1-7, *CCSL* 140-140A.

714. *Epist.* 6.38, lines 1-8, *CCSL* 140-140A. Gregory seems to use all means at his disposal in order to promote Church unity and guarantee conversions. In *Epist.* 2.50, lines 1-25, Gregory directs that those who converted from Judaism were to receive a reduction in their taxes.

715. For the integration of Gregory’s pastoral and pragmatic activities, see Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 102-7.

716. *Epist.* 2.50, lines 1-149, *CCSL* 140-140A.

717. *Epist.* 2.50, lines 139-49. Gregory also told Felix, the bishop of Siponto, to use Church funds to secure the release of captives; see *Epist.* 4.17, *CCSL* 140-140A.

Gregory also directed bishops and other ecclesiastical leaders to sell church items and property to lessen the burdens of others. His instructions to Donus, the bishop of Messina, were to sell things to buy the release of prisoners. Gregory reminded Donus that this was well within the right of the Church: “The statutes of both the sacred canons and of the law permits utensils of the Church to be sold, for the ransoming of captives.”<sup>718</sup> Even though Gregory’s appeal to Donus had solid legal backing, he also based his request on compassion: “It is a sin . . . for a mostly desolate church to put its property before its captives, and to delay in their redemption.”<sup>719</sup> Gregory’s message is clear. The use of church funds to help ease people’s burdens was both a legal and a moral duty of pastoral leaders. Gregory insisted that compassion be at the heart of revenue collecting as well as in providing funds for helping others. If those who owed money to the Church fell on financial hardships, then pastoral leaders should not demand payment. He wrote to Anthelm, the sub-deacon and administrator of the Campanian patrimony, that those collecting money: “should be kind rather than inflexible, compassionate rather than strict, and should not expect profit from another’s loss.”<sup>720</sup> He not only implored pastoral leaders to assuage the problems of the people, but also felt imperial leaders should share in this endeavor. He directed Vitalis, the defender of Sardinia, to go to Constantinople to try and convince authorities to re-examine the taxation system that proved to be a hardship on landowners.<sup>721</sup>

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718. *Epist.* 7.35, lines 2-3, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 491. *Et sacrorum et legalia statute permittunt ministeria Ecclesiae pro captivorum esse redemptio vendenda.*

719. *Epist.* 7.35, lines 17-20, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 492. *Sic iterum culpa est . . . res maxime desolatae Ecclesiae captivis suis ponere, et in eorum redemptio cessare.*

720. *Epist.* 9.109, lines 16-8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 608. *Decet et nobilem, plus benignus quam rigidus, plus misericors esse debeat quam districtus et lucrum de damno alterius non expectet.* [9.109.16-18]. Gregory displays an unusual familiarity with financial matters as he gives a detailed account regarding the arrangement of payments for one who was indebted to the Church.

721. *Epist.* 14.2, lines 13-7, *CCSL* 140-140A.

Gregory manifested a well-developed sense of providing a solid fiscal foundation to guarantee financial stability. To that end, he directed Peter, the sub-deacon of Sicily, to sell livestock advanced in age or sterile for the purpose of generating income for farmers. If the livestock were unable to produce, at least their sale could bring in a small amount of income that could be beneficial to the farmer.<sup>722</sup> Gregory was instrumental also in changing the policy that had put farmers at a disadvantage when it came to land distribution. His intervention allowed farmers to inherit lands and secure their rights so as to avoid evictions. This singular act stabilized the economy and increased production.<sup>723</sup> He further instructed Peter to distribute resources fairly among tenant farmers so that they would have the means necessary to cultivate the land and make a sensible wage. He admonished him in the strictest of terms to ensure that secular authorities not infringe on farmers' properties or rights, and he addressed the crippling taxation system that presented even greater obstacles for farmers.<sup>724</sup> Gregory implemented this fiscal plan in order to ensure that the people had the means proper and necessary to foster a sense of dignity and maintain a successful livelihood.

In addition to using church funds to aid farmers and the poor, and to ransom captives, Gregory made certain that the financial needs of the people and the state were met. Markus points out that Gregory described himself as the city's treasurer, who used church funds for secular reasons: "The impoverished public finances in Italy were helped out by loans from the expenditure by the pope. Gregory once described himself as the 'treasurer' (*saccellarius*) who paid for all the daily running expenses in Rome just as did the imperial treasurer of the 'first army of Italy' in Ravenna."<sup>725</sup> To complete a picture of his financial dealings on a secular and

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722. *Epist.* 1.42, lines 69-89, *CCSL* 140-140A.

723. *Epist.* 1.42, lines 50-127, *CCSL* 140-140A. Also, Straw, "Gregory the Great," pp. 24-5.

724. *Epist.* 2.50, lines, 1-149, *CCSL* 140-140A.

725. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 101.

religious level, it would suffice at this time to simply mention his involvement in financial payments to the overburdened troops attempting to keep at bay the hostile advances of the Lombards. He wrote to the empress Constantina: “But we have already spent twenty-seven years living in the city of Rome, surrounded by the swords of the Lombards. How much they have cost this Church day after day, just so we can go on living among them, cannot be estimated.”<sup>726</sup>

In his letters Gregory clearly expressed the moral obligation the Church had to provide funds necessary to alleviate financial burdens. The Church entered into the secular realm to aid those who were in financial and spiritual need. It was a matter of justice to tend to the spiritual and physical needs of the people. He rebuked Anthelm, the sub-deacon of Campania, and admonished him never to lose sight of the ultimate goal of church administration: “I remember having warned you quite often not only with frequent injunctions, but also face to face, to administer our office not so much for the sake of church interests as for alleviating the needs of the poor, and more for protecting them against the oppression of whoever it may be.”<sup>727</sup> Gregory entered into the secular realm in order to fulfill the Gospel mandate of tending and feeding the flock entrusted to him. To this end, he corresponded not only with church administrators, but also with local and imperial leaders.

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726. *Epist.* 5.39, lines 66-9, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 357. *Viginti autem iam et septem annos ducimus, quod in hac urbe inter Langobardorum gladios vivimus. Quibus quam multa ab hac ecclesia cotidianus diebus erogantur, ut inter eos vivere possimus, suggerenda non sunt.* Emilio Gandolfo offers a concise and insightful analysis of Rome during the years of Lombard aggression; see *Gregorio Magno: Servo Dei Servi di Dio* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), §11, 50-6; also Logan, *A History of the Church*, 47-8.

727. *Epist.* 1.53, lines 1-6, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 175-7. *Non solum frequentibus praeceptionibus, sed etiam praesentam te saepius monuisse me memini, utilie vice nostra, non tantum pro utilitatibus ecclesiasticis, quantum pro sub levandis pauperum necessitatibus fungereris, et eos magis a cujus liber oppressionibus vindicares.*

#### **7.4.0: The Monarchical and Imperial Correspondence**

Gregory's correspondence with leaders of barbarian kingdoms and the empire helps elucidate his rationale for entering into secular affairs. Because of the religious difference between the Franks and Lombards, his relationship with each was quite different. His letters to the kings and queen of the Franks, who were Catholic, took on a distinctive tone of good will.<sup>728</sup> He applauded the monarchical rulers for their devotion and faith while requesting their assistance in dealing with church-related issues such as simony and church order. On the other hand, his communications with the Lombards, who were Arian, were also affected by the Lombards' military sieges and hostilities against Rome. Although his relationship with Queen Theodelinda was one of fondness, his untiring efforts to make peace with the Lombards were often contentious. The process of securing a peace treaty with the Lombard King Agilulf in 598 began to undermine Gregory's relationship with Maurice, the emperor. His correspondence with the eastern emperors also followed divergent lines. Once the rapport between Gregory and Maurice had become strained, Gregory seemed to welcome the imperial usurper, Phocas, with open arms.

