Prayer Before Studying Theology:

O good Jesus, the word of the Father, the brightness of the Father's glory, whom angels desire to behold; teach me to do your will; that guided by your good Spirit, I may come to that blessed city where there is everlasting day and all are of one spirit; where there is certain security and secure eternal tranquility and quiet felicity and happy sweetness and sweet pleasantness; where you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign, forever. Amen

--Gregory the Great

Week #6a: Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counsel in Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*

Life and Works of Gregory I (the Great)

Life: Gregory was born in c. 540, the son of a Roman senator. It was a time of bitter warfare (battle to take back much of Italy from the invading Ostrogoths, a Germanic people) and hardship (an epidemic of the plague in 543).

Gregory received an education that would prepare him for the practical concerns of a career in administration, rather than literary or philosophical studies. After holding various lesser posts in the government, he became Prefect of Rome in c. 573, presiding over the senate and holding the highest office in the city.

After the death of his father Gordianus, Gregory sold off much of the family property he had inherited, using the proceeds to assist the poor and establish seven monasteries (six in family estates in Sicily and one in the family palace on the Coelian Hill at Rome, which became the monastery of St. Andrew). Gregory's commitment to a disciplined ascetic life eventually began to undermine his physical health and c. 579 the bishop of Rome (probably Benedict I) ordained him one of the seven deacons of Rome (these assisted the bishop of Rome with day-to-day administration and various practical tasks, being principally concerned with the Church's relief of and care for the urban poor). About five years later, he was sent (with some monks from his monastery) by the bishop of Rome (Pelagius II) to Constantinople to serve as an *apocrisarius* in the court of the Emperor Tiberius II to obtain aid for Italy.

- An *apocrisarius* or "legate" is a high ecclesiastical office in which one is sent to the imperial court, an ecclesiastical council or another episcopal see as the messenger and authorized representative of a bishop.

After returning to Rome in 585, Gregory retired again to the monastery of St. Andrew and was subsequently elected its abbot. Since Gregory remained a trusted advisor to the bishop of Rome (still Pelagius II), when the bishop died of the plague in 590 Gregory was elected by the senate and people to be the new bishop. Gregory initially resisted the appointment [Gregory had tried to flee and had asked the Emperor to veto his appointment to office] but

acquiesced when his election as bishop was ratified by the Emperor Mauricius and was consecrated bishop of Rome on Sept. 3, 590.

As bishop of Rome, Gregory had an enormous number of problems to deal with. First, the flooding of the Tiber had swept away the granaries (causing famine) and triggering an outbreak of the plague (which had caused the death of Gregory's predecessor and many others). Gregory also had to negotiate with the surrounding barbarian tribes and managed to protect Rome by establishing peace with the Lombards [a Teutonic people that had invaded Italy in 568 and established a kingdom in the Po Valley] in 592 or 593 and maintaining friendly relations with the Franks and Visigoths [Germanic peoples that invaded and dominated southern Germany, the Netherlands and northern France (Gaul) in the third and fourth centuries].

- "I have seen with my own eyes Romans led like dogs, a rope around their neck being taken to Gaul to be sold" (*Moralia*, pref. ; loose translation)
- the need to use the monies of the church to redeem captives from the barbarian tribes
- On the background, history and significance of these barbarian tribes, see
    - Jeremy Williams, "Barbarian Invasions" in Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999, pp. 92-94 and
    - Peter Heather and John Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1991)

Gregory also proved to be an excellent administrator, overseeing the management of the estates belonging to the Roman Church and using their proceeds to care for their poor, while combating the simony and immorality of the clergy.

Gregory also took an interest in the advance of the Gospel, sending Augustine (of Canterbury; died c. 604; not Augustine of Hippo) on a mission for the conversion of England.

