

The Devil in the Writings and Thought of Pope Gregory the
Great (590-604)

Charlotte Emily Kingston

PhD

University of York

Department of History

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the portrayal of the devil in the writings and thought of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). It examines his exegetical, hagiographical and homiletic works in addition to his correspondence. It analyses the ways in which Gregory described, understood, and used the figure of the devil, and places this within Gregory's wider conceptual framework. It proposes new ways of approaching the topic, particularly in his exegetical works, and looks as much into the associations that he drew as the doctrines that he preached. By looking at a wide selection of his works, this thesis gives an insight into how this one idea manifested itself across a variety of genres, and also how it affected his practical politics and interpretation of real-life situations. As part of this it explores the relationship between Gregory's diabolology and ecclesiology, and the influence of this upon his understanding of the Roman primacy. Whilst Gregory the Great has been subject to vast amounts of scholarship, as of yet no such study has been done which takes into consideration so many of his works. This thesis therefore offers a fresh perspective and provides new ways of thinking about how Gregory used and understood the idea of the devil.

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A Note on Translations and Biblical References

All Latin quotations from the bible are from the Vulgate.

All English quotations from the bible are from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate.

References to the modern bible are from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition) (NRSV)

When there is an agreement of chapter and verse numbers between versions a single biblical reference will be given. When there is no agreement, references to the bible in the main text are to the modern chapter and verse, and the Vulgate reference is given immediately afterwards.

Non-Biblical Translations

All translations are my own, except where indicated.

Author's Declaration

The author declares that this is her own work and that due credit and acknowledgement has been given where reference has been made to the work of others. Some of chapter three was presented in a different form at the 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, 2009. None of this work has previously been published.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In his *Dialogues*, Gregory the Great tells the story of a nun who ate a lettuce from a monastery garden, but who forgot to make the sign of the cross over it before she did so.¹ As a result she was possessed by a devil (*diabolus*) and fell to the ground writhing in agony.² The abbot Equitus was called to pray over her, and as soon as the holy man appeared, the devil, sitting on the nun's tongue, started to complain:

Ego quid feci? Ego quid feci? Sedebam mihi super lactucam. Venit illa et momordit me.³

In spite of the devil's indignant protest, the abbot commanded him to leave the woman, which he immediately did; he also never touched her again.⁴

It is the innocuous nature of the devil that stands out most in this story. The devil was apparently indifferent to the nun's presence until she ate the lettuce that he was sitting on, and the nun was therefore only harmed because she was too careless to make the sign of the cross, which, by implication, would have easily dismissed him.⁵ The devil was then immediately and permanently put to flight by the command of a holy man. It comes therefore as no surprise that such stories have been described as trivial and ludicrous.⁶

This story is starkly different to the terrifying words on the devil found in Gregory's *Moralia*, his work of exegesis on Job. In this work Gregory discusses the complex arguments and devices with which the devil entraps humanity.⁷ He writes about the devil's seduction of men and women:

¹ For the following story, see Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 1.4.7 in *Grégoire le Grand. Dialogues [Dial.]*, ed. A. de Vogüé and trans. Paul Antin, 3 vols. Sources Chrétiennes [SC] 251, 260, 265 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978-80), 2:42-4. Hereafter the standard *Dialogues* reference will be given, followed by, in brackets, the volume and page number of this particular edition. For instance: *Dial.* 1.4.7 (2:42-4).

² *Dial.* 1.4.7 (2:44).

³ *Dial.* 1.4.7 (2:44). What have I done? What have I done? I myself was sitting on a lettuce, and she came and ate me.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ For more on the use of the sign of the cross to dispel demons, see p. 125 note. 67 below.

⁶ Francis Clark, *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 2:637-8.

⁷ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 32.20.35 in *Gregorius Magnus. Moralia in Iob [Mor.]*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCSL 143, 143A, 143B, Scholars Version, 2 vols. (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979-1985),

Prima quippe serpentis suggestio mollis ac tenera est, et facile uirtutis pede conterenda, sed si haec inualescere neglegenter admittitur, eique ad cor aditus licenter praebetur, tanta se uirtute exaggerat, ut captam mentem deprimens, usque ad intolerabile robur excrescat.⁸

He also writes of sinners' inability to escape even when they suspect they are being trapped and try to escape:

Behemoth iste ita inexplicabilibus nodis ligat, ut plerumque mens in dubio adducta, unde se a culpa solvere nititur, inde in culpa artius astringatur.⁹

In these extracts, the devil is neither indifferent nor innocuous, but single-minded and intelligent in his attempts to lead humanity to destruction. He is tireless in his efforts, knowledgeable in his attacks, and, like a spider's web, his schemes entrap the sinner the more they struggle to escape. Furthermore, his intimate knowledge of individuals and their weaknesses means that he carefully suits his temptations to different characters, ensuring that as many as possible are dragged with him to damnation.¹⁰

The extraordinary scope and generic diversity of Gregory's writings offer a unique opportunity to understand the idea of the devil in the early middle ages. His works are able to shed light on how this powerful idea manifested itself in a variety of genres and, because of his surviving correspondence, also how it affected his perceptions of the world and his decisions in real-life situations. These examples not only demonstrate how in his writings the devil appeared in a multitude of shapes and forms, but also hint at some of the difficulties that this can cause for the scholar studying the subject. Indeed, for one scholar, the difference between the portrayal of the devil in the *Moralia* and the *Dialogues* is seen as evidence for the non-Gregorian

2:1656. Henceforth references to the *Moralia* will be in the following format: the standard reference (including book and chapter numbers) followed by, in brackets, the volume and page number(s) of this edition. For instance: *Mor.* 32.20.35 (2:1656).

⁸ *Mor.* 32.19.33 (2:1654). Of course the first suggestion of the serpent is soft and delicate, and easily crushed by the foot of virtue; but if this is carelessly allowed to grow, and is freely given access to the heart, it magnifies its power so much that it weighs down the captive mind, all the time rising up to unbearable strength.

⁹ *Mor.* 32.20.38 (2:1657-8). This Behemoth binds with such intricate knots that the mind is commonly led into doubt, from which place it strives to untie itself from error, only to be tightly drawn up in sin.

¹⁰ For examples of the different ways in which the devil moulds his suggestions to individuals, see *Mor.* 32.21.41 – 32.21.44 (2:1659-1661).

authorship of the latter;¹¹ however, as this difference is merely observed, and taken as evidence without any analysis, this ‘paradox’ is here taken as a starting point for further investigation, rather than automatically assumed to be proof of inauthenticity. Indeed, the devil is discussed in the abstract in Gregory’s exegetical works, given form and visible shape in his hagiography, and invoked for political purposes in his correspondence with ecclesiastical and political figures. He is portrayed as performing a variety of roles in the past, present and future and is given a place in sacred history. The devil also performs a variety of narrative functions and is used as a literary and didactic device. Because of this and in spite of the difficulties, Gregory’s impressive *oeuvre*, consisting of works of exegesis, hagiography, homilies, papal letters, and a work on pastoral care, offers an unrivalled opportunity to investigate the idea of the devil in this period.

This is particularly so as the idea of the devil is not only found throughout Gregory’s writings but also forms a central pillar of his thought. He describes the devil as the first and most powerful of all creation¹² whose greatness of nature and enormity of strength continues to surpass those of humanity.¹³ His life is connected to the fates of men and women, as no one can enter the life of the elect without having first succeeded against him;¹⁴ he is thus the ancient enemy of humankind (*antiquus hostis humani generis*).¹⁵ In Gregory’s mind, therefore, to be human is to undergo unceasing temptation by this ‘chief of the ways of God’, the greatest of God’s creatures.¹⁶

Gregory’s works were translated into many languages¹⁷ and had an influence over western Christendom until at least the time of Aquinas. Amongst the Anglo-Saxons he was referred to affectionately as ‘Our Apostle’¹⁸ and he would become

¹¹ Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 650-652; Francis Clark, *The ‘Gregorian’ Dialogues and the Origins of Benedictine Monasticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 113-115. For the controversy over the Gregorian authorship of the *Dialogues*, see p. 113 note 1 below.

¹² *Mor.* 32.22.46 – 32.23.47 (2:1663-1666); *Mor.* 32.15.22 (2:1646).

¹³ *Mor.* 34.20.39 (2:1761).

¹⁴ *Dial.* 3.19.5 (2:348).

¹⁵ *Mor.* 33.7.14 (2:1685).

¹⁶ *Mor.* 32.23.47 (2:1665). See Job 40:19 (=Job 40:14 Vulg.).

¹⁷ For example: the *Dialogues* would be translated in Greek by Pope Zacharias (741-752), Old English and Old French, and the *Pastoral Care* would also be translated into Old English by Alfred the Great.

¹⁸ See Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.1 in Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors eds., *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 136. For some of the other terms used to refer to Gregory in the middle ages, see F. Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), 2:137.

one of only two popes to be awarded the epithet 'the Great'.¹⁹ The influence of Gregory's writings was therefore extremely large, and understanding his ideas about the devil is of value to historians who work across the medieval period. In particular, his ideas about sin and the devil were amongst the main models for the Anglo-Saxons²⁰ and had a particularly large effect on some of Bede's writings.²¹ His *Moralia* (or parts of it) had been copied numerous times by 1200, and was considered an authoritative work on doctrine.²² Its influence can be seen in Old English works such as Ælfric's *Homily on the Book of Job*²³ and it was also a source for French and Latin writings of the later middle ages.²⁴ Many incidents in his *Dialogues* containing images of demons in the afterlife were to have an effect on later ideas of the other world and purgatory.²⁵ Consequently, this study of Gregory's ideas about the devil can also set a base against which other medieval understandings can be compared.

The figure of the devil was also important in other writings of the period. He was often invoked for didactic purposes in homilies and saints' lives and was frequently presented as the antithesis to the saint. In terms of theology, he was believed to have played roles at key points in sacred history: at the fall of angels and of man, in the lives of certain Old Testament fathers, in the ministry of Christ and the Apostles, and in the trials of men and women of the present day; it was also believed that he would be of immense importance in the eschaton.²⁶ Gregory's writings therefore offer the historian an invaluable opportunity to study this great enemy of

¹⁹ The other would be Pope Leo I. Exactly when Gregory achieved this epithet appears uncertain. Moorhead points to the late ninth century: John Moorhead, *Gregory the Great* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1. James O'Donnell, however, has indicated that in private conversation Robert Markus thought it might have been the eleventh century: James O'Donnell, 'The Holiness of Gregory' in *Gregory the Great. A Symposium*, ed. John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 62-81, at p. 75, n. 1.

²⁰ Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound. The Devil in old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 27.

²¹ William D. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1994), 4-8.

²² Dudden, *Gregory*, 1:195-6.

²³ Lawrence L. Besserman, *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 73-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-9.

²⁵ Isabel Moreira, *Heaven's Purge. Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 93-4.

²⁶ This is laid out in more detail in the next chapter. See pp. 39-52 below.

man and God as he appears in a variety of genres and contexts within the writings of a single author.²⁷

The importance of the devil in early medieval belief and practice is increasingly being recognised and subjected to research; the early twenty-first century in particular has seen a growth in such scholarship. For instance, in 2001 Peter Dendel explored the devil in Old English narrative literature²⁸ and a few years later Henry Kelly revisited the role of scripture and the church fathers in shaping medieval and modern ideas about the devil.²⁹ David Brakke has investigated the role of the devil in monks' spiritual formation in fourth- and fifth-century Egypt³⁰ and a collection of essays on the topic of the devil in late antique and medieval Christianity has just been published.³¹ The increasing acceptance of this as an important area of study is also demonstrated by the fact that the first conference on the devil in the imagination of the pre-modern world was held in 2008.³² Pre-modern, and particularly early medieval, representations and understandings of the devil are therefore currently experiencing a surge in scholarly interest, and Gregory's works are able to shed a unique light on this topic because of their large influence and their unusual diversity.

This increased interest in the devil (particularly as he occurs in saints' lives) can be considered a development of the shifts in scholarship that occurred in the 1970s and 80s regarding the study of late antique and early medieval hagiography, particularly since the publication in 1981 of Peter Brown's *The Cult of the Saints*.³³ This period witnessed a shift in scholarly approaches to saints' lives and a sea-

²⁷ This thesis is not primarily concerned with the debate over the authorship of the *Dialogues*, but for reasons that will become apparent, arguments against their Gregorian origin on the basis of their demonology are not accepted here.

²⁸ Dendle, *Satan Unbound*.

²⁹ Henry Angsar Kelly, *Satan. A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁰ David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk. Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

³¹ Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten eds., *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

³² *The Devil in Society in the Pre-Modern World*, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Victoria College, University of Toronto, 17-18 October 2008.

³³ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981). Peter Brown's work on the holy man in the east was equally influential: Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101. See also Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity 1971-1997', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6:3 (1998): 353-76. For an analysis of his ideas and their reception see James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward eds., *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See particularly Averil Cameron, 'On Defining the Holy Man' in *Cult of Saints* eds. Howard-Johnston and Hayward, 27-43.

change in opinions regarding the validity of the genre as an area of study. Previous to this, as shall be discussed below, hagiography – and, of importance here, diabolology – was not always considered a suitable subject of study or understood on its own terms. As a result, until recently the majority of academic works on the devil tended to be on the devil in doctrinal thought.³⁴

However, as a result of this renewed interest in hagiography amongst early medievalists, sections on the devil began to appear in works on saints' lives. Thus Clare Stancliffe's work on Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin* contains a substantial amount on the devil,³⁵ and Raymond Van Dam's exploration of the cult of saints in late antique Gaul also devotes space to him.³⁶ The devil also features in McCready's work on the hagiography of Gregory the Great³⁷ and in his work on Bede.³⁸ Sofia Boesch Gajano has considered the role of demons in Gregory's hagiography, focussing on what one can learn from his works about attitudes towards the relationship between the devil, illness and mental illness.³⁹ The realisation that saints' lives can function as arguments and carefully-constructed pieces eventually led to a reassessment of the role of the devil within them, as his presence was no longer simply seen as testament to 'superstition'. The first decade of the present century has therefore witnessed the branching-out of this interest in hagiography to

³⁴ There were several works written on the devil prior to and during the 1980s, particularly in the USA. These tended to be quite broad and concerned with ideas about the devil beyond and before Christianity, and were not concerned with saints' lives. As they were quite explicit about wanting to discuss the devil in an intellectual manner, rather than as a matter of faith, it is possible that their expected audience was not wholly academic. Some major works were Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan. The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer. The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness. Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy. Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). Kelly also wrote several works on the devil prior to this period, including Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism. Ritual, Theology, and Drama* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) and Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent during the Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies* vol. 2 (1971): 301-327. There were also some scholarly French articles on the devil in patristic writings, such as G.J.M. Bartelink, 'Les dénominations du diable chez Grégoire de Tours', *Revue des Études latines* 48 (1970): 411-432 and Jacques Fontaine, 'Sur un titre de Satan chez Tertullien: *Diabolus interpolator*', *Studi et Materiali di storia della Religioni* 38 (1967): 197-216.

³⁵ Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer. History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 228-241, *passim*.

³⁶ Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and the Miracles in late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

³⁷ William D. McCready, *Signs of Sanctity. Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989), 233-7, *passim*.

³⁸ McCready, *Venerable Bede*.

³⁹ Sofia Boesch Gajano, 'Demoni e miracoli nei <<Dialogi>> di Gregorio Magno' in *Hagiographie, Cultures et Sociétés IV^e-XII^e siècles. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2-5 Mai 1979)* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981): 263-281.

include diabolology and the place and function of the devil in saints' lives. Problems have also plagued the study of the devil in other genres, as the devil's portrayal in works of exegesis has often been dominated by the research of ideas such as grace and predestination, and has thus frequently involved the extraction and analysis of relevant passages outside of their exegetical context.⁴⁰

Scholarly works analysing Gregory's representation of the devil nevertheless remain few and far between. There do not appear to be any studies which have Gregory's representation of the devil across a range of his works as their primary focus, and certainly none which then explore how this affected his actions. The reasons for this are several: past scholarly ambivalence about the devil in saints' lives and other writings; the continuance of this in some quarters; and, discussed below, other divisions in Gregorian scholarship which have resulted in Gregory's works not always being viewed as a coherent whole.

The topic is touched on in several works, however, and still one of the most accessible and sound introductions to Gregory's diabolology can be found in F. Homes Dudden's work on Gregory's life, thought and times.⁴¹ Dudden's short section on Gregory's beliefs about the devil is still of enduring worth insofar as it provides an introduction to the topic and a selection of his statements on the issue. However, it leaves much to be desired as it offers a basic description rather than full analysis of the subject. Its value lies in its collation in one place of many of Gregory's statements on the devil, making some of the main points of his diabolology obtainable at a glance; its primary drawback, however, is that the analysis that does occur complies in content and style with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concerns and assumptions. Dudden failed to assess the pope on his own terms when discussing his theology and was instead concerned with explaining why, in his eyes, Gregory was *not* an Augustine.⁴² In his assessment, Gregory was 'destitute of originality', 'extremely uncritical' and 'often puerile and absurd' in his exegesis.⁴³ The brief and limited nature this section on diabolology is no doubt because, in short, it was not considered worthy of much study or note. It is conceivable that to Dudden

⁴⁰ See p. 24 below.

⁴¹ Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:364-369.

⁴² Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:286. See also Adolph Harnack, who discussed Gregory's doctrine of grace and dismissed it as 'emasculated Augustinianism': Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. James Millar, 7 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898), 5:263.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

– an early twentieth-century protestant historian – Gregory’s beliefs about the devil were also simply not a valid subject of study.

Indeed, the contempt in which theological interest in angels and demons was held at this time is evident from the following:

[In Gregory’s works] The doctrine of angels and the devil comes to the front, because it suited popular and monastic piety. We can call Gregory the “Doctor angelorum et diaboli.”...He who thought so little of Graeco-Roman culture sanctioned its most inferior parts in his doctrine of angels. His monkish fancy dealt still more actively in conceptions about the devil and demons, and he gave new life to ideas about the Antichrist, who stood ready at the door, because the world was near its end.⁴⁴

Harnack’s description of angeology as one of the ‘inferior parts’ of Graeco-Roman culture betrays the obvious disdain with which he held theological interest in angels and demons. It is most probably for this reason that in spite of calling Gregory ‘Doctor angelorum et diaboli’ he devotes very little space to explaining why or how. Other older works which have also explored Gregory’s portrayal of the devil lack the insight of modern historiography, and are often basic and focussed on one or two works, useful as they may be in several respects.⁴⁵

This contempt for angeology and diabolology is not, however, the preserve of scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries alone. On the contrary, this idea that some theological topics are ‘superior’ to others and demonstrate a ‘better’ Christianity continues to persist, and it is the continuation of this scorn that is in part responsible for the authenticity debate surrounding Gregory’s *Dialogues*.⁴⁶ As part of his argument for the internal evidence of the inauthenticity of the *Dialogues*, Clark analysed some of Gregory’s portrayals of the devil.⁴⁷ He commented that

In their fantastic and often ludicrous quality, and in their triviality and lack of serious moral purpose, the Dialogist’s tales are not only religiously inferior but different in kind. They are alien from the gravity, reverence and pastoral wisdom of St Gregory himself, who writes at a

⁴⁴ Harnack, *Dogma*, 5:263-4.

⁴⁵ For instance: Alfred C. Rush, ‘An Echo of Christian Antiquity in St. Gregory the Great: Death a Struggle with the Devil’, *Traditio* 3 (1945): 369-380. Rush explores episodes in Gregory’s *Dialogues* and homilies which involve death-bed struggles with the devil and puts them into patristic context.

⁴⁶ See p. 113, note 1 below.

⁴⁷ Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 2:637-8; 650-2. See also Clark, *Origins of Benedictine Monasticism*, 113-115.

higher level of spiritual and moral sensitivity which the Dialogist cannot match. Justly may they be called sub-Christian.⁴⁸

This extremely critical assessment came directly after discussion of a selection of stories, many of which, such as that involving the nun and the lettuce, contained reference to the devil. Of interest here is the attitude that Clark adopts towards Gregory's depiction of the devil and demons, rather than his argument regarding the authenticity of the work. His use of words such as 'inferior', 'ludicrous' and 'sub-Christian' betray the contempt with which he holds the portrayal of the devil in this work. Such opinions as to the worthiness of such a topic – both for a theologian and for a scholar studying such a theologian – explains the hitherto scarcity of works on Gregory's portrayal of the devil.

Most modern scholars, however, have moved beyond this and no longer make such judgements; indeed, this thesis will make no judgement as to any real or perceived 'quality' of Gregory's diabolology. Nonetheless, in spite of changed attitudes towards the study of such beliefs and practices, this vastly important figure in both Gregory's and early medieval thought is still in need of research. The small number of studies on this topic have been extremely restricted in their scope, which is in part connected to the problems that have beset Gregorian scholarship, which often divides up his works.⁴⁹ In fact, most scholarship on Gregory's diabolology has come about incidentally whilst scholars have focussed their attention on other things. Consequently, whilst comments on Gregory's views on the devil are in some ways endemic in Gregorian scholarship, the topic is most usually tackled in a cursory way. The fragments of analysis that do occur are most often found in works concerned with Gregory's theology and thought, and are usually brought into the wider argument being proposed. Gillian Evans, for instance, has included analysis of Gregory's beliefs about the devil as part of her work.⁵⁰ Indeed, opinions about Gregory's ideas about the devil scattered across scholarly works are often placed within the larger schema promoted by particular authors. Thus, Carole Straw gives the devil a place within the larger framework that she believes structured Gregory's

⁴⁸ Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 2:638.

⁴⁹ See pp. 23-5 below.

⁵⁰ Gillian R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), *passim*. See particularly pp. 62-3 for Evans on Gregory's views on Satan and pp. 55-68 on Gregory's speculative theology more generally.

thought-system (explained below),⁵¹ and Claude Dagens, who explored the ideas of *intus* and *foris* in Gregory's writings, interpreted Gregory's thoughts on the devil in the light of his conceptual structure.⁵² These larger ideas will be discussed in more detail where appropriate.

It remains difficult to tell, however, whether discussing the devil in terms of his place within complex thought-structures is nothing but the most recent solution to the same perceived problem – that is, that these are just new ways of attempting to make Gregory's ideas about the devil appear more 'sophisticated', and thus more easily 'acceptable' as the compositions of a great man. Caution ought to be exercised when discussing the complexity (or not) of Gregory's diabolology, since to celebrate it (rather than, if it is there, to identify and explain it) is to risk accepting the premises of old criticisms and to fall into the trap of arguing that Gregory is an exception to 'superstitious' diabolology because his works are sophisticated (if indeed they are). It is necessary to make this point because beliefs about the devil and demons have been assessed in such a different light to 'high' theological doctrines for so long that these assumptions are still somewhat implicit, perhaps unintentionally, in some scholarship.