##### **7.4.1: The Franks**

The rapport between Gregory and Childebert II, the king of the Franks, was amicable, and the two times that Gregory wrote to the king were cordial. The basis of the relationship that he enjoyed with the Franks was established some hundred years prior to his papacy. The Franks were a loosely banded group of Germanic barbarians, who first appear in Roman sources in northern Gaul in the late 250s, posing a minor threat. Between 350-450, the Franks grew to be a

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728. The Franks had become Catholic under Clovis in 496.

more imposing threat and were involved in a number of conflicts with the empire.<sup>729</sup> Even though there were occasional armed conflicts, by the fifth century a relationship had been forged that benefited the Franks, the empire, and the Church. Childeric, one of the Franks' leaders, amassed significant power in the latter part of the mid-450s. He fought in a number of Roman offenses against the Visigoths and gained control of several important strongholds. Childeric's son, Clovis, succeeded him in the early 480s and continued to garner support and take control of other Frankish kingdoms. Eventually, he was able to unite the Franks under his rule and establish the Merovingian dynasty, named after his grandfather, Merovech.<sup>730</sup>

Clovis was potentially a strong ally. J. N. Hillgarth comments that Arian kings such as the kings of the Visigoths in southern Gaul, the kings of the Burgundians, and King Theodoric who was in control of Italy after the events of 476, all tried to bring Clovis into their respective camps.<sup>731</sup> The Church also recognized the benefit in having Clovis as an ally. Shortly after Clovis became king at the age of fifteen, bishop Remigius of Reims wrote to him in an apparent attempt to entice him into becoming an ally of Church. After he had learned of several of Clovis's victories, the bishop advised him: "First of all, you should act so that God's judgment may not abandon you and that your merits should maintain you at the height where you have arrived by your humility. . . . You ought to associate with yourself counselors who are able to do

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729. Edward James, *The Franks* (New York: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1988), 51-8. James presents a detailed account of the military campaigns involving the Franks and the empire. Despite several battles, the Franks and the Romans lived in relative peace.

730. Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, 212-3.

731. J.N. Hillgarth, *The Conversion of Western Europe, 350-750* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 73.

honor to your reputation. . . . You should defer to your bishops and always have recourse to their advice.”<sup>732</sup>

Clovis had converted to orthodox Christianity by the early sixth century and forged an alliance both with the Church and the eastern emperor. Gregory of Tours recounts that Clovis’s armies were being slaughtered in battle. In an appeal for victory, Clovis had cried out: “Jesus Christ . . . if you grant me victory of these, and I experience that power which the people dedicated to your name claimed to have, then will I also believe . . . and be baptized.”<sup>733</sup> For the Franks, the alliance benefitted them politically and spiritually. They gained a strong ally in the eastern emperor as well as a strong ally with the Church in the West. The Franks became the first Germanic people to convert to orthodox Christianity rather than Arian Christianity.

The Franks, the East, and the Church in the West enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship. Gregory’s correspondence in 595 with Childebert II, the king of the Franks, is a testimony to the close relations between the Church and the Franks. Gregory praised the faith of the king, expressed pious affection, sought assistance in combating the heresy of simony, and attempted to establish an exchange that would bring financial support from the patrimony in Gaul to Rome. Since Gregory recognized the faithfulness of the king, he felt it appropriate to offer him some political and spiritual advice, as did Bishop Remigius to Clovis in 481, which would benefit Childebert’s soul and the souls of his people. In order to preserve the sacred duty of the Church in preparing and guiding souls, Gregory wanted the king to pressure those who were attempting to gain entrance into sacred orders without having been duly trained and

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732. Hillgarth, *The Conversion of Western Europe*, 74. It is important to note that Clovis had just taken control of the Merovingian kingdom at the time the letter was written and that Clovis’s conversion was still, by some accounts, some twenty years off.

733. Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum*, 2.2, line 30, *MGH* 1; trans. Dalton, 68. *Iesu Christi . . . si mihi victuriam super hos hostes induleris et expertus fuero illam virtutem, quam de te populus tuo nomine dicatus probasse se praedicat, credam tibi et in nomine tuo baptista.*



formed. Gregory received word that ambitious laymen were being tonsured and putting themselves in bishoprics when bishops in Childebert's kingdom died.

Gregory sought Childebert's support because there was nobody within the Church to stop these laymen from taking control. He considered this disastrous for both the Church and the state, and bemoaned the blind ambition that had brought these men to seek pastoral leadership. Due to their lack of formation, Gregory declared that they would do more harm than good within Childebert's kingdom. He lamented the outcome:

And since he has not learnt what he should be able to teach, he practices his priesthood in name only, for he continues to be a layman in his speech and deed. And how is he going to intercede for the sins of others, who has not first wept for his own sins? For such a shepherd does not defend his sheep, but deceives them . . . and their deaths result from that which should have been their greatest support and protection of their safety.<sup>734</sup>

To this point, we can hear echoing in the background Gregory's main premise of the *Pastoral Rule*. In the opening paragraph of his pastoral treatise, Gregory did not mince words. He initiated the conversation of pastoral authority with a simple yet critical commentary on those who were taking it upon themselves to grab power: "*the inexperienced should not obtain authority.*"<sup>735</sup>

Gregory also sought the king's help in addressing the issue of simony a problem throughout Gaul. He exhorted the king in pastoral yet firm language: "to command such a

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734. *Epist.* 5.60, lines 22-9, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 396-7. *Et quoniam quod possit docere non didicit, sacerdotium tantum modo gerit in nomine, nam laicus in sermone pristinae perseverat et opere. Quomodo ergo pro aliorum peccatis intercessurus est, qui sua primitus non deflevit? Talis enim Pastor non munit gregem, sed decipit . . . et indesumat interitum, unde salutis ferae protectionis magnum debuit habueris sidium?*

735. *PR.* 1.1, line 1 *SCh* 281-2; trans. Demacopoulos, 29. *Ne venire imperiti ad magisterium audeant.* Gregory spells out in a very straightforward manner why the inexperienced and untrained should not have access to the pastoral office.

detestable practice be banned from your kingdom.”<sup>736</sup> He offered the king advice and admonished him to act on this matter with swiftness and diligence. His motive in writing to the king appeared to be pastoral, in that he was offering his directive in order to ensure the safety of the king’s soul. Gregory states that it was his duty to inform the king of such matters and to instruct on how they should be handled. This sacred duty of Gregory’s was for the benefit of the king and his people. His advice to the king was to correct the proud and arrogant actions of those who sought or bought their positions of authority. Gregory was establishing a clear line in this letter. Those who worked for the preservation of the Church would be rewarded by God. A failure to defend the rights of the Church and to rid the Church of scandal and heresy would lead to chaos within the kingdom or something altogether worse - the loss of souls. Gregory used the analogy that a leader of army who was not trained could not successfully lead his troops into battle. The result would be certain defeat and even death to those under such ill-equipped leaders. The Church needed to have strong leadership if souls were to be saved. A failure to ensure that only those suitable for pastoral leadership had access to spiritual authority would lead to the same result, defeat and certain spiritual death of souls.

While Gregory advised and admonished the king, he additionally made a gentle request. He showered the king with affectionate language and an occasional reminder that the clarity of the king’s faith allowed him to be a bright light that “shines in the obscurity of a black night.”<sup>737</sup> After this exchange of pleasantries, he appealed to the king to do all in his power to re-establish a small parcel of the church patrimony in the Marseilles district in Gaul and ensure that the Church had his protection and support against those who had unlawfully taken that property. Gregory

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736. *Epist.* 5.60, lines 43-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 397. *Ut tam detestabile facinus de regno suo excellentia vestra prohiberi praecipiat.*

737. *Epist.* 6.6, lines 6-7, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 405. *In taetrae noctis obscuritate luminis sui claritate fulgescit.*

relied on the revenues generated from the church patrimony to fund his social programs. The monies raised from the various regions allowed the Church to purchase grain to feed the hungry, offer assistance to the widows and the orphans, to subsidize military salaries, and provide funding to the farmers. He urged the king: “And if by chance anything has been done there against the law, or if some property of the same small patrimony is being retained by anyone, let the crime be corrected by the justice of your power, and let what has been stolen be restored to its rightful owner.”<sup>738</sup>

Demacopoulos comments that the patrimony was placed in the hands of Saint Peter and others had taken it from the rightful owners, Peter’s representative. Appealing to the king’s faith, Gregory asserted that the patrimony had been well-governed from Peter to the present time, and reminded the king that what was entrusted to Peter needed to remain in the hands of Peter’s successor. Demacopoulos maintains that the Petrine claim on the property raises the level of importance the king’s actions held for Gregory.<sup>739</sup> The ultimate goal for Gregory was to secure the land for the Church and make certain that any monies collected from that patrimony not be taken by other authorities.

Whether it was the issue of ambitious priests, the practice of simony, or absconding of funds from the patrimony, Gregory was looking out for the best interests of the Church and its ministries, and it appears that he sought to use the power of the throne to advance the Church. His overarching concern was for the well-being of the souls entrusted to him and the Church. He made it abundantly clear to the king that he was interested in the salvation of Childebert’s soul and of those of the people in his realm: “And so, most excellent son, I give you this advice

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738. *Epist.* 6.6, lines 28-30, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 406. *Si aliquod illic fortasse praeiudicium factum est aut res eiusdem patrimonioli ab aliquot detinentur, potestatis vestrae iustitia corrigatur et iuri pristinae quae ablata sunt refoventur.*

739. See Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 149-50.

because I long for your soul to be saved.”<sup>740</sup> The letters to Brunhilde, Childebert II’s mother, further clarify Gregory’s rationale for establishing a rapport with the throne.