- Augustine was sent to England with 40 other people, including 30 monks, a priest and interpreters.
- After baptizing Ethelbert, king of Kent, Augustine baptized many other Anglo-Saxons and became the first archbishop of Canterbury

Gregory was also influential in promoting the spread of Benedictine monasticism. Gregory died after fourteen years in office on March 12, 604. He is regarded as one of the doctors (acknowledged major teachers) of the Western church (perhaps the most widely read writer of the western medieval church).

Works: Gregory had not had a literary or philosophical education, had no knowledge of Greek and had no interest in speculative or philosophically oriented theology. The genius of his works is that they represent an attempt to apply Augustine's theology (as Gregory understood it) to the practical tasks of preaching and pastoral care.

(a) The *Regula pastoralis* (*Pastoral Rule*) is perhaps Gregory's most important work and was written shortly after his ascension to the pontificate in 590 (perhaps in 591). It is addressed to a certain bishop John (perhaps John of Ravenna) who had chided Gregory for resisting his election and is a kind of instruction manual for bishops. It draws in part on Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oratio* II, which deals with the latter Gregory's flight from

ecclesiastical office (the Greek work of Gregory probably being read in Rufinus' Latin translation).
The *Regula pastoralis* is divided into four books:

- Book I consists of eleven chapters which describe the difficulties associated with the pastoral office and the qualities which must be found in anyone that would aspire to that office. (As bishops increasingly had to deal with not just religious but also civil affairs, there was a potential for attracting the wrong sort of people, who wanted the job for the wrong sort of reasons.)
- Book II consists of eleven chapters that describe the virtues necessary to be an exemplary pastor, developing his argument by reference to the Old Testament law and an allegorical interpretation of the vestments of the high priest.
- Book III is the most interesting, identifying the various temperaments one finds in people in the course of pastoral work and how they must be approached if one is to be an effective pastor
- Book IV, which consists of one chapter, counsels the pastor to know himself and be aware of his weaknesses lest he fall.

Gregory probably intended his *Pastoral Rule* to have a function for secular clergy similar to that played by the rule of St. Benedict for monks, with a similar emphasis upon moderation and discretion in dealing with different types of people under differing circumstances. It was translated at an early date into Greek and was fairly popular in the Greek East. The *Pastoral Rule* was also translated into Anglo-Saxon by Alfred the Great in the ninth century.

(b) Gregory's second most important work was the *Moralia in Iob*. This work was begun when Gregory was in Constantinople at the urging of other Western Latin-speaking bishops (Leander of Seville and others) but not completed until 595. The work is essentially a series of talks given to the monks who had accompanied him to Constantinople, which expound the book of Job according to the historical, typological and moral meanings (with the focus being on the latter, showing deep insight into human nature, moral theology and practical responses to the mystery of suffering). This work, although rather long and a bit prolix, contains an interesting and influential treatment of *compunction*, which is the experience of godly sorrow that moves one to repentance (cf. the being “pierced to the heart” in Acts 2). This work was lightly revised in the second half of Gregory’s pontificate (597-604) and thus, for example, *Moralia* 27,21 alludes to the success of the mission to England.

(a) Gregory's other works include

- over 800 letters;
- *Dialogues concerning the Life and Miracles of the Italian Fathers* (presented in the format of a conversation of Gregory with his deacon, Peter, it presents Gregory’s moral and spiritual teaching through stories about Italy’s saints; the second book contains the life of St. Benedict), and
- homilies on Ezekiel and the Gospels.