In sum, the neglected topic of the devil in Gregory's works is in need of research because of the significant role this idea played in his thought and actions, as demonstrated by his recurring descriptions of the place of the devil in human life and salvation history. This reflects the key position that the devil held in the medieval imagination: he was the great enemy of man and God, against whom life is a struggle. Gregory's writings present a unique opportunity because one is able to study the manifestation of this one idea within multiple early medieval genres whilst the variable of authorship is controlled. His works also offer the opportunity to understand how these ideas may have shaped responses to political situations, and understanding the extent to which his actions as pope were underscored by a belief in the devil sheds further light on his papacy. Lastly, as his works were copied and read throughout the middle ages, this study provides a base for future research on how the

⁵¹ Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 257-60. See particularly her table on p. 258. See pp. 25-6. below.

⁵² Claude Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand: Culture et expérience chrétiennes* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977).

ideas that Gregory held about the devil – and the effects these had on his ministry – changed or stayed the same by later writers of the middle ages.

1.1 Gregory's Writings

The documents available to the historian from Gregory's pontificate surpass those for any other figure of his age. First there is the *Registrum Epistolarum*, his collection of papal correspondence of just over 850 letters.⁵³ This invaluable collection provides an insight into his daily concerns, including his administration of ecclesiastical affairs and management of the papal lands. Apart from a letter thought to have been written by Gregory under the name of a previous pope,⁵⁴ all of the letters attributed to him are from the years of his pontificate, 590-604. This period of his life and the secular and ecclesiastical responsibilities that he held during it are therefore well-documented.

Gregory's largest and earliest work is the *Moralia in Iob*.⁵⁵ This work of exegesis provides the reader with a window into his theology, way of thinking, and pastoral concerns, and is therefore the subject of a detailed study in this thesis. Another early work was his *Regula Pastoralis* (henceforth *Pastoral Care*),⁵⁶ which is an important key through which much of his *oeuvre* can be interpreted and understood.⁵⁷ This handbook for pastors was concerned with pastoral care and the ministry of bishops. It is divided into four sections, which are concerned with the following: how one should approach a position of authority; how a pastor should

⁵³ For the most recent critical edition see *S. Gregorii Magni. Registrum epistularum*, ed. Dag Norberg, CCSL 140-140A, 2 vols. (Turnholt: Brepols, 1982). This is the edition that will be cited in this thesis, except where indicated. References will first give the letter book and number, and then the reference for this particular edition. See also John R.C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), which offers an English translation of this edition. For the MGH edition, which will be referred to for particular letters not included in the CCSL edition, see *Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum*, eds. Paul Ewald and Ludo Moritz Hartmann, MGH Epistolae 1-2, 2 vols. (Munich, MGH: 1992, originally Berlin, 1887-1899). Note that the numbering of letters in the CCSL does not match that in the MGH. All references to Gregory's correspondence in this thesis refer to the CCSL numbering, unless specifically stated otherwise.

⁵⁴ For more details see Paul Meyvaert, 'A Letter of Pelagius II Composed by Gregory the Great' in *Gregory the Great. A Symposium*, ed. John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 94-116. The letter itself is *Ep. 3* [MGH] in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum Epistolarum*, 3, Appendix 3, 449-467.

⁵⁵ Further information will be given about the *Moralia* in the introduction to chapter 3. See pp. 53-67 below.

⁵⁶ *Gregorius Magnus. Regula pastoralis [Reg. Past.]*, found at <http://clt.brepols.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 July 2011).

⁵⁷ For the *Pastoral Care* as the key to all of Gregory's works, and Gregory's consciousness of this, see Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 204.

live; how they should teach those beneath them; and how they must guard against pride. The third part, the bulk of the work, does not contain the figure of the devil; however, its message that the pastor should acquaint himself with the temperament and situation of those in his care and suit his words to them will be shown to have parallels with the ways in which the devil exerts his influence upon men and women. It is mainly part four – which does contain explicit mention of the devil – that will be discussed here. However, the *Pastoral Care* is not given a separate chapter in this thesis, for two reasons: not only does the devil not feature as much in this work as in other works, but its primary value lies in its position as the backbone of Gregory's writings and pontificate. Consequently, in this thesis it is treated as a tool by which to understand his other works, rather than as an individual subject of study. It is therefore used and referred to in several chapters where appropriate, and this thesis will show that Gregory's ideas on the devil can be linked to many of the ideas in the *Pastoral Care*. As a result, its main points are discussed as needed throughout the thesis, and used to form a picture of his motivations and concerns.

Gregory's work on the Song of Songs, like the *Moralia*, began as a series of sermons, possibly given before he became pope.⁵⁸ During the later years of Gregory's pontificate these were then revised by the abbot Claudius,⁵⁹ as Gregory was not able to edit this work himself (as he did the *Moralia*) as a result of ill-health.⁶⁰ Gregory, however, was not happy with Claudius' transcription,⁶¹ and it is almost certainly this unsatisfactory version that comes down to us.⁶² Even more significantly for present purposes, however, is the unfortunate fact that the majority of this work does not survive: all that is left is the preface and Gregory's exegesis of

⁵⁸ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 16. For an edition see *Sancti Gregorii Magni Expositio in Canticum Cantiorum*, ed. Patricius Verbraken, CCSL 144 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1963). It had once been believed that this work was spurious: Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism. The Teaching of SS. Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1926), 65. Its authenticity is now generally agreed: Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 16; Joan M. Petersen, 'The Influence of Origen upon Gregory the Great's Exegesis of the Song of Songs', *Studia Patristica* 18.1, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Studies, 1986), 343-47. On the reasons for the work's authenticity see B. Cappelle, 'Les homélies de saint Grégoire sur le Cantique', *Revue Bénédictine* 41 (1929): 204-17.

⁵⁹ *Ep.* 12.6 (2:975). For the date of this work, see Paul Meyvaert, 'The Date of Gregory the Great's Commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles and I Kings', *Sacris Erudiri* 23 (1978-1979): 191-26.

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 12.6. (2:975).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Moorhead, *Gregory*, 16.

the book up until Song of Songs 1:8.⁶³ This is in spite of the original version going up to as much as 4:5.⁶⁴ For these reasons, his work on the Song of Songs is not considered separately in this thesis, although it is referred to in places where it is appropriate to do so, particularly where its discussion on allegory provides clues on how to interpret Gregory's exegesis and saints' lives.

Forty homilies on the Gospels⁶⁵ and twenty on the book of Ezechiel⁶⁶ also survive of Gregory's sermons. The work on Ezechiel is in some ways different to that on the Gospels, as these sermons were almost certainly preached in front of an audience that was predominantly monastic.⁶⁷ His *Gospel Homilies*, in contrast, were preached to a wide audience, including lay people, of anyone who attended his services.⁶⁸ These are shorter and different in type to the *Moralia*, although as shall be discussed, in some ways they are a bridge between the *Moralia* and the *Dialogues*. Finally, the *Dialogues* are a collection of four books of miracles and saints' lives that Gregory completed around 593-4.⁶⁹

This thesis looks at all of Gregory's works, with a particular focus on the following: the *Moralia*, the *Dialogues*, the *Gospel Homilies*, and his letters. His homilies on the Song of Songs and Ezechiel are discussed where appropriate, and the ideas contained within his *Pastoral Care* inform the entire thesis. This latter work is also discussed when it is pertinent to do so. The work on 1 Kings is accepted as a twelfth-century forgery, and is therefore not discussed.⁷⁰

1.2 Scholarship on Gregory the Great

⁶³ E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved. The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 94. Song of Songs 1:9 (=Song of Songs 1:8 Vulg.)

⁶⁴ Matter, *Song of Songs*, 94.

⁶⁵ *Gregorius Magnus. Homiliae in evangelia [Hom. in Evang.]*, ed. R. Etaix, CCSL 141 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1999).

⁶⁶ *Gregorius Magnus. Homiliae in Hiezechihelam prophetam [Hom. in Ezech.]*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCSL 152 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971).

⁶⁷ Robert Gillet, 'Grégoire le Grand', in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*, ed. Marcel Viller et al, 17 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1967), 6: 872-910, at p. 878.

⁶⁸ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, 52.

⁶⁹ See pp. 113-117 below.

⁷⁰ See Adalbert De Vogüé, 'L'Auteur du Commentaire des Rois attribué à saint Grégoire le Grand: un moine de Cava?', *Revue Benedictine* 106 (1996): 319-31. Its status as a forgery – even with some Gregorian material within it – is now accepted by many scholars. For instance: Moorhead, *Gregory*, 17.

Gregory the Great is a figure of international scholarly interest.⁷¹ He has been viewed as possessing great practical wisdom and skill⁷² and as an administrator who transformed the organisation of the papacy;⁷³ his spiritual achievements have also been recognised, earning him from one scholar the title of ‘doctor of contemplation’.⁷⁴ He has been understood as a man belonging to two worlds, that of the late antique fathers before him and the medieval authors that succeeded him.⁷⁵ He has been juxtaposed in another way too, this time geographically: it has been argued that he connected the east and the west, linking old and new Rome.⁷⁶ These varying assessments of his character, thought and pontificate largely result from the nature of the surviving sources, variations in national scholarship, and the developments in scholarship over time. In particular, many scholars have focussed on one particular aspect of his life or set of writings, and the main split has been between that which focusses on his politics (and thus his letters) and that which focusses on his theology (and thus his other writings). These have been termed ‘secularised’ and ‘spiritualised’ approaches.⁷⁷ These, however, are increasingly being brought together, and this thesis will analyse the devil in Gregory’s writings and thought from all of these angles.

There has, however, also been a degree of continuity in terms of some of the broader questions asked of Gregory’s works, which have frequently been of two main types: those exploring the origin, identity, and originality of his ideas, and those assessing the coherence of his thought or the presence, or not, of a unifying concept or system. There are, of course, other areas of debate, but these form the

⁷¹ For an idea of the extent of this scholarship see Robert Godding, *Bibliographia di Gregorio Magno (1890/1989)* (Rome, 1990) and Francesca Sora D’Impero, *Gregorio Magno: bibliografia per gli anni 1980-2003* (Firenze: SISMEL edizioni de Galluzzo, 2005). These bibliographies, which cover scholarship on Gregory in European languages for the years 1890-1989 and 1980-2003 respectively, are invaluable tools for all those researching this pope. For an assessment of the different ways in which Gregory’s character and achievements have been understood, see O’Donnell, ‘Holiness of Gregory’, 62-81.

⁷² Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:285.

⁷³ Jeffrey Richards, *Consul of God. The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

⁷⁴ Jean Leclercq, ‘The Teaching of St Gregory’ in *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, eds. Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke and Louis Bouyer (London: Burns & Oates, 1961, English translation 1968), 3-30, at p. 7.

⁷⁵ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, xii.

⁷⁶ Joan M. Petersen, *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), xx.

⁷⁷ One useful summary of Gregorian scholarship which discusses this division can be found in Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141. In this thesis, Leyser’s spelling has been anglicised from ‘secularized’ and ‘spiritualized’.

crux of much Gregorian scholarship and are the most salient to this study. Relevant aspects of the former will be discussed later in this introduction, but of the latter, scholars are increasingly seeing his works in some way as unified, whether in terms of method, content, or both.⁷⁸ This thesis, which considers a single idea within a representative sample of Gregory's works, will cover some of these questions in passing.

The strand of scholarship that has tended to focus on Gregory's pontificate, politics and evangelising missions has been particularly notable in British and German scholarship, concerned as this has hitherto been with Gregory's missions to the English and his administrative abilities. This 'secularised approach'⁷⁹ is evident in the work of scholars such as Walter Ullmann, Jeffrey Richards, and Holmes Dudden. These writers were particularly impressed with Gregory's administrative capabilities and less impressed with his intellectual ability. Dudden, for instance, called him 'a man of action, a great practical genius'⁸⁰ but subsequently devoted little space to his theology.⁸¹ Walter Ullmann's studies have likewise been from the perspective of power and the state,⁸² and it is in this vein that Richards extols Gregory's virtues in *Consul of God*.⁸³

Gregory's theological doctrines have also been investigated, often in terms of their relationship to the writings of previous church fathers.⁸⁴ Sometimes, however, Gregory's theology has not been properly contextualised with regards the genres in which they appear or the events of Gregory's life and times. This is understandably most evident in works written in the discipline of theology rather than history, and

⁷⁸ For instance, Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 431-435. Dagens sees a unity across Gregory's works from the point of view of content as well as method.

⁷⁹ The term coined by Leyser in Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 141.

⁸⁰ For two damning assessments of Gregory's intellectual abilities, see Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:285-6; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5:262.

⁸¹ Only a third of his second volume is devoted to theology: Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:283-443.

⁸² For example, see Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1972) and Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages. A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1955).

⁸³ Richards, *Consul of God*.

⁸⁴ For instance, George Demacopoulos has recently looked into Gregory's theology of salvation, and has argued for a greater appreciation of the influence of eastern, rather than Augustinian, theology upon him: George Demacopoulos, 'The Soteriology of Pope Gregory I: A Case Against the Augustinian Interpretation', *American Benedictine Review* 54:3 (2003): 312-27, at p. 327, *passim*.

can be seen, for instance, in a series of theses published in America in the 1950s.⁸⁵ The approach in these has been to identify a topic, extract relevant passages, put them into a coherent order, and then to issue what might be said to amount to a statement of Gregory's beliefs.⁸⁶ The flaw of this approach is that it is usually done without any discussion of how these ideas were presented in Gregory's works, and almost as if the beliefs discussed were laid out clearly, were properly formulated, and were never contradictory. Like Dudden's section on theology, these works serve as useful reference tools which set out in an ordered way various aspects of Gregory's theological thought. For present purposes such works which are concerned with traditional theological questions (particularly specific, discrete, matters of doctrine) can be called 'theological' (as opposed to 'spiritualised').⁸⁷ The flaw with such rigidly 'theological' approaches is that they are rather traditional in their ordering of material, categorisation of ideas, and in the subject of the questions they ask.

An additional strand of scholarship has been concerned with Gregory's monastic spirituality. This has been particularly evident in the works of Benedictine authors such as Butler and Leclercq, whose writings have explored Gregory's ideas about contemplation and his practice of *lectio divina*.⁸⁸ However, more recently Conrad Leyser has incorporated understanding of Gregory's monastic spirituality with what is known about his actions as pastor, offering a wider and more nuanced assessment of the inter-relationship between Gregory's beliefs and actions.⁸⁹

France has been a particular vanguard in studies which focus on Gregory's spirituality and thought, and has provided some of the frameworks within which many scholars now discuss and think about Gregory's works.⁹⁰ A prime example of

⁸⁵ For instance: Ignatius Fonash, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment in the Writings of Saint Gregory the Great* (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1952); Neil Sharkey, *Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power* (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1950); Joseph McClain, *The Doctrine of Heaven in the Writings of Saint Gregory the Great* (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1956).

⁸⁶ It is possible that the confessional stance of these particular works influenced the manner in which the authors sought a coherent theology.

⁸⁷ Straw has termed such an approach in its less modern incarnation 'neoscholastic'. However, she did so perjoratively and when referring to older works, so it is not the best term to use here: Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 18. It is here being proposed that a third category – that of a 'theological' approach – should be added to the 'secularised' and 'spiritualised' approaches that Leyser has identified.

⁸⁸ Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 65-92; Leclercq, 'Teaching of St Gregory', 3-30. *Lectio divina* and contemplation will be discussed in chapter 6. See pp. 96-7 below.

⁸⁹ See, for instance, Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 131-187.

⁹⁰ For instance, Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*.

this is Paul Aubin's exploration of the concepts of interiority and exteriority in the *Moralia*,⁹¹ a model that has since been explored in Gregory's other works and within the context of a variety of studies.⁹² Aubin investigated Gregory's vocabulary, particularly his use of words such as *interior*, *intra*, *exterior*, and *foris*.⁹³ He argued that Gregory's pervasive use of such words betrayed some of his fundamental beliefs.⁹⁴ Indeed, Dagens has discussed how Gregory frequently used terms such as *intus* and *foris* when speaking of the spiritual life or on morality, and how these concepts dominated Gregory's perspective and the structure of his theological discourse.⁹⁵ Thus, for instance, Gregory spoke of humanity's fall in terms of men and women exiting themselves and humanity's consequent repentance and contemplation in terms of their re-participation in interior joys.⁹⁶ These notions also shaped his discussion of the active and contemplative lives.⁹⁷ The centrality of interiority to Gregory's spiritual doctrine⁹⁸ will be shown to have relevance to his ideas and ways of speaking about the devil, particularly in chapter 4 on the *Dialogues*.

In a similar vein, Straw has argued for the importance of the paradoxical relationship between complementarity and opposition in Gregory's thought.⁹⁹ Straw argues that various ideas, such as the spiritual and carnal, are complementary whilst also being opposites in Gregory's thought. Furthermore, the level of reciprocity and complementarity – that is, how much the polarities aid each other – varies according to which polarity is being considered.¹⁰⁰ Thus, in Straw's scheme the weakest degree of reconciliation is between God and the devil:¹⁰¹ there is complementarity because

⁹¹ Paul Aubin, 'Intériorité et Extériorité dans les *Moralia* In Job de Saint Grégoire le Grand', *Recherches de science religieuse* 62 (1974): 117-166.

⁹² Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, *passim*. This idea was expanded upon by Claude Dagens as part of his study into Gregory and Christian culture, in which he argued for the centrality of certain concepts in Gregory's thought. 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* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2007), 102-113, *passim*; Jean Laporte, 'Une théologie systématique chez Grégoire?' in *Grégoire le Grand*, eds. Jacques Fontaine, Robert Gillet and Stan Pellistrandi (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1986), 235-243.

⁹³ Aubin, 'Intériorité et Extériorité', 118-119. Aubin's work is principally a study into Gregory's use of this vocabulary, which he lists in detail in his appendices. He identifies 2,486 places in which such words occur.

⁹⁴ Aubin, 'Intériorité et Extériorité', 117.

⁹⁵ Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 165-6.

⁹⁶ Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 165. See *Mor.* 7.2.2 (1:335).

⁹⁷ Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 135.

⁹⁸ Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 136, *passim*.

⁹⁹ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 257-260.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 20, 258 (image).

the devil is the *exactor* of God,¹⁰² but the reconciliation is less than that which is found between, for instance, the active and contemplative lives, as the relationship between these opposites is more balanced and reciprocal.¹⁰³ The relationship between God and the devil is therefore more oppositional than complementary, although it contains elements of both. These ideas and arguments will be discussed in this thesis where relevant.

This interest in the conceptual structures that shaped Gregory's perceptions and beliefs (the 'spiritualised approach') has now been a part of scholarship in the English-speaking world for several decades. Straw has justified this way of studying Gregory:

The uniqueness and originality of Gregory's thought and his contribution to the later tradition of medieval spirituality have yet to be appreciated, perhaps because of the methods so often used to examine his works... Form and content, structure and idea are inseparable in Gregory's writings, more so than for many early Christian theologians. To understand Gregory's message, one must focus on the mental processes and the various configurations of ideas that structure his thought, for these patterns determine the very definitions and prescriptions he gives for the spiritual life.¹⁰⁴

As part of this, Straw argues that one must study incidental and implicit information as well as the explicit argument in Gregory's works.¹⁰⁵ She continues:

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.¹⁰⁶

According to Straw, all of this allows the scholar to understand the assumptions, values, intuitions and judgements that shaped Gregory's thought.¹⁰⁷

The 1997 work of R.A. Markus¹⁰⁸ also marked a watershed in English-language scholarship because it combined the two approaches to Gregory that had

¹⁰² Ibid., 257.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 257-260. See p. 258 for an image which shows Straw's argument in diagram form.

¹⁰⁴ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁵ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 17.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Markus, *Gregory the Great*.

hitherto most usually been undertaken separately: that which was concerned with Gregory's administration and evangelisation missions, and that which was concerned with his thought.¹⁰⁹ At the beginning of his magisterial work Markus set out this new, integrated approach he intended to adopt. This is worth quoting in full:

In this book I am trying to portray Gregory in his proper setting. Gregory lived in late sixth-century Rome, with a brief spell in Constantinople. His world was sixth-century Europe. We live, however, in several worlds: not only the world we see and hear and act in and upon; but also the world of our imagination, perceptions, representations and ideas. The worlds we live in are not separate; they interpenetrate unpredictably. In calling this book *Gregory the Great and his World* I had all these in mind. To come to grips with his work, we need to place him firmly in both his worlds: the social reality and the intellectual and imaginative construct.¹¹⁰

This integrated approach, incorporating what is known about Gregory's external world as well as his intellectual inheritance, has been a leap forward in Gregorian scholarship. It breaks down the barrier between what is believed and the assumptions and thought-processes that shape these beliefs, and what is perceived in the world and the principles and reasoning that guide real-life actions within it. In acknowledging that the political world in which Gregory lived affected the intellectual landscape of his thought, Markus has been able to provide a broader and more nuanced analysis of Gregory's life and thought.

These arguments and areas of enquiry are extremely important for this analysis of the devil in Gregory's thought. The question of whether or not any unity can be discerned across his works, and if so the identity of this unity – such as in content, style or conceptual structure – is one that this thesis will touch upon due to the nature of the study. Many of the conclusions of this thesis will intersect with the larger arguments that continue to be waged over his life and works, and whilst this study will not answer them in their entirety it will offer perspectives on these questions from the angle of Gregory's ideas about the devil. What has been written on these questions therefore both inform this thesis and will come to be informed by it. Furthermore, the principle that research on Gregory is more nuanced if it

¹⁰⁹ See Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 141.

¹¹⁰ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, xi.

combines an understanding of Gregory's intellectual as well as his political inheritance is adopted in this thesis, and the links between the two with relation to his ideas on the devil will be explored, particularly in chapter 6. It is because this thesis is adopting such a dual approach that the next part of this introduction sets out both the political world in which Gregory lived and the intellectual ideas that he inherited.

1.2.1 Political Context: Gregory's Life and Times

Gregory was born in c.540 to a wealthy senatorial family.¹¹¹ Several of his ancestors had been popes or otherwise involved in the administration of the church,¹¹² and, after one of the best educations on offer in Italy at the time,¹¹³ he himself became prefect of Rome in 573.¹¹⁴ At his father's death, however, he decided to abandon the secular life and used his family estates to found six monasteries in Sicily and a seventh in Rome, giving the rest of his possessions to the poor.¹¹⁵ Gregory would reside in this latter monastery of Saint Andrew on the Coelian Hill from approximately 573, which he later described as one of the best times of his life.¹¹⁶ His happy repose there was interrupted in 579, however, when he was ordered by the pope to go to Constantinople as *apocrisiarius* (representative) to the emperor. With him he took some of his fellow monks from Saint Andrew's, to whom he dictated lessons on the book of Job that he would later write down in the form of the *Moralia*. He was recalled to Rome around 585/6, when he returned to his monastery. In 590 Pope Pelagius II died of the plague, and Gregory was elected to the pontificate.

Many of Gregory's ideas about the devil were shaped by the events and experiences of his life and, in their turn, these beliefs influenced his interpretation of

¹¹¹ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 3, 8. The precise date of his birth is uncertain, but due to evidence in his *Dialogues* it is likely that he was born in 545 at the latest: Dudden, *Gregory*, 1:3-4. For his ancestry, see Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks [LH]* 10.1, found in *Gregorii episcopi turonensis libri historiarum X*, eds. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica [MGH]. Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum [SRM]* (Hannover: Impensis Biblioplii Hahniani, 1951), 478.

¹¹² Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 8. Felix III (483-92) was Gregory's great-great-grandfather, and Agapetus (535-6) may also have been a relative of his.

