

1.24 Gregory to John of Constantinople, Eulogius of Alexandria, Gregory of Antioch and John of Jerusalem, and to Anastasius ex-patriarch of Antioch, from the same original | February 591⁹²

When I consider that I have been compelled to bear the weight of pastoral care although unequal to it in merit and totally resisting it in my mind, gloomy grief arises, and my sad heart sees nothing other than those shadows, which allow nothing to be seen. For why is a bishop chosen before the Lord except to intercede on behalf of sinful people? And so with what confidence do I come before Him as an intercessor for other people's sins when I am not secure about my own sins in his presence? Just suppose somebody appearing before a man of power were to ask that I become his intercessor, and that man of power was both angry with him and unknown to me, I should reply at once: 'I cannot come to intercede, because I have no knowledge of him from a long-time friendship.' Therefore if I should rightly blush to become an intercessor as a man before another man, about whom I would make no presumption, what great audacity it is to hold the position of the people's intercessor before God, when I do not recognize myself as a friend of His due to a life of merit. In which matter there is still something else, which I should fear more seriously. For as we all clearly know, when one who displeases is sent to intercede, the mind of an angry party is provoked to a worse state.⁹³ And I am extremely afraid that the Christian people entrusted to me may perish with the addition of my guilt, whose faults our Lord always used to tolerate with equanimity hitherto. But whenever I somehow suppress this fear and apply my consoled mind to the studies of pontifical work, considering the very immensity of the business, I am terrified.

I consider indeed that one must be vigilant and take all care that a bishop⁹⁴ is pure in thought, outstanding in action, discrete in silence, useful with his speech, very close to individuals with compassion, more uplifted in contemplation than all others, allied with those doing good through humility, but upright with the zeal of justice against the vices of wrong-doers. While of course I strive to scrutinize all of these with a fine examination, the breadth itself of each area for consideration hampers me. For as I said above, one must take very special care that the bishop is pure in thought, so that no impurity pollutes him who has taken on this office,⁹⁵ that he might wipe away the

92. For his explanation of the synodical letter, see *Ep* 9.148. Such letters were regularly exchanged by various Church patriarchs, on their election to office. A sign of communion between the churches, they were in fact professions of faith and hence guarantees of their writers' orthodoxy. In *Ep* 11.29, Gregory acknowledges receiving a synodical letter from Bishop Isaac of Jerusalem. *Ep* 1.24 is in two parts, the first and longer is a general exhortation, similar to his *Regula pastoralis* (with many shared phrases), the second is much briefer and contains a clearly spelt-out profession of faith.

93. Compare the foregoing with Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 1.10.

94. See *Ep* 1.23. Here the 'rector' is a priest or bishop, not a secular ruler.

95. For the section from 'I consider' down to 'also,' see Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 2.1.2.

stains of pollution in other men's hearts also. For it is necessary that his hand strives to be pure, as it has the care of washing those that are dirty, in case each hand which it touches becomes even dirtier, if when dirty it holds added filth. For it is written: 'Purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.'⁹⁶ For indeed the Lord's vessels are born by those who undertake to bring the souls of those nearest to them to the inner temples, by the example of their own way of life. And so let him see how much he himself ought to be purged, he who carries living vessels to the temple of eternity, in the embrace of his own Christian way of life. Hence the divine voice advises us that on the breast of Aaron the breastplate of judgment is fixed, bound with linen bands, so that frivolous thoughts should by no means possess his priestly heart, which might be bound by reason alone.⁹⁷ And let him not think of anything indiscrete or useless; he who was appointed as an example for others ought always to show by the gravity of his life how much reason he bears in his heart. An addition was also carefully made on this breastplate, listing the names of the twelve patriarchs. For always to bear the names of the patriarchs written on one's breast is to think of the lives of the ancient fathers without intermission. For the priest advances without blame only when he looks incessantly to the example of the fathers preceding him, when he contemplates the footprints of the saints without cessation and suppresses illicit thoughts, in case he should stretch the foot of his work beyond the limit of his rank.⁹⁸

Again when I turn to consider what works a priest should do, I reflect with what great attention he must take care that he is remarkable in his action, to show his subjects the way of life by his way of living, and so that the flock which follows the shepherd's voice and morality might make better progress through his examples than through his words.⁹⁹ For he who is constrained by the necessity of his position to say what is best, by this same necessity is forced to demonstrate what is best. For that voice penetrates the hearts of listeners more readily which the life of the speaker commends; for what he teaches with his words he helps to come about by his example. For this reason the prophet says: 'Go up into the high mountain, Zion, herald of good tidings.'¹⁰⁰ That is to say he who presents heavenly preaching, now deserting the baseness of earthly works, seems to stand on the summit of the world, and draws his subjects to better things all the more easily as he proclaims heavenly matters through the merits of his own life. That is why by divine law the priest receives the right shoulder for sacrifice,¹⁰¹ separated from the body, so that his action is not only useful but also singular, and so

96. Is 52:11.

97. See Ex 28:15ff. The Greek use of *rationale* as a noun is employed for the 'oracular breastplate' of the Jewish high priest, his *rationale iudicii*, in Greek τὸ Λογιεῖον τῆς κρωσέως.