Gregory's Theology

--Modified Augustinianism (the teaching of Augustine simplified and popularized and modified under the influence of John Cassian; see Seeberg, *History of Doctrines*, pp. 22-24; G.R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great*, 69-71) in forms accessible to the masses combined with both greater emphasis upon the institutional church and a certain apocalyptic expectation (McDermott and Peters, p. 8, second complete paragraph)

--Interest in miracles and spiritual warfare (see William C. McDermott and Edward Peters (eds.), *Monks, Bishops and Pagans: Christian Culture in Gaul and Italy, 500-700*, p. 6), though admitted that those who excelled in virtue were in no way inferior to those noted for their miracles

--Development of theology of the sacrifice of the mass, intercession of the angels and saints, efficacy of relics, veneration of images and beginnings of the doctrine of purgatory (pre-existing beliefs not yet defined with precision);

See the excerpt from the *Dialogues* in McDermott and Peters, pp. 4-6 : the offering of masses on behalf of the faithful departed implied that sins of the departed could be forgiven, which implied some temporary intermediate state between heaven and hell, i.e. purgatory (=a place where the souls of Christians are purified after death from whatever defilement of sin remains and grow in holiness prior to being admitted to heaven), referring back to

- 2 Macc. 12:42-46 (RSV):

39]On the next day, as by that time it had become necessary, Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen and to bring them back to lie with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers.
[**40**] Then under the tunic of every one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. And it became clear to all that this was why these men had fallen.
[**41**] So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden;
[**42**] and they turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen.
[**43**] He also **took up a collection**, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and **sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering**. **In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection.**
[**44**] **For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead.**
[**45**] But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he **made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.**

- Mt. 12:32 (some kinds of guilt are forgiven in this age, but others in the age to come) and
- 1 Cor. 3:12-15 (the transitory fires of purgatory could not consume the greater and harder [mortal] sins but they could consume the milder, lesser [venial] sins, so that at the end the elect could be cleansed and enjoy the contemplation of God in heaven)
    - Even many of the faithful who take refuge in penance in the hour of death need to be cleansed of their sins before they can enter into the presence of God.
    - The Church through its power to bind and loose sins has authority and jurisdiction over the remission of sins.
    - See further Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, v. 1, pp. 437-438; Seeberg, *History of Doctrines*, pp. 24-26.

There are some distant roots for this idea in Augustine, who admitted

- (in arguing against the Platonists) the possibility that some of the temporary punishments God sends us prior to the final judgment might occur after death, so that some sins not remitted in this age might be remitted in the next (*De civ. Dei* 21.13)
- that those who sinned ("in the time of temptation…prefers to hold onto…temporal, worldly things, rather than Christ") and have not performed appropriate acts of repentance will not experience the remission of sins and will not inherit the kingdom of God. (*Enchirid*. 69; having just mentioned in 68 the purifying fire of 1 Cor. 3)

It is Gregory I, however, who links these ideas with

- prayers for the dead (freeing souls from purgatory) and
- the merit of the sacrifice of the mass (which, by renewing Christ's passion, placates the wrath of God)

and heavily promoted all of this as a popular devotional observance.

--Rejected the Patriarch of Constantinople's claim to the title *Papa universalis* and claimed this title for himself as successor of the apostles (Peter), albeit with a bit more humility than later medieval popes had:
"My honor is the honor of the whole Church. My honor is the solid strength of my brothers. I am truly honored when due honor is paid to each and every one."

- Cf. Gregory's preferred title, "Servant of the servants of God."

<u>Gregory's Spiritual Teaching</u>
The Three Conditions of Life and Their Relevance to the Care of Souls
In the directing of souls (our own and others') toward God—which indeed is the best and highest of all arts (*ars artium*)--we must

- distinguish between the different conditions in which people find themselves and
- recognize that different types of person will proceed toward the same ultimate goal in different ways.

Thus, for example,

(1) the average person (peasant) will need to devote much of their attention to work (manual labor) to provide a living for their family, while
(2) monks live a contemplative existence (in which prayer and care for one's own soul predominates over manual labor) and
(3) those who preach and provide pastoral care and spiritual direction will need to have a life that is
    - rooted in prayer and care for one's soul and yet
    - requires regular activity in the world, albeit in a form that actively cares for the souls of others (rather than being primarily limited to care for the needs of the body through manual labor.)