¹¹³ Gregory of Tours, *LH* 10.1, p. 478.

¹¹⁴ Dudden, *Gregory*, 1:101-104.

¹¹⁵ Gregory of Tours, *LH* 10.1, pp. 477-8.

¹¹⁶ Gregory, *Epistola ad Leandrum [Ep. ad Leandrum]*, 1, found in Marcus Adriaen eds., *Mor.*, 1:1-7, at pp. 1-2. This letter is listed as Ep. 5.53a in the MGH edition and can also be found as Ep. 5.53a in Martyn, *Letters*, 2:379-385.

worldly events and the actions he took as pope. There are several features of his life and times that are particularly relevant to this study. These form the background for chapter 6 which deals with the impact that Gregory's ideas had on his conduction of the papacy, and are discussed below.

The first of these is the war and dislocation that formed the backdrop to his life and papacy. Gregory's early childhood would have been overshadowed by the Gothic Wars (535-554) between the Ostrogoths and the armies of the emperor Justinian.¹¹⁷ These wars completely devastated Italy and its fiscal system, and the story of the Gothic king Theodoric being thrown into the fires of hell in Gregory's *Dialogues* may well be an indication of Gregory's feelings about this Arian king.¹¹⁸ Whilst the emperor's attempted reconquest of the west ended in 554, this did not spell the beginning of unbroken peace for Italy. On the contrary, war would be a constant for much of Gregory's life, as after barely a decade of peace Italy again came under attack, this time from the Lombards in 568.¹¹⁹ Gregory's pontificate would be overshadowed by this occupation of the northern Italian lands by the Arian Lombards, and these things resulted in Gregory assuming responsibility for much of the secular administration in Rome.¹²⁰ During his papacy he took charge of the refugees who fled to Rome; negotiated with the invaders; dealt with sieges, paid armies and brought about truces; and handed care of certain sees to Ravenna because he could not communicate with them due to the Lombard-occupied lands. In 554 Italy came under the legal jurisdiction of the Byzantine emperor, whose representative (exarch) resided at Ravenna, where Gregory also maintained his own

¹¹⁷ For more information about these wars and for a history of the Italian peninsula at this time see Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy. Central Power and Local Society 400-1000* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1989, first published 1981 by The Macmillan Press Ltd). For a history of Rome see Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (New York: Praeger, 1971) and Richard Krauthamer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 59-87.

¹¹⁸ *Dial.* 4.31.2-3 (3:104). It also may well have been intended as a show of loyalty towards the emperor, whose predecessor Justinian had been Theodoric's enemy, and under whose authority Rome lay at this time.

¹¹⁹ Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome. A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 140.

¹²⁰ This assumption of secular and governmental responsibilities by the local bishop (in this case the pope) was not unique to Rome at this time. For a wider perspective on this topic, see J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137-167, *passim* and 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. Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600*, eds. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 207-237. See also Bryan Ward-Perkins, 'The Cities' in *The Cambridge Ancient History. Vol. 13. Late empire, A.D. 337-425*, eds. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 371-410.

representative.¹²¹ Much of the business of defending Rome and the surrounding territory fell to Gregory, however, and the inter-relationship between Gregory's beliefs about the devil and these cataclysmic events will be explored in chapters 5 and 6.

A second circumstance affecting Gregory's ideas about the devil was the presence of heresy, schism and paganism in Italy and the world beyond. However, whilst that outside Italy had an effect (particularly with regards his evangelising missions), this was not quite as immediate or pressing as that which was geographically close to Gregory and which took up much of his day-to-day business.¹²² The Lombards, who had attacked in 568 and engaged in warfare and skirmishes with the imperial forces throughout this period, were Arian. The presence of this heresy and a rival Arian episcopacy in the northern Italian lands meant that Gregory had to remain alert to apostasy and defective pastoral care amongst Catholic bishops; the relevance of this situation with Gregory's ideas about the devil will be discussed in the last chapter. Furthermore, the metropolitan sees of Aquileia and Milan had broken off communion with Rome as a result of the Three Chapters controversy, and dissent towards Rome's acceptance of the condemnation of the Three Chapters tended to survive in areas occupied by the Lombards.¹²³ Thus, this schism provided further necessity for vigilance on top of that required against the Arian heresy. The juncture of these problems of heresy and schism in northern Italy with Gregory's conception of the relationship between bishops, the church and the devil will be discussed in chapter 6 on Gregory's letters and actions as pope.

A third circumstance which affected and was affected by Gregory's conception of the devil was his relationship with the east, namely, with the emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople. Constantinople was, like Rome, a patriarchate, and had

¹²¹ For more on Gregory's relationship with the emperor's representative (exarch) and the archbishop of Ravenna, see R.A. Markus, 'Ravenna and Rome, 554-604', *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 566-578. Markus does not believe that Gregory was jealous of the See of Ravenna, but that he nonetheless had difficulties both with the exarchs and archbishops that he had dealings with. See also Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 147-156.

¹²² The larger presence of Italian problems in his everyday business is evident from his correspondence. Unsurprisingly, after those to lands in southern Italy and the suburbicarian bishoprics, the vast majority of his letters were sent to northern Italy (excluding Ravenna), which were those places most affected by the Lombards and schism. For the distribution of Gregory's correspondence, see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, Appendix, 206-9.

¹²³ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 126-7.

been placed second to Rome at the Council of Chalcedon (451).¹²⁴ Gregory's belief about the place, purpose and role of the bishopric of Rome in Christianity, the pentarchy and the world can be discerned in his dealings with fellow patriarchs and the representative of secular authority. Gregory's understanding of the role of the devil in society and the church, and the effect of this of his conception of Roman primacy, will be explored in chapter 6.

War, heresy and schism therefore formed the backdrop to Gregory's life and pontificate. The profound effects that these had on his ideas about the devil and *vice versa* will be discussed mostly in chapter 6, on Gregory's letters and actions as pope, but also partly in chapter 5, which touches on some of his eschatology.

1.2.2 Intellectual Context: Gregory's Education and Literary Debts

Gregory the Great's contemporary, Gregory of Tours, said that the pope was so educated in grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric that he was second to none in the city.¹²⁵ Beyond this the details of Gregory's education are unclear.¹²⁶ Gregory lived and wrote in a changing world, and the education available to him was very different than that which he would have received some sixty years before.¹²⁷ Indeed, it has been claimed that

In Western Europe the late sixth century marks a real break with the world of antiquity, closed off access to much of its intellectual culture,

¹²⁴ See the controversial 28th Canon of the Council of Chalcedon in Richard Price and Michael Gaddis eds., *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 3:91. See also the discussion in Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, 'Introduction', in Price and Gaddis eds., *Council of Chalcedon*, 1:1-85, at pp. 50-1.

¹²⁵ 'Litteris grammaticis dialecticisque ac rethoricis ita est institutus ut nulli in Urbe ipse putaretur esse secundus': Gregory of Tours, *LH* 10.1, p. 478.

¹²⁶ On Gregory's education see M.L.W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe, A.D. 500 to 900* (New York: L. MacVeagh, The Dial Press, 1931), 74-82; Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West. From the Sixth through the Eighth Century*, trans. John J. Contreni (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1976, Original French edition published in 1962), 143-57.

¹²⁷ In 535 Cassiodorus had had ambitions to found a Christian university in Rome in conjunction with pope Agapetus (r. 535-536). This plan, however, never came to fruition due to the wars, when Cassiodorus left for the east. However, it appears that pope Agapetus did manage to set up a library in Rome (perhaps intended for the university), and once he returned, Cassiodorus also set up a library in southern Italy at the monastery of Vivarium. For general information on these things see Riché, *Education and Culture*, 132-135; James O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 179-81. For their relationship to Gregory see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 10, 34-35.

and even more drastically, to its ways of looking at, understanding and speaking about that world.¹²⁸

The Gothic Wars had had an adverse effect on the intellectual culture of Rome, as it had caused many of its great families to move away and abandon intellectual projects.¹²⁹ It is therefore difficult to take (for instance) what is known about Cassiodorus' education and manuscript access and apply it to Gregory, although it is possible to make some tentative claims. There were certainly some continuities regarding the education that was available in Rome,¹³⁰ and it is likely that Gregory was schooled in classical literature, rhetoric, and Roman law.¹³¹ Whilst in some of his writings he expresses general disdain towards pagan learning, this should not be taken as indicating that he was totally against it in all circumstances.¹³² His precise knowledge of particular authors remains difficult to ascertain, however, as Gregory did not quote directly from works other than scripture¹³³ or indicate his sources in any way.¹³⁴ This problem can be tackled by examining his work for possible allusions to and borrowings from earlier authors,¹³⁵ and thinking about this within

¹²⁸ R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 222. Contrary to this, Riché has sought to downplay the intellectual changes that occurred in Rome during this period and has argued that in his education and learning Gregory was a man of 'Antiquity': Riché, *Education and Culture*, 144-5, 152.

¹²⁹ Markus, *Ancient Christianity*, 218.

¹³⁰ Riché, *Education and Culture*, 140-145.

¹³¹ John R.C. Martyn, 'Introduction', in Martyn ed., *Letters*, 1:1-116, at p. 2. His education probably involved studying authors such as Virgil, Horace, Cicero, and perhaps some Homer and Plato. Gregory also names some pagan authors in his *Moralia*. (Hesiod, Aratus and Callimachus). See Gillet, 'Introduction', in *Moralia in Job*, trans. André de Gaudemaris (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1975), 7-113, at pp. 82-3, 103-9.

¹³² Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 36-39; Riché, *Education and Culture*, 152-157. In a letter to bishop Desiderius of Vienne, Gregory said that praises of Jove and of Christ cannot proceed from the same lips: *Ep.* 11.34 (2:922). However, to what extent this was an example of Gregory employing a common *topos* or was said specifically with Desiderius' episcopal status in mind – meaning that it was because he was a bishop that it was inappropriate – is not clear. In his letter to Leander, he wrote that in the *Moralia* he would not submit to the rules of Donatus, pointing out that the authors of holy scripture did not either: *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 5 (1:7). In *Ep.* 7.9 (1:458) he tells John, bishop of Syracuse not to have his (Gregory's) writings read out during meals, but those of ancient writers instead. Whether this refers to ancient Christian or Pagan writers is unclear, however. In sum, it is likely that Gregory tolerated study of pagan literature as long as it could be used to aid the study of Christian texts: Riché, *Education and Culture*, 157.

¹³³ Gillet, 'Introduction', 82; Moorhead, *Gregory*, 31-32.

¹³⁴ Moorhead, *Gregory*, 31-32. This difficulty in establishing his borrowings with a degree of certainty is almost universally recognised amongst scholars working on Gregory: Moorhead has said that because of this, it can be difficult to place Gregory in the context of preceding Christian thought. Moorhead, *Gregory the Great*, 31.

¹³⁵ Gillet has divided his findings on Gregory's sources in to explicit citations and named authors on the one hand, and implicit borrowings on the other. He has found that all explicit citations of previous works come from scripture: Gillet, 'Introduction', 81-109, espec. p. 82. However, given that explicit citation was rare in ancient literature, this may not be surprising: *Ibid.*, 83.

the context of what texts might have been circulating in late sixth-century Italy. Whilst this thesis is not primarily concerned with identifying Gregory's relevant intellectual debts, some appreciation of this is necessary.

Gregory had some knowledge (whether directly, indirectly, in whole or in part) of patristic works, including those of Augustine,¹³⁶ Cassian,¹³⁷ Ambrose,¹³⁸ Jerome¹³⁹ and Origen.¹⁴⁰ Of these, Augustine and Cassian appear to have been the biggest influences on him,¹⁴¹ although this was a general rather than specific reliance, as it is similarities rather than direct borrowings that are usually discerned.

Gregory's knowledge of Greek and of Greek works (whether in the original or in translation) is also a subject of much debate.¹⁴² Of most relevance to this study,

¹³⁶ In a letter to Innocent, praetorian prefect of Africa, Gregory recommended Augustine's works in place of his own. From this it is evident that Gregory both knew of (some of) his works and that he held him in great esteem; it is not known which of Augustine's writings he had read, however. See *Ep.* 10.16 (2:845). The effect of Augustine on Gregory has been explored by Carole Straw, who sees it as profound: Carole Straw, 'Gregory the Great', in *St. Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999): 402-5. Possible borrowings and allusions that have been identified by previous scholars and which are relevant here include: *De Civitate Dei*: R.A. Markus, 'The Latin Fathers' in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 92-122, at pp. 120-121; *De Trinitate, Sermones, De libero arbitrio, Enchiridion and In Joannis Evangelium*: Gillet, 'Introduction', 86-9.

¹³⁷ Gillet, 'Introduction', 89-97. Gregory's knowledge of Augustine and Cassian is generally agreed upon by scholars. For instance, see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 35.

¹³⁸ Gregory referred to Saint Ambrose (although did not mention his works) in a letter to the priests, deacons and clergy of Milan in 600: *Ep.* 11.6 (2:868). Gillet observes that some features in Ambrose (who wrote *De interpellatione Job et David*), whose ideas themselves come from the broader Greco-Roman tradition, can be found in the *Moralia*: Gillet, 'Introduction', 84-5.

¹³⁹ Many of Gregory's interpretations of names in Job come from Jerome: Gillet, 'Introduction', 85.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory is thought to have known Origen's work on *Song of Songs*. See Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 35, n. 7; Meyvaert, 'A New Commentary', 220.

¹⁴¹ For general remarks on their influence on Gregory's conceptual structures (Augustine) and spirituality (Cassian): Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 40. For an analysis of implicit citations and textual similarities between Gregory and these two writers in the *Moralia*: Gillet, 'Introduction', 86-89 [Augustine], 89-93 [Cassian]. Gillet also compares Cassian and Gregory on the vices: Gillet, 'Introduction', 93-97 [pride and humility], 97-100 [greed], 100-101 [anger], 101-102 [points where there are different].

¹⁴² See Joan M. Petersen, 'Did Gregory the Great Know Greek?', *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976): 121-134. In this Petersen argued that Gregory did, in fact, know Greek, contrary to previous scholarly opinion. However, she later revised her views on Gregory's knowledge of the Greek language, arguing that his knowledge of it was considerably less than she had believed earlier, and that he was reliant for many of his interpretations on Augustine, Jerome, and Eucherius of Lyons. See Joan M. Petersen, "'Homo omnino Latinus'?" The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great', *Speculum* 62:3 (1987): 529-551, at p. 529. She has, however, attempted to demonstrate the influence of various Greek works on Gregory's writings: Petersen, 'The Influence of Origen'. Markus believes Gregory knew of Greek writers in translation: Markus, 'The Latin Fathers', 117. Recently, Matthew Dal Santo has argued that Gregory wrote as part of a common Greek and Latin culture: Matthew Dal Santo, "Gregory the Great and Eustratius of Constantinople: *The Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* as an Apology for the Cult of Saints", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17, no. 3 (2009): 421-457, at p. 423. See also G.J.M. Bartelink, 'Pope Gregory the Great's Knowledge of Greek', trans. Paul Meyvaert, in Cavadini ed., *Gregory the Great*,

however, is his knowledge, opinion and use of Origen. This is for two reasons: first, because of Origen's part-heretical diabolology;¹⁴³ and secondly, because of Origen's allegorical method of exegesis.¹⁴⁴ Gregory seems to have had some knowledge of Origen in Latin translation, particularly his homilies and commentary on the Song of Songs; indeed, his own work on the book displays evidence of a knowledge of Origen.¹⁴⁵ In fact, Paul Meyvaert has argued that at times Gregory seems to be doing nothing more than paraphrasing Origen or using Origen as a cue from which to develop his own thoughts.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Gregory believed that heretics mixed truth and error and he was not averse to picking valuable ideas from their words as long as that which was erroneous was discarded.

For Gregory's debts to late antique hagiography, one should turn to the footnotes of De Vogüé's SC edition of Gregory's *Dialogues*, which lists many of the possible borrowings; listing all possible borrowings is unnecessary here, but these will be indicated throughout the thesis as necessary. The literary sources for the *Dialogues* will be discussed in more depth in the relevant chapter, but it is important to make clear at this point that Gregory was not writing in a vacuum. Other hagiographic works that Gregory seems to have had access to and which are relevant here include Athanasius' *Life of Antony*. He also appears to have been influenced by other works such as that of Pachomius. It had also previously been argued that there was a close connection between the stories in Gregory's *Dialogues* and those in the *Gesta Martyrum*.¹⁴⁷ However, more recent opinion sees only a grain of truth in this assertion.¹⁴⁸ His knowledge of Benedict's *Rule* has been debated, although most now accept that he knew it, even if he did not follow it.¹⁴⁹

(Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 117-136. It is older studies that accept without question Gregory's statements that he knew no Greek at face value: Dudden, *Gregory*, 1:153-4.

¹⁴³ See below, p. 39.

¹⁴⁴ See below, pp. 62-3.

¹⁴⁵ Meyvaert, 'A New Edition of Gregory the Great's Commentaries on the Canticle and I Kings', *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s 19 (1968), 215-225, at p. 220.

¹⁴⁶ Meyvaert, 'A New Edition', pp. 220-1. This finding has been reiterated in Petersen, 'Influence of Origen', 346.

¹⁴⁷ Albert Dufourcq, *Étude sur les Gesta Martyrum Romains*, 3 vols. (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1900-1910), 3 [1907]: 62-3. He argues that some of the stories involving hell-fire came from the same traditional material as that found in the *Gesta martyrum*. He perceives a similarity between the two sets of work (Ibid., 3:294-5). He writes that: 'il y a une étroite solidarité entre les Gestes et les *Dialogues*: ces deux séries de textes se complètent et s'éclairent l'une l'autre; leur rapprochement permet de reconstituer l'ensemble du mouvement légendaire dont les *Dialogues* ne donnaient qu'un fragment.' (Ibid., 3:294-5. Dufourcq's italics).

¹⁴⁸ Petersen, *Dialogues*, 88-9.

¹⁴⁹ See p. 119 note 33 below.

These arguments regarding Gregory's appropriation of various works can be strengthened or weakened by an understanding of what manuscripts *might* have been available to Gregory at this time. From his letters it is evident that Gregory had access to the archives of the church in addition to separate libraries in Rome.¹⁵⁰ It is also likely that Gregory had access to some of the books from the library set up by Pope Agapetus, next to which Gregory's monastery of Saint Andrew's would later be founded.¹⁵¹ It is almost certain that Gregory knew of this library, and it is possible that he had its books transferred to the Lateran.¹⁵² However, it is not known how many works survived the Gothic Wars, or, if they did, what they were, whether they were accessible, and where they were stored. It is also possible, although perhaps less likely, that some of the many works in southern Italy at Vivarium¹⁵³ were available to Gregory.¹⁵⁴ In spite of current lack of knowledge regarding his access to specific texts, however, where textual allusions to works known to have been

¹⁵⁰ *Ep.* 8.28 (2:549-50). According to this letter Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, had asked Gregory for a copy of Eusebius' *Acts of the Martyrs*. Gregory, however, had not been able to find this, either in the archives of the church or the libraries of the city of Rome: 'Praeter illa enim quae in eiusdem eusebii libris de gestis sanctorum martyrum continentur nulla in archiuo huius nostrae ecclesiae uel in romanae urbis bibliothecis esse cognoui, nisi pauca quaedam in unius codicis uolumine collecta.' [My italics]: *Ep.* 8.28 (2:549). The way in which this is worded (see italics) suggests that the archives of the church should be considered as separate from the other libraries (which are referred to in the plural) that also served Rome. Indeed, Rome had previously been well-served by private libraries (Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 34-5), but given that many of the Roman elite, including Cassiodorus, left Rome for the east during this time, it is difficult to ascertain what works, if any, would still have been available. Some of Cassiodorus' books had also been destroyed in the wars (Riché, *Education and Culture*, 134). On the church's library itself, it is unlikely that the church had a library separate from the papal archives before the seventh century (Riché, *Education and Culture*, 131-2). This would seem to be corroborated by Gregory's reference to the church's *archiuum* rather than its *bibliotheca*.

¹⁵¹ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 10.

¹⁵² O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, 183. It is not clear, however, how many of these works survived the Gothic Wars or, if they did, whether they were accessible and exactly where they were stored. Not everyone agrees that Gregory would have transferred the books from this library to that at the Lateran. See Riché, *Education and Culture*, 134, n. 219.

¹⁵³ This library contained Latin, Greek, and pagan works: Lorenzo Viscido, 'Augustinian Works Available in the Vivarium Library (6th Century)', *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984): 35-39; O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, 185; Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres Grecques en Occident: de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1948). There is not total agreement between Viscido on the one hand and O'Donnell and Courcelle on the other regarding the presence of particular Augustinian works (such as his anti-Manichean writings) in Vivarium. Viscido is less convinced that there is a connection between what is mentioned in Cassiodorus' *Institutes* and what was available in Vivarium: Viscido, 'Augustinian Works', 36.

¹⁵⁴ Gregory was in contact with monasteries in Squillace and at one point wrote to Vivarium. Whether or not this contact included the transfer of manuscripts is unknown, but its geographical distance and the presence of the Lombards in southern Italy was clearly not a complete barrier to communication. See *Ep.* 8.32 (2:555-557) and *Ep.* 8.30 (2:553). Gregory had received a petition from the monks there, including one complaining that a bishop had removed certain things from the monastery, in the guise of a gift. What this was, and whether this consisted of manuscripts, is uncertain. Riché believes that Gregory had access to Vivarium texts: Riché, *Education and Culture*, 153-4, 175.

circulating in Cassiodorus' day do occur (or seem to occur) in Gregory's works, a case can certainly be made for some sort of transmission; but it remains that little can be said with complete certainty. As to understand how and why Gregory came to portray the devil in the ways that he did requires putting his writings and what he says about the devil within the literary context of late antique exegesis and hagiography, where relevant and appropriate, possible literary debts regarding Gregory's portrayal of the devil will be discussed and assessed throughout this thesis.

In conclusion, therefore, whilst Gregory's education and access to patristic texts is not entirely known, it can be stated with certainty that he had a knowledge of some writings – in some form – of authors such as Augustine, Cassian and Ambrose, and a knowledge of hagiographic literature, particularly the *Life of Antony*. The difficulties in ascertaining precise borrowings mean that it will not always be possible to state with certainty how Gregory came to discuss the devil at a particular time – because of his own thoughts or because someone else's work dictated that he should do so – but it is argued here that if there is a possibility that a work, part of a work, or orally-transmitted knowledge of a work was possibly available in late sixth-century Rome, and a part of Gregory's work seems to be indebted to it, then it is entirely possible, if not likely, that some form of debt or influence is there. To determine the exact extent of this debt, however, would not only be impossible but also outside the aims of this thesis. The evidence available to the historian combined with the aims of this thesis mean that references to possible allusions, where these can be ascertained, will suffice.