98. Compare the passage above with Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 2.2.

99. For the pastor's duties, see Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 3.4.

100. Is 40:9.

101. See Ex 29:22.

that he does not only do what is right among the evil, but also among those subjects who are doing good. Just as he surpasses them with the dignity of his rank, even so he transcends them with the goodness of his morality. In eating he also receives a little of the breast with the shoulder, so that what he is told to take from the sacrifice, he learns to sacrifice to his Creator from his own body. And let him not only ponder in his heart on what is right, but invite those observing him to heavenly thoughts by the shoulder of his works. Let him long for nothing of the present life, let him be fearful of nothing; let him despise the delights of the world with the inmost terror of his mind, but let him condemn these fears by contemplating the delight of an inner sweetness. From which the priest, again under the command of the heavenly voice, has each of his shoulders covered with the veil of the priest's humeral,¹⁰² so that he is always protected against adversity and prosperity by the ornament of his virtues. Thus, living according to the word of Saint Paul, proceeding 'by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and the left,'¹⁰³ although he may simply strive against what lies directly ahead of him, he is not turned on either side to the lowest of delights. Let prosperity not raise him up, nor adversity perturb him, let no allurements seduce him even to self-indulgence, let no hardships force him to despair. Thus as he frees the concentration of his mind from any passions, he may show what a beautiful humeral covers each of his shoulders.

It is right also that this humeral is commanded to be made from gold, hyacinth, purple, scarlet twice dyed, and twisted linen,¹⁰⁴ to show with what diversity of virtues the priest should shine. For gold gleams on the priest's habit before all else, as in it the intelligent wisdom shines out first of all. To this hyacinth is added, which is resplendent with a heavenly color; so that through everything which penetrates by his understanding, he may not sink to the lowest of favors but rise to the love of heavenly things, in case, while carelessly enraptured by his own praises, he is even emptied of the understanding of truth itself. Purple is also mixed with the gold and hyacinth,¹⁰⁵ so that of course the priest's heart, while it hopes for the highest things which it preaches, may reprove in itself even the suggestion of vices, and may contradict them as if with regal power, so that he may always consider the nobility of inner re-growth, and defend with his morality the habit of the heavenly kingdom. For concerning this nobility of spirit it is said by Peter: 'You, however, are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.'¹⁰⁶ Concerning this power also, by which we conquer vices, we are strengthened by the voice

102. For the pallium, see the Introduction, pp. 78-79. The Jewish 'ephod' is fully described in Ex 28:4ff, 29:5-6, and more particularly, that of Aaron.

103. 2 Cor 6:7.

104. See Ex 28:8.

105. All the manuscripts read *byssos*, but the editors rightly corrected it to *hyacintho*. Linen is not possible in this context, coming as it does after the scarlet just discussed (see below).

106. 1 Pt 2:9. For this section see Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 2.5.

of John, who says: 'As many as received him, he gave the power to become the sons of God.'¹⁰⁷ However to gold, hyacinth and purple,¹⁰⁸ scarlet twice dyed is added, so that before the eyes of the soul's judge, all the goodness of the virtues is embellished with love, and so that all things which gleam in the presence of humans, the flame of inner love may set alight in the sight of the hidden judge.¹⁰⁹ This love, of course, because it loves God and one's neighbor at the same time, gleams just like scarlet from a double dyeing. And so he who aspires to the vision of his Creator in such a way that he neglects the care of his neighbors, or so concentrates on the care of his neighbors that he is remiss in his love of God, because he neglects one or other of these two, does not realize that he has twice dyed scarlet in the decoration of his humeral. But when his mind is turned to the precepts of love, it remains without any doubt that his flesh should waste away through abstinence. Which is why twisted linen is also added to the twice-dyed scarlet. For the linen comes from the earth with its gleaming appearance. And what is signified by linen, other than corporal chastity, gleaming white with the beauty of cleanliness? Of course after it has been twisted, it is bound on to the beauty of the humeral, because moral purity approaches the perfect whiteness of cleanliness, when the flesh is worn out through abstinence. And when among the other virtues the merit of mortified flesh also progresses, it is like the twisted linen glowing white in the diverse appearance of the humeral.¹¹⁰

Again, when I apply myself to considering the speech and silence owed by the pastor, I consider with fearful concern that it is very necessary for him to be discrete in silence and useful in his speech, so that he neither reveals what should be kept quiet, nor keeps silent about what should be revealed. For, just as a careless remark leads him into error, even so an indiscrete silence leaves in error those who could have been instructed. For often improvident bishops, fearful of losing human favors, are afraid to speak freely about what is right, and by no means do they then look after the protection of their flock according to the voice of Truth, with the endeavor of shepherds, but rather in the manner of hired servants, because they flee as a wolf approaches, while hiding themselves under silence.¹¹¹ For this is why our Lord attacks them through the prophet, saying: 'they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark.'¹¹² Here he complains again, saying: 'You did not go up into the breach, nor did you build a wall for the house of Israel to stand firm in battle on the day of the

107. Jn 1:12.

108. See n105 above; again all the manuscripts wrongly read bysso.

109. The third declension *arbitris* in Norberg seems to be a misprint for *arbitri*. Pb4, the Berlin MS, makes the same mistake in *Ep* 1.24a, perhaps due to confusion with *iudicis*.