Each of these three groups will proceed in a somewhat different manner toward the same ultimate goal (i.e. God), leading us to distinguish between the differing spiritual disciplines appropriate to

- the active life
- the contemplative life

- the mixed life,

the last of these (which is proper to the pastoral office and represents the form pastoral spirituality should take) as being the best in certain respects.

None of these three lives of course ever exists in pure form, but they are representative of certain tendencies.

(1) Those pursuing the active life need
- basic instruction in
  - the faith (so that they can trust in Christ, who becomes their rock and the root of their life) and in
  - prayer and
- to learn to name and pursue the virtues proper to interpersonal relationships and to recognize and repudiate the opposing vices.
  - E.g., to give practical pastoral examples
    - Positively—instruction on the divine purpose and indissolubility of marriage and the duty of fidelity
    - Negatively—warnings against false approaches to the supernatural (magic and superstition)

(2) The monk, having largely given up the previous sort of life, needs instruction in
- patterns of self-discipline that support and enable deeper forms of
  - prayer and
  - contemplation.

(3) The pastor, having experienced the active life and desired to grow deeper in prayer and love for God, finds that precisely for this reason that he must return to the world to serve God and neighbor, but he does not return to the ordinary life of the community as he left it. Because of the time spent in prayer and contemplation, he finds that he has been changed and has a somewhat different perspective and something more to offer those he returns to.

- Note the emphasis here upon prayer and holiness as foundational to pastoral ministry; see PL 94,657-658 (a letter of Bede the Venerable, dependent on Gregory, for a typical statement of this ideal and how it should be pursued by the clergy).

The Three Stages of Contemplation

(a) *purgation* –(Being inwardly purified from sin) The fact that spiritual disciplines are often used by persons seeking to advance in the Christian life often misleads the uninstructed into an interest in/focus upon outward acts.
  - Our attention should rather be directed toward understanding and repenting of improper root motivations (*radix intentionis*) so that with divine help we might arrive at purity of heart and a single-minded attentiveness to the will of God.
  - Like Benedict, Gregory sees moderation as central here. By renouncing the immoderate (and often violent) passions associated with self-will, we recover our proper place in relation to others and become capable of patience and humility, which are prerequisites to arrive at purity of heart and deeper communion with God. (To use the traditional language, the

virtues of patience and humility dispose the soul for contemplation of God.)

(b) *compunction*—(Acts 2:37: being "pierced to the heart" by a specific conviction of personal sin") Compunction is not a prerequisite to contemplation but rather a particular aspect of it, in which we have a vivid awareness of our past and present spiritual limits: "Man has fallen very far beneath himself…having lost sight of his Creator, he has at the same time lost his strength and firmness of purpose" (*Moralia* VIII,8; loose translation).
    - Since this awakening to a clear awareness of one's true state is a product of the action of grace and the soul's conversion, compunction leads one to a deep sense of our need for God and our utter dependence upon God (=evangelical humility): "When God enters into a soul, his entry is followed by the laments of repentance so that henceforth the soul's greatest joys lies in shedding tears over its salvation…It is as if by a clap of thunder that he strikes us when, by his grace, he awakens us to our negligence and heaviness [i.e. sloth]" (*Moralia* 27,40).
    - Over time, grace transmutes these tears over our lack into tears of gratitude for the salvation granted to us: "They do not cease to desire to see the King in his beauty and to weep from love each day" (*Hom. Ez.* II,10,21). Compunction is thus not shame or guilt but rather a dynamic, multifaceted emotion which is capable of
        i. looking with a sober and truthful eye at where one was (*ubi fuit*);
        ii. looking forward with anticipation to where one will be *(ubi erit*) as a result of salvation by God's grace;
        iii. seeing where one is (*ubi est*) presently in one's pilgrimage toward this goal;
        iv. seeing what one has not yet attained on this pilgrimage (*ubi non est*), leading the soul to send forth fervent prayers arising from a growing love for the Good one seeks (*Moralia* 23,41; cf. the "prayer of fire" in the Desert Fathers and Cassian **Conf.* IX,26-28=Luibheid, p. 117-118, which is very worth reading and certainly a source of Gregory's doctrine).