Gregory’s correspondence with Brunhilde was more abundant than his correspondence to her son, Childebert II, and even her grandchildren, Theoderic and Theodebert.<sup>741</sup> As would be expected, Gregory praised the virtues possessed by the queen. Prior to her marriage to King Sigebert, Brunhilde had been an Arian Christian from Toledo. She converted to Catholic Christianity and became a staunch supporter of Gregory. She was regent for her son, Childebert, until 585 and her grandchildren until 599 [Theodebert] and 601 [Theoderic].<sup>742</sup> He praised her in eloquent terms: “In the government of a kingdom, virtue needs justice and power needs fairness, and for this neither can suffice without the other, but it is clearly shown how brightly your care for these qualities shines forth through your love . . . for you govern a large number of races in a praiseworthy manner.”<sup>743</sup> He did not miss the opportunity to express affection and praise her diligence as a mother. He commended her for instilling in her son, Childebert, a great love for things that were eternal so as not to be consumed by temporal glory.

Consequently, King Childebert had become a king, according to Gregory, who “surpasses all the kingdoms of other nations.”<sup>744</sup> He further commended her for the assistance she offered in

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740. *Epist.* 5.60, lines 47-8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 397. *Haec igitur, praecellentissime fili, id circo ad moneo, quia animam vestram salvari desidero.*

741. At the death of Childebert II in 595, the kingdom was split between his two sons, Theoderic and Theodebert. Due to their young age, their grandmother Brunhilde became the regent ruler.

742. See Franca Ela Consolino, “*Il Papa e le Regine*,” in *Gregorio Magno e il Suo Tempo*, pp. 241-9.

743. *Epist.* 9.213, lines 2-5, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 675. *Cum in regni regimine virtus justitia et potestas aequitas egeat, nec ad hoc alterum sine altero possit sufficere, quanto in vobis amore horum cura preafulgeat . . . dum turbas gentium laudabiliter gubernatis.*

744. *Epist.* 6.5, line 8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 404; *Cuncta gentium regan praecelleret.*

helping those missionaries on their way to bring about the conversion of England.<sup>745</sup> Gregory was determined to make certain that the souls of the people of England be saved. By her generosity, patronage, and assurance of safe passage, at the behest of Gregory, Brunhilde aided the monk Augustine on his mission to England. In return for her willingness to help in this missionary endeavor, Gregory assured her that God would indeed reward her: “Our God, who has adorned you in this world with good qualities pleasing to him, may even so make you give thanks with his saints in eternal rest.”<sup>746</sup>

Typical of Gregory, after the exchange of pleasantries, he petitioned for aid and attempted to elicit support. He approached her with requests similar to those he had made to her son. In this instance, he reminded her that all authority comes from God and that she was indebted to God for what she had received. He immediately told her: “For it is proper for you, most excellent daughter, it is proper for you to be such a person that you could be subject to the Ruler. For in him, you confirm the rule of your power also over your subjects.”<sup>747</sup> As with Ambrose before him, Gregory believed that the source of all power, ecclesiastical and secular, came from God.<sup>748</sup> This became another means by which Gregory would become involved in secular affairs.

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745. Although the conversion of England is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is necessary to mention Brunhilde’s role in supporting the missionary works of the Church under Gregory. For her part in the English missions see *Epist* 6.60, lines 2-29; 11.48, lines 1-31, *CCSL* 140-140A. These letters mention the hospitality and encouragement the queen displayed to those on route to England.

746. *Epist*. 6.60, lines 23-5, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 444. *Deus noster qui in hoc saeculo vos bonis sibi placitis decoravit, hic et in aeterna requie cum suis vos sanctis faciat gratulari.*

747. *Epist*. 8.4, lines 7-9, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 501. *Decet enim vos, excellentissimae filiae, decet tales exsistere, ut subiectae possitis esse dominatori. In eo enim regnum potestatis vestrae et subiectis gentibus confirmatis.*

748. Del Santo, “Gregory the Great, The Empire and the Emperor,” 58. See *Epist*. 7.6, lines 1-29, *CCSL* 140-140A, Gregory’s Letter to Maurice for Gregory’s further development of his understanding of the source of all authority, ecclesial and political.

He repeated to Brunhilde the requests he had made to Childebert. He further asked for her assistance in bringing them about in order to make it possible for the Church to carry out its mission.<sup>749</sup> Specifically, he wanted her to prohibit those unfit and inexperienced from gaining orders,<sup>750</sup> ensure true worship is conducted within her realm,<sup>751</sup> condemn any and all simoniacal practices,<sup>752</sup> and promote justice and support to the patrimony in Gaul.<sup>753</sup> In order to accomplish these outcomes, he implored her to call a council to bring about reform in her kingdom.<sup>754</sup> As a matter of political expediency, he directed her: “A kingdom is believed to be stable when a fault that is known is very quickly corrected.”<sup>755</sup> He reminded her, as he did her son, that souls were in jeopardy if these faults were not eradicated from her domain.

#### 7.4.2: The Lombards

Gregory showed great affinity for the Franks, because of their adherence to the Catholic faith and the fact that they did not present a threat to the people of Rome. Gregory’s relationship with the Lombards, however, was very different, due to the fact they were Arians and posed an ongoing military and political threat in Italy. In addition, his experiences and correspondence with them were often the direct result of a lack of imperial action against the Lombards who wreaking havoc in the West. After Justinian’s sixth-century efforts at re-unification with the West, Italy was left in ruins. Since the emperor confined military efforts largely to the East, Italy

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749. Gregory would also continue to make requests to eliminate abuses in his communications with Brunhilde’s grandsons, Theoderic and Theodebert. On the papal patrimony see *Epist.* 6.51, lines 11-29; simoniacal practices *Epist.* 9.216, lines 14-45; 11.47, lines 10-15; 11.50, lines 1-28; ill-formed clerics, *Epist.* 9.216, lines 46-64]; Church order *Epist.* 9.227, lines 1-34; 11.47, lines 1-20, *CCSL* 140-140A.

750. *Epist.* 8.4, lines 42-7, *CCSL* 140-140A.

751. *Epist.* 8.4, lines 86-111, *CCSL* 140-140A.

752. *Epist.* 8.4, lines 48-52, *CCSL* 140-140A.

753. *Epist.* 6.5, lines 1-31, *CCSL* 140-140A.

754. *Epist.* 11.49, lines 1-31, *CCSL* 140-140A.

755. *Epist.* 11.46, lines 3-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 791. *Tunc regnum stabile creditor, cum culpa quae cognoscitur citius emendatur.*

could not count on any significant eastern protection, which left it vulnerable to assaults from foreign groups such as the Lombards.

The Lombards were not always hostile to the empire. In fact, they were instrumental in helping to defeat the Ostrogoths in 540, when the imperial general Narses enlisted their help. In turn, the Lombards were able to secure the territory south of the Danube. The relationship between the Lombards and the empire, however, soured just three years after the death of Justinian. In 568, the Lombards successfully eliminated any competition in the region. They seized the opportunity to strike when Italy was in no position to defend itself. Brown comments: “Separation from the Byzantine empire had left Rome exposed to the ambitions of the Lombards. Worse even than the prospect of conquest by the Lombards was the fact that Rome was bankrupt. . . . The shape of ancient Rome had been lost.”<sup>756</sup> Knowing that the East offered little help and that Italy had been devastated by another plague that ravished the area in 567, the Lombards engaged in a military offensive under the leadership of king Alboin that would bring them into the central part of Italy.

The Lombards faced little resistance in this campaign. In 569, they took control of Milan and worked their way south. By 571, they had seized the Po Valley and within a year took control of Spoleto and Benevento. Eventually in 573, they were at the door of Rome.<sup>757</sup> It was then that Gregory, who was then the *praefectus urbis Romanae*, experienced firsthand the nature and the belligerence of the Lombards. By this time, they controlled a significant amount of lands in Italy. The Byzantine empire retained control of Ravenna and the Adriatic coastline. Rome, southern Italy, and Sicily also remained under the imperial authority of the East. Some regions, such as the Balkans, opted to accept their rule. In a sense they defected from the control of the

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756. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 428-9.

757. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 871-2, military victories of Alboin and the swift campaign that within five years put a vast amount of Italy in Lombard hands.

East to be subjected to the authority of the Lombards. Brown argues: “They were regions which had grown tired of empire. A strong state was not for them. Lombard garrisons were the lesser of two evils. The worse, by far, was the return of East Roman tax collectors and the imposition . . . of authoritarian East Roman emperors.”<sup>758</sup>

Lombard aggression was a pressing problem when Gregory ascended to the papacy. His correspondence paints a dire picture regarding the situation with the Lombards, who controlled the northern regions of Italy as well as the two key Italian regions of Spoleto and Benevento. As early as 591, Gregory realized what he was up against and he did whatever was possible to curtail their advances. He expressed grief to John, an ex-consul, regarding the Lombard situation: “I have been made bishop not of the Romans but of the Lombards, whose treaties are swords and whose gratitude is revenge.”<sup>759</sup> He explained to the emperor Maurice the unending situation in the West. While presenting the dangers faced each and every day, Gregory made his discontent known over the fact that his description and needs were questioned at best and dismissed at worst.

Gregory found himself and the people of Italy in peril and had no recourse. He lamented to the emperor: “Italy is led captive each day beneath the Lombard’s yoke, and while my suggestions are in no way believed, the forces of the enemy are increasing immensely.”<sup>760</sup> The threats were constant: he even explains to Eulogius, the bishop of Alexandria: “We are suffering from the swords of the Lombards, in the daily plundering or maiming or slaying of our

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758. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 192.

759. *Epist.* 1.30, lines 9-11, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 150-1. *Non Romanorum, sed Langobardorum episcopus factus sum, quorum pacta sunt gladii, et gratia poena.*

760. *Epist.* 5.36, lines 34-6, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 349. *Inde Italiae quotidie ducitur sub Langobardorum iugo captiva. Dum quem eis suggestionibus in nullo creditor, vires hostium immaniter excrescunt.*



citizens.”<sup>761</sup> Gregory also realized that the strained relationship he had with the exarch in Ravenna ensured that no assistance would be forthcoming.<sup>762</sup> Straw observes that due to aggression from the duke of Spoleto, Ariulf, Gregory was put into the position of looking after the needs of the city, in particular readying the troops and seeking terms of peace: “Ariulf took up arms. Gregory took care of Roman interests. He authorized Peter . . . to buy grain . . . sent troops to the *magister militum* . . . advised the other *magistri*. . . on strategies to employ against Ariulf.”<sup>763</sup>

Amidst these great hostilities, Gregory had a surprisingly cordial relationship with their queen, Theodelinda. Consolino comments that the relationship between the two was good and that Gregory sent her a copy of his *Dialogues* as a gift. Consolino states: “the good relationship between Gregory the Great and Theodelinda is recorded by Paul the Deacon, who informs us also that the pope gave to the queen a copy of the *Dialogues*, in as much as he knew her.”<sup>764</sup> Gregory saw the great value in maintaining a good relationship with the queen, because he recognized the part she could play in securing peace and establishing Catholic Christianity among the Arian barbarian Lombards. He wrote to the queen in order to reinforce her faith and instruct her to avoid the erroneous teachings of dissident bishops. Because of Gregory, Queen Theodelinda decided to break communion with such bishops and pledge support for Constantius,

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761. *Epist.* 6.61, lines 27-9, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 445. *Quanta autem nos a Langobardorum gladiis in quotidiana nostrorum civium depraedatione vel de truncatione atque interitu patimur narrare recusamus.* Markus offers a complete diagram of the devastation wrought about by the Lombards; see *Gregory the Great and His World*, 99-100.

762. Demacopoulos cites the research of Richards, *Counsel of God*, 182-5, Demacopoulos points out that along with the strained relationship, the exarch in Ravenna was concentrating efforts on protecting the roads Ravenna and Rome; see Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 107.

763. Straw “Gregory the Great,” 15-6. See also, Neil, “The Papacy in the Age of Gregory the Great,” 22-27 regarding the tense relationship with the exarch.

764. Consolino, *Il Papa e le Regine*, 239. *I buoni rapporti fra Gregorio Magno e Teodelinda sono ricordati da Paolo Diacono, il quale ci informa anche il papa donò alla regina una copia dei Dialogi, poiché la sapeva.*

bishop of Milan. Demacopoulos remarks that it was important for Gregory to assure the queen of the orthodoxy of Constantius of Milan. By doing so, she would also be ensuring her salvation in addition.<sup>765</sup>

Gregory was concerned that she was being led astray by those who condemned the canons of the Council of Chalcedon and were adherents of the Three Chapters and the schism that followed. In a sincerely pastoral tone, he informed her: “The more sincerely we love you, the more strongly we grieve over you, because you entrust yourself to ignorant and foolish people, who not only fail to realize what they are saying, but what they have heard they are scarcely able to understand.”<sup>766</sup> He tried to persuade her by making the case that if she abandoned the true faith, she ran the risk of jeopardizing all the good works she had accomplished. He reminded her of the orthodoxy of both Constantius and himself. He reassured her that the Church venerated and kept with great care the teachings of the four Ecumenical councils: “For we venerate the four holy synods: The Nicene . . . that of Constantinople . . . the first of Ephesus . . . and the Chalcedonian . . . We strike down under the imposition of anathema anyone who presumes to add or subtract from the faith of these same four synods, but especially the Chalcedonian.”<sup>767</sup> Gregory’s vigorous attempts to convince the queen of his and Constantius’s orthodoxy underscore his desire for Church order and his need for her support in a possible peace process.<sup>768</sup>

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765. See Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, pp. 148-9.

766. *Epist.* 4.4, lines 5-8, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 289. *Quod quantum vos pure diligimus, tantum de vobis forties dolemus, quia vos imperitis stultis que hominibus creditis, qui non solum ea quae loquuntur nesciunt, sed percipere quae audierint possunt.* This letter should be read in conjunction with 4.2, lines 1-30.

767. *Epist.* 4.33, lines 10-7, CCSL 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 313-4. *Nos enim veneramur sanctas quatuor synodos: Nicaenam . . . Constantinopolitanam . . . Ephesinam primam . . . Chalcedonensem . . . sub anathematis interpositione ferientes eum qui earumdem quatuor synodorum, maxime autem Chalcedonensis.*

768. *Epist.* 5.52, lines 1-36; 9.68, lines 1-20, CCSL 140-140A.

Additionally, by influencing Theodelinda, Gregory might secure the assistance of the king in achieving the long sought-after peace treaty. This treaty would grant the people of Italy a respite from the dangers posed by Lombard aggression. Gregory took the lead and applauded her for her desire and initiative in bringing his terms of peace to her husband: “We have learnt from a report by our son and abbot, Probus, that your Excellency has devoted yourself with great eagerness and kindness to making peace, as is your custom.”<sup>769</sup> Gregory relied on her and his trusted friend Constantius, bishop of Milan, to collaborate in making peace first between Italy and the Lombards then between the Lombards and the imperial authorities.<sup>770</sup> All along, Gregory knew that this would be problematic with the imperial court, who viewed the Lombards as enemies.

Recognizing that the exarch in Ravenna was not going to offer the desired help he needed, Gregory believed he had to enter the fray of the secular realm to protect the people of Rome. He wanted to relieve the pressure that was placed daily on the people of Italy as well as the papal lands and possessions. From the vantage point of the West, particularly Rome, Gregory was successful. He effectively garnered enough support with the help of the queen and peace was achieved. In his enthusiasm, he commended king Agilulf for accepting the terms and bringing about amity between Italy and the Lombards. He exclaimed: “We offer thanks to your Excellency, since you listened to our petitions and drew up a peace that would be beneficial for both parties, as we were confident you would.”<sup>771</sup> Gregory worked tirelessly to make certain this

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769. *Epist.* 9.68, lines 2-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 585. *Quia excellentia vestra ad faciendum se pacem studiō et benignitatibus, sicut solet, impenderit, renuntiante filio nostro Probo abate cognovimus.*

770. See Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 103-7.

771. *Epist.* 9.66, lines 2-3, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 583. *Gratias excellentiae vestrae referimus, quia petitionem nostrum audientes pacem, quae utrisque esset partibus profutura.*

peace was realized.<sup>772</sup> He employed the efforts of the queen and the bishop of Milan, and he submitted his plans to the author of peace, God. Gregory's peace proposal was successful; however, it came at a cost. His peace initiatives were met with great consternation by the emperor and the exarch. The imperial correspondence sheds light on the relationships between Gregory and the imperial court.