110. Note the chiasmus of humeral/moral purity, mortified flesh/humeral. See *Regula pastoralis* 2.3.

111. Based on Jn 10:12 (where Christ is the 'good shepherd').

112. Is 56:10.

Lord.¹¹³ For to step into the breach, is to go against the powers of this world in defense of the flock, with a free voice. And to stand firm in battle on the day of the Lord, is to resist the attacks of the wicked with the love of justice. For when the shepherd has been afraid to say what is right, what is it other than to have turned his back by keeping quiet? Of course if he exposes himself on behalf of his flock, he sets a wall against the enemy for the house of Israel. Here again it is said to a delinquent people: 'Your prophets had seen false and foolish things for you; and they have not discovered your iniquity, so as to provoke you to penitence.'¹¹⁴ For prophets are sometimes called learned men in Holy Scripture, who while indicating that present things are transitory, make clear what is to come. Divine words disprove that they had false visions, because, while they fear to correct faults, they flatter transgressors in vain, with the promise of security. They by no means reveal the wickedness of sinners, because they refrain from words of rebuke. For words of rebuke are the key to openness, because through rebuke he uncovers a sin that even the person himself who committed it often does not recognize. Here Paul says: 'So that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince those who contradict him.' Here it is said through Malachi:¹¹⁵ 'For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they will seek the law from his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.'¹¹⁶ Here the Lord advises through Isaiah, saying: 'Cry aloud, and unsparingly lift up your voice like¹¹⁷ a trumpet.'¹¹⁸ For whoever enters upon the priesthood takes on the office of herald, so that before the arrival of the judge, who follows clothed with terror, he himself may of course go forward crying aloud. So if the priest has no knowledge of preaching, what words of proclamation is a dumb herald going to speak? For this is why the Holy Spirit settled on the first pastors in the shape of tongues.¹¹⁹ For of course those whom it filled with itself it at once made eloquent. For this reason Moses was ordered to enter the tabernacle as priest surrounded by little bells, so that of course he might have the sound of proclamation, to avoid offending the judgment of the heavenly witness by keeping silent. For it has been written: 'that his sound may be heard when he enters the sanctuary in the Lord's presence; that he does not die.'¹²⁰ For the priest dies going in or coming out, if a sound is not heard from him, because he excites the anger of the hidden judge against himself, if he enters without the

113. Ezek 13:5.

114. Lam 2:14. Gregory adapts the quotation with a new ending 'to turn away your captivity.'

115. Ti 1:9. Both PL and MGH use *Malachiam*, but *Zachariam* appears in the manuscripts and in Norberg.

116. Mal 2:7.

117. PL reads *quasi*, as in the Vulgate, Norberg *velut*. The sense is the same, and either is possible, but Gregory seems to have relied on his memory for this encyclical.

118. Is 58:1.

119. See Acts 2:3.

120. Ex 28:33, 35.

sound of proclamation. But little bells are described being aptly inserted in his vestments. For what priestly vestments ought we to accept other than righteous works, as the prophet bears witness, when he says: 'Let your priests be clothed with justice.'¹²¹ Therefore let little bells hang on his vestments, so that the priest's very works themselves may proclaim the path of life, along with the sound of his tongue.¹²²

But one must also consider that the priest, when he prepares himself for speaking, pays attention to how much caution he should apply in speaking. Otherwise if he is rushed into speaking without control, the hearts of those listening may be struck with a wound of error and, when he desires perhaps to appear wise, he may unwisely cut apart a unified structure. For here Truth says: 'Have salt in yourselves and have peace between you.'¹²³ For by salt is signified the wisdom of the word. Therefore he who strives to speak wisely should be greatly afraid that through his eloquence the unity of his listeners may be shattered. Here Paul says: 'he should not think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but think more soberly.'¹²⁴ Hence on the priest's vestment, in accordance with the heavenly voice, there are pomegranates joined with the bells. For what is signified by pomegranates other than the unity of faith? For just as in the pomegranate many inner grains are covered by a single exterior peel, even so countless members of the Holy Church are covered by the unity of the faith, members held within by a diversity of merits.¹²⁵ And so we are then joining pomegranates with the bells, when we keep guard over the unity of the faith through all of what we have said.

Again, when I bring myself to considering what sort of bishop he should be with regard to compassion and what sort with regard to contemplation, I consider that he should be both very close to individuals in compassion and elevated before all others in contemplation.¹²⁶ Thus he may both transfer to himself the weakness of others, through the bowels of piety, and through the loftiness of his speculation may transcend even himself by seeking things invisible. In this way he neither despises the weaknesses¹²⁷ of his neighbors while seeking lofty things, nor ceases from seeking lofty things while attending to his neighbors' weaknesses. For it is thus that Paul is transported to paradise and investigates the secrets of the third Heaven,¹²⁸ and yet, suspend-

121. Ps 131 (132):9.

122. Concerning the passage above, see also *Regula pastoralis* 2.4.

123. Mk 9:50.

124. Rom 12:3

125. Concerning the passage above, see also Gregory, *Regula pastoralis* 2.4.

126. For this section on the bishop's duties, see *Regula pastoralis* 2.6.

127. The *infima ... infimis* ('lowest regions') in Gussanvillaeus and PL neatly balance *alta ... alta* ('heights'), but *infirma* is in all the manuscripts, and 'weakness' is the main theme here: see *infirmatur ... infirmor* in 2 Cor 11:29, quoted below. The antithesis between 'heights' and 'depths' appears effectively in the next section (*infima/summa*).

128. See 2 Cor 12:2-4.

ing¹²⁹ that contemplation of things invisible, he recalls the sharpness of his mind to the bed of carnal men, and since holy matrimony is for the sake of procreating children, he allows them some pleasure also, saying: 'But to avoid fornications, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband fulfill his obligations towards his wife, the wife hers likewise toward her husband.'¹³⁰ Behold he has already entered heavenly secrets, yet through the bowels of condescension he examines the bed of carnal men, and that eye of his mind which he raises to things invisible, he turns to the secrets of husband and wife. He transcends Heaven by contemplation, and yet he does not desert the carnal bed in his solitude. For being joined to the highest and the lowest alike by the bond of charity, in his own case he is strongly drawn to the heights by the virtue of his spirit, and by piety to others he is recalled patiently to the depths. As for this compassion of his charity he again says: 'Who is weak, and I am not weak also, who is scandalized and I do not burn with indignation?'¹³¹ On this he again says: 'and unto the Jews I became as a Jew.'¹³² He exhibited this not by losing his faith, of course, but by extending his piety, so that by transforming himself into the person of an unbeliever he might learn from his own example how he ought to have shown pity towards others, to bestow on them what he would have rightly wanted to be bestowed on himself, if such had been the case. On this he again says: 'Whether we are beside ourselves, it is for God, or whether we be sober, it is for your sakes,'¹³³ because he had learnt to transcend himself through contemplation, and to moderate himself too by condescending to his listeners. This is why Jacob sees the angels ascending and descending,¹³⁴ as the Lord looks down from above, and the stone below is anointed.¹³⁵ For of course good preachers not only seek through contemplation the holy head of the Church up above, that is the Lord God, but by showing pity they also descend down below to its limbs. That is why Moses often enters and leaves the tabernacle, and inside he is transported in contemplation, while outside he is oppressed by troubles of the infirm. Inside, he considers the secrets of God, and outside he bears the burdens of carnal men. He returns always to the tabernacle over doubtful matters, and consults