- A keen sense of our limits therefore leads not to shame, guilt or a focus upon penitential acts but instead paradoxically to
    - a deeper trust in God and a greater joy and confidence in our salvation by God: "*Blessed is the people who knows rejoicing* (Ps. 88): the soul is moved by tears of joy.
    - The spirit conceives an ineffable joy which can no longer be hidden and which no word can express…It is not said 'Blessed are the people who *speak their joy*,' but '*who knows rejoicing*'—that joy which can be known cannot be expressed in words. It can be felt but it is far beyond any feeling. The perception of the one who feels it is not sufficient to contemplate it—how could perception ever express it?" (*Moralia* 23,10)
- In undergoing this change, we discover the both
    - the conviction of conscience (recognition of our limits) and

    - the joy and gratitude we have in God's salvation are actually a work of God in us (not something that we initiated or produced in ourselves) and that what God asks of us is simply to consent to receive these things, acknowledging them to be the gifts given by a grace greater than we could ever have imagined.
- In this stage, we advance in the virtues, especially the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, without which nothing can be pleasing to God.

(c) *illumination and contemplation per se*: Ever-increasing desire, the knowledge one has through love, and the role Christ as mediator plays in this—(to be discussed in the second half of class)

Week #6b: Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Rule* and a Brief Survey of His Spiritual Teaching

The problems for the person who newly assumes pastoral responsibilities:

(1) The need to practice **contemplation** (single-minded attention to God in prayer), that God may give one rightly-ordered **compassion** for those under one's care (see II.5; not in Leinenweber but =Demacopoulos, pp. 58-61)

(2) Receiving from God rightly-ordered **compassion for the people under one's care leads us to adapt ourselves to meet and help them where they are at** (*condescensio*), following Christ, who was not ashamed to adapt himself to our weaknesses and the difficulties of our circumstances in order to save us.

- On contemplation leading to and being counter-balanced by rightly-ordered compassion, see pp. 58-60 [top half]
- On taking up the burdens of the weak in pastoral counseling and the additional temptations this can pose for the pastor, see pp. 60 [bottom half]-61

(3) How to counsel and exhort another person appropriately when each has a different temperament and is in a different state of constraint/advance? (pp. 1,3-4).
Imitating the example of Paul in the New Testament (*passim*, see e.g. p. 19), we must recognize that

- "…what helps some harms others"
    - persons in different situations (temperament, social position, moral position) should be dealt with
        - asking different things of them
        - using differing degrees of severity in exhortation
        - together with different types of encouragement
        - appealing to different motivations
- It is clear then that there can be no "one size fits all" prescriptions in pastoral care.
- It is also clear that the kind of pastoral care needed changes as the individual changes/progresses. (See e.g. p. 6 on the adjustments necessary as the counselee's moral position changes.)
- Careful thought needs to be given to the underlying power dynamics within social relationships, since these profoundly shape people's identities (rich/poor, men/women, educated/uneducated, master/slaves, the proud and superior vs. the weak and fearful, etc.) and need to be addressed with reflection and discretion.
    - See e.g. p. 7 on indirection and the use of narrative to effectively address the powerful.
    - Later, he argues that one should praise certain things before administering a necessary correction to the superior, who need to learn not to command more than is just (i.e. avoid abuse of the power given to them for limited and defined purposes to promote various goods for those under their care)(p. 9).
        - Similarly, those of inferior and dependent status should neither to imitate nor to quickly and rashly condemn the faults of their

superiors (p. 11), since the latter are their fellow humans and servants under God (p.13).
    - In dealing with bold and timid people, do we understand how to make a just criticism that appropriately adjusts their view of their situation without demoralizing them and reducing them to despondency (pp. 17-18).
    - See p. 55 on dealing with the prideful. Since they are always concerned about what others think of them and their actions, tell them their progress benefits us more than them and be sure to mix in praise with rebuke and challenge.
- Careful thought should be given to the right time to administer a rebuke (or even to bestow praise); cf.
    - p. 51 on not rebuking a person while they are still angry and
    - p. 52 on not consenting to return anger for anger.
    - There is no benefit in eliciting further displays of the sinful behavior one aims to correct by administering the right rebuke at the wrong time or without love and patience (cf. pp. 20-23)