1.3 The Approach of this Thesis

This thesis will be an exploration of the devil in Gregory's exegetical, hagiographical and homiletic works, and his invocation and use of the figure in his correspondence. Whilst it will offer a description and analysis of the main points that Gregory makes about the devil, thus consisting in part of a 'theological' approach, it is not intended that it will only consist of a selection of statements on the devil put into a coherent order. Rather, many of these will be put into context, and steps will be taken, where possible, to identify those ideas that were uppermost in Gregory's mind. Furthermore, with regards Gregory's thought (and particularly the *Moralia*),

Straw's call for the interconnections between his different ideas to be sought out and understood will be heeded as far as is possible. In light of the exegetical method that shaped his works (see below), these links and structures will be determined, or part-determined, in this thesis. It will thus in part employ the ideas proposed in works following the 'spiritualised' approach, and will attempt to view the place of the devil within Gregory's spirituality and thought as a whole. Finally, the thesis will look at Gregory's letters and explore how these ideas, if at all, affected his actions in the world, both with ecclesiastical and secular figures. Thus, it will conclude by looking at how one idea manifested itself in his everyday life, and the influence of his intellectual and political worlds upon one another.

1.3.1 Plan of the Thesis

This thesis is an extended analysis of the devil in Gregory's writings, taking into consideration his exegetical, homiletic and hagiographical works in addition to his correspondence. It thus also explores the relationship between his abstract beliefs and his perceptions of and actions in the real world. The approach to be taken is indebted to late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century developments in Gregorian and hagiographic scholarship.

It begins with an introduction to the devil in scripture and patristic thought which discusses the often ambiguous nature of the devil (or Satan) in the bible and the development of a coherent narrative about him in the writings of the church fathers. This chapter is in recognition of the fact that scripture and patristic writings formed the backbone of early medieval understanding about the devil, not least in the works of Gregory the Great. Chapter 3 looks at the devil in the *Moralia* and forms the theological backbone of the thesis. After introducing the genre and giving an outline of Gregory's main beliefs about the devil, the first part identifies and analyses some of his main ideas, such as about the involvement of the devil in sin and temptation and the power of God over the devil. Much of this involves the relationship of the devil to the individual. It also explores some of the models he employs and discusses them with regards his typological mode of thinking and consequent non-linear (or multi-dimensional) conception of history. Part two of the chapter attempts a more thematic assessment of the place of the devil in Gregory's thought by paying particular attention to his exegesis and method of *lectio divina*.

According to a particular method proposed in this section, the scriptural words and phrases that led him to discuss the devil or to digress from a strict exegesis onto discussion of the devil are identified and analysed. In so doing the wider categories of prompts and associations – such as ideas to do with darkness or separation – that Gregory had in his mind regarding the devil are identified and understood.

The fourth chapter examines the role of devil in the saints' lives of the *Dialogues*, focussing particularly on books one and two, the most strictly hagiographical. It demonstrates the role of the devil in hagiogenesis before moving onto the relationship between contemplation and discernment in Gregory's thought. It explores the arguments that Gregory makes using the figure of the devil with regards religious communities and lay men and women, and also analyses Gregory's use of the devil as a narrative device and didactic tool. Books three and four of the *Dialogues* are discussed in the fifth chapter alongside the Gospel homilies. This chapter is concerned with the discursive passages of book three and the eschatological stories in book four. The influence of Gregory's exegesis on these other genres is demonstrated, and similarities and differences with the *Moralia* with regards diabolology are discussed. Furthermore, deathbed scenes involving the devil are discussed within the larger context of Gregory's thought.

The last research chapter uses Gregory's letters in order to explore how Gregory's ideas about the devil influenced his conception of his own role and how they influenced his actions as pope. It explores his ideas about the relationship between the devil and the church, after which the controversy relationship between the devil and the church, the controversy over the title of 'Ecumenical Patriarch' is taken as a case study to explore the manner in which his ideas affected his interpretation of events and his actions, given the beliefs that have been discussed previously.

The *Pastoral Care*, *Homilies on Ezechiel* and *Homilies on the Song of Songs* are discussed throughout the thesis where appropriate, often used as supplementary guides to interpreting or understanding Gregory's other works.

Chapter 2

THE DEVIL IN SCRIPTURE AND IN LATE ANTIQUE AND PATRISTIC THOUGHT

In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council declared as part of its confession of faith that

The devil and other demons were created by God naturally good, but they became evil by their own doing. Man, however, sinned at the prompting of the devil.¹

Such clear, official statements of belief about the devil were rare in the middle ages. Indeed, conciliar statements about the devil were so few and far between that this canon was quoted as the basis for current beliefs by Pope Paul VI in 1972.² When Gregory was writing, therefore, there was little official definition of the devil, although there were already rich scriptural, patristic, and hagiographic traditions. The most important official pronouncement (for the purposes of this thesis) came centuries earlier, when anaethemas had been promulgated against Origen's idea of *apocatastasis*, thus making clear that salvation will not offered to the devil and that his punishment will be eternal;³ other than this, however, the church hierarchy had been relatively uninterested in diabolology, other than where teachings touched on debates about the nature of God, Christ and the Trinity. Indeed, it has been suggested

¹ Norman P. Tanner ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 1:231.

² Kelly, *Satan*, 315-6.

³ The idea of *apocatastasis* held that all fallen rational creatures – stars, men and angels - will one day rise again to enjoy their pre-fallen state. That is, it includes the idea that the devil will, at the end of all things, be saved. On Origenism, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). For the idea of the devil's salvation from Clement of Alexandria and Origen onwards, see C.A. Patrides, 'The Salvation of Satan', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28:4 (1967): 467-478. In 553 the 11th Canon of the Second Council of Constantinople anaethematized Origen and his heretical works: Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 1:119. A further 15 anaethemas were promulgated against specific beliefs of his (or believed to have been his) including *apocatastasis*, although it is now believed that these anaethemas were made just before the proceedings of Constantinople II, and not technically at the council itself: Henry R. Percival ed. *The Seven Ecumenical Council of the Undivided Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 316-7 and Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, 110-111. For these 15 anathemas, see Percival, *Ecumenical Councils*, 318-20. The emperor Justinian also issued anaethemas against Origen, including one that Christ will not be crucified for demons as he was for men, and that a resoration of demons and impious men will not take place: Percival, *Ecumenical Councils*, 320. Origen had been condemned and debated various times previous to the sixth century: Karl Baus, Hans-Georg Beck, Eugen Ewig and Hermann Joseph Vogt, *History of the Church 2: The Imperial Church from Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Anselm Biggs (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 126.

that the statement from Lateran IV was intended as an affirmation by Innocent III against the Cathars and Albigensians.⁴ A similar phenomenon can be found in Augustine, as most of his thoughts on the devil are found in his anti-Manichean works.⁵ In both cases what was at stake was God's position as omnipotent creator, as this would be threatened by the existence of a creator-devil of equal power to God. Even the debate about *apocatastasis* was sometimes conducted with regards this question.⁶ Consequently there was relative free reign in the early medieval period regarding what one could believe about the devil, as long as he was held to be created, evil through choice, beyond redemption, and less powerful than God. In this period it is therefore more accurate to speak of widely-held beliefs and traditions than doctrines.

Indeed, there were many such traditions as the devil was a subject of interest in polemical writings, works of exegesis, hagiography, and many other such works at this time. Lateran IV had merely affirmed ideas that had been present in Christian thought and writing since earliest times. The ideas it contains are first evident in a clear form in a Christian context⁷ in the writings of church fathers such as Origen and Augustine, and whilst some of these ideas are found in the New Testament in embryonic form, the biblical stories that form the basis of these myths do not always in themselves form a full, clear, or consistent account. Rather, passages now often believed to refer to the figure of the devil are scattered throughout the two testaments and some of the apocryphal books.⁸ These biblical passages underpinned later

⁴ Kelly, *Satan*, 316.

⁵ Frederick Van Fleteren, 'Devil', in Fitzgerald ed., *Augustine Through the Ages*, 268-269, at p. 268.

⁶ A Valentinian heretic Candidus defended a dualism of good and evil by pointing to the idea that the devil cannot be saved. Origen argued against him to say that the devil fell through his will, and not his nature. But he nevertheless worried that not offering salvation to the devil conceded victory for gnostic dualism. See Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society. From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 139, 437.

⁷ This thesis is not concerned with non-Christian ideas about the devil or other entities of evil, or with the roots of the Christian tradition (other than scripture and Christian tradition) or the possible effect of Jewish or Persian ideas on Christian conceptions of the devil. For more information on these questions and the wider context, see Forsyth, *Old Enemy*; Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Russell, *Devil*.

⁸ For information on references to devils and demons in scripture see the translation of Henry Kelly's entry in the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 33 (2001) in Henry Kelly, *The Devil, Demonology, and Witchcraft. The Development of Christian Beliefs in Evil Spirits*, revised edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1974, reprint 2004 with new appendix), Appendix: The Devil in Church History. In this thesis, the apocryphal books that are referred to are those of the old testament that were a part of the Septuagint and which were written in Greek during the intertestamental period (ie. the deuterocanonical books, such as Wisdom). These books formed part of the Vulgate and were not repudiated by the Catholic as they were by the Eastern church, although their different status to the

understanding of the devil and his portrayal in hagiography and were also the foundation of Gregory's own diabolology.

2.1. Scripture

In the Old Testament, the figure now most widely associated with the devil primarily appears as the Hebrew שָׂטָן (transliterated as *śṭn*, *Satan*).⁹ The root meaning of *Satan* is oppose, obstruct, or accuse,¹⁰ and although this term occurs on many occasions, it is often meant in a descriptive sense or as a common rather than proper noun, such as in 1 Kings 11:14 where it is not interpreted as referring to an evil, supernatural being.¹¹ Satan is first found without the definitive article (and therefore as a distinctive being) in 1 Chronicles 22:1, and then in Zechariah 3:1 and the prologue to Job. In these books the relationship between God, Satan and evil is ambiguous, as the idea is still in the process of development. Most significantly, at first God is seemingly presented as though in possession of evil aspects, with Satan described more as the assistant of God than His enemy, as in Job.¹² In the canonical Old Testament Satan is not presented as an adversary.¹³ The temptation of Eve by the serpent in Genesis came to be associated with the devil, and Isaiah 14:14 and Ezechiel 28, which were both later interpreted non-literally as referring to a Lucifer, an angel who fell from heaven due to pride.

The apocryphal (or deuterocanonical) books were also important in forming later conceptions of the devil. These were written between c.200BCE and 100CE, during the time of apocalyptic Judaism,¹⁴ and in this literature one explicitly finds

Hebrew books was accepted by some, such as Jerome. See F.L. Cross ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 68-9.

⁹ Charles G. Herbermann ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church*, 17 vols. (London: Encyclopedia Press, 1907-1922), 4:274.

¹⁰ Russel, *Devil*, 189.

¹¹ 1 Kings 11:14 (3 Kings 11:14 Vulg.): And the Lord raised up an adversary [Hebrew: Satan; Vulgate: adversarium] to Solomon; Russel, *Devil*, 189-90.

¹² The ideas of both Yahweh and Satan developed over time in Hebrew literature. In summary, there is a development from Yahweh being portrayed as encompassing both good and bad ('I create the light; I create the darkness' Is. 45:7) to the idea of there being two separate entities, one of good and one of evil. A stage of this is the subservient, rather than oppositional, role that Satan performs in the book of Job. See Russel, *Devil*, 174-184; Langton, *Satan*, 18-21.

¹³ Forster, *Old Enemy*, 107. For *śṭn* in the Old Testament, see *Ibid.*, 107-123.

¹⁴ Edward Langton, *Satan, A Portrait. A Study of the Character of Satan through all the Ages* (London: Skeffington, 1945), 13.

the idea of an angelic fall¹⁵ and the idea of both good angels and bad angels (demons).¹⁶ In many ways the devil of the Apocrypha is more similar to that of the New Testament than that of the Old.¹⁷ Given these similarities and Gregory's favourable attitude towards and use of the apocryphal books¹⁸ these will be considered here, together with the New Testament books. In the New Testament and Apocrypha one finds the term devil (*διάβολος*, translated into *diabolus* in Latin versions) in addition to Satan.¹⁹ It also contains demons (*δαίμων* and *δαιμόνιον*, translated into *daemonium*). The association between Satan and the devil occurred very early on, as the Septuagint sometimes interpreted Satan as *διάβολος*.²⁰ This connection is made explicit several times, such as in Apoc. 12:9 where the dragon, the serpent, Satan and the devil are referred to as though equivalents,²¹ thereby establishing a scriptural basis for regarding Satan and the devil as the same being.

The practice of referring to the devil by several different names is given further credence in the New Testament as Satan, Leviathan,²² dragon,²³ Behemoth and Beelzebub, the prince of devils²⁴ are all terms that it is possible, if reading scripture in a particular way, to associate with the devil.²⁵ He is also described as the prince of this world²⁶ - giving legitimacy to the idea that the world is his dominion - and the new testament also contains a call for arms against his forces:

induite vos arma Dei ut possitis stare adversus insidias diaboli quia non est nobis conluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem sed adversus

¹⁵ Langton, *Satan*, 19-21.

¹⁶ Russel, *Devil*, 170.

¹⁷ Langton, *Satan*, p. 27.

¹⁸ Gregory, noting that 1 Maccabees was not canonical, said that it was not wrong to quote from it as testimony: *Mor.* 19.21.34 (2:983). He also quoted from Tobit, and from Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) at length.

¹⁹ Herbermann ed., *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:764.

²⁰ Such as with Zech. 3:1-2. See Russel, *Devil*, 190, n.19.

²¹ Apoc. 12:9: And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

²² Largely due to Is. 27:1, which discusses the Lord slaying Leviathan. This and Job 41:1 (= Job 40:25 Vulg.) translated Leviathan as dragon in the Septuagint and Leviathan in the Vulgate. See Kelly, *Satan*, 150-1.

²³ Apoc. 12:9.

²⁴ Beelzebub princeps daemoniorum: eg. Matt. 12:24; Luke 11:15.

²⁵ For a straightforward introduction to the devil's names see Luther Link, *The Devil. A Mask without a Face* (London: Reakton Books, 1995), 19-27.

²⁶ John 14:30; John 12:31. Cf. John 18:36.

principes et potestates adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum contra spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus²⁷

The New Testament also set the precedent of seeing the devil at the head of the body of the wicked,²⁸ and the devil as both one and many simultaneously.²⁹ It provided models for hagiographic and similar portrayals of the devil: possession,³⁰ temptation,³¹ the recognition and proclamation of holiness³² and lying and deceiving³³ are all demonic actions with a strong biblical basis.

Consequently, these books, written at different times for different purposes, contain references to several different entities but do not contain a full account of what came to be believed about the devil. Furthermore, the differences in portrayal between the devil of the New and Old Testaments is sometimes quite stark: within the New Testament he is very much set up in opposition to God and man, whereas in the Old, such as in Job, the relationship is much more one of Satan being God's assistant.³⁴ The New Testament also contains some elements of both.³⁵ These things would play themselves out in Gregory the Great's portrayals of the devil.

²⁷ Ephes. 6:12-14 (=Ephes. 6:11-13 Vulg.). ¹¹Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. ¹²For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.

²⁸ 1 John 3:8-10: ⁸He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Whosoever is born of God, committeth not sin: for his seed abideth in him, and he can not sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.

See also Job 41:34 (= Job 41:25 Vulg.): He beholdeth every high thing, he is king over all the children of pride.

Cf. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 3.37.55 found in *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. Joseph Martin, CCSL 32 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1963): 1-167, at pp. 114-6. Here Augustine recapitulates Tyconius' seventh rule of interpretation about the devil being at the head of the body of the wicked.

²⁹ Mark 5:9: And he asked him: What is thy name? And he saith to him: My name is Legion, for we are many.

³⁰ Examples of this abound, but see Luke 11:14-26 (Christ discusses Beelzebub and possession); Luke 9:37-42 (Christ cures a possessed boy); Mark 5:1-17 and Luke 8:26-39 (Christ expels Legion from a man into a herd of pigs. Legion recognises and proclaims Christ). In Matt. 8:28-34, based on the same story as the latter two, Christ is also accused by the demons of wanting to torture them.

³¹ Such as when the devil tempted Christ: Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. In a mix of temptation and possession, Satan also entered into Judas: Luke 22:3; John 13:27.

³² Luke 8:28.

³³ John 8:44: You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth; because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. See also 2 Cor. 4:4: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them.

³⁴ Timothy Thornton, 'Satan – God's Agent for Punishing', *Expository Times*, 83 (1972): 151-2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

2.2. Late Antique Authors

Medieval and modern ideas about the devil stem from the imposition of a coherent narrative over these various passages by church fathers such as Origen, Augustine and Jerome, to form what has been called a 'New Biography of Satan'.³⁶ The idea that triumphed in orthodox Christianity was that the devil was created good and great but fell through pride. The idea of some form of fall circulated from the earliest years of Christianity, as evidenced by relatively explicit references to such an occurrence in the New Testament.³⁷ However, the idea that pride was the cause was primarily based on non-literal readings of Is. 14:12-15 and Ezech. 28, and such a reading of the former is what led to the term *lucifer*, or morning star, being used to refer to the devil in his pre-lapsarian state.³⁸ This term only appears in Latin translations, and whilst the idea of an angelic fall appears to have existed in earlier, pre-Christian forms, within a Christian context it is first explicitly drawn out from this particular passage and elaborated upon by Tertullian and Origen.³⁹ This idea won against the competing myth based on Genesis 6:1-4 and 1 Enoch which saw the lust of angels (or watcher angels) for human women as the reason for their descent.⁴⁰ This latter idea placed the fall of the angels *after* the creation of man.

³⁶ This is the main argument in Kelly, *Satan*, which is on the whole accepted here.

³⁷ Luke 10:18: I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven; 2 Peter 2:4: For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments, to be reserved unto judgment; Jude 1:6: And the angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, he hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains, unto the judgment of the great day; Apoc. 12:7-9: ⁷And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: ⁸And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. ⁹And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

³⁸ Isaiah 14:12.

³⁹ Origen: Kelly, *Satan*, 194-99, 324. Tertullian: whilst Is. 14:13-14 is interpreted as relating to the devil and pride, in Tertullian this is seen as happening after the original fall, the devil's great sin having been the deception of men: Kelly, *Satan*, 178-9. For greater discussion on the inconsistency in these myths as to when the devil fell, see Russell, *Devil*, 196, n.37.

⁴⁰ Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 5-6, 218-221. This idea is found strongly in Justin Martyr and slightly less so in Tertullian: Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, 351 [Justin Martyr], 355-6 [Tertullian]. As part of his wider argument concerning the victory of the 'combat myth' over other myths, Forsyth argues that in Tertullian one still finds the idea of the watcher angel (based on Enoch) as well as the rebel angel (based on Ezechiel and Isaiah); Origen, however, separates these two narratives, thus encouraging the church to think of Satan as a prideful rebel rather than as a being of lust. Tertullian is much more of a champion of the Enochic literature [and thus the Genesis interpretation of the fall] than Origen: Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 194-5. In Jerome one also finds traces of the idea that the devil fell as a result of lust: G.J.M. Bartelink, 'Le diable et les démons dans les oeuvres de Jérôme', in *Studia Patristica*. 17.2, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1982): 463-471, at p. 463.

Other myths placed the devil's fall at this time, but saw his sin as the temptation of Eve; this idea was more common in the earliest church fathers, such as in Irenaeus, whose works contain both ideas.⁴¹ Later authors, such as Cassian, explicitly rejected the temptation of Eve as being the cause of the devil's first fall (the cause of this being pride), although he sees the devil's envy of man as responsible for his second.⁴² Indeed, an apocryphal passage pointed to envy as being responsible for the entry of death into the world:

invidia autem diaboli mors introivit in orbem terrarum⁴³

The main interpretation of this was that the devil was envious of man, giving him a motive to tempt man in Eden, and although this is more in line with the verse and its context, it also came to be seen as meaning that envy was a reason for Lucifer's rebellion against God. Indeed, another competing myth was that envy was a reason for Lucifer's rebellion against God, partly because of the relationship between pride and envy: in order to be envious, one must consider oneself worthier than one is or worth more than one has. Both envy and pride continued to be used as explanations for the angelic fall throughout this period; lust, however, was largely dropped as an explanation.

By the time of Origen the idea that multiple angels had fallen was fairly accepted, although these things had clearly not been specifically laid down:

Regarding the devil and his angels, and the opposing influences, the teaching of the church has laid down that these beings exist indeed; but what they are, or how they exist, it has not explained with sufficient clearness. This opinion, however, is held by most, that the devil was an angel, and that, having become an apostate, he induced as many of the angels as possible to fall away with himself, and these up to the present time are called his angels.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 65.

⁴² Cassian, *Conferences*, 8.9-10, found in *Collationes XIII*, ed. Michael Petschenig, CSEL 13 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 8.9-10, pp. 297.

⁴³ Wisdom 2:24. But by the envy of the devil, death came into the world.

⁴⁴ Origen, 'De Principiis', in *The Writings of Origen*, F. Crombie ed., 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1869), 1:5.

The devil was also very quickly associated with the serpent in Genesis and thus accorded a role in the fall of man.⁴⁵ In thus deceiving Eve, he set up the model whereby he is a deceiver and manipulator, as the fall was widely held to have meant either that the devil won or was granted jurisdiction over humanity.⁴⁶ He was thus believed to continue in his temptation of man up until the present day, and an interpretation of Apoc. 20:1-3 saw the chaining of the devil (or beast) in the abyss as occurring in the past, with the devil presently closed up inside the hearts of the wicked, and therefore restrained by God in terms of this capacity to tempt and deceive.⁴⁷

The incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ were believed to refigured the relationship between the devil and humanity. As a result of the fall of man the devil legally held mankind; God, however, gave Christ as a ransom, but the devil, in trying to claim Him, tried to claim what was not his thereby also losing man.⁴⁸ In this narrative, God defeats the devil even as Christ is put to death and the devil tries to claim Him.

In the future, the devil will be released and increase in his persecutions, but again be defeated and cast down. Whereas Isaiah 14 and Ezechiel 28 (both interpreted non-literally), Luke 10:18 and Jude 1:6 set this story of a fall or expulsion in the past, Apoc.12:7-9, which details a fight between the Archangel Michael and the dragon, sets it in the future when read literally. Matt. 25:41, referring to a fire for the devil and the angels, is also set in the future. This therefore lent scriptural legitimacy to ideas which saw this fall as occurring in both the past and future.

It was therefore possible to cite scriptural evidence for a variety of paradoxical ideas: that the angels fell at various times in the past and will do so again in the future; that

⁴⁵ This connection between the two occurred in the apocryphal inter-testamental literature, such as in Wisdom 2:24. This work, written sometime between 50BCE and 50CE, is from a similar time period as the new testament events: Kelly, *Satan*, 70.

⁴⁶ Russel, *Prince of Darkness*, 67, 103-4.

⁴⁷ Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church. A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 134.

⁴⁸ Russel, *Prince of Darkness*, 67. Versions of this idea are found in Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine: Augustine, *De Trinitate* 13.15, found in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini. De Trinitate libri XV*, ed. W.J. Mountain, CCSL 50, 50A, 2 vols. (Turnholt, Brepols, 1968), 2:407-8; Gregory the Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* 23, found in Gregory of Nyssa, 'The Great Catechism' in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises*, etc., trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson (Oxford: Parker, 1893): 472-509, at pp. 492-4. The latter describes Christ as a 'hook' on which the devil is caught. For more on the origins of this idea, see C.W. Marx, *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 7-27.

the devil is both one and many; that he is one with the human reprobate, at the head of their body, yet separate from them; that he is both the greatest and the most damned; that he has many names; and that he sometimes performs God's will, and sometimes opposes it. The temporal, spatial and numerical flexibility of these ideas were to affect Gregory's portrayal of the devil.