129. The reading *suspensa* in R1, PL and MGH is correct ('that contemplation having been suspended'); *suspensam* in the other manuscripts and in Norberg ('his mind's sharpness ... suspended in contemplation') is certainly not appropriate here.

130. 1 Cor 7:2-3. In NAB a weak 'immorality' translates *fornicationes*. Gregory changes the singular in the Vulgate, read by PL.

131. 2 Cor 11:29.

132. 1 Cor 9:20.

133. 2 Cor 5:13.

134. The *descendentes* was read by R3 and PL, to make up the normal pair. Other manuscripts and editions omit it. With the words' likeness, a scribe could have left out either by mistake. This is supported by its *sursum ... appetunt, deorsum ... descendunt* explanation.

135. See Gn 28:12-18.

the Lord before the Ark of the Covenant.¹³⁶ Thus without any doubt he provides an example for bishops, that when they are in doubt over external decisions, they should always return to their mind as if to the tabernacle, and take counsel from the Lord before the Ark of the Covenant, if they are searching by themselves the pages of Holy Scripture, concerning matters over which they are in doubt. Thus Truth itself, revealed to us on the mountain through the acceptance of our own humanity, is implicit in prayer and accomplishes miracles in the cities,¹³⁷ preparing a path of imitation in fact for good bishops, so that although they already aspire to the heights through contemplation, they might nevertheless immerse themselves in the necessities of the infirm, by showing compassion. For love rises to the heights miraculously, when it draws itself pityingly to the lowest of neighbors, and the more it descends kindly to the lowest levels, the more¹³⁸ it climbs strongly to the highest.

In the exercise of this compassion it is of course necessary that he who is in charge, reveal himself to be such a person, that none of his subjects feel ashamed to reveal even their secrets to him. Thus, when they bear waves of temptations like little children, they may run to the pastor's mind as if to a mother's lap, and they realize that they are polluted by the baseness of disturbing sin, with this solace of his exhortation, whereby they may wash themselves in the tears of his prayer. That is why before the doors of the temple, twelve oxen bear a brass 'sea,' that is a hand-basin, for those entering the temple to wash their hands, and indeed the faces of the oxen are clear to see outside, but from behind are hidden.¹³⁹ For what is signified by twelve oxen other than the universal order of pastors? About whom the law states, as explained by Paul: 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.'¹⁴⁰ We certainly see their exterior works, but we do not know what awaits them behind in a hidden retribution, before a strict judge. However those who¹⁴¹ with the patience of their understanding prepare for the washing away of sins confessed by their neighbors, bear a hand-basin, as it were, before the doorway of the temple, so that whoever strives to enter the doorway of eternity, confesses his temptations to the mind of the priest and washes the hands of his thought or work, as it were, in the hand-basin of the oxen.

136. See Ex 3:8ff.

137. See Lk 6:12-19.

138. The *eo* in PL ('the more') picks up *quo*, essential for Gregory's quadruple antithesis (*quo benigne descendit ad infima, eo valenter recurrit ad summa*). He is more likely to have written *quo benignius ... eo valentius* ('the more kindly... the more strongly'). The chiasmus with 'to the heights, to the lowest / descends, climbs' is also rhetorically effective.

139. See 1 Kings 7:23-25.

140. 1 Cor 9:9 (quoting Dt 25:4).

141. The *cum* is awkward after *Qui tamen* ('But those who [when they] prepare'). It may be best taken as *cum patientia* (the final *m* easily added by mistake).

And it very often happens that, while the mind of the priest knows the temptations of others by its understanding, it is itself struck also by the temptations it has heard, because this same water of the hand-basin by which the multitude of the people is washed clean is without doubt polluted. For while it absorbs the dirtiness of those washing in it, it loses the serenity as it were of its purity. But this should be in no way feared by the pastor because, as God weighs all things with precision, the more compassionately he wears himself out with the temptation of others, the more easily he is saved from his own.¹⁴²

Again when I apply myself to considering what sort of person a bishop should be in humility, and what sort in strictness, I consider that since it is necessary for him to be both an ally to those doing good through humility, and against the vices of sinners, upright with the zeal of justice, he should in no way prefer himself to the godly, and when he extracts the sins of the wicked, he should recognize the power of his priority, so that he thinks himself equal to his subjects who live good lives, suppressing his rank, and against the sins of the wicked, rises up with the zeal of his justice. For this is why Peter, holding the supreme authority of the Holy Church with God's authority, refused to be venerated too immoderately by Cornelius, who was behaving well and prostrating himself humbly before him. Peter recognized himself as being similar to Cornelius, saying: 'Get up, do not do this; I am only a man myself.'¹⁴³ But when he discovered the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira, he soon showed how great his power had grown over the others. For he shattered their lives with a single word, which he understood with the scrutiny of his spirit;¹⁴⁴ and against their sins he set his supremacy within the Church, a supremacy which he had not acknowledged in the presence of brethren living good lives, when honor was bestowed on him too earnestly. Here the sanctity of the action merited a communion of equality, there the zeal of punishment opened his right of power. This is why Paul did not know that he was elevated above brethren who lived good lives, when he said: 'Not that we lord it over your faith; rather we work together for your joy.' And he added directly afterwards 'for you stand firm in the faith,'¹⁴⁵ as if he was explaining what he had preferred, saying: 'We do not rule over your faith, for the reason that you stand by faith, in which we know you stand.' As if he did not know that he was elevated above his brethren, when he said: 'We have become little children in the midst of you.'¹⁴⁶ And again: 'but ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.'¹⁴⁷ But when he found a sin that was in need of correction, he at once recalled that he was their master, saying: 'Which do