### 7.4.3: The Imperial Correspondence

Gregory's paradigm for ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs to a certain extent paralleled tactics used by Ambrose and Leo. Markus reminds us: "The marriage of Christian orthodoxy and imperial authority in the fourth century is the model Gregory instinctively adopted, and, along with the model, the implication that the rulers' duties included the defense and enforcement of Catholic orthodoxy."<sup>773</sup> As previously stated, the ideal, used by Ambrose and Leo and continued by Gregory, was that all authority, whether political or spiritual, had God as its source. Gregory reminded the emperor Maurice of this, using phrases such as: "Our most pious Lordship, appointed by God";<sup>774</sup> "Most Christian of emperors, sincere rectitude of faith shines in you like a beam of light sent down from heaven";<sup>775</sup> and "For power over all men has been given by Heaven to my Lordship's piety."<sup>776</sup> In order to call Maurice to task, Gregory reminded him that he was selected by God to lead the earthly kingdom.<sup>777</sup>

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772. *Epist.* 9.66, lines 1-20; 9.44, lines 1-54, *CCSL* 140-140A, for the aftermath of the peace process.

773. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 85.

774. *Epist.* 5.37, line 2, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 351. *Piissimus atque a Deo constitutes dominus noster.*

775. *Epist.* 6.16, lines 2-3, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 414. *Cum sincera in vobis, Christianissime principum, velut emmisum coelitus jubar, fidei rectitude resplendeat.* [6.16.2-3].

776. *Epist.* 3.61, lines 29-31, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 281. *Ad hoc enim potestas super omnes homines dominorum meorum pietati coelitus data est.*

777. See Matthew dal Santo, "Gregory the Great the Empire and the Emperor," pp. 57-81

On a spiritual level, Gregory sought imperial assistance to rectify injustices and vices prevalent in certain regions of the Church. In order to preserve the harmony of the Church, Gregory needed the influence of the emperor. Whether it was his quest to stamp out simony; to ban, as he saw it, the improper use of the title “Universal Patriarch;” to prohibit heretical or pagan activities; or to challenge imperial decrees that impacted Church vocations;<sup>778</sup> Gregory recognized the importance of imperial might. He never ceased to repeat to the emperor his moral obligation to defend the Church. He exclaimed: “Almighty God, who has made your Majesty the guardian of the peace of our Church, preserves you with the very faith which you preserve in the unity of the priesthood.”<sup>779</sup> He sought imperial help to combat heresy, wayward priests, and John the Faster’s use of the proud title of “Universal Patriarch.”<sup>780</sup> He asked for imperial intervention to suppress the remnants of Donatists in Africa and beyond.<sup>781</sup> He requested an imperial inquiry, as a matter of justice, to dismiss charges that had been brought against a priest in the city of Chalcedon.<sup>782</sup> He reminded the emperor that Church order is not a “frivolous matter” and failure to assist it could be “extremely harmful” to the not only the Church, but the empire.<sup>783</sup>

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778. Gregory disputed the imperial decree that would ban certain civil leaders from entering into monastic vows. He tells Maurice: “This regulation, I confess to my Lordship, has greatly alarmed me. For through it the path of Heaven is closed for many men.” *Epist.* 3.61, lines 21-3, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 281. *Quam constitutionem ego, fateor dominis meis, vehementer expavi. Quia per eam coelorum via multis clauditur.* In order to resolve the matter, Gregory wrote to the emperor’s physician, Theodore, requesting his help in overturning the decree. He inquires: “But would your Glory offer my suggestion to him privately, at an opportune moment?” *Epist.* 3.64, lines 25-6, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 286. *Sed vestra gloria opportune tempore secrete suggestionem meam ei offerat.*

779. *Epist.* 7.6, lines 2-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 459. *Omnipotens Deus, qui pietatem vestram pacis ecclesiasticae fecit esse custodem, ipsa vos fide servat, quam vos in sacerdotali unitate servatis.* See also Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, 157-61 for what he terms as the subversion of imperial privilege.

780. *Epist.* 5.37, lines 1-116, *CCSL* 140-140A.

781. *Epist.* 6.64, lines 1-32, *CCSL* 140-140A.

782. *Epist.* 6.16, lines 1-44 in conjunction with 6.17, lines 1-20, *CCSL* 140-140A.

783. *Epist.* 7.30, lines 1-51, *CCSL* 140-140A.

In his dealings with the exarchs and the emperors, Gregory took ecclesiastical involvement to new heights. Aside from the legendary account of Leo the Great marching with the army of Saints Peter and Paul against the advancing army of Attila the Hun, and Leo's participation along with a Roman delegation in peace negotiations, we have not seen the level of secular involvement to which Gregory entered into affairs. He became fully invested in the affairs of the state, in part, because of the lack of assistance from the exarch in Ravenna, particularly Romanus. He made it extremely clear that their relationship was problematic. In a letter to his friend John, bishop of Ravenna, Gregory advised: "But the animosity of the aforesaid most excellent man, the patrician Romanus, ought not to influence you, because as much as we are above him in position and rank, so much so ought we to tolerate with maturity and gravity any of his fickleness."<sup>784</sup> He also showed contempt for Romanus in the issue of the exarch's involvement in a judgment rendered by the bishop in Ravenna regarding an ex-priest and the scandalous behavior of some women religious. In less than diplomatic terms, he advised the exarch to stay out of the affairs and stop meddling in the matter by offering support to those parties.<sup>785</sup> Due to the pressing threats of the Lombards, Gregory felt obliged to get involved in secular matters. He was concerned, for good reason, with the presence of the duke of Spoleto, Ariulf. He recounted the terror and savagery of the man: "At the time Ariulf had reached the city

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784. *Epist.* 2.38, lines 23-7, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 215. *Movere autem vos non debet praefati excellentissimi viri Romani Patricii animositas, quia nos quanto eum loco et ordine praeimus, tanto si qua sunt ejus levia, tolerare mature et graviter debemus.*

785. *Epist.* 5.19, lines 1-28, *CCSL* 140-140A. See also Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World*, 105-6.

of Rome and was killing some men and decapitating others, I was affected by such great sadness.”<sup>786</sup>

We have already discussed in detail the shape of Rome during Gregory’s papacy. He recounted on several occasions the turmoil that enveloped the Church and the state. He best summed up the condition of the West:

I am compelled to exclaim and say: ‘What times! What immorality!’ Look, in parts of Europe everything has been handed over to the control of barbarians, and cities have been destroyed, army camps overwhelmed, provinces depopulated, and no farmer inhabits the land. Worshippers of idols run riot and daily oversee the deaths of the faithful, and yet priests, who should have lain on the pavement and in ashes with tears in their eyes, seek out names for themselves full of vanity, and boast of new and profane titles.”<sup>787</sup>

Realizing he was making no progress with his appeals to the exarch in Ravenna, Gregory decided to take matters into his own hands. He inserted himself into military and diplomatic ventures for the sake of the people of Rome. Gregory made no excuses and indicated that he had assumed governance in certain matters in the West when it was appropriate: “We have taken on the role of government, although undeservedly, so we are obliged to fight for the requirements of our brethren, as far as opportunity arises.”<sup>788</sup>

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786. *Epist.* 2.38, lines 4-5, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 215. *Eo tempore quo Ariulphus ad Romanam urbem veniens alios occidit, alios detruncavit, tantam moestitia affectus sum.* He also recalls in his letter to Maurice the horrendous deeds of Ariulf: “I saw Romans bound with ropes round their necks, just like dogs . . . led to Gaul for sale,” *Epist.* 5.36, lines 79-81, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 350. *Ita ut oculis meis cernerem Romanos more canum in collis funibus ligatos, qui ad Franciam ducebantur venales.*

787. *Epist.* 5.37, lines 52-8, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 352. *Exclamare compellor ac dicere: O tempora, o mores. Ecce cuncta in Europae partibus barbarorum iuri sunt tradita, destructae urbes, eversa castra, depopolatae; nullus terram cultor inhabitat; saeviunt et dominantur cotidie in nece fidelium cultores idolorum; et tamen sacerdotes, qui in pavimento et cinere flentes iacere debuerunt, vanitatis sibi nomina expetunt et nouis ac profanes vocabulis gloriantur.*

788. *Epist.* 1.47, lines 2-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 172. *Quia regiminis locum licet immeriti suscepimus oportet ut fratrum nostrorum necessitatibus, in quantum fac ultas suppetit, concurramus.*

Not waiting to see if any military help would come to the aid of Italy in the face of the Lombard advance in late 591, Gregory began to make military preparations for an offensive against the duke of Spoleto, Ariulf. He informed Velox, the military commander stationed on the frontier of Spoleto, that the time had come for the troops to be assembled, prepared, and deployed for battle.<sup>789</sup> Continuing with the campaign against Ariulf, he directed the military commanders, Maurice and Vitalian, to strike the duke's armies from the rear and he ensured them of God's protection.<sup>790</sup> Like a skilled military general, he sought to firm up the support of people throughout the region. He asked military commanders to ascertain whether or not people were remaining loyal to the empire.<sup>791</sup> Gregory's desire to establish the loyalty of the people to the empire is very telling. This desire is proof of his own loyalty to the empire and a reassurance that he was not trying himself to overthrow or undermine any imperial authority. In other words, he had no ulterior political motive in his aggressive military endeavors; he was not looking to usurp imperial power. Collins notes: "But Gregory's political loyalty was never in doubt, and his actions were not aimed at emancipating Rome and its Church from imperial rule."<sup>792</sup> Gregory simply wanted to protect the city of Rome and keep the Lombards from making any advances.