2.2.1. Late Antique Authors: Augustine and Cassian

Augustine and Cassian, the two greatest influences on Gregory apart from scripture, both had many things to say about the devil and demons. Such was their influence on Gregory that some words are required, although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the relationship of their works with those of Gregory's at length. Their thoughts on the topic broadly agree with the summary given above. The devil is discussed all across Augustine's works, but is discussed most frequently in his *Sermones*, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, and in his anti-Manichean and Anti-Pelagian works.⁴⁹ Most significantly for this thesis, Augustine emphasises the subordination of the devil to God and in his works on Genesis⁵⁰ one can find his ideas on the fall and certain ideas about temptation expounded most clearly. Discussion of demons (*Daemones*) is principally found in his *De civitate Dei* (particularly books 8-10), *De divinatione daemonum*, and, again, his *Sermones* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.⁵¹ Many of his ideas on evil and the devil are expressed in a clear manner in his *Enchiridion*, an instruction-manual for the layman Laurentius,⁵² and his *De Libero arbitrio* deals with questions of the origin of evil and of theodicy.⁵³ Many of the points discussed in the section above regarding the devil's fall are contained in his *Enchiridion*, and in his *De civitate Dei* (henceforth *City of God*) Augustine differentiated between Christian and various traditional Graeco-Roman (or pagan)

⁴⁹ Van Fleteren, 'Devil', 268. Of Augustine's anti-Manichean writings, the most relevant to this study is his *De genesis contra Manichaeos*. For more on Augustine's beliefs concerning the devil and demons, see G.R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 98-111; Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 91-106.

⁵⁰ *De Genesi adversus Manicheos; De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus; De Genesi ad litteram liber*.

⁵¹ Frederick Van Fleteren, 'Demons', in Fitzgerald ed., *Augustine Through the Ages*, 266-268, at p. 267.

⁵² Particularly in chapters 4, 8, 9 and 29. See *Sancti Aurelii Augustini. Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate*, ed. E. Evans, CCL 46 (Turholt: Brepols, 1969): 21-114, at pp. 54-6, 63-4, 64-7, 108-110.

⁵³ Theodicy – the attempt to defend God's goodness and omnipotence in light of the presence of evil in the world – is not an overriding concern of Gregory's.

beliefs about demons and pagan gods. Many Christians had regarded the pagan gods as Christian spirits.⁵⁴

In the works of John Cassian, the most significant discussions on demons for present purposes occur in the *Conferences* (particularly conferences seven and eight) where their role in temptation is discussed.⁵⁵ Of particular importance here are his ideas about the methods by which demons enter the human mind, and about how they increase the severity of their attacks the more they are resisted.⁵⁶ The importance of Augustine for Gregory tends to lie in doctrine, and the importance of Cassian in his ideas about temptation. Similarities between their ideas (and others) and those of Gregory ideas will be indicated where relevant to the discussion, although the identification of borrowings is not the purpose of this thesis.

2.2.2. The Antichrist

Gregory the Great posited a close relationship between the devil and the Antichrist.⁵⁷ Whilst Gregory used this term often, however, Antichrist (*antichristus*) only occurs five times in four verses in the Vulgate.⁵⁸ Thessalonians 3-12, which speaks of a man of sin (*homo peccati*), the son of perdition (*filius perditionis*) who will appear on the day of the Lord, was interpreted from the earliest days of Christianity as referring to the Antichrist.⁵⁹ Passages from the apocalypse of Daniel (Dan. 7-12), which

⁵⁴ Chadwick, *Galilee to Gregory the Great*, 178.

⁵⁵ Cassian, *Collationes* 8-9, pp. 247-312.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ See below, pp. 90-5.

⁵⁸ 1 John 2:18: Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are become many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour; John 2:22: Who is a liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is Antichrist, who denieth the Father, and the Son; John 4:3: And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God: and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world; 2 John 1:7: For many seducers are gone out into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a seducer and an antichrist.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and their accounts of the end and of the man of sin, see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 41-45. 1 and 2 Thessalonians are the earliest texts containing apocalyptic segments in the canonical Christian tradition and 1 Thessalonians is the earliest surviving Christian document (from. C.50 CE). Bernard McGinn, 'Early Apocalypticism: the ongoing debate', reprinted in Bernard McGinn, *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1994), 20. This suggests that apocalyptic elements, including ideas of a man of perdition, existed in the earliest days of Christianity.

originally concerned the historical figure Antiochus IV, also came to be associated with the Antichrist.⁶⁰

In spite of this limited presence of the Antichrist in scripture, many traditions and legends came to be built around him by early Christian writers. At the end of the first century the Antichrist came to be associated with the emperor Nero;⁶¹ this paved the way for his association with later political figures. In such cases, he is often associated with a persecuting tyrant,⁶² and one strand of thought was that he would not appear until the Roman Empire had collapsed.⁶³ Other traditions, seeing him as Christ's opposite, saw him as Jewish and as descended from the tribe of Dan.⁶⁴ In accordance with 2 Thess. 2:7-11, his coming was also often associated with an increase in signs and wonders, and seen as allowed by God.

These traditions see the Antichrist as human, and although this was the most accepted tradition, there were others. Origen described Antichrist as the 'son of the evil daemon, who is Satan and the devil', although he preferred spiritual interpretations of Antichrist passages,⁶⁵ and the idea that the Antichrist was the devil himself or his child is also found in some fourth-century texts, including Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogues*.⁶⁶ Mostly, however, the Antichrist was interpreted as fully human, and care was taken to preserve the idea of his humanity.⁶⁷ He was also associated with the human reprobate of the present day. Augustine taught that the Antichrists in 1 John 2:18-27 should be interpreted as heretics,⁶⁸ and, like some others such as Origen and Tyconius, he brings out moral lessons and emphasises that

⁶⁰ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 26-27. For more on the Antichrist, see L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of the Antichrist. A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996). This provides a lengthy introduction to many of the Christian texts that helped create various Antichrist legends.

⁶¹ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 45-53. This association of the Antichrist with Nero can be split into two traditions: that which saw Antichrist-Nero as the devil incarnate, an idea that would come to be rejected by mainstream Christianity, and that which saw Antichrist-Nero as resurrected, rising from the abyss. Many have believed it is possible to find in Revelations, due to the number (666 or 616) of the beast in Revelations 13:18. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 49, 50-53.

⁶² Kevin L. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist. Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 7.

⁶³ Marjorie Reeves, 'The Development of Apocalyptic Thought. Medieval Attitudes' in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature. Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions*, ed. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984): 40-72, at p. 42.

⁶⁴ Reeves, 'Apocalyptic Thought', 43.

⁶⁵ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 64.

⁶⁶ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 68; 298-9, notes 51 and 52.

⁶⁷ Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 6.

⁶⁸ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 77. This is found in his *Homilies on 1 John*.

anyone can be an antichrist.⁶⁹ This idea had some basis in scripture.⁷⁰ Augustine was, however, reluctant to be too specific about the date of the end of the world and the signs that will accompany it, including the person and actions of the Antichrist.⁷¹ Augustine's reluctance to discuss the date of the end of the world was followed by Gregory and broadly influential in the middle ages.

The Antichrist had therefore been associated with both dread and deceiving wonders; understood as a single figure and as encompassing all the reprobate; seen as internal and external; seen as a political figure, a Jew, and of some kinship or relationship to the devil; and spoken of as a future figure and as though he was already here.

2.3. Names for the Devil and the Terminology of this Thesis

The result of interpreting many different scriptural entities as the devil was that it was possible to refer to him by many different names. By the time of Gregory the Great, words such as Satan, Lucifer, the serpent and Behemoth were all firmly associated with the devil. His names were not limited to those in scripture, however, as many other terms were used for him, these often reflecting the primary functions he was believed to perform. Thus, in the late second and early third centuries, Tertullian favoured the words *aemulus* (rival or imitator) and *interpolator* (corruptor) when referring to him.⁷² This was quite unusual⁷³ and the latter word and similar ones do not seem to have been used by Gregory the Great.⁷⁴ On the contrary, Gregory of Tours had used words such as *inimicus* and *adversarius* as equivalents to *diabolus* (devil),⁷⁵ and was strongly influenced by the bible and ascetic tradition.⁷⁶ Whilst there is no evidence that Gregory the Great knew of Gregory of Tours, this demonstrates the diversity of ways in which different authors chose to refer to the

⁶⁹ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 77-8.

⁷⁰ 2 John 1:7.

⁷¹ Daley, *Patristic Eschatology*, 132.

⁷² Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, 356; Fontaine, '*Diabolus interpolator*', 99, *passim*.

⁷³ Fontaine, '*Diabolus interpolator*', 199.

⁷⁴ As determined by a search for the word and its derivatives in Gregory's works in the Brepols 'Library of Latin Texts – Series A' database, found at <http://clt.brepols.net> (accessed 16 July 2011).

⁷⁵ Bartelink, 'Grégoire de Tours', 432.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 411, 431-2.

devil. Augustine referred to the devil in a multitude of ways, many of them biblical, and some not.⁷⁷

Gregory used all the biblical words mentioned in this chapter to refer to the devil, and used them as equivalents, sometimes explicitly making these connections. Indeed, having asked why the devil is called by so many names, he answered that it is because he changes his form and appearance in order to deceive minds.⁷⁸ As Gregory used so many terms for the devil interchangeably, when deciding whether or not a word or phrase refers to the devil, in this thesis the net has been cast widely. The only word that he did not use much was Lucifer,⁷⁹ although as shall be become evident, he did associate Is. 14:14 with the devil. As he also flitted between the singular and plural when speaking of the devil (and demons and the Antichrist), this thesis will be considering both. In this thesis the following words and phrases (and, where applicable, their plurals) have been understood to refer the devil: *diabolus*; Satan; Behemoth; and Leviathan. *Daemon* and *daemones* are also included in this definition, as are various animals such the serpent (*serpens*), dragon (*draco*), wolf (*lupus*) and lion (*leo*). For the latter two, identification with the devil sometimes depends upon context.

Hostis antiquus is one of the most common terms for the devil in Gregory's works, and other uses of the word enemy (*hostis*, *inimicus* and *aduersarius*) or spirit (*spiritus*) which are accompanied by a reference to or adjective describing his evil, deceit, ancient origin, or any other similar attribute are also here taken to refer to him. Adjectives commonly added to these nouns are *antiquus* (ancient), *occultus* (hidden) and *callidus* (cunning), although Gregory is flexible and inventive in his terminology and has also called him such things as *lubricus* (slippery) or *insidias* (lying in wait). *Spiritus*, when referring to the devil or demons, is frequently accompanied by *immundus* (unclean) but also other words such as *malignus* (malignant) and *aduersantes* (opposing) have been added to this word. All of these phrases have been taken to refer to the devil. In accordance with Gregory's definition, the Antichrist is understood to be a man into whom Satan has entered.

⁷⁷ See Van Fleteren, 'Devil', 268-9.

⁷⁸ *Mor.* 33.15.31 (2:1700).

⁷⁹ He uses this on twenty-three occasions across his works, as discovered by a search for the word 'Lucifer' and its different grammatical forms on the Brepols 'Library of Latin Texts - Series A' database, which is an electronic version of the CCSL edition. <http://clt.brepolis.net> (Accessed 16 July 2011). However, he does not usually interpret these words as referring to the devil, and he does not refer directly to Is. 14:12 and does not use it as a *testimonium*.

This list is not exhaustive, but is intended to impart an idea of the multiple – and revealing – ways in which Gregory referred to the devil. Throughout this thesis the word ‘devil’ shall be the default word when discussing this figure, unless otherwise specified.

Chapter 3

THE DEVIL IN THE MORALIA IN IOB

The *Moralia In Iob* is Gregory's largest work and in places also his earliest. Consisting of thirty-five books in six volumes, this work of exegesis on the book of Job took Gregory many years to complete. During his lifetime copies were disseminated as far afield as Spain and North Africa, and it would continue to be used as a storehouse of information about his teachings throughout the ages. It is also the work which modern scholars have turned to most readily when trying to piece together Gregory's theology, as it touches on such a vast array of topics. In its content and structure the work provides a fascinating window into his preoccupations, modes of thought, and the assumptions that shaped his life.

However, for the researcher this work can also be very problematic. It has been described as a 'scarcely penetrable jungle'¹ and as 'diffuse, rambling, verbose, and filled with apparent digressions'.² His exegesis has been likened to a maze (*dédale*)³ and his system in the *Moralia* described as 'annoying'.⁴ This stems from his particular exegetical method, which also poses methodological problems for the scholar. This chapter, therefore, will explore Gregory's representation of the devil in this work, but in ways that take into account the problems and features of the genre.

Gregory began the work between 579 and 586 whilst he was serving as *apocrisiarius* in Constantinople.⁵ He had brought some of his brethren from St. Andrew's with him to the east, where they all endeavoured to continue living as a monastic community.⁶ The *Moralia* had its genesis in a request from these fellow-monks and from Leander, bishop of Seville that he lecture on the book of Job,⁷ the passages of which he was to examine in their historical, allegorical and moral senses.⁸ He did not finish the work whilst in Constantinople, however, as in 591 he had to write to Leander, who had asked for a copy of the work, to explain that it was

¹ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 21.

² Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 22.

³ Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 58-9.

⁴ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982, first published 1964), 34.

⁵ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 1-2 (1:1-2).

⁶ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 1 (1:1-2).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 (1:2).

⁸ *Ibid.*

not yet finished;⁹ it was not until 595 that Gregory was able to send him a copy of the completed work.¹⁰ During his pontificate, Gregory also received a request for a copy from Africa.¹¹

The *Moralia* was therefore begun between 597 and 586 and completed by 595. The earlier books were written down by monks whilst Gregory lectured, although he dictated its later parts directly.¹² He dictated the second part so that it was in the style of the spoken word like the first,¹³ and later revised the first books, with most of his revisions consisting of additions rather than reductions.¹⁴ He was unable to edit the third part because of other duties and because his brethren did not wish him to go into as much detail as previously.¹⁵ Consequently, the early books were written at a variety of times and subject to revisions, but the later books were predominately later in origin. It is possible that the later origin of some of the books of the *Moralia* had an effect on his portrayal of the devil in them.

It is reasonable to assume that Gregory was happy with the final version of the *Moralia* as not only did he take time to edit the work but it is clear that he took great efforts to ensure the correct form and dissemination of his texts. He had, for instance, expressed his dislike for the written version of his commentary on the Song of Songs.¹⁶ Like the *Moralia*, this had been written down whilst he dictated, but unlike the *Moralia*, Gregory felt that its transcription had changed its sense.¹⁷ He therefore asked John, sub-deacon of Ravenna, to take into his possession all copies of this inaccurate version.¹⁸ Gregory expressed no such concerns about the *Moralia*, and the lack of such a complaint is taken here to mean that he considered it to be a true representation of what he wished he say.

According to his letter to bishop Leander, Gregory's instructions had been to explain the allegorical meaning of Job's passages, but also to concern himself with their moral meaning. Furthermore, he was to add testimonies – other scriptural

⁹ *Ep.* 1.41 (1:47-49, at p. 49).

¹⁰ This is the date of his letter which accompanied the *Moralia*.

¹¹ *Ep.* 10.16 (2:845).

¹² *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:3).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ep.* 12.6 (2:974-7, at p. 975).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

passages – in order to provide further evidence for his interpretations.¹⁹ Gregory was therefore constrained to some extent by the details of the request that he had received. However, the request that Gregory emphasise the moral interpretation fits into Gregory's pastoral concerns more widely, and it is likely that the monks' request was at least in part, if not in full, a response to what they perceived to be Gregory's own interests. Combined with Gregory's superior position over the monks and the time that he took to compose the work, this means that the interpretative slant of the *Moralia* is evidence of Gregory's own interests and not just the result of this request.

Gregory's *Moralia* was not the first Christian commentary on Job. The most notable prior to him were Ambrose's *De interpretatione Job et David* (four sermons on the complaints of Job and David) and Augustine's *Adnotationes in Job* (a series of comments on certain Joban passages).²⁰ Neither of these, however, were of the length or comprehensiveness of Gregory's *Moralia*: Augustine's work, for instance, was merely a collection of notes rather than a commentary,²¹ which Augustine himself criticised for being brief and obscure and which he was uncertain whether to attribute to himself or others.²² It is not clear whether Gregory knew these works or others. A statement to Leander that Job was an obscure (*obscurus*) work which had not been discussed until now (*hactenus*) suggests either that he did not or that he did not think them to be of the comprehensiveness, depth or type that he required.²³ Where relevant, likenesses to previous interpretations will be indicated, although as previously stated, the identity of Gregory's sources is not the primary concern of this thesis.

It is also evident that Gregory began the work with a specific audience in mind. When he began the task in Constantinople, his audience was educated monks; this intended audience did not change. Gregory would later write to John, sub-deacon of Ravenna, that the book was not meant for a popular audience and that it

¹⁹ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 1 (1:2).

²⁰ Moorhead, *Gregory*, 32. There were also works by Origen and John Chrysostom (a series of homilies on the book) in the east: Gillet, 'Introduction', 84. For an edition of Ambrose, see *Ambrosius Mediolanensis. De interpellatione Job et David*, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2011).

²¹ Kenneth B. Steinhauser, 'Adnotationes in Job', in Fitzgerald ed., *Augustine Through the Ages*, 8. For an edition, see Augustine, 'Adnotationes in Job' in *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum libri VII: Adnotationum in Job liber unus*, ed. Joseph Zycha, *Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 28 (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1895): 509-628.

²² *Retractiones* 2.13, found at *Sancti Aurelii Augustini. Retractionum libri II*, ed. Almut Mutzenbecher, *CCSL* 57 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1984), 2.13, pp. 99-100.

²³ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:2). Gregory also claimed that Ezechiel had not been discussed: *Hom. in Ezech.* 2.2.1, p. 225.

may do more harm than good if heard by those who were uninstructed.²⁴ This comment arose when he was criticising Marinianus, the archbishop of Ravenna, for reading out parts of it publicly (*publice*) at Matins, an action of which Gregory did not approve.²⁵ Gregory therefore had both a very set purpose (moral edification) and audience (educated monks) when composing the *Moralia*.

3.0.1 Scriptural Exegesis

As a work of exegesis the purpose of the *Moralia* was to open up the profound mysteries that were believed to lie within all biblical texts. It was not a work of speculative theology or intended to explain, explore or argue a particular point of orthodoxy. It was also not intended to provide a comprehensive account of the devil and his actions. Consequently, Gregory's ideas about scripture and his practice of exegesis influenced his representation of the devil in the work; these also had a profound role in shaping his hagiographic, homiletic and epistolary writings.²⁶ The most significant ramification of this for the *Moralia* is that references to the devil are found in the form of a large number of scattered passages and stand-alone remarks, and are not found together in one place or as part of a structured argument or arguments. This has methodological consequences for the present chapter, which are explored in this section.

3.0.1.1. Typology and History

²⁴ *Ep.* 12.6 (2:975-6).

²⁵ *Ep.* 12.6 (2:975).

²⁶ For an introduction to the topic of exegesis see Henri Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. Mark Sebanc, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998, originally published 1959). For shorter introductions, see Alan Blowers, 'Interpreting Scripture' in *Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol 2. Constantine to c.600*, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 618-636; Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, 1-36. On the main exegetical schools see Frances Young, 'Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis' in *A History of Biblical Interpretation. Volume 1: The Ancient Period*, eds. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003): 334-354. The influence of Gregory's practice of exegesis on his various works will be demonstrated and explored in the relevant chapters.

Christian exegesis began with the earliest followers of Christ making connections between the figures and events of the Old Testament with those of the New.²⁷ Indeed, the relationship between the two Testaments is the key to all Christian biblical exegesis.²⁸ Such typological or figurative interpretation can be defined thus:

Typology, considered as a method of exegesis, may be defined as the establishment of historical connexions between certain events, persons or things in the Old Testament and similar events, persons or things in the New Testament. Considered as a method of writing, it may be defined as the description of an event, person or thing in the New Testament in terms borrowed from the description of its prototypal counterpart in the Old Testament.²⁹

This principle was adopted by Gregory:

Prophetia ergo Testamenti Noui, Testamentum Vetus est, et expositio Testamenti Veteris, Testamentum Nouum.³⁰

Typology affected Gregory's understanding and portrayal of the devil. This is because its underlying principle came to be extended beyond the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and into other things, such as hagiography: as Gregory says in his *Dialogues*, the miracles imitate those of old (that is, of Christ).³¹ Many of these miracles had themselves, according to medieval exegetes, been prefigured or foretold in the Old Testament (such as in the miracles of Elijah and Elisha). Typology's significance for present purposes, therefore, is that it influenced Gregory's conception of history. For Gregory the events of the past, present and future were profoundly intertwined. He explained that prophecy (*prophetia*) – which can come from the mouths of prophets or the words of scripture – does not refer to the prediction of the future but to the revelation of things that are hidden, whether

²⁷ This is evident within the New Testament itself, where events are interpreted with reference to passages from the old testament. For more on the self-referential nature of the New Testament, see Stephen Prickett, 'Introduction', in *Reading the Text. Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory*, ed. Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991): 1-11, at pp. 3-4.

²⁸ For discussion of this see Prickett, 'Introduction', 1-5.

²⁹ K.J. Woollcombe, 'The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology', *Studies in Biblical Theology* 22 (1957): 39-75, at pp. 39-40.

³⁰ *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.6.15, pp. 76-7. Therefore the Old Testament is prophecy of the New Testament, and the New Testament explanation of the Old Testament. See also *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.6.12, 14, pp. 73-4, 75.

³¹ *Dial.* 1.7.4 (2:68). For more on the expansion of typology away from its strictest sense, see Blowers, 'Interpreting Scripture', 622-4.

these be of the past, present or future.³² Furthermore, these tenses of prophecy are intimately wound together, as past and future events discussed in the bible can be proved and understood with reference to each other.³³ An effect of typological exegesis, therefore, was the refiguration of the historical timeline so that sacred history was not always or only understood in strictly chronological or horizontal terms, but also as a series of interconnected events and prefigurations and recapitulations:

Salvation history was not a 'flat' or transparent linear pattern of sacred events. It was dimensional, training the church forward and upward to a transformed order, the new creation. Underlying typology, like the more purely symbolic forms of allegory and anagogy, was a view of biblical revelation as a dense web of signification and evocation, its multiple senses hanging together at various levels.³⁴

It is consequently useful to think of historical events as vertically as well as horizontally significant:

At an early stage, therefore, students of the Scriptures perceived that to every event, person or group in history there was, so to say, a vertical point of reference as well as a horizontal. The historical fact was really there: it had its locus in time and place, but it signified more than itself.³⁵

It is therefore severely limiting for the modern scholar to view Gregory's account of the devil only in strict chronological terms: doing so does not account for the entirety or subtlety of his understanding of the devil's place in the economy of salvation. It also does not always make sense to attempt to reconcile any chronological ambiguities that occur. Rather, given this multi-dimensional (and in some ways self-referential) view of history, thought ought also to be given to how the devil's actions in the human past, present and future were understood to be related. For this reason this chapter will not only, in the first part, reconstruct a linear narrative from the text of the *Moralia*, but will also, where relevant, indicate what

³² *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.1.1, p. 5.