142. Concerning the passage above, see also *Regula pastoralis* 2.5.

143. Acts 10:26. Gregory adds *ne feceris* ('do not do this').

144. For the sudden deaths of both husband and wife see Acts 5:1-10.

145. 2 Cor 1:24.

146. 1 Thes 2:7.

147. 2 Cor 4:5. Gregory ends with *per Christum*, the Vulgate, *per Iesum*.

you want, that I should come to you with a rod?'¹⁴⁸ And so the highest position is well governed, when the person in charge controls vices rather than his brethren. A person controls the power he has received well, who knows both how to hold and condemn it. He controls it well, who knows how to rise above sins with it, and how to be made equal to others with it.

But the virtue of humility should be preserved in such a way that the rights of authority are not dissolved, in case while some prelate humbles himself more than is fitting, he cannot restrain the lives of his subjects under a bond of discipline.¹⁴⁹ The severity of discipline should be preserved in such a way that, although his zeal is inflamed more than is necessary, his clemency is not completely lost. For often vices falsely suggest that they are virtues, as miserliness would like to appear to be frugality, extravagance generosity, cruelty a passion for justice and laxity piety.¹⁵⁰ Therefore discipline or compassion is greatly diminished if one is maintained without the other. But compassion should be preserved with a great art of discretion, while giving just counsel, and discipline likewise, while piously severe. For this is why, as Truth teaches us, through the efforts of the Samaritan¹⁵¹ a man half-dead was led into an inn, and wine and olive oil were applied to his wounds, so that of course his wounds might be stung by the wine and warmed by the olive oil. For it is necessary that the person in charge of curing his wounds would apply a bite of pain in the wine and the tenderness of piety in the olive oil, so that the corrupt parts might be purified by the wine and the parts to be cured might be warmed by the olive oil.¹⁵² Therefore let there be love without softness, let there be vigor without harshness. This is signified well by that Ark of the tabernacle, in which a rod and manna,¹⁵³ also join the tables there, for along with knowledge of the Holy Scripture, if there is a rod of severity in the heart of the good bishop, let there also be manna of sweetness.

And so having taken on the burden of pastoral care, when I consider all of these things and many others of this sort, I seem¹⁵⁴ to be what I cannot be, most of all because whoever is called pastor in this position, is heavily beset by exterior cares, to the extent that it often becomes uncertain whether he is fulfilling the office of a pastor or of an earthly nobleman. Indeed whoever has the charge of ruling his brethren cannot be completely free from external cares, but yet he should take very great care that he is not weighed

148. 1 Cor 4:21.

149. Concerning the passage above, see also *Regula pastoralis* 2.6.

150. Concerning the passage above, see his *Regula pastoralis* 2.9 and *Moralia in Iob* 23.19.11.

151. For the parable of the Good Samaritan, see Lk 10:30-37.

152. Concerning the passage above, see *Regula pastoralis* 2.9 and *Moralia in Iob* 20.14.8.

153. See Heb 9:4, for the tables of the covenant, the rod of Aaron that budded and the golden pot which held the heavenly manna.

154. The *videor* ('I seem') in PL is better suited to this apothegm (with an ἀπὸ κοινοῦ use of *esse*) than the simplistic *video* ('I see') in the manuscripts and other editions.

down by them immoderately. For which reason it is rightly said to Ezekiel: 'Priests shall not shave their heads nor let their hair grow long, but they shall cut it keeping it trimmed.'¹⁵⁵ For what do hairs on the head signify other than external thoughts in the mind? As they grow insensibly on the head, they express the cares of present life. These cares derive from a negligent and torpid spirit, because they grow insolently, as if we do not sense them. Since, therefore, all who are in authority certainly ought to have external worries, but not pay excessive attention to them, let priests be rightly prohibited from shaving their heads and also from growing their hair long, so that they neither completely cut off from themselves thoughts of the flesh from the lives of their subjects, nor relax so that there is excessive growth again. It is well said there: 'When cutting their hair, let them keep it trimmed,' for of course the cares of temporal worry should both grow as much as is necessary, and yet be cut back quite quickly, in case they grow immoderately. Therefore, while his subjects' corporal life is protected by the administration of an external providence (and again the lofty attention of the heart is not impeded, by a moderate providence), they are preserved like hairs on the head of the priest. They cover the skin, but are cut back to avoid blocking the eyes.¹⁵⁶ But in this context I see that I cannot keep control of this discretion, because every day such great disasters threaten to overwhelm my mind at the same time as they destroy my corporal body. Wherefore, most holy brother, I beg you by the judge who is about to come, by the multitude of many thousand angels, by the Church of the ancients whose names are written in the Heavens, assist me with the intercession of your prayer as I grow weary beneath this burden of pastoral care, so that the heavy load I have undertaken does not oppress me beyond my powers. Remembering however what is written: 'Pray one for another, that you may be healed,'¹⁵⁷ I also provide what I seek. But let me receive what I provide. For while we are joined to you¹⁵⁸ with the help of prayer, like people walking over a slippery surface, we hold each other's hand, and from this great provision of love, it comes about that the love of each individual is all the more firmly implanted, as each of us embraces the other.¹⁵⁹

155. Ezek 44:20. For this section on discipline and mercy, see *Regula pastoralis* 2.6.

156. Concerning the passage above, see also *Regula pastoralis* 2.7.

157. Jas 5:16.

158. The *vobis coniungimur* in R1, R3 and PL ('we are joined to you') makes perfect sense; *nos nobis coniungimus* in MGH and Norberg ('we join ourselves to ourselves') makes little sense.