In taking on the role of commander-in-chief, Gregory was acting like no prior pope. He appointed the leader of the city's garrison, paid the salaries of the troops from the Church's patrimony, offered them encouragement, and demanded their loyalty in religious and military matters. He garnered support from the military and provided them with a morale booster when he enthusiastically declared: "The highest military glory among other worthy services is this, to

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789. *Epist.* 2.4, lines 3-19, *CCSL* 140-140A.

790. *Epist.* 2.27, lines 1-15, *CCSL* 140-140A.

791. *Epist.* 2.28, lines 1-23, *CCSL* 140-140A.

792. Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven*, 101.



offer obedience to what benefits our holy republic, and to submit to whatever has been ordered for its advantage.”<sup>793</sup> Despite Gregory’s involvement in military matters, one would be mistaken to categorize him as a warmonger or general. He was trying to curtail and prevent the aggression of the Lombards. From the time as prefect of the city in 573, he knew the abusive treatment doled out by the Lombards. He wanted to spare people from such a violent fate. Straw comments: “Gregory’s dealings with the Lombards reveal pragmatism and courage and are a good index to the temporal power of the papacy.”<sup>794</sup> He did not perform diplomatic duties in a perfunctory manner. To this end, Gregory would use every means at his disposal.<sup>795</sup> He sought the assistance of the imperial physician,<sup>796</sup> the bishop of Ravenna,<sup>797</sup> the curator of Ravenna,<sup>798</sup> the emperor’s sisters,<sup>799</sup> and even the empress herself.<sup>800</sup> He even wrote eight letters directly to the emperor.

As customary, Gregory would ask the emperor for his assistance in matters of the faith. Gregory informed the emperor that maintaining church order would be beneficial to both the emperor himself and the empire. He reminded Maurice: “It has thus been brought about that they all pray together in concord for the life of their Lordship, that almighty God might grant you a long and peaceful life and allow the most fortunate offspring of your Piety to flourish for a long

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793. *Epist.* 2.47, lines 3-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 227. *Summa militia laus inter alia bona merita haec est, obedientiam sanctae rei publicae utilitatibus exhibere, quodque sibi utiliter imperatum fuerit obtemperare.*

794. Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 19.

795. Dal Santo provides a detailed list of the imperial correspondence and its recipients; see “Gregory the Great, the Empire and the Emperor,” pp. 61-2.

796. *Epist.* 5.46, lines 1-65; 7.25, lines 1-30, *CCSL* 140-140A.

797. *Epist.* 2.38, lines 1-73, *CCSL* 140-140A.

798. *Epist.* 9.44, lines 1-53, *CCSL* 140-140A. The peace that Gregory sought the curator’s help with was between the empire and the Lombards.

799. *Epist.* 1.5, lines 1-71; 11.27, lines 1-312, *CCSL* 140-140A.

800. *Epist.* 5.38, lines 1-52; 5.39, lines 1-114, *CCSL* 140-140A.

time in the Roman Republic.”<sup>801</sup> The relationship between Gregory and the emperor began to deteriorate the more involved Gregory was in matters of the state.<sup>802</sup> After Gregory achieved a peace treaty with Agilulf, he was shocked and dismayed that Maurice and Romanus rescinded the treaty. Straw points out that Romanus did enter talks with Agilulf but Gregory was aware that the talks were self-seeking on the part of Romanus and strictly benefitted and preserved only Ravenna. The negotiations of Romanus were not as comprehensive as Gregory anticipated. Concerned that Rome would be left to itself, Gregory informed the emperor of the willingness of the Lombards for peace talks. This was ultimately rebuffed by the emperor and the exarch.<sup>803</sup>

Gregory rebuked the emperor, who dismissed his meddling in political matters as foolish, and he strongly chastised the emperor: “The Piety of our Lordship in his most serene commands, while he was keen to refute me on certain matters, by sparing me has not spared me at all. For in them with the refined sense of ‘simplicity’ you call me naïve.”<sup>804</sup> He continued, in this vein, by placing the blame of the latest assault on Rome on the emperor. Due to the breaking of the treaty, which was financially supported by Gregory and not the emperor, Rome was left vulnerable and the Lombards once again took advantage of the situation. Gregory’s sharp and justifiable critique of Maurice and Romanus did little to persuade the emperor. An eventual peace accord was struck in 599 with the help of the new exarch Callinicus, but it was short-lived,

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801. *Epist.* 5.30, lines 18-21, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 343. *Unde actum est ut simul omnes pro vita dominorum concorditer orarent, qua tenus omni potens Deus longa vobis et quieta tempora tribuat, et pietatis vestrae felicissimam sobolem diu in Romana republica florere concedat.*

802. It also must be noted that Gregory and the emperor were at odds on some Church matters as well. For instance, when the emperor deposed an ailing bishop, Gregory reproved him but in the end acquiesced to the emperor’s action; see *Epist.* 11.29, lines 1-23, *CCSL* 140-140A.

803. See Straw, “Gregory the Great,” 17.

804. *Epist.* 5.36, lines 2-4, *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 348. *In serenissimis iussionibus suis dominorum pietas dum me de quibus dum redarguere studuit, parcendo mihi minime pepercit. Nam in eis urbane simplicitatis vocabulo me fatuum appellat.*

only two years in duration.<sup>805</sup> Rome was neglected and Gregory was all the more determined to do whatever was possible to secure peace, continue the Church's work, and save souls.

Gregory maintained a mutual and respectful relationship with Maurice. In fact, despite the difficulties he endured, Gregory treated the imperial court with remarkable affection. Dal Santo comments that Gregory rose above the tensions and was a true pastoral leader in the sense that he showed care and concern for those in authority. He observes: "Gregory always approached the imperial office, whoever its occupant, with deference, and never conceived of a future for the Roman Church separate from the political and spiritual community of the Roman Empire, even if the latter was, in his day, ruled from Constantinople."<sup>806</sup> He did not, however, shirk his responsibilities in exercising moral judgment over imperial authorities. He continued to call to task those who did not implement, in a just and moral manner, the duties of their office. He also never ceased in trying to achieve a lasting peace that would allow the Church, the East and the West, and the Lombards days of tranquility and freedom from strife. He addressed Phocas, the new emperor, to the surprise of many, with his desire for peace and for the suppression of the enemies of the Church.<sup>807</sup> He told Phocas:

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805. See *Epist.* 9.142, lines 1-23; 9.155, lines 1-41; 9.156, lines 1-159, *CCSL* 140-140A.

806. Dal Santo, "Gregory the Great, the Empire and the Emperor," 57.

807. Gregory stunned many when he addressed the new emperor in such extraordinary words. He welcomed the news of the Phocas's reign with a heartfelt "Glory to God on the highest," *Epist* 13.32, 848. The cause of the disbelief of many was that Phocas became emperor after he murdered the imperial family and many of the imperial court officials. Gregory's greeting seemed inappropriate and scandalous.

For we cannot explain with any words that we could suggest, how we have been oppressed for the length of thirty-five years already (just imagine it!) by daily sword thrusts and by great incursions from the Lombards. But we trust in almighty God that he will complete for us that goodness of his consolation that he has begun, and he who has raised pious lords for the republic will also destroy its cruel enemies.<sup>808</sup>

Regardless of Gregory's reaction to the actions of Phocas, we have a clear indication that he was willing to continue to work with imperial leaders and maintain an ecclesiastical involvement in state affairs.