³³ *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.1.2, p. 6.

³⁴ Blowers, 'Interpreting Scripture', 621. For more on Gregory's multi-layered view of history and of scripture, see Susan E. Schreiner, "'Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?': Gregory's Interpretation of Job." *American Benedictine Review* 39:3 (1988): 321-42, at pp. 323-8; Patrick Catry, 'Lire l'Écriture selon saint Grégoire le Grand', *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 34 (1972): 177-201.

³⁵ Marjorie Reeves, 'The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages' in *Reading the Text. Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory*, ed. Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991): 12-63, at p. 13.

events involving the devil signify and also identify any correspondences and parallels with other diabolical actions across the historical timeline.

3.0.1.2. Biblical Intepretation

These secrets of the divine dispensation were believed to be contained in scripture which, being itself very complex, was in need of interpretation. Gregory believed that as a result of the fall, humanity is not able to understand God when He is speaking directly.³⁶ As a result, He has clothed the divine word in things comprehensible to man, resulting in allegories.³⁷ Consequently, scripture has both simple and complex meanings and the exegete must examine the external meaning to find the internal truth. He used the image of the book written inside and out from Ezech. 2:10 (2:9 Vulg.) to explain this idea:

Liber enim sacri eloquii intus scriptus est per allegoriam, foris per historiam. Intus per spiritalem intellectum, foris autem per sensum litterae simplicem, adhuc infirmantibus congruentem.³⁸

This mixture of simplicity and complexity means that scripture offers both guidance to the simple and wisdom to the learned.³⁹ These different levels of understanding also meant that for Gregory, knowledge of scripture is in unceasing movement, and he therefore did not consider his knowledge of it to be fixed, but to grow day by day.⁴⁰ As he sometimes claimed that his own understanding had increased, it is to be assumed that he was conscious that his knowledge of what of the bible taught him about the devil also developed and changed.

Scriptural interpretation consisted of reading biblical passages according to several senses, not just the typological. However, there was no firm agreement

³⁶ *In Cant.* 1, p. 3.

³⁷ *In Cant.* 1-2, pp. 3-4. For more on this see G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Earlier Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-5. On Augustine and the idea of the fall as a loss of the original vision of the truth, and its ramifications for language, see Eric Jager, *The Tempter's Voice. Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3-4, 51-61, 96-98.

³⁸ *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.9.30, p. 139. For the book of holy eloquence was written on the inside by allegory, the outside by history. On the inside by spiritual understanding, but the outside by the simple sense of the letter, suited to those who are still weak.

³⁹ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 4 (1:6).

⁴⁰ *Hom in Ezech.* 1.10.5, p. 146; Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 69 ; Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 42.

amongst the church fathers as to their number or categorisation. For instance, Origen had held that there were three senses⁴¹ whilst Cassian and Augustine believed that there were four.⁴² It is nonetheless possible to speak loosely of the following levels of interpretation: historical (literal), allegorical (sometimes overlapping with typological⁴³), tropological (moral) and anagogical (the highest sense, appertaining to the future and knowledge of God).⁴⁴ Gregory outlined his own method of interpretation – or at least that which he was to use in the *Moralia* – in his letter to Leander, bishop of Seville:

Sciendum uero est, quod quaedam historica expositione transcurrimus et per allegoriam quaedam typica inuestigatione perscrutamur, quaedam per sola allegoricae moralitatis sollicitius exquirentes tripliciter indagamus. Nam primum quidem fundamenta historiae ponimus; deinde per significationem typicam in arcem fidei fabricam mentis erigimus; ad extremum quoque per moralitatis gratiam, quasi superducto aedificium colore uestimus.⁴⁵

Gregory therefore claimed to be adhering to a threefold sense of scripture. When he stuck to this method, as he did in the *Moralia*'s earlier books, his allegorical interpretations were often typological: that is, he frequently interpreted Job as a type – or prefiguration – of Christ or the church.⁴⁶ His moral interpretations tended to involve applying the verse to men and women, particularly the elect, and

⁴¹ Literal, moral and spiritual: Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 1:142-4.

⁴² Cassian, *Collationes* 14.8, pp. 404-7. He began by dividing scripture into two parts, according to the historical interpretation and spiritual understanding. He then subdivided the spiritual interpretation into three: tropology, allegory and anagogy. On Augustine: Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 1:123, 124-127.

⁴³ The fathers called 'allegory' what we now often call 'typology': Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery. An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 118. However, G.W.H. Lampe and K.J. Woolcombe argued that there was a difference between typology and allegory, and that this was typology's rootedness in history: G.W.H. Lampe, 'The Reasonableness of Typology' in G.W.H. Lampe and K.J. Woolcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London: SCM Press, 1957): 9-38, at pp. 29-31; Woolcombe, 'Patristic Development of Typology', 39-75, at p. 75. Frances Young has argued that history is not the correct measure for identifying typology, and has said that its significance lies in its 'recapitulative' force: Frances Young, 'Typology' in *Crossing the Boundaries. Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, eds. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce and David E. Orton (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994): 29-48.

⁴⁴ Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2:180-1.

⁴⁵ *Ep. ad Leandrum* 3 (1:4). It should be known that we hasten through certain things of historical exposition and search for certain things by investigation of the typical through allegory. We carefully look for other things through allegorical morality alone, thus seeking these things out in three ways. Indeed, for first we place the foundation of history; from there we erect, through figurative meaning, a construction of the mind on a citadel of faith; at the end also, through the grace of morality, we clothe the abovesaid building as if with colour.

⁴⁶ For example: *Mor.* 1.11.15-1.13.17 (1:31-33).

bringing out a lesson on how they do or ought to behave.⁴⁷ Anagogical interpretations, relating to the higher mysteries that can be understood by means of contemplation, have also been found in his exegesis,⁴⁸ although he himself does not mention this sense. In all, he focussed on literal interpretations significantly less.⁴⁹ The result of this was, according to Gregory, that he often postponed the ordinary exposition of Job and spent a little longer on its spread of contemplation and morality.⁵⁰ The devil often features in Gregory's exegesis in ways appropriate to these particular senses, such as an enemy of the church, or against men and women in their struggles on earth. For present purposes it is enough to recognise that when Gregory spoke of the devil, particularly in the *Moralia*, he was frequently doing so according to one of these senses. When the occurrence of this is clear and is relevant to the argument, this will be indicated.

Gregory mainly used Jerome's translation of the bible, but when selecting additional scriptural evidence, he sometimes looked to the Old Latin translations as well.⁵¹ He chose which to use depending upon which he believed would give the more edifying lesson.⁵² He seemed to have believed that both translations were authoritative, as not only did he claim that both were used in his apostolic see⁵³ but he sometimes drew lessons from both translations quite explicitly.⁵⁴ Thus, in one such case he interpreted both the *Myrmicoleon* (ant-lion) in the Old Latin version (based on the Septuagint) of Job 4:11 and the *tigris* (tiger) which stood in its place in the Vulgate as being illustrative of particular aspects of the devil's nature and character.⁵⁵ He seems to have shown a preference in this case for the Jerome translation – which in any case he tended to discuss first – as it fitted his discussion more than the Old Latin translation.⁵⁶ However, it is significant that he felt it pertinent to offer interpretations of both versions, as it demonstrates that he did not believe one necessarily held more authority than another. When Gregory used both translations in order to discuss a point relating to the devil, such as the example just

⁴⁷ For example: *Mor.* 1.24.33-1.26.37 (1:43-45).

⁴⁸ Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 1:133-4.

⁴⁹ For more on Gregory's exegesis of Job and his friends as being multi-layered see Schreiner, 'Gregory's Interpretation of Job', 328.

⁵⁰ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:3).

⁵¹ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 5 (1:7).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ For an example of this when discussing the devil, see *Mor.* 5.20.43 (1:247-248).

⁵⁵ *Mor.* 5.20.43 (1:247-248).

⁵⁶ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 5 (1:7).

mentioned, for reasons that will follow it can be assumed that this was because he believed the point important to make.

Given that Gregory intended to interpret Job with reference to a particular method, it is vital to determine the degree of exegetical freedom (as opposed to constraint) that he exercised. Strict adherence to a particular interpretative method or to previous interpretations of Job would limit the ability of his comments on the devil to offer an insight into his own thoughts and concerns, more constrained would they be by the rules of the genre and those that he himself had set down. In answer to this it should first be said that Gregory did not in practice follow the interpretative scheme that he set out to Leander particularly rigidly. He adhered to it most strongly in the *Moralia's* first four books⁵⁷ but otherwise he frequently employed just two senses, the historical and spiritual (this including any of the non-historical senses).⁵⁸ Consequently, rather than extracting the sense of every passage according to a consistent method, Gregory's exegesis was really rather fluid.⁵⁹

Secondly, to compare him with other exegetes of late antiquity, Gregory has been seen as of the Alexandrian mould, with the influence of Origen standing out most in his works.⁶⁰ This is because in practice Gregory appears to have been very unconcerned about the use of allegory and the dangers of eisegesis, unlike many others of the period. In particular he differed sharply from the older Augustine in terms of how far he felt it was legitimate to diverge from the literal meaning of the text, as in his later years Augustine had become increasingly anxious about the unrestrained use of allegory and had come to restrict his use of it more and more.⁶¹ The respective attitudes of Augustine and Gregory towards allegory has been compared by Markus, who has argued that

⁵⁷ Robert McNally, *The Bible in the Early Middle Ages* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 55.

⁵⁸ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 46-7.

⁵⁹ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 46.

⁶⁰ Petersen, *Dialogues*, 26. His influence on Gregory's exegesis was perhaps even greater than that of Augustine: Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 1:153-4, 162. This is particularly noticeable in his exegesis of Song of Songs: Paul Meyvaert, 'A New Edition of Gregory the Great's Commentaries on the Canticle and I Kings', *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 19 (1968): 215-25, at pp. 220-225; Petersen, 'Song of Songs', 346.

⁶¹ R.A. Markus, *Signs and Meanings. World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 12-16, 48-9. For Augustine's main work dealing with scriptural exegesis, see see *De doctrina Christiana*.

Such caution [as shown by Augustine] is foreign to Gregory. His own homiletic practice illustrates the unlimited freedom from textual restraint to which he felt entitled of his exegesis. He was more interested in the spiritual truth that the text could be made to support than in expounding its meaning.⁶²

Indeed, such was Gregory's relative lack of constraint that Markus has gone so far as to accuse him of 'exegetical freewheeling'.⁶³ Gregory was therefore not as beholden to the text as were some patristic authors, and that he had few such qualms about 'exegetical freewheeling' means that his passages containing reference to the devil are more likely to indicate his own interests than to be merely passing exegetical comments. He was not so constrained by the text and an exegetical method that his own ideas, concerns and imagination do not show through. This makes it more possible to determine to some degree his own interests and thought processes.

How, then, ought this work of exegesis be approached? Paul Meyvaert's words are a useful place to start:

I believe that the most rewarding approach to the material of this sort that he has left us is to view it as a grand exercise in the use of the imagination, and not to worry overmuch about the actual text he is commenting on. Gregory was anxious to make certain doctrinal points, or to get across some of the lessons drawn from his own spiritual experience, and he was constantly on the watch for a Scriptural verse on which he could 'peg' this or that idea. The more 'pegs' he used – and they are often incongruous ones – to stress one particular point, as 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. The Scriptural 'pegs', therefore, often provide an index to Gregory's personal preoccupations, and to this [sic] habitual cast of mind on a given subject.⁶⁴

This assessment of Gregory's exegesis is accepted and reiterated by Markus:

The text [of Job] becomes a storehouse of pegs on to which he hangs often quite extended treatises, mostly concerned with moral and spiritual

⁶² Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 45.

⁶³ Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 50.

⁶⁴ Paul Meyvaert, 'Gregory the Great and the Theme of Authority' in *Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977, originally published 1966), 5: 5. Markus considers this the 'sanest' assessment of Gregory's works and their interpretation that he has come across: Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 45.

matters...The text is a springboard for the contemplative, a flight from hearing to seeing.⁶⁵

The passages of Job therefore only acted as starting points for Gregory's commentary and did not always determine the entire course of his exposition. However, to quibble with Meyvaert's first sentence, it is argued here that they are important insofar as they *are* starting points, and that looking at the text that he is discussing and his accompanying commentary can help illuminate the connections that he made in his mind. The text that he is commenting on should not be entirely discarded because, as a work of exegesis, the scriptural passage and his explanation are connected and in themselves can be informative. As has been argued by another scholar, one should not view the jewels in the *Moralia* with no regard to their settings.⁶⁶ Consequently, the last part this chapter will identify some of the 'pegs' - ideas, words and concepts in the book of Job - on which Gregory hung his ideas about the devil, and which led him to think about him. This will also help illuminate where the devil was situated in Gregory's larger thought-world. This thesis therefore ignores the advice that one should read the *Moralia* without any thought of Job.⁶⁷

Meyvaert's contention that the more verses (pegs) Gregory attached a particular commentary to, the more we can be certain that this was a real preoccupation of his, is accepted here. This is not only for the simple reason that, given Gregory's exegesis, it is reasonable to assume that topics that he returned to repeatedly were those that were on his mind (with due attention given to the constraints of the book of Job), but also because of Gregory's beliefs about controlled speech and the role of the pastor.

3.0.1.3. The Task of the Pastor

The *Moralia* contains numerous digressions. This was for two main reasons: first, Gregory's loose exegetical method; and, secondly, Gregory's strongly-held belief that the pastor must digress if a teaching opportunity requires it:

⁶⁵ Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 52.

⁶⁶ Grover A. Zinn, 'Exegesis and Spirituality in the Writings of Gregory the Great', in *Gregory the Great*, ed. John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 168-180, at pp. 168-9.

⁶⁷ Cuthbert Butler, *Benedictine Monachism. Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule* (Cambridge: Speculum Historiale, 2nd edition 1924), 113.

Sed tamen quisquis de deo loquitur, curet necesse est, ut quicquid audientium mores instruit rimetur, et hunc rectum loquendi ordinem deputet, si cum opportunitas aedificationis exigit, ab eo se, quod loqui coeperat, utiliter deriuat. Sacri enim tractator eloquii morem fluminis debet imitari. Fluuis quippe dum per alueum defluit, si ualles ex latere concavas contingit, in eas protinus sui impetus cursum diuertit, cum que illas sufficienter impleuerit, repente ses in alueum refundit.⁶⁸

As a result, Gregory believed that the preacher should divert into associated topics should a teaching opportunity arise.⁶⁹ In this passage Gregory used words denoting a change of direction (*derivere*, *divertire*, *intorqueat*) when discussing the teacher's task, and specified that the preacher should go somewhere nearby (*iuxta*), bordering (*contingere*), or on the side (*latere*) of the main channel. Gregory applied this to the *Moralia*, resulting in a work in which he was content to indulge in digressions.

Gregory's concern with the correct order of speaking (*rectum loquendi ordinem*) is something that is evident in all of his works, none of which can be fully understood without reference to it. Gregory argued that one should only speak in order to edify, and that the pastor must also match his language, lesson, and manner of speaking to his listener.⁷⁰ Idle words – those which lack the motive of just necessity (*iustus necessitas*) or the intention of pious utility (*pious utilitas*) – should be avoided.⁷¹ The centrality of these ideas to his thought were such that he devoted an entire work to the question: his *Pastoral Care*. This work, particularly book three, demonstrates his belief that the pastor should mould his words in order to maximise their effects on different hearers, and in doing so he shows great insight into the different personalities of men and women.⁷² If there is nothing to say then the pastor should remain silent: in short, the tongue should neither be too loose, nor so bound

⁶⁸ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:3-4). And yet, whoever speaks about God, must take care that he examines thoroughly whatever instructs the morals of his audience, and he must allot this correct order of speaking, if he should derive from it profitably the start of his speech, when the opportunity of edification demands it. The user of holy eloquence ought to imitate the manner of a river. For if a river, while it flows down through its bed, finds concave recesses along its sides, it at once diverts the course of its flow into those, and when it has filled them up sufficiently, it suddenly pours back into its bed. (Translation from Martyn, *Letters*, 2:381-82. *Ep.* 5.53a).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Mor.* 6.39.64 (1:333). *Reg. Past.* 3, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 17 October 2011).

⁷¹ *Mor.* 7.37.58 (1:379).

⁷² *Reg. Past.* 3, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 17 October 2011).

that it cannot be of service.⁷³ The importance that Gregory attached to proper speech means that it would be wrong to view Gregory's digressions as of secondary importance or only as evidence of an inability to be concise. Rather, it is argued here that the time that Gregory took to edit the *Moralia*, combined with his opinions regarding speech, mean that digressions and asides should be seen as integral to the text and Gregory's purposes. Furthermore, as diversions from the main narrative can be revealing, they are used below as an approximate guide to Gregory's interests and concerns regarding the devil.

3.0.2. Approaching the *Moralia*

The topic of the devil in the *Moralia* is approached most appropriately and fruitfully by taking into account these things about Gregory's use of the exegetical genre. This chapter will begin with a brief overview of Gregory's interpretation of Job and will give a summary of his main beliefs about the devil, and how these two fit with and shape each other. The bulk of the chapter will then be divided into two parts. The first part will analyse Gregory's theology of the devil as represented in the *Moralia*, isolating for further discussion those ideas and concepts that recur most often in the work. These topics will be discussed because these are the ideas that are attached to a large number of scriptural passages, and are therefore ideas which appear to be uppermost in his mind. This section will therefore not be exhaustive but will identify and explore those ideas which were most central to his thought, and which will be encountered in different forms later on.

The second part will identify and analyse some of the scriptural 'pegs' on which Gregory hung his ideas about the devil. This is to provide a more fluid and thematic account of Gregory's understanding of the devil and his place in the world and salvation history. In doing so it will explore some of the comparisons, associations and interconnections that Straw has identified as being in need of study, with particular reference to those which concern ideas about the devil.⁷⁴ The reason for this is that some scholarly works on Gregory's theology come across as very

⁷³ *Mor.* 7.37.61 (1:380). See also *Reg. Past* 2.4, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 18 October 2011).

⁷⁴ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 17.

different to the *Moralia* itself: whilst the *Moralia* follows Gregory's often digressory sequence of thought, scholarship on the *Moralia* is often ordered, coherent, in possession of a set body of knowledge and a clear progression of argument. This is of course inevitable and what one would expect, but in trying to represent Gregory's views in a systematic and coherent way, there is the danger that one will misrepresent his work, and especially his mode of thought. This is because he did not necessarily write with the same thought processes, assumptions, categories, and organisational boxes as the modern reader. It is for this reason that the second half will explore the contexts in which passages on the devil appear. This chapter and those which follow will not only be concerned with *what* Gregory said about the devil, but also when and where he said it, and why. The circumstances which drew him to discuss the devil can be as revealing as what he actually discusses; indeed, as Straw notes, what Gregory said incidentally and implicitly can be as important as what he did so explicitly.⁷⁵

Consequently, instead of battling against the structure of the *Moralia* and imposing on it – and Gregory's thought – a potentially artificial coherence, part of this chapter will explore what Gregory's exegetical method can tell modern readers about the way in which he thought about the devil. The manner in which he moved between different ideas can itself inform us of the contours of his thought. This will complement the more usual method of exploring his ideas by means of argument and analysis, as will be done in the first part. It is hoped, therefore, that an understanding will be reached on not only *what* Gregory believed about the devil, but also on *how* he believed and thought about him, and some of the wider ideas that he connected with this figure. Later chapters will explore how these beliefs and methods of thinking about the devil affected his dealings with the world around him.

3.0.3 The Devil in the *Moralia*: An Overview

Satan is found in the prologue (Job 1-2) to Job and it is therefore unsurprising that he should be in Gregory's exegesis. He is, however, found nowhere else in the book, although Leviathan is found twice and Behemoth once.⁷⁶ Gregory gives several

⁷⁵ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 17.

⁷⁶ Leviathan: Job 3:8; Job 41:1 (=Job 40:20 Vulg). Behemoth: Job 40:15 (= Job 40:10 Vulg).

overviews of the meaning of Job.⁷⁷ He describes how Job became the intermediary in the contest between God and Satan,⁷⁸ and how in spite of Satan's intention, Job's merits were augmented by the afflictions he suffered.⁷⁹ He makes it known that Job is a type of Christ and that his suffering prefigured Christ's passion,⁸⁰ and that he is also a type of the church as the tribulations he suffered represent those the church currently endures.⁸¹ Job's friends, in contrast, represent heretics.⁸² This overall interpretation of Job was traditional⁸³ and suggests that even if Gregory did not know of previous commentaries directly (or have them to hand), he was at least aware of traditional interpretations of the work. These similarities, however, are broad, and still allowed Gregory wide scope for interpretation.

On the devil himself, Gregory believed that he was created by God and he rejected by name the Manichean heresy that the devil is a First Cause (*principium*) and a co-creator with God.⁸⁴ He condemned Mani's teaching that the devil created matter and asserted that God is the creator of all things, including the devil.⁸⁵ In line with other Christian traditions, Gregory also asserted that the devil was an angel. He said that he was created the first and greatest of all God's creatures, and was endowed with a brilliance that was greater than all the other angels.⁸⁶ The other angels were like his adorning branches, heightening his splendour.⁸⁷ As a spirit, the devil possessed a knowledge much vaster than that of men and women,⁸⁸ and in the power of his angelic nature he still surpasses them.⁸⁹ He was created great beyond all comparison,⁹⁰ and, like men and women, his purpose had been to contemplate God.⁹¹ Had he had not fallen, the devil would now stand in glory, holding all of the angels together in contemplation of the divine.⁹²

⁷⁷ *Mor.* Praef. (1:8-24). See also *Mor.* 7.1.1 (1:334).

⁷⁸ *Mor.* Praef. 3.8 (1:14).

⁷⁹ *Mor.* Praef. 3.7 (1:13).

⁸⁰ *Mor.* Praef. 6.14 (1:19); *Mor.* Praef. 7.16 (1:20).

⁸¹ *Mor.* Praef. 7.16 (1:21).

⁸² *Mor.* Praef., 6.15 (1:20).

⁸³ Gillet, 'Introduction', 84.

⁸⁴ *Mor.* 9.49.74 (1:508).

⁸⁵ *Mor.* 9.49.74 (1:508).

⁸⁶ *Mor.* 32.23.47-48 (2:1665-7); *Mor.* 32.24.51 (2:1668-9).

⁸⁷ *Mor.* 33.23.47 (2:1665).

⁸⁸ *Mor.* 2.3.3 (1:61).

⁸⁹ *Mor.* 34.20.39 (2:1761).

⁹⁰ *Mor.* 32.23.47 (2:1665).

⁹¹ *Mor.* 4.3.8 (1:168).

⁹² *Mor.* 32.23.48 (2:1666-7).