159. The text suggests the image of the porphyry sculpture of the four tetrarchs, found today on the facade of Saint Mark's in Venice, where the tetrarchs embrace each other in love (without stepping on each other's feet). The text above is from PL's *eo robustior caritas perfigatur, quo in alterum alter insistitur*. The *eo ... quo* is typical of Gregory, as is the stress on love (*caritas*). R1 and 3 read *quo in alterum*, and r reads *perfigatur*, R and the other editions *pes figatur*. The foot ties in with the slippery surface, but joined hands give stability. See above for my suggested *quo benignius ... eo valentius*.

Furthermore, because 'with the heart man believes in justice, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation,'¹⁶⁰ I admit that I take up and venerate the four councils, just like the four books of the Holy Gospel, that is to say the Nicene council, wherein the perverse doctrine of Arius is destroyed, that of Constantinople also, wherein the error of Eunomius and Macedonius is refuted, the first of Ephesus also, wherein the impiety of Nestorius is judged, and that of Chalcedon, wherein the depravity of Eutyches and Dioscorus are reprov'd.¹⁶¹ These four I embrace with total devotion and I guard with purest approbation, because in them the structure of the holy faith rises up as if built on a square stone,¹⁶² and whoever does not uphold their solidity, whatever his life and works may be, even if he appears to be of stone, yet he lies outside the building. I also venerate equally the fifth council, in which are refuted the letter, said to be that of Ibas, as being full of error, that of Theodore, who separates the person of God and man as mediator into two substances, who is convicted of having fallen into the perfidy of impiety, together with the writings of Theodoret, in which the faith of blessed Cyril is condemned with audacious madness.¹⁶³ Indeed I spurn all of those persons whom the aforesaid venerable councils spurn, and I embrace those they venerate. For, since they have been established with universal consensus, whoever presumes either to untie those they bind, or to bind those they untie, destroys himself and not those councils. And so let whoever thinks otherwise be anathema. May whoever upholds the faith of the aforesaid synods receive the peace of God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, who lives and reigns with him, consubstantially God, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for all eternity. Amen.

1.24a Gregory to his most reverend and most holy brother and fellow-bishop John¹⁶⁴ | February 591

You criticize me, my dearest brother, with a kind and very humble purpose, for having wanted to escape from the heavy burdens of pastoral care, by hiding myself away. In case anyone should think these burdens lightweight, with the composition of this book by me, I express all of my thoughts with regard to their heaviness. Let one who is free of them should not seek these burdens with due care, and he who has sought them without due care, should be very much afraid of taking them on.

160. Rom 10:10. This marks the second part of the letter, Gregory's profession of faith.

161. The Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451).

162. *In quadrato lapide*: the square has 4 sides, just as the Church has its 4 Councils.

163. Theodore of Mopsuestia (in Cilicia), Theodoret of Cyr and Ibas of Edessa (in Mesopotamia), three theologians of the fifth century, with erroneous views on Christology, who supported the opinions of Nestorius (condemned at the council of Ephesus in 431) and threatened Church unity in the East. They were all involved in the Three Chapters schism.

164. Gregory is sending his *Regula pastoralis* to John, bishop of Ravenna, showing what sort of pope he should be. The letter is in MGH, from two manuscripts, one in Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare (seventh century) and the other in Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek (ninth century).

zealous for the good of the Church, he should not fear the opposition or enmity of anyone. Yet the more he considers that others envy him, the more vigilantly he should persevere in the interests of the Church and in the service of God, so that they cannot harm him at all. But your Fraternity ought not to be suspicious about his person after this, because no insinuation will find a place here with me.

2.15 Gregory to Maximian, Bishop of Syracuse | 29 February 592

A church established in fortified places ought not to be without the office of a pastor. Since therefore the church of Lipari is known to lack a bishop, for that reason Let your Fraternity decide that Paulinus,³³ bishop of the church of Taurum, should be in charge of the aforesaid church of Lipari,³⁴ to show the administration of his office with vigilance in that same church, and not cease to arrange whatever he learns to be profitable for its benefits. And please exhort all of the clergy to obey him in all ways according to the canons, in so far as advantage can be bestowed on the aforesaid church, with the help of Christ, under the government of your aforesaid brother and fellow bishop.

Dated the twenty-eighth of February, tenth indiction.

2.16 Gregory to Bishop Paulinus | 29 February 592

We want you to know that we have written to our brother and fellow-bishop Maximian,³⁵ to put your Fraternity in charge of the church of Lipari on our authority, and it is necessary for you to obey him in all ways. We bid you to devote yourself properly to the interests of that church, and we want you to complete without delay everything which you recognize as needful for its benefits. But you will visit the church of Taurum whenever you believe it an opportune time. And so let your Fraternity be quick to complete all of this, so that your presence may settle the church of Lipari advantageously, and so that with the enthusiasm of your visitation, you do not cease to bring together and cherish the church of Taurum.