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808. *Epist.* 13.39, lines 23-30, , *CCSL* 140-140A; trans. Martyn, 854. *Ut tanto nobis valeat celeries misereri quanto afflictionem nostrum verius ex ejus relatione cognoverit. Qualiter enim quotidianis gladiis et quantis Langobardorum incursionibus ecce jam per triginta quique annorum longitudinem premimur, nullis explere suggestionis vocibus valemus. Seb in omnipotente Domino confidimus quia ea quae coepit consolationis suae nobis bona perfliciet; et qui suscitavit in republica pios dominos, etiam exstinguet crudeles inimicos.*

## Conclusion

Gregory the Great introduced a paradigm for ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs that went beyond anything prior to his time. While there are striking similarities to pre-existing ecclesiastical involvements in secular affairs as developed by Ambrose and Leo, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Gregory read or studied them. Policies and practices of previous ecclesial figures would likely have found their way into church involvement and decision making, yet Gregory operated from a paradigm that was his own making.

Prior to becoming the bishop of Milan, Ambrose was the provincial governor of Aemilia-Liguria, with a seat in Milan. Gregory, like Ambrose, had a civil administrative background that gave him a distinct advantage in dealing with imperial figures and civic issues. Ambrose developed his paradigm on the basis that all authority, both religious and civil, was derived from God. Consequently, he held that the emperor was a servant of God even before a ruler of the people, and under obligation to promote, defend, and protect the faith. Analysis of three key instances has demonstrated the nature of Ambrose's involvement.

Ambrose believed that the matters in which he got involved may have appeared to be political matters, they were in actuality religious, such as in the case of his involvement to stop the several attempts to restore the Altar of Victory. Ambrose reminded the emperor and those in positions of imperial authority that there was nothing conceivably higher than faith, and that all matters of faith were to be handled by the competent ecclesial authority. The emperor or any other civil leader had no right or jurisdiction to meddle in affairs of the Church. It appears that the argument should be reciprocal and that members of the Church should not meddle in matters of the empire.

When Ambrose held firm and refused to allow the use of the Milanese basilicas for Easter services by Arian Christians, he highlighted that the two authoritative institutions needed to operate out of mutual respect. Even though Ambrose felt that the two entities should exercise their power within their respective domains, he argued that the emperor had a moral obligation to defend the Church. He furthered the argument when he reprimanded the emperor for taking punitive measures against the people and clergy in Callinicum for destroying a synagogue. Ambrose displayed defiance sought to have the punishment overturned. He considered that this was a matter of faith and that the emperor had no right to impose a punishment or demand restitution that would benefit the Jews of Callinicum. Ambrose acted on what he considered his pastoral responsibility to instruct and admonish the emperor. His rationale that matters of faith necessitated the entry of ecclesiastical leaders into what appeared to be imperial matters enabled him to judge the unjust actions of the emperor and successfully correct his erroneous decrees. While the mass execution in Thessalonica ordered by Theodosius was appalling, Ambrose used it to his advantage. It allowed him an opportunity to exercise moral judgment over the emperor.

These three instances delineate what Ambrose believed his pastoral duty entailed: to defend the faith, to advise the emperor, and to judge imperial actions. His treatise *On Duties, De Officiis*, provided the moral foundation for ecclesial leaders to be involved in matters of the empire. By adapting Cicero's treatise to a scriptural context focused on the kingdom of Heaven. Ambrose sought to hold pastoral leaders to a Christian standard of the four classical virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and temperance. Although Ambrose's paradigm of virtuous pastoral leadership had some in practice with Gregory's, they differed from his approach to the character of pastoral leadership.

There are certain components of the Ambrosian paradigm in Gregory's thought. Gregory would agree that there were two distinct but complementary entities of authority, that tending to souls (in Ambrose's case primarily the emperor's), was central to the duty of pastoral leaders, and that imperial authorities did have a role in defending and promoting the faith. Gregory introduced a different rationale of ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs, one focused on preparing people spiritually for the end times while providing for their physical needs.

While more in line with a Leonine paradigm, perhaps because they were bishops of the same city, albeit in two distinct periods, Gregory exercised and asked for a level of care that transcended that implemented by Leo. Although Leo did not hold a civil administrative post prior to becoming the city's bishop, he was one of the seven deacons of Rome, and was fully involved in church administration and imperial diplomatic missions. Concerned with the *cura animarum*, Leo extended that care to incorporate an aspect of the *cura Romae*. By the time Leo became pope, the West was on the decline. Ineffective emperors created the need and motive for somebody to look after the city. Along with Leo's spiritual duties, he instituted social programs to promote the well-being of the people of Rome.

Leo saw himself as the heir of Peter and used the legal definition of inheritance to defend the primacy of Rome. As heir, Leo closely aligned himself with the *persona* of Peter, and took on the care of the universal Church and the city. As Ambrose before him, Leo saw the value in maintaining relations with imperial authorities. He sought imperial assistance to defend the faith and establish church order. In an attempt to preserve good communication between the Church and empire, Leo set up a liaison office between the two institutions. This new post, *apocrisiarius*, functioned along the lines of an ambassadorial role, an office that Gregory would occupy prior to his papacy.

Leo also took on the role as defender of the city of Rome. Believing that Rome played a part in God's plan for salvation, Leo became involved in social and civil matters that included defending the city, starting a civic spiritual renewal rooted in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and assisting in the transformation of Rome into a Christian city. He felt obligated to care for and defend what Peter had entrusted to him as heir. Leo's renewal of the city was not only spiritual, it also contributed to meeting the material needs of the people. A charitable program of almsgiving became the vehicle with which Leo would enter into the secular matters of his day.

Leo's profile of leadership was based on the concept of Roman primacy, which led him to undertake a care of the Church and the city in a way that had not been seen before. He had a strong moral sense that this was what God expected of him. Gregory also based his profile of leadership on the ideal of God's expectation, but he differed from Leo's approach by concentrating on the moral development of the pastoral leader rather than highlighting Roman primacy.

The situation of Rome in the sixth century demanded a new paradigm for ecclesiastical involvement. The city's needs were drastically different from that of the fifth century and even the geopolitical atmosphere prevalent in fourth-century Milan. Although scholarship differs on the exact condition of the city during Gregory's papacy, it is indisputable that Rome had deteriorated. The difference between the fifth and sixth centuries was that in Leo's time an emperor was seated in the West, albeit a weak and ineffective one. Decades after Leo's papacy, the western seat of the empire was abdicated and the centers of authority in the West began to shift. Historiography of this event and its aftermath were heavily influenced by western narratives. Claire Sotinel remarks: "Men took pen in hand to compose histories and chronicles



that defined and defended the Roman model of ecclesiastical authority. This is the explanation of the distorted account of events in the West.”<sup>809</sup>

Among contemporary historians, two schools of thought attempt to give more accurate accounts of the situation of sixth-century Rome. One contends that in the wake of the abdication of the western emperor the Church, in particular the bishop of Rome, exercised absolute control over political and civic affairs in the West, so that by Gregory’s papacy, the only recognizable institution responsible for governance in the West, the Church.<sup>810</sup> The other school of thought presents a similar analysis of the condition of sixth-century Rome, but rejects the assessment that the papacy overshadowed the imperial rule and authority of the eastern emperor, and contends that there were two functioning forms of authority in the West.<sup>811</sup>

Both schools of thought have merit in their constructions of what Gregory’s world looked like, yet I maintain that a more accurate picture of late-sixth century Rome and the impetus for Gregory’s ecclesiastical involvement in matters of the state must take an additional factor into account, namely Gregory’s reading of the times and the nature of his pastoral and practical motivations as expressed in his actions and his writings. It is a matter of fact that Rome had suffered greatly leading up to and including the time of Gregory. The major assaults from foreign troops, neglect of the care of the West due to eastern preoccupation for its own well-being, an ongoing culture of fear based on the violence inflicted by the Lombards, and atmospheric conditions that led to plague and devastation contributed to the current state of Rome. Gregory’s world was far more compromised than at any time prior to him. For that

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809. Claire Sotinel, “Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: The Western View,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 283.

810. This was the stance that is held by Richard Krautheimer and supported by Robert Markus.

811. Mark Humphries challenges the conclusion reached by Krautheimer regarding the state of affairs in the West. Carole Straw seeks to develop the theory held by Markus, who claims that there was only one institution exercising authority in the West, the Church.

reason, he needed to develop not only a practical political strategy but a pastoral paradigm that could be used to alleviate some of the pressures, needs, and fears of the people.