However, pride brought to an end to the devil's life of blessedness, and because he attempted to rise up and be like God, he was cast down from his exalted position.⁹³ As Gregory believed that it was pride, and not lust, that caused the devil's fall, Gregory's account demonstrates the victory of the Genesis-Isaiah version over that based on Genesis and Enoch. Other angels also fell with him,⁹⁴ and when they fell, the devil and his fellow-apostates lost sight of the face, or wisdom, of God; they will never regain this.⁹⁵

The devil is also associated with the serpent in Eden,⁹⁶ and by his deception of Eve he brought about the fall of humanity.⁹⁷ He did this by appealing to Adam and Eve's pride, inviting them to be like gods;⁹⁸ Gregory also writes that the pride of the devil is the origin of humanity's fall.⁹⁹ He later attempted to tempt Christ, but this failed,¹⁰⁰ as shall be seen later in this chapter, Christ was subject to external temptation, but did not succumb internally.¹⁰¹ Gregory believed that the devil tempted Christ because he believed him to be a man,¹⁰² and thus appropriated the 'debtor' and 'trap' myths: that is, that Christ tricked the devil into losing his rights to man because he had tried to claim Christ, who was innocent.¹⁰³

Ever since the fall, the devil and his angels have been envious of the salvation offered to men and women,¹⁰⁴ and as a result they continually attempt to prevent their rise by means of temptation.¹⁰⁵ Thus, between the fall of man and the apocalypse the devil's role is to tempt,¹⁰⁶ and, as a consequence of Gregory's pastoral concerns, the vast majority of Gregory's writings, particularly the *Moralia*, are devoted to this.

⁹³ For instance: *Mor.* 34.21.40 (2:1761); 34.23.47 (2:1766); 23.6.13 (2:1154). See Eccl. 10:13; Is. 14:14; Luke 10:18. For more on pride in the *Moralia*, see Michael Baastan, *Pride According to Gregory the Great. A Study of the Moralia* (Edwin Mellon Press, 1986).

⁹⁴ *Mor.* 2.42.74 (1:103).

⁹⁵ *Mor.* 19.2.4 (2:956).

⁹⁶ *Mor.* 3.8.12 (1:121-2).

⁹⁷ Gen. 3:1; Gen. 3:13.

⁹⁸ Gen. 3:5.

⁹⁹ *Mor.* 34.23.54 (2:1771).

¹⁰⁰ Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

¹⁰¹ See p. 82 below. See also *Hom. in Evang.* 1.16, page 111, line 28, <http://clt.brepolis.net/Ita/pages/Toc.aspx> (Accessed 17 October 2011).

¹⁰² *Mor.* 3.15.28 (1:133).

¹⁰³ *Mor.* 33.7.14 (2:1684-5); *Mor.* 33.9.17 (2:1687-8). See p. 46 note 48 above.

¹⁰⁴ *Mor.* 2.47.74 (1:103).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Mor.* 2.22.41 (1:84). [Between the fall and the coming of Christ this is what he did]; *Mor.* 34.1.1 (2:1733). [When talking about the end of the world].

In the present day the devil and his angels roam the air between the earth and sky.¹⁰⁷ He is currently imprisoned in the abyss, meaning that he is currently out of sight but with hidden influences upon the minds of men.¹⁰⁸ This is also interpreted to mean that his power is currently restrained by God.¹⁰⁹ One day, however, the devil will be brought out into the open,¹¹⁰ and at this time he will enter into a man, who will be called the Antichrist.¹¹¹ The devil's powers will increase at this time, and the Antichrist will be his sword, the means by which he wreaks destruction.¹¹² The Antichrist will use his mouth and those of his wicked preachers to pervert the minds of men¹¹³ and his miracles and lying wonders will bring confusion and doubt even into the minds of the elect.¹¹⁴ At the end of time, however, the devil will be defeated and thrown in the pit, to be punished forever.¹¹⁵

Men and women will be subjected to the same fires of hell as the devil, although they were originally prepared for the devil.¹¹⁶ Gregory conceived of hell (*infernus*) as consisting of both an upper and lower region.¹¹⁷ It is in the lower region that this fire can be found and the condemned are punished; the upper regions are where the souls of the just before Christ were consigned, and where Christ descended to after His death and before His resurrection.¹¹⁸ In the *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies*, Gregory recorded several visions and journeys into the underworld which initially suggest that some of the devil's angels are, in fact, currently in hell, attempting to claim the souls of the dead and dying; in the *Moralia*, however, the devil is not currently in hell. Many of these topics and their meaning and implications will be discussed later.

This forms the basic narrative of the devil's origin, nature, fall, present actions and fate as it is possible to piece together from Gregory's *Moralia*. As can be seen, Gregory absorbed previous Christian ideas about the devil, and this basic narrative provided him with a number of ideas to which he was to return frequently. Gregory,

¹⁰⁷ *Mor.* 2.47.74 (1:103).

¹⁰⁸ *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174).

¹⁰⁹ *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174).

¹¹⁰ *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174); *Mor.* 19.9.15 (2:97).

¹¹¹ See, for instance, *Mor.* 15.58.69 (1:793).

¹¹² *Mor.* 34.8.17 (2:1744).

¹¹³ *Mor.* 33.33.57 (2:1723).

¹¹⁴ *Mor.* 33.36.61 (2:1726).

¹¹⁵ *Mor.* 34.6.11 (2:1741).

¹¹⁶ *Dial.* 4.30.5 (2:102). See Matt. 25.41.

¹¹⁷ *Mor.* 12.9.13 (1:636). For more information on Gregory's ideas about hell and punishment see Fonash, *Eternal Punishment*, 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

however, never set out to provide a chronological narrative, and some of these ideas were of little interest to him. This is demonstrated by his deliberate and explicit decision not to repeat certain information, which will be discussed later.¹¹⁹ However, within the *Moralia* there are also several points about the devil that Gregory took the time to repeat over and over and that he explores in great detail. These ideas, and how they worked in Gregory's mind, are explored below.

PART ONE

3.1 The Relationship between the Devil and God

Gregory believed that in the book of Job, Job was the subject of a contest between God and the devil.¹²⁰ Success in this contest was to be determined by Job's reaction to suffering: should he curse God and cease to live a righteous life, Satan would win; should he continue in his righteousness, God would be the victor. The book was therefore not about Job, but about the enmity between the devil and God: Job was merely the pawn. The result was that Job responded appropriately in speech and action to the hardship that befell him, proving God right and serving both as a type of Christ and as a model for men and women.¹²¹ The idea that God gave Satan permission to strike Job is present in the literal sense of Job 1-2, and is one that many modern readers unschooled in early medieval methods of exegesis might easily find when reading the prologue. It is therefore unsurprising that this is something that Gregory deemed worthy of comment. However, that Gregory not only reiterated this point but brought extra passages of scripture into his argument to prove it further indicates that the idea was important to Gregory in a way that went beyond mere passing exegetical interest.¹²² This is further evidenced by the appearance of the same idea in the *Dialogues*.¹²³

¹¹⁹ See pp. 97-98 below.

¹²⁰ *Mor. Praef.* 3.8 (1:14).

¹²¹ See *Mor.* 7.1.1 (1:334).

¹²² For example: *Mor.* 3.9.15 (1:124). In this passage he also uses Isaiah 45:5-7 ('I am the Lord, and there is none else: there is no God, besides me: I girded thee, and thou hast not known me: 'That they may know who are from the rising of the sun, and they who are from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else: 'I form the light, and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord that do all these things.')

¹²³ *Dial.* 3.21.4 (2:354).

Gregory went further than just presenting God as the victor in this contest (in line with the literal interpretation of the book), and frequently asserted the Augustinian line that the devil can do nothing by himself and that, being a spirit, he cannot even subsist by himself.¹²⁴ As this meant that the devil could not inflict suffering on Job without divine permission, this placed ultimate responsibility for Job's hardship on God; this, however, did not concern Gregory as it might the modern scholar concerned with theodicy, as his overriding concern was to make God's omnipotence clear. Gregory approached this problem by making a distinction between the devil's will and his power, saying that :

Sciendum uero est quia satanae uoluntas semper iniqua est sed numquam potestas iniusta, quia a semetipso uoluntatem habet sed a Domino potestatem. Quod enim ipse facere inique appetit, hoc Deus fieri non nisi iuste permittit.¹²⁵

Gregory reiterated this idea many times in the *Moralia*, drawing it out of various verses in Job.¹²⁶ Similarly, he also wrote elsewhere that Job was righteous because he acknowledged this fact that his suffering came from God and not Satan (Job 1.21: 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away').¹²⁷ He also drew it out from a number of other scriptural passages that he introduced as *testimonia*, and thus, in addition to Job 1:11, 1.21 and Job 23:13, he also pointed the reader to 1 Sam. 18.10 ('the evil spirit from God came upon Saul')¹²⁸ as further evidence for this teaching.¹²⁹ This additional passage was intended to serve as evidence (*testimonium*) that would crown or fortify (*cingere*) the meaning of the passage from Job under discussion.¹³⁰ Demonstrating the importance he attached to this topic, he then proceeded to subject 1 Sam. 18:10 itself to exegesis:

¹²⁴ *Mor.* 2.10.16 (1:70).

¹²⁵ *Mor.* 2.10.17 (1:70). We must know that the will of Satan is always unjust but his power never unjust, because he has his will from himself, but his power from God. For what he himself unjustly desires to do, God permits this to be done only justly.

¹²⁶ For instance: *Mor.* 2.10.17 (1:70); *Mor.* 2.18.31 (1:79); *Mor.* 18.2.4 (2:888).

¹²⁷ Job 1.21. See *Mor.* 2.18.31 (1:79).

¹²⁸ 1 Samuel 18:10 (= 1 Kings 18:10 in Vulg.). *invasit spiritus Dei malus Saul.*

¹²⁹ *Mor.* 2.10.17 (1:70). For a similar occurrence also see *Mor.* 18.2.4 (2:887-8). In this place Gregory also discusses the unjust nature of the devil's will but the just nature of his power, again bringing 1 Samuel 10:18 into the discussion.

¹³⁰ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:2).

Sed duobus uerbis comprehensa est et potestas iusta in diabolo, et uoluntas iniusta. Nam et ipse dicitur spiritus malus per nequissimam uoluntatem; et idem spiritus Domini per acceptam iustissimam potestatem.¹³¹

This distinction between the devil's will and power was therefore an idea that was reinforced in Gregory's mind as a result of its presence (he believed) in several biblical verses. Gregory was preoccupied with the question of the relationship of the devil's powers to those of God, which is demonstrated by the large number of scriptural passages onto which he 'pegged' interpretations relating to this issue.¹³² As set out in the introduction, one way of determining Gregory's interests in the very complex *Moralia* is to determine which ideas he 'pegged' to verses most frequently: the power of God over the devil is one such idea.

He considered this point of doctrine so important that, having seen evidence of it in Job 1:11, he deemed it necessary to elaborate and to include additional evidence from scripture to fortify his interpretation. Gregory's mind frequently worked associatively and in accordance with the 'phenomenon of reminiscence',¹³³ but could only do so if these other passages and their meanings were already present within his mind. 1 Samuel 10:18 therefore served as a stored scriptural reference which stood ready to be recalled whenever Gregory was discussing the origin of the devil's power and the extent to which it was just. There were also other biblical passages which Gregory associated with this idea. Matt. 8:31 ('And the devils besought him, saying: 'If thou cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine')¹³⁴ was also frequently used as a *testimonium* to illustrate the accuracy of the doctrine.¹³⁵ Indeed, both Athanasius and Cassian brought Job 1.21 and Matthew 8.31 into their discussions when describing this phenomenon,¹³⁶ and this distinction between the

¹³¹ *Mor.* 18.2.4 (2:888). But the just power and unjust will of the devil is expressed in two words. For he himself is called an evil spirit through his most evil will, and also the spirit of God through having received a very just power.

¹³² See pp. 63-4 for this as a way of determining which ideas were important to Gregory.

¹³³ The phrase that Leclercq used to describe the practice whereby monastic authors recalled other associated phrases and biblical passages to mind, sometimes causing them to divert away from their original subject. Discussed mainly with reference to later authors but nevertheless a valid way of describing Gregory's own method of reading and writing. See Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 73-4. See general introduction pp. 95-7 below.

¹³⁴ Matt. 8:31.

¹³⁵ For example: *Mor.* 2.10.16 (1:70); *Mor.* 32.24.50 (2:1668). See also *Dial.* 3.21.4 (2:354).

¹³⁶ Athanasius, 'Life of Antony' 29, found in Archibald Robertson ed., 'Life of Antony' in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series. Volume 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B.

devil's will and his power was also made by Augustine, who similarly discussed it in conjunction with Job 1.21.¹³⁷

Many of Gregory's doctrines about the devil therefore had their origin in previous exegeses of scripture. However, Gregory was not an abstract theologian, and for him the most important doctrinal truths were often encapsulated in particular scriptural references. It was by means of remembering these passages, which he could recall at will, that these doctrines were contained in his mind. He was not interested in formulating a full theology of the devil but instead can be found moving his mind associatively between various ideas and verses of scripture.

The importance of this doctrine to his mind is illustrated by his exegesis of the whirlwind speech (Job 38-41). This is concerned with the question of God's justice, but Gregory did not primarily interpret it in these terms, because he was not concerned with issues of theodicy and suffering.¹³⁸ Rather,

Gregory thought the question of the speech answered the following question: 'By what power does one overcome the attacks and temptations of the devil?' In Gregory's view, what Job needed was not justice but a God powerful enough to protect him from the assaults of Satan.¹³⁹

This overstates the case, as the next section will demonstrate that Gregory *was* concerned with justice, but that he conceived of it in different terms than a person in the modern day might. However, it remains that Gregory took the opportunity to emphasise God's power over the devil when and where he could.

Crucially, however, this idea – that God was more powerful than the devil – was, for Gregory, evident in the *story* of the devil itself. Its truth was not just found abstractly in various passages of scripture, but it was also evident from the *events* of the devil's life. The introduction noted that a typological way of thinking is in many ways a non-linear one, and that events on the historical time-line have vertical, or sacred, significance: in the events of the devil's life, whenever he (or the Antichrist)

Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1891, reprinted 1891), 195-221, at p. 204; Cassian, *Coll.* 8.1.1, pp. 217-18.

¹³⁷ Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos* 32, 2.12, found in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini. Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L*, CCSL 38 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1956), 263-4. Augustine used Job 1.21 to illustrate his point that everything comes from God and that one should therefore ascribe chastisement to God directly, and not to the devil.

¹³⁸ Schreiner, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found*, 48.

¹³⁹ Schreiner, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found*, 48.

falls and is bound, this demonstrates the principle that God is more powerful than the devil (or the Antichrist). Thus, sacred significance can be in the form of a moral or allegorical meaning. That is, each and every time that the devil is cast down or bound, this serves as an illustration of God's power, in story form.

For instance, Gregory interpreted Job 7:12 ('Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou hast enclosed me in a prison?') as referring to the devil, writing that the evil spirit is currently bound in prison, unable to rise up to heaven or to tempt as much as he would like.¹⁴⁰ Gregory brought in 2 Pet. 2:4 ('For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments, to be reserved unto judgment') as a *testimonium* to explain this further, associating the devil's fall with this principle. He thus saw a direct connection between the devil's casting-down and binding with his limited power and God's power over him.¹⁴¹ In another place it is Apoc. 20:1-3 that is associated with the devil's current restraint.¹⁴² Consequently, the evil spirit and his followers are confined by God so that they cannot achieve all that they desire.¹⁴³ Furthermore, chapter 5 will demonstrate how in the *Dialogues* Gregory explicitly connected the story of the devil's fall as in Is. 14:14 with the doctrine of the power of God over the devil.¹⁴⁴

The devil's fall at the beginning of time therefore set in motion a repeating cosmic event which also has doctrinal – or 'vertical' – significance. The original fall of the devil thus served as an archetype and set in motion a repeating action which can be seen in the devil's fall, his current bound position, the Antichrist's fall in the future, and the devil's casting-down at the end of time. It will become evident that other repeating-motions and ideas were set in place by this fall, but one of its meanings was that God is more powerful than the devil: this can be seen in discussions of his current bound position, which is sometimes described as representing that the devil is currently restrained in his power (to be released in the future).¹⁴⁵ This is a phenomenon that will be discussed further with relation to other events in the devil's story and particular doctrines and repeating activities.

¹⁴⁰ *Mor.* 8.23.39 (1:410).

¹⁴¹ *Mor.* 8.23.39 (1:410).

¹⁴² *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174).

¹⁴³ *Mor.* 8.23.39 (1:410-11)

¹⁴⁴ See pp. 163-5 below.

¹⁴⁵ *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174); *Mor.* 18.42.67 (2:933).

3.1.1 The Devil's Attacks and God's Justice

Gregory argued that all hardship, whether received directly from God or via the devil, serves one of two functions: to aid the elect in their steadfastness, or to begin the punishment of the reprobate that will conclude in the eternal fires of hell.¹⁴⁶ That the devil needed divine permission in order to exercise power was therefore not a problem for Gregory, as he used it as the basis for an 'intricate exposition of the pedagogical use of pain by God'.¹⁴⁷ He was unconcerned that this made God ultimately responsible for suffering; indeed, it has frequently been noted that Gregory was not concerned with theodicy, and that he was not seeking to defend God against accusations that he was responsible for making people suffer.¹⁴⁸ The representation of hardship as an instrument of divine justice in Gregory's works has been subject to much previous analysis, and will therefore not be expanded upon here,¹⁴⁹ although the role of the devil in all this is pertinent to this thesis.

First, in quick summary, the precise manner in which suffering served these ends differed according to the situation. In the case of the elect, hardship sometimes enabled a person's righteousness to be increased, such as in the case of Job; in others adversity helped to redirect the will of the elect from evil.¹⁵⁰ In such a way God is said to have impeded the elect when they wished to do something wrong.¹⁵¹ The reprobate do not always suffer because their punishment is in some ways a commencement of that which they will endure in hell.¹⁵² Augustine had similarly argued that God makes good use of wicked wills and that whilst God created the devil good, foreseeing that he would become wicked, He prepared the use that he would make of him: to bring good to the saints.¹⁵³ Like Gregory, Augustine said that

¹⁴⁶ *Mor.* 18.22.35 (2:908).

¹⁴⁷ Hester, *Eschatology and Pain*, 82.

¹⁴⁸ Hester, *Eschatology and Pain*, 82; Schreiner, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found*, 48.

¹⁴⁹ Most notably: Catry, 'Épreuves du juste et mystère de Dieu'; Hester, *Eschatology and Pain*. See also Laporte, 'Une théologie systématique chez Grégoire?', in which it is argued that the idea of suffering was central to Gregory's theology.

¹⁵⁰ *Mor.* 34.2.4 (2:1735). See particularly *Mor.* 5.1.1 (1:218-19), which discusses why things sometimes go well with the bad and bad with the good, and vice versa.

¹⁵¹ *Mor.* 34.2.3 (2:1734-5).

¹⁵² *Mor.* 5.1.1 (1:218-19).

¹⁵³ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 11.17 (2:336-7).

any evil spirit can have within itself the will to do harm, but maintains that the power to do so can only come from God.¹⁵⁴

The idea that suffering in this life can stand in the place of suffering after death occurs frequently within the *Moralia*.¹⁵⁵ In this way the devil is like the anvil upon which the elect are formed:

Recte ergo Leviathan iste incudi comparatus est, quia nos illo persequente componimur, ipse autem et semper percutitur, et in uas utile numquam mutatur. Aeternae illum percussioni relinquimus; et nos superni artificis manu in eius temptatione percussi, per illum quasi uascula formata transimus. In ipso enim tundimur, sed ut ad usum domus supernae ueniamus.¹⁵⁶

God thus turns the will of the devil and evil men and women to His own purposes, and turns them towards the protection of the good.¹⁵⁷ It is in such a way that the devil is the *extractor* of God, and it is this complementary relationship that is commented upon by Straw, and inserted into the conceptual framework that (she argues) structures Gregory's thought.¹⁵⁸ However, whilst the temptations of the devil may serve to erase the sins of the elect, it appears that such purgation can only occur in this life. Gregory does write, in a sentiment that is repeated elsewhere in the *Moralia*, of a purificatory process by which men and women pass through fire, but it is not a post-mortem one that is described.¹⁵⁹ Punishment can begin now on earth, to end in the punishments of eternal damnation; it can begin and end on earth, salvation following in the next life. And, in both of these, the attacks of the devil play a significant role, as it is by means of these that one is shaped into a form that will permit entry into God's kingdom. An example of this occurring will be explored in the case of Benedict in the next chapter.

3.1.2 The Devil's Damnation

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ For example: *Mor.* 5.1.1 (1:218-19).

¹⁵⁶ *Mor.* 34.6.11 (2:1741). Rightly therefore was this Leviathan compared to an anvil, because we are built up by his attacks, but he himself is always struck, and is never changed into a useful vessel. We abandon him to eternal beating, and we, having been beaten by the heavenly hand of the Artist in his temptation, through him turn into as it were shaped vessels. For on him we are beaten, but it is in order that we might come into the use of the heavenly house.

¹⁵⁷ *Mor.* 34.7.13 (2:1742).

¹⁵⁸ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ *Mor.* 16.32.39 (1:822).

In a passage that is also found in his *Dialogues*, Gregory says that the decree that one should pray for one's enemies (Matt 5:44) is valid only at that time when they are able to convert and turn away from sin, and that one does not pray for the human dead who are condemned to hellfire for the same reason that one does not pray for the devil: prayers should not be wasted on those whom God had condemned.¹⁶⁰ For present purposes this passage is important not for what it says about the ability (or not) of men and women to repent after death, but for what it says about the devil's inability to do so. This is especially so as even though this passage had originally intended to demonstrate why one does not pray for the *human* condemned, immediately after it Gregory addressed the reader directly, making it clear that he had intended the passage to denounce Origen's followers, whose doctrines concerned the devil. Here he said that he had spoken about Origen briefly because an opportunity had offered himself, but that he was now going to return to his order of exposition.¹⁶¹

This explicit rejection of Origen (who had held that eventually all created beings will be saved), as with his explicit rejection of Mani, is illustrative because it demonstrates that Gregory was keen to promote those few doctrines about the devil that had been officially decided upon.¹⁶² In the introduction it was noted that in Gregory's writings explicit diversions from the main narrative can offer a window into his preoccupations: the idea that the devil cannot be saved was therefore one such preoccupation. That he considered it a topic of major importance is demonstrated by his claim that he had diverted from his main narrative in order to make the point. This is particularly so in light of his words concerning the importance of controlled speech and the necessity of digression when the opportunity for edification demanded it. The reason for the significance of this theological point to his mind is almost certainly revealed by his immediate reference to Origen: Gregory's desire to adhere to orthodoxy and to make certain that his audience did not fall into error meant that he perceived it as his pastoral duty to take advantage of all openings to spell out orthodox opinion. Gregory's beliefs were founded in scripture and the decrees of the ecumenical councils, and as pastor he was

¹⁶⁰ *Mor.* 34.19.38 (2:1760). The same passage occurs in *Dial.* 4.46.7-9 (3:164-6). See also Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 21.24 (2:790).

¹⁶¹ *Mor.* 34.19.38 (2:1760-1).