Month of March, tenth indiction

2.17 Gregory to Natalis, bishop of Salona³⁶ | March 592

I have learnt from many people coming from your city, dearest brother, that you have abandoned your pastoral care and are busy with nothing except for banquets. But I would not believe what I heard, without the proofs that your actions

33. For Paulinus, bishop of Taurium in Calabria, see *Epp* 1.38; 2.16.

34. To judge from *Ep* 3.53 (July 593) the church on Lipari, the very small island north of Sicily, lost its bishop, Agatho, for various abuses.

35. See *Ep* 2.15. For Maximian, bishop of Syracuse, see *Ep* 2.5.

36. In *Ep* 2.44, Gregory replies to Natalis' defense to this letter. Between March and August, their envoys made three trips. In *Ep* 2.38, the Pope suggests that the arrogant Natalis has modified his behavior, but he could only relax at his death (*Ep* 3.22). For Salona's location (near Split), and the strife between deacon and bishop, see *Ep* 1.10.

provide. For it has been proved that you in no way study the holy text, in no way pay attention to preaching, but rather ignore even the very custom of the ecclesiastical order, because you do not know how to show reverence to those placed over you. For you were prohibited by a letter from my predecessor, of holy memory,³⁷ from nurturing in your heart the pain of such a long resentment against your archdeacon, Honoratus, and you were strongly forbidden by me also from doing this.³⁸ For you both neglected the commandments of God and despised what we wrote, trying to degrade the aforesaid Archdeacon Honoratus, under the clever pretext of promoting him to a higher rank. Thereby it has turned out that, with his removal from the position of archdeacon, you invited someone else who could comply with your way of life, when the aforesaid man displeased you in no way, except that he prohibited you from giving sacred vessels and garments to your parents. Both I now, and my predecessor of holy memory then, wanted to examine this case with a meticulous investigation. But you, conscious of what you have done, have put off sending a person with instructions for the trial. Therefore let your Fraternity recover from the error of your wrongdoing, especially after so many repeated warnings, and as soon as you receive my letter, replace the aforesaid Honoratus in his office. But if by chance you put it off, know that your use of the pallium, granted to you by this see, is removed from you. And if, even after your loss of the pallium, you still persist in the same obstinacy, you will know that you are deprived of participation in the body and blood of our Lord. After this, you must realize that we are now investigating your cases more minutely, and are deciding with extremely great care and inquiry whether you ought to continue as bishop. But the man who consented to being promoted to another person's position, contrary to the rule of justice, we depose from the same archdeaconship. And if he presumes to minister any longer in the same position, he will know that he has been deprived of participation in Holy Communion.

You therefore, dearest brother, do not provoke us further in any way, in case you find us very hard in our severity, after despising us when compliant in our love towards you.³⁹ And so with Honoratus restored to his position as archdeacon, send over a person quickly with instructions, who can prove to me by his affirmations that this matter should have a reasonable outcome. For we have ordered the same archdeacon to come to us, so that we can decide whichever is just, whichever pleases almighty God, once we know the assertions of each party. For we do not defend anyone because of personal affection, but uphold the rule of justice, with God's authority, disregarding our acceptance of any individual.

37. Pelagius II, whose letter to Natalis has not survived.

38. In *Ep* 1.19.

39. One of many examples of a neatly balanced antithesis (*valde duros / erga te positos, in asperitate / in caritate, sentias / contemnis*); see the Introduction, pp. 111–112.

3.60 Gregory to Fortunatus, bishop of Naples | August 593

We have received the letter of your Beloved, in which you indicated to us that with the favor of God, you have been well received by your sons, the citizens of Naples. For this we have offered thanks to almighty God. You should therefore repay their affection with your own morality, repressing the evil, opening up to the good with discretion and maximum kindness, and urging them to follow the better parties more frequently, so that they may rejoice to have found their father's morality in you, and you too, with the cooperation of the Lord, may more zealously carry out the pastoral care entrusted to you.

3.61 Gregory to the Emperor Maurice¹⁹⁸ | August 593

A man who is not pure towards our most serene Lordship over everything that he does and says, is on trial before almighty God. But I, an unworthy servant of your Piety, in this suggestion of mine I speak neither as a bishop nor as a servant with an official right, but with a private right. For, most serene Lordship, you were already my lord at that time when you were not yet lord of all men.¹⁹⁹

With the arrival here of Longinus, a most illustrious man and equerry,²⁰⁰ I received the law of my Lordship, but I did not have the strength to reply to it, being tired out then by bodily illness.²⁰¹ In it your Lordship's piety enacted that anyone involved in public administration should not be allowed to obtain an ecclesiastical office. I praised this greatly, knowing most clearly that one who hastens to obtain ecclesiastical offices, while giving up a secular occupation, wants to change what is secular, not relinquish it. But I was totally amazed that in the same law it is stated that this person should not be allowed to become a monk, while his accounts can be handled through a monastery, and it can be arranged also that his debts may be recovered from that place which accepts him. For, although nobody with a devout mind would have wanted to become a monk before repaying what was wrongly taken, he could also think about his own soul all the more truthfully, as he is the more lightly burdened.

198. The first of eight letters to the emperor (also *Epp* 5.30, 36, 37; 6.16, 64; 7.6, 30). Gregory wrote three to his wife Constantina (*Epp* 4.30; 5.38, 39) and three to his sister Theoctista (*Epp* 1.5; 7.23; 11.27). None have survived to Maurice's younger brother, Peter, or to his eldest son and heir, Theodosius, Gregory's godson. All were killed by Phocas.

199. Gregory was papal emissary in Constantinople from 578 to 584 or 585, and godfather at Theodosius' baptism in 584. He asked Maurice not to assent to his election as pope.

200. From *sterno* ('I saddle'), *strator* was used for 'groom,' or 'equerry,' here in charge of the royal stables, an important office in an equestrian society.