Gregory nonetheless assumes that it is ultimately one's temperament and not one's outward circumstances that cause people to respond in a certain way.

- Thus, for example, one may have *bodily strength* (which is something external to our intention/will) but this outward possession is in itself is neither good nor bad.
    - Bodily strength can be used either for good (e.g. building homes for Habitat for Humanity) or evil (e.g. stealing and carrying away the wrongfully acquired goods), depending upon the moral character of one's intention/will (see p. 33).

Gregory also assumes that individual temperaments, due to the effects of sin, readily lose their grounding and tend to fly off into immoderate extremes (sins of excess).

- Cf. the Aristotelian ideal of *metriopatheia* (moderation hits, rather than exceeds, the mark; intermediate conditions representing a healthy balance are always best). Hence the 36 pairs of qualities discussed within the *Pastoral Rule* and the cautioning against extremes.

This general idea can also be found in slightly different forms in medical literature and derivatively in the ascetic literature on the application of contrary principles to overcome temptation.

- See e.g. p. 8: "The happy tend toward dissipation, the sorrowful toward anger…[thus] certain vices accompany certain temperaments."
- One can go too far and overstep the mark, failing to preserve the good associated with that temperament, while allowing its immoderate extremes to cause harm to others (see p. 54).
    - Thus, for example, timidity can promote peace and represent a reasonable caution against being overbearing, but it also fails to challenge or exhort others to better things.
    - Gregory's emphasis upon imitation must be understood in this light, i.e. as being fundamentally concerned with eliciting a similar intention/will in the other person: "the attractive power of imitation is to persuade the

simple to rise to greater things" (30)…."When people neglect themselves, not directing their energies upward, they are liable to desire what is low; when they do not pull themselves together by a zeal for the heights, they are wounded by a hunger for the depths."

- Note that even the animal imagery that Gregory uses is not really about external action but about inner intention; thus the hedgehog symbolically represents the person who intends to conceal their faults (p. 30).
- Even the practices that Gregory sometimes recommends (e.g., on p. 53, following Evagrius and Cassian, recommending the use of certain portions of Scripture to oppose certain patterns of temptation) aim at affecting the intention/will.

- It is important to note that, in going to unhealthy extremes,
  - one can not only have immoderate and excessive desires for created things (e.g. the treatment of gluttony and extravagance as types of inordinate and excessive desire),
  - one can also have too little desire for created things, undervaluing them and rejecting the appropriate pleasures associated with them (cf. p. 63 on abstemiousness and compare the subsequent treatment of stinginess). In this case, having too little desire and placing too little value on created things and the pleasures associated with them sickens and deenergizes the soul, so that it loses the strength to worship and enjoy God and becomes subject to depression, lethargy and spiritual weakness in the face of temptation. Thus, one could have too much asceticism (or rather, in Gregory's view a misguided view of what asceticism is actually about).
    - Note also the way that the devious can power down and turn inward because they have no desire for change and redirect their energy into deflecting criticism (cf. the example of the hedgehog in pp. 30-32)
- The real question in pastoral care and spiritual direction is thus not what actions need to be performed or what behavior needs to be regulated or limited, but "Where are people closed off?"
- *Compunction* (the divinely-produced enlightenment concerning one's state, which pains and convicts the conscience to bring about grief over sin and move one toward repentance; cf. Acts 2:37) is able to move forward the closed-off person (see p. 37)