¹⁶² For Origen's argument, see Origen, 'De Principiis', 1, fragment, p. 71.

required to speak out against all erroneous beliefs, including those about the devil declared so by conciliar pronouncement. The next section will also make it clear that, alongside the doctrine of God's power over the devil, this doctrine was also established and encapsulated in the events of Genesis.

3.2. Temptation

Temptation is the main action that the devil and his angels perform in the present day. It is a theme that runs throughout the *Moralia*, and it is impossible to single out just one book or selection of books where it occurs most frequently. The evil spirits, knowing that they are barred from blessedness and cannot return to life, seek men and women with whom they can share their destruction.¹⁶³ The devil and his angels do not wish to fall into the pit with just a few men; rather, they wish to gain more souls before they are cast down at the end of time.¹⁶⁴ These spirits act in this way not only because they wish to have fellows in their destruction, but also because they are envious of men due to the salvation that is possible for them.¹⁶⁵ In the future the devil's cruelty will increase as he realises that his end is approaching and that his ability to lure men to their destruction will soon disappear.¹⁶⁶ The primary method employed by the devil and his angels to prevent the rise of men is temptation, which includes luring men and women into sin by means of deceit.

3.2.1 The devil in Gregory's model of temptation

It is in the *Moralia* that Gregory sets out his famous four-fold method of sin and temptation. This passage needs to be quoted in full:

Quattuor quippe modis peccatum perpetratur in corde, quattuor consummatur in opere. In corde namque suggestionem, delectationem, consensum et defensionis audaciam perpetratur. Fit enim suggestio per aduersarium, delectatio per carnem, consensus per spiritum, defensionis audacia per elationem...Nam serpens suasit, Eua delectata est, Adam consensit, qui etiam requisitus, confiteri culpam per audaciam noluit.

¹⁶³ *Mor.* 9.46.71 (1:506).

¹⁶⁴ *Mor.* 34.1.1 (2:1733).

¹⁶⁵ *Mor.* 2.47.74 (1:103).

¹⁶⁶ *Mor.* 34.1.1 (2:1733).

Hoc uero in humano genere cotidie agitur quod actum in primo parente nostri generis non ignoratur. Serpens suasit quia occultus hostis mala cordibus hominum latenter suggerit. Eua delectata est quia carnalis sensus, ad uerba serpentis mox se delectationi substernit. Assensum uero Adam mulieri praepositus praebuit quia dum caro in delectationem rapitur, etiam a sua rectitudine spiritus infirmatus inclinatur.¹⁶⁷

The first point to make is that in this passage Gregory was very consciously setting up the devil's temptation of Eve as the model through which all temptation occurs. This is a very clear – and worked out – example of the phenomenon hinted at in the previous section: that the events of the devil's life at the beginning of time provided the archetypes for his actions in the future. Thus, this first temptation was the mould for all future temptations, and whilst the time changes, the scale changes, and the individuals (other than the devil) change, the devil himself performs as part of the same sequence over and over again. This also establishes the principle that for men and women, life on earth is struggle against the devil.

The second point regards the significance of the fourth stage. This division of temptation into particular stages can also be found in Gregory's *Homilies* and letters, although in these, the fourth stage, the willingness to defend, is excluded.¹⁶⁸ This fourth stage – found in the *Moralia* – refers to the refusal of Adam and Eve to confess their sin when confronted by God (Gen 3:11-13), and the refusal of all men and women to do the same. Elsewhere in the *Moralia* Gregory stated that Adam and Eve's refusal to admit to their sin and their attempts to implicate another – Adam's implication of Eve, and Eve's implication of the serpent – worsened their guilt.¹⁶⁹ However, of significance for present purposes is what Gregory wrote about God's condemnation of the serpent (Gen. 3:14-15):

¹⁶⁷ *Mor.* 4.27.49 (1:193). For sin is committed in the heart in four ways, and in four ways consummated in deed. For in the heart it is accomplished by suggestion, delight, consent, and the audacity of defence. For the suggestion comes through the enemy; delight, through the flesh; consent, through the spirit; and the audacity of defence, through pride...For the serpent tempted, Eve delighted, and Adam consented - who, even when called for, was unwilling to confess his sin because of pride. This in truth is conducted in the human race today; our race is not ignorant of that act of our first parents. The serpent tempted because the hidden enemy secretly suggests evil in the hearts of human beings. Eve delighted because the carnal sense, at the serpent's words, soon puts itself at the service of delight. Indeed Adam (who was put in command of woman), because the flesh was siezed with delight, was bent from his uprightness, as the spirit was weakened.

¹⁶⁸ *Hom. in Evang.* 1.16, part 1, page 110, lines 20-21, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 12 October 2011); *Ep.* 11.56a [MGH] in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum*, 2:331-43, at p. 343. Note that his letter is *Ep.* 8.37 in Martyn, *Letters*, 2:543.

¹⁶⁹ *Mor.* 22.15.30 (2:1113-4); *Mor.* 33.28.50 (2:1718).

Serpens uero iam non requiritur, quia nec eius paenitentia quaerebatur. Hi autem quorum paenitentia quaesita est, scutum nequissimae defensionis contra iustissimae correptionis uerba protulerunt. Vnde nunc usque in usum peccantium trahitur.¹⁷⁰

God therefore did not ask the devil whether or not he was involved, but immediately condemned him, because God does not allow the devil a chance to confess. This action, therefore, signified another higher principle, mentioned previously: that salvation is not available to the devil. Confession is only needed when pardon is possible, and pardon is something that will never be accorded to the devil. Thus, a second template set in motion here is that of men and women being asked to confess, but the devil not: this signifies the higher principle that salvation is offered to men and women, but not to the devil. In Gregory's mind, therefore, this was a doctrine not just encapsulated by certain passages of scripture, but in the story of the devil himself, as the events of Genesis established the principle that the devil will never repent, and that he will never be given the chance to do so. Gregory therefore believed that the description of the fall in Genesis 3:1-19 served as a template for all future human and diabolical experience in several ways: falling through pride; ways of being tempted; and being asked (or not) to confess. In terms of doctrine, they indicated the related ideas of God's power over the devil, the necessity of temptation, and the principle that the devil will not be offered salvation.

Returning to Gregory's model of temptation, the first three stages, consisting of suggestion, delight and consent, can be found in several of Gregory's works, and in all places where this model is discussed, Gregory called them the ways of sin (*peccati modi*)¹⁷¹ and the many means of sin by which humankind has fallen (*humanum genus in quot peccatorum gradibus sit lapsus*).¹⁷² This model, forming the foundation of his thought concerning temptation, was that with which he interpreted both humankind's present experience and sacred history. The devil was at the centre of the first stage, as seen in his letter to Augustine of Canterbury:

¹⁷⁰ *Mor.* 33.28.50 (2:1718). Indeed even now the serpent is not asked, because his repentance is not sought. But they from whom repentance was asked for brought forth a shield of most wicked defence against words of most just rebuke. From which time up until now it has been drawn into the use of those committing sin.

¹⁷¹ *Mor.* 4.27.50 (1:193).

¹⁷² *Mor.* 4.27.50 (1:194).

Tribus enim modis impletur omne peccatum, videlicet suggestione, delectatione, consensu. Suggestio quippe fit per diabolum, delectio per carnem, consensus per spiritum, quia et primam culpam serpens suggestit, Eva velut caro delectata est, Adam vero velut spiritus consensit.¹⁷³

Gregory therefore placed responsibility for *suggestio* squarely with the devil. He does this in several places following this passage: *Cum enim malignus spiritus peccatum suggerit in mente* and *hoc quod malignus spiritus seminat in cogitatione*.¹⁷⁴ In these passages, the devil plants a suggestion in the mind (*mens*) or thought (*cogitatio*), and it is from this suggestion that sin has its beginning.¹⁷⁵ In this scheme of temptation, therefore, the first stage is initiated by the devil: *Fit enim suggestio per aduersarium*.¹⁷⁶ Gregory therefore employed this model and placed the devil at the beginning of every sin in a variety of his works.

As well as Genesis 3:1-13, Gregory also interpreted Job 3:11-12, the accounts of Christ's temptation in the synoptic Gospels, and mankind's present experiences in the light of this model.¹⁷⁷ On Christ, he wrote that the devil tempted Him but could not corrupt His soul or defile the heart of God.¹⁷⁸ Christ can be said to be tempted because temptation is external and by the devil; however, whereas humanity has within itself the conflict – brought about by the fall – which makes men and women succumb to these temptations, Christ did not. Consequently, therefore, whilst the first stage concerns the devil, how the second and third stages play themselves out depends upon the nature of the individual being tempted. Gregory therefore applied the model he found in Genesis 3:1-13 to other situations. Typological interpretations of scripture encouraged the search for parallels and repetitions across history, and this stood behind this wider application of the events of Genesis to other situations.

¹⁷³ *Ep.* 11.56a [MGH] in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum*, 2:343. For all sin is completed in three ways, namely, by suggestion, delight, and consent. Suggestion of course comes about from the devil, delight from the flesh, and consent from the spirit, because the serpent suggested the first sin, Eve was delighted as flesh, and indeed Adam consented as spirit.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* First quotation: 'For when the malignant spirit suggests sin in the mind.' Second quotation: 'This that the malignant spirit sows in the thought'.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Mor.* 4.27.49 (1:193).

¹⁷⁷ Job and all men and women: *Mor.* 4.27.50 – 4.27.53 (1:193-197). Christ: Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1-13. *Ep.* 11.56a [MGH] in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum*, 2:331-43, at p. 343; *Hom. in Evang.* 1.16, part 1, page 111, lines 24-8, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 12 October 2011).

¹⁷⁸ *Mor.* 9.28.44 (1:487).

Gregory's use of such a model was not without precedent. A similar model based on Genesis can be found in Augustine of Hippo's anti-Manichean work *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*. In this, Augustine's exegesis of this passage of Genesis is similar to that which Gregory refers in the *Moralia*.¹⁷⁹ In this passage Augustine discussed the origin of *suggestio* first of all in terms of coming from the thought (*cogitatio*) and the senses of the body (*sensus corporis*), before going on to connect these things to the serpent's cunning (*serpentis astutia*) more generally. Whenever Gregory used this model, however, he always began by stating unequivocally that the suggestion comes from the devil. It is sufficient for present purposes to point out the similarities with Augustine's exegesis of Genesis 3:1-13, but the interest here is Gregory's application of it across several of his writings. It is found in his letters, *Gospel Homilies* and in the *Moralia*, and is therefore a model that not only sprang to his mind frequently, but one which he believed was suitable for the edification of a variety of audiences. Whatever the origin of this idea, this model formed the foundation of Gregory's thought on the relationship between the devil and human sin.

3.1.1.1. Internal and External Temptation

In what way, however, does the devil suggest sin? Is this an external or an internal suggestion? Does the devil take physical form and entice men and women through the physical senses, or does he enter the human heart in a more subtle conquest? From his letters, it is incontestable that Gregory believed that the devil could enter into the human heart and that he thought of this in a physical, and not just a figurative, way. This is evident from a letter he sent to the bishops Eulogius of Alexandria and Anastasius of Antioch in which he used scripture to prove that the devil does, in fact, enter into the human heart, and argued that to say that the devil does not enter the human heart is heresy.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, in the letter quoted earlier, Gregory specifically said that the devil suggests sin to the mind.¹⁸¹ This is also seen explicitly in other passages in the *Moralia*. For instance, Gregory says that

¹⁷⁹ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 2, column 207, line 21, <http://clt.brepolis.net/lita/pages/Exporter.aspx?ctx=523887&extra=10> (accessed 23 January 2011).

¹⁸⁰ *Ep.* 7.31 (1:492-5, pp. 4-5). Scriptural references: John 13.27 and John 13:2.

¹⁸¹ *Ep.* 11.56a [MGH] in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum*, 2:343.

Primum subtilibus consiliis ad cor hominis immundi spiritus loquuntur,
qui dum leniter persuadent, quasi uenenum aspidum fundunt.¹⁸²

Here it is clearly indicated that at first (*primum*) the devil attacks the human heart; this idea is repeated through this section of the *Moralia*.¹⁸³ This suggests that even when he did not follow through with the rest of the model (as in the above example), he was still thinking in its terms: in the beginning, the devil enters the human heart. That he designates it as first suggests that there is more to come; this is presumably delight and consent.

Furthermore, this is not described as an external temptation, a suggestion worded by an external devil heard by the ears of the targeted individual, but as an internal planting. It is, however, external in the sense that the origin of the suggestion is the devil and not the human heart: as seen, Christ was only tempted externally, because his temptation came from the devil.¹⁸⁴ Sin therefore has an external origin – the devil – but is implanted internally. As it is clear that Gregory was adamant that the devil could and did enter into the human heart in a physical sense, this first stage, *suggestio*, can therefore be seen as involving an internal temptation, planted by an external figure.¹⁸⁵

However, this distinction between a physical and figurative entering of the human heart is one that is unlikely to have concerned Gregory, as for Gregory, the spiritual and physical realities were linked. In his letter to Leander, he argues that one must not neglect the literal meaning of scripture in favour of the spiritual or allegorical meaning. Therefore, when Gregory read of Judas that ‘Satan entered into him’, he would have taken this as a literal possession; however, his writings on scriptural interpretation in general suggest that there is no need to infer from that that Gregory did not also think of it in a figurative or allegorical way. It is therefore argued here that during temptation, Gregory believed that the devil physically entered into the body, heart or mind of the individual, but also that this does not preclude a more psychological, allegorical, or figurative interpretation on his part. The distinction between these would in any case have been an irrelevant or

¹⁸² *Mor.* 15.15.19 (1:759). First the impure spirits speak to the heart of man with subtle suggestions, and, while they gently persuade, they as it were pour the poison of asps.

¹⁸³ *Mor.* 15.15.19 (1:759).

¹⁸⁴ *Hom. in Evang.* 1.16, part 1, page 111, lines 24-8, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 12 October 2011).

¹⁸⁵ This is something that will also be looked at in following chapters, particularly chapter 3 on the *Dialogues* and the temptations of Saint Benedict.

meaningless to him, as at the core of Gregory's understanding of human sin stands the devil who always acts as an instigator, however one interprets this.

3.2.1.2. Methods of temptation

This first stage in the model of temptation, which involves the devil, can be divided into two types: that which involves fear and tribulation, and that which involves pleasure or persuasion. These are the two ways in which Gregory describes the devil drawing men and women into sin:

Antiquus hostis humanum genus duobus modis tentare consuevit, ut uidelicet corda stantium aut tribulationibus frangat aut persuasionibus molliat.¹⁸⁶

These two methods of persuasion are also described in terms of wounds (*uulnera*) and words (*uerba*), both of which are directed by the devil at Job.¹⁸⁷ The wounds refer to tribulations and hardship, and the words to pleasure and suggestion. Gregory likens these to darts (*iacula*), one of which is thrown in the manner of wounds (*modo uulnerabis*) to Job's face (*facies*), and the other which is thrown in the manner of words (*modo uerbis*) to his side (*latere*).¹⁸⁸ Indeed, the more we resist the devil, the more he is provoked against us, causing him to turn to more severe and devious tricks each time he fails.¹⁸⁹ It is therefore clear why the arrows of wounds are aimed at his face and the arrows of words approach him from the side: the progression from tribulation to suggestion is a part of this progression in the mode of temptation. The throwing of arrows from the side when previously they had been aimed at Job's face indicates a progression from seen or visible darts to ones that are not visible, a lesson that is applicable to all men and women. The devil begins by piling tribulation upon tribulation, inflicting wound upon wound.¹⁹⁰ However, when the devil cannot persuade us by means of wounds, each subsequent one increasing in severity, he

¹⁸⁶ *Mor.* 3.8.12 (1:121). The ancient enemy is accustomed to test humankind in two ways, so that, namely, he might crush by tribulations or soften by persuasions the hearts of the steadfast. See also *Mor.* 6.12.39 (1:312).

¹⁸⁷ For instance: *Mor.* 3.8.14 (1:123).

¹⁸⁸ *Mor.* 3.10.17 (1:126). On the devil throwing darts, see Eph. 6:16-17; 2 Cor. 10:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:8. Also see for instance, Cassian, *Collationes* 7.5, pp. 184-88.

¹⁸⁹ *Mor.* 3.10.18 (1:126). See also *Mor.* 3.1.1 (1:115).

¹⁹⁰ *Mor.* 2.15.25 (1:75).

enters the tongues of others to persuade us by means of words.¹⁹¹ Men who speak lies in order to draw others into sin are like these apostate angels.¹⁹² The devil, working by means of wounds and words, only resorts to poisoned talk after trial by tribulation has failed: *Verba enim post uulnera intulit*.¹⁹³ The order of progression, therefore, is from visible wounds which harm us to words which subtly persuade us.

As with his other repeated actions (such as ‘falling’), the idea that the devil was a verbal deceiver had deep scriptural roots. In Gen. 3:1-5, the serpent tempts Eve by means of speech, and in Gen. 3:13 she accuses the serpent of deceiving her. The influence of these verses on late antique perceptions of diabolical temptation was profound:

Eloquence had played a key role in the temptation leading to the Fall. Eve had been seduced by the Serpent’s crafty words and she in turn (the text hinted, and interpreters assumed) had imitated her tempter by similarly seducing Adam...On a more practical level, the Fall was the original scenario for verbal seduction, whether as practiced by heretics urging their false doctrines on the faithful, or by men and women deceiving or manipulating each other.¹⁹⁴

The fall therefore provided patristic authors with the ‘archetypal seduction through language’.¹⁹⁵ This is therefore another instance of the devil’s ‘story’ at the beginning of time putting in place a model of action which he copies again and again. There is therefore a very close connection between the devil’s original deceptive action and his later verbal seductions.

The idea that the devil is a manipulator of language will be revisited in the next chapter, but to continue in this vein, this connection was made by Gregory in his discussion of Job and his wife. In this, Gregory explored the progression from fear to persuasion. As a last resort, the devil seized the mind of Job’s wife, and tried to get her utter words of persuasion, this time aimed at his pride; this is discussed at the same time as the serpent’s temptation of Adam through Eve.¹⁹⁶ Gregory explained how this story typifies the general truth that the devil uses the wife in a last resort

¹⁹¹ *Mor.* 3.8.12-13 (1:121-2).

¹⁹² *Mor.* 3.20.38 (1:139).

¹⁹³ *Mor.* 3.8.14 (1:123). For he inflicted the words after the wounds. See also *Mor.* 3.10.18 (1:126).

¹⁹⁴ Jager, *Tempter’s Voice*, 4.

¹⁹⁵ Jager, *Tempter’s Voice*, 99.

¹⁹⁶ *Mor.* 3.8.12-14 (1:121-3) and *Mor.* 3.20.38 (1:139).

against the husband, and how women are a weakness of men.¹⁹⁷ The devil's attempts to attack Job by means of words and his wife are depicted as much more dangerous and devious than his attacks by means of tribulations. Thus, Job, in his successful withstanding of temptation, is described as catching the javelins of wounds, which were cast at him from the front, as well as the javelins of words, which were cast from the side.¹⁹⁸ The devil's words, therefore, are extremely dangerous.

The devil is therefore extremely persistent and cruel in his temptations. The more he is overcome, the more he is provoked to further acts, starting, as seen, with the weaker temptations and progressing to the stronger ones, ending only when he has possession of the mind. The devil tailors his attack to match the weaknesses of the individual, because not everyone is susceptible to the same vice.¹⁹⁹ He does this by searching for that which is held most dear, so that by it he might set his traps.²⁰⁰ He demonstrates great skill when choosing when and how to tempt.²⁰¹ There is, however, an order to temptations, and Gregory criticises those who are ignorant of this, as one ought first to control the appetite (greed and lust) before proceeding to spiritual battles.²⁰² In this case, the defeat of the flesh is not associated with the devil, but is a pre-requisite for fighting him; however, inflicting such blows within (on the flesh), also inflicts blows on those without (evil spirits).²⁰³ It is partly because humankind has flesh that it is offered salvation but the devil is not: flesh is a weakness, and therefore offers some mitigation for the fall.²⁰⁴ Indeed, as seen, for men and women, whilst it is the devil who tempts, it is the flesh which delights.²⁰⁵

The devil also sometimes takes a rest in order to lull the individual into thinking that they are secure, as their defences may be worn down if they think they have already defeated the devil.²⁰⁶ The devil can then return suddenly and unexpectedly.²⁰⁷ A person's defences may also be worn down if they think they have already defeated the devil.²⁰⁸ In such a way Gregory also describes the devil as being

¹⁹⁷ *Mor.* 3.8.12 (1:121-2).

¹⁹⁸ *Mor.* 3.10.17 (1:126).

¹⁹⁹ *Mor.* 3.31.60 (1:153).

²⁰⁰ *Mor.* 2.46.73 (1:102).

²⁰¹ *Mor.* 2.13.22 (1:73-4). Cf. Cassian, *Collationes* 7.19, pp. 196-7.

²⁰² *Mor.* 30.18.59 (2:1530).

²⁰³ *Mor.* 30.18.59 (2:1531).

²⁰⁴ *Mor.* 4.3.8 (1:168-9).

²⁰⁵ See pp.79-80 above. *Ep.* 11.56a [MGH] in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum*, 2:343.

²⁰⁶ *Mor.* 3.28.56 (1:150); *Mor.* 2.42.76 (1:105); *Mor.* 2.49.79 (1:108).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Mor.* 2.49.79 (1:108).

able to act both quickly and slowly to erode the defences of men. The devil, when he finds that he cannot possess a person's heart, instead of persevering with the battle, takes a rest, only to set upon the person suddenly and unexpectedly when the person returns to feeling secure.²⁰⁹ Thus the devil can capture in one unexpected quick swipe those whom he could not capture by stealth.

The devil also mixes truth and lies, such as by saying good things about the just so that the rest is believed, as Job's friends did of him.²¹⁰ It is in this way that heretics work: they mix orthodoxy and heresy, meaning that the listener is confused and, knowing that some of what the heretic says is true, believe the rest of it also. Temptation is something that is endured by everyone, and no one enters the life of the elect who has not been tempted by the devil.²¹¹ The devil is very good at this, his two main characteristics being cruelty and cunning,²¹² and in Gregory's writings one finds a devil who suits his temptations perfectly to the person being tempted, and a devil who ties a person up in sin after sin: the devil of the *Moralia* is therefore powerful, intelligent, and ruthless.

3.2.1.3 Responsibility for Sin

The superior, angelic nature of the devil presents the problem that if all sin originates with a suggestion from him, then this creates the problem of where responsibility for it lies. Gregory himself is clear that the blame for wrongdoing belongs to both the devil and humanity, as it is the will of the devil acting together with the consenting will of man that brings about human sin:

Et quia omne peccatum hostis quidem callidus suadet, sed nos eius suasionibus consentiendo perpetramus, apte subiungitur: Conuulnerauit lumbos meos.²¹³

This passage emphasises the joint responsibility of the devil and human individual. Thus, the devil does not cause us to sin without our own will, but when he prompts us, we follow of our own free will, and in doing so, we wound ourselves with sin in

²⁰⁹ *Mor.* 3.28.56 (1:150).

²¹⁰ *Mor.* 5.15.32 (1:240).

²¹¹ *Mor.