201. He rarely pleads illness as an excuse for not writing, but his health was never good. His stomach caused him most distress, especially with the fevers of a hot summer. See the Introduction, pp. 5-6.

In this law it has been added that no one marked on the hand should be allowed to become a monk.²⁰² This regulation, I confess to my Lordship, has greatly alarmed me. For through it, the path to Heaven is closed for many men, and what has been legal up till now, is prohibited from being legal. For there are many who can lead a religious life even in a secular condition. And there are very many who could not in any way be saved in the presence of God, unless they gave up everything. However, as I say this to my Lordship, what am I but dust and a worm? And yet because I feel that this regulation turns against God, the author of all things, I cannot be silent before my Lordship. For power over all men has been given by Heaven to my Lordship's piety for this reason, that those who seek good things are given help, that the path to Heaven is opened more widely, and that an earthly kingdom is in service to the heavenly kingdom. And behold it is said with a clear voice that once a man has been marked for earthly service, he should not be allowed to do service for Christ unless he has completed his military service, or has been rejected for weakness of body.

To these things, behold, Christ answers through me, the lowest of his servants and of yours, saying: 'From notary I made you commander of the imperial guard, from commander of the guard I made you crown prince, from crown prince I made you emperor, and not just this, but even I made you the father of emperors.²⁰³ I have entrusted my priests to your hand, and you withdraw your soldiers from my service.' Reply to your servant, I beg you, my most pious Lordship: what reply will you give to your Lord, when he comes and says these things to you in judgment?

But perhaps it is believed that none of them becomes a monk with pure intent. I, your unworthy servant, know how many soldiers in my time have worked miracles after becoming monks, and have brought about holy signs and virtuous deeds. But through this law, it is now prohibited that any man of this sort may become a monk.

Let my Lordship inquire, I beg you, what previous emperor enacted such a law,²⁰⁴ and judge more carefully if it should have been enacted. And it should certainly be considered that every soldier is being prohibited from leaving the secular world now, at the very time when the end of the world itself has drawn nigh. For behold, there will be no delay, and as the Heavens

202. It had taken over a year for the legislation to be completed (see *Ep* 3.64). It is not mentioned elsewhere, but see *Codex Theodosianus* 16.2.3, which bans cavalry commanders and their sons, and public officials, from taking refuge as clerics. For the sign branded on the soldier's hand, like a slave's, see *Ep* 3.64, which expands the list of those banned.

203. His eldest son, Theodosius, was crowned as Maurice's successor. In reminding the emperor of his rise to the throne, and of his prayers and fasting (a major part of Maurice's daily life), Gregory shows his friendly admiration for his old friend. The carefully constructed letter does not suggest any anger on Gregory's part, or any rift between them. At the end of *Ep* 3.62, 'oaths and hostages bind our souls together.'

204. In *Ep* 3.64, Gregory declares that it was none other than Julian the Apostate.

blaze, the earth blazes and the elements flash, the terrifying judge will appear with angels and archangels, with thrones and dominions, and with principalities and powers.²⁰⁵ If he should pardon all sins, and say that this law alone was enacted against his will, what excuse will there be, I ask you? Therefore, I pray you through the same terrifying judge that all those tears, all those prayers, all that fasting, and all that alms-giving of my Lordship, should not for any reason be blackened before the eyes of almighty God. But let your Piety reduce the force of the same law by interpretation, or by alteration. For the army of my Lordship grows greater against our enemies when God's army has increased for prayers.

I indeed, subject to your command, have had the same law transmitted through various parts of the world.²⁰⁶ And behold, through the page of my suggestion I have announced to my most serene Lordship that the law itself is not at all agreeable to almighty God. And so in both ways I have done what I should do, as I have shown obedience to my emperor and have not kept silent about what I felt to be God's interest.²⁰⁷

3.62 Gregory to Domitian, metropolitan²⁰⁸ | August 593

On receiving the letter of your most charming and most delightful attitude, I rejoiced greatly that it had a lot to say to me about Holy Scripture. And because I found my favorite feasts in it, I devoured it greedily. Some matters also regarding external and necessary cases were mixed in with these topics. And you have acted as if preparing a feast for my mind, so that the dishes offered would give me greater pleasure by their diversity. And if indeed external cases have less flavor, like inferior scraps of food, yet they have been discussed by you so prudently that they are happily undertaken. For even contemptible food is made sweet with a good cook's sauce.

Yet while the truth of history is preserved, what I had said recently about the significance of Holy Scripture should in no way have been rejected. For although the significance, since you wish it so, is not agreeable, yet from the many passages surrounding it, what was said from it can be held without

205. A powerful picture of the final judgment, quite often used as a threat (see *Epp* 3.29, 61; 4.23, 44). See also Gregory, *Moralia in Iob* 32.23.48 and *Homiliae in Hiezechielem* 15, 34 and the Introduction, pp. 17–18.

206. No examples of this initial circular have survived, possibly destroyed when the emended version was received, in 597. See the following note.

207. Gregory is as persuasive as possible, and then uses an old friend, the court doctor Theodore (*Ep* 3.64) to present his plea in person, with additional arguments, but without much success. By 597, the emperor and pope had made some concessions and an emended order was issued by a more satisfied pope (*Ep* 8.10).

208. Domitian, metropolitan of Armenia and bishop of Melitene (on the Euphrates), was on good terms with Gregory while he was at court in Constantinople (see *Epp* 5.43; 9.4). He was related by blood to Maurice and was godparent to some of his children, but Gregory was a close enough friend to use colloquial culinary and jewelry imagery, and a bath house proverb, and to enjoy a final joke at the emperor's expense.