To understand Gregory's ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs, his preoccupation with the eschaton must be in the forefront. Based on what Gregory personally witnessed in the city at time, he concluded that the end of the world was coming. Through his homilies, he preached that a definitive sign of the impending final days was reflected in the neglected state of affairs in Rome. From his strong eschatological perspective, Gregory saw the work that needed to be done. He made the preparation of souls the primary focus of his ministry and that of other pastoral leaders; it was to take priority over any other activity undertaken by those in the position of pastoral leadership. Ambrose chose to make the defense of the faith the focus of his ministry, whereas Leo took the exercise of primacy as the foundation for his exercise of both religious and secular authority. Gregory, however, believed that the spiritual preparation of the people for salvation in face of the coming eschaton was his goal. Developing a paradigm that would center on the *cura animarum* while attending to the physical needs of the people and protecting the political interest of the city was a pastoral mandate that responded to his times.

Gregory created a profile of leadership based on his context that was more comprehensive and more applicable than his predecessors. He offered three exemplars of leadership that reveal his ideal of pastoral authority: a father-like figure, a servant, and a shepherd. In conjunction with these examples, he identified the virtues, behaviors, and attitudes that were foundational for the exercise of pastoral care.

In order to fully comprehend what Gregory actually did both spiritually and quasi-politically, it is essential to understand the character of leadership as he saw it. He introduced a style of leadership, reminiscent of Ambrose and Cicero, that was centered on the moral conduct

of the one in authority. It is here that his three examples are best appreciated and developed. Unlike Ambrose and Leo, Gregory takes great time and care in delineating those behaviors, attitudes, and qualities of character that are the hallmark of pastoral leadership. The pastoral leader is a caring individual, a father-like figure who out of charity serves the needs of others. The leader can never exercise authority in a tyrannical fashion. Those who do operate out of power, coercion, greed, and pride, behaviors that, for Gregory, render one unfit to hold any position of authority. The life of a pastoral leader should be virtuous, easily emulated and profoundly desired.

The Christian virtues of compassion and humility help one to act as a servant. The leader must recognize that equality exists between the one in authority and his subordinates. Acknowledgment of basic human equality enables a pastoral leader to look beyond his own desires and to direct his intention to providing for the needs of others. In preparing souls for the kingdom of God, the pastoral leader cannot be unsympathetic to the needs of those he is called to serve.

The third image Gregory employed is by far his most preferable, the shepherd. He sternly warns those assuming positions of leadership to do so with the right intention. He contrasts the role of the shepherd with that of the hireling. The latter is more concerned with himself and does everything possible to advance even to the extent of jeopardizing those in his care. The pastoral leader who is more recognized as a hireling is unable to protect the faith and be the guardian of souls, which is his intended duty.

Through these examples Gregory constructs a code of conduct for pastoral leaders, that is rooted in the two-fold commandment of love God and neighbor. Love is at the heart of the

Gregorian paradigm, the virtue that is the centerpiece of a triptych of the pastoral leader. The two necessary and “hinge” virtues in the triptych are humility and detachment.

Humility for Gregory parallels Ambrose’s virtue of prudence, which is knowledge seeking truth. Gregory sets out four scriptural models of humility that, taken together, create a composite portrait of pastoral leadership. From the examples of John, Peter, Paul, and Stephen, Gregory demonstrated that humility was the proper disposition of one exercising authority, because it allowed the leader to do what was in the best interest of others rather than themselves. As pastoral leaders were becoming more involved in affairs of the state, Gregory felt that pride and greed could corrupt their exercise of authority and that humility was the only means possible to correct these vices.

Gregory was concerned that love of temporal things would weigh the person down and enslave them. A leader who is fully immersed in this world, without any hint of desire for the spiritual realm, was compromised. Detachment, based on the model of Christ, allowed for the abandonment of temporal things for the sake of God and others. It is a prerequisite for fulfilling the two-fold commandment of love. Humility and detachment are necessary virtues for those in positions of authority and are connected to the virtue of charity. For Gregory, charity is the guardian of all virtues. It is with the two-fold dimension of love that begins to construct his paradigm for ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs. He was adamant that one cannot show love for God while neglecting the needs of others. The two-fold nature of love called Gregory and all pastoral leaders out of the confines of a contemplative life and into service and highlighted the need for balance between action and contemplation. While love motivates Gregory to be involved in secular affairs, he was conscious of the fact that he and others ran the

risk of endangering their spiritual life. Balance in life was essential to Gregory's overall plan for tending to the spiritual and physical needs of the people.

Gregory believed, as did Ambrose, that the two forms of governance, spiritual and political, were complementary. This was also the case when he came to deal with the two aspects of pastoral ministry. By his example, Gregory taught that a balance in the contemplative and active life was achievable, that the two worked together and not in opposition. If there was a harmony between the two, contemplation would fuel the leader's action, while good acts would aid his contemplation. Gregory held up two standards that would ensure a balance. He insisted that the motive for tending to the needs of others must arise from right intention, not prideful reason. Once the given task was accomplished, the pastoral leader must return immediately to the contemplative life.

In Gregory's paradigm of ecclesiastical involvement in secular affairs, the *cura animarum* led him out from the contemplative state into the world. Gregory's exercise of pastoral care, like Leo's, was both spiritual and secular. What differentiated Gregory was to the extent in which he involved himself in matters of the state. Somewhat paradoxically, his ecclesiastical paradigm drew him much more deeply into the secular world than any Church leader before him had ventured to go. It did so without asserting the superiority of bishops' religious authority over emperors' derivative secular authority (Ambrose) or appealing to Roman primacy (Leo).

Gregory's programs were economic, political, social, and religious in nature. All were undertaken in order to alleviate the sufferings and burdens the people endured. His focus on the end of the world drove him to attend to all needs of the people. He could not neglect tending to their needs, because, for him, overlooking the needs of one's neighbor was equivalent to

disregarding God. The rationale for involvement in so many levels was based solely on the two-fold commandment of love. Gregory, therefore, became involved on all levels in order to bring relief to the suffering and salvation to souls. His civic programs brought peace and stability to a region that became far too used to violence, corruption, and coercion. His civic programs produced relief to those who were hungry and struggling economically. They ensured military protection for the city and the West. For Gregory, it was always a matter of justice and never a means to increase his prestige and honor.

Little help, if any, had trickled into the West from the eastern empire. Communication with the exarch in Ravenna was, at best, limited. Gregory saw the suffering the people of Rome had endured. He could not wait any longer for relief. He established a food distribution system that brought corn and other staples into Rome. He repaired the ancient broken down aqueduct systems to ensure water would be able to come into the city. He had grain facilities built in Sicily and set up a schedule of shipping that was most beneficial to the city. In addition, Gregory was responsible for introducing a comprehensive economic package that brought tax breaks to widows and orphans, he instituted an economic recovery program that was sensitive to the needs of those who were unable to pay taxes. His economic incentives were welcomed reliefs to those who found themselves in dire financial situations. In short, his economic plan offered great relief and alleviated the financial burdens of the people in Rome and beyond.

Aside from these social programs, he was heavily involved in the process of negotiating terms of peace with the Lombards. He also found himself acting at times in the role as a commander-in-chief with the military. Using church funds to pay salaries and provide the military with those things necessary for them to carry out their task of protecting the city and the western sphere of the empire. More often than not, he used monies collected from the church

patrimony to assist in these and other financial endeavors. Although he had a rather peaceful relationship with the Franks, his dealings with the Lombards were tenuous. It was in dealing with them that he sought imperial assistance. When it became evident to him that imperial help was not to be granted, he entered into dialogue with the Lombards with the expressed intention of achieving peace in the region. Unlike the legendary accounts of Leo's negotiations, Gregory's were factual.

The *cura animarum* is present in all three ecclesiastical paradigms examined in this dissertation. It is found in the actions and words of each key figure that defined their involvement in secular affairs. The backgrounds and the context of each ecclesial figure determined their actions and the perceptions of what warranted their entry into matters of the state. This paradigm Gregory created introduced a new level of involvement and a new pastoral rationale for ecclesiastical leaders taking on secular responsibilities. Gregory went beyond Ambrose and Leo in bringing ecclesial involvement to new heights because of his administrative experience and close attention to the prevailing needs of his time, his recognition of and relationship with imperial authorities in Italy and Constantinople, and his new paradigm of pastoral leadership. His paradigm, and the values and virtues that orientated his practice of the *cura animarum* encompassed both the spiritual and material needs of his city and its people while nurturing the active and contemplative lives of its pastoral leaders. It was a paradigm tailor-made for his times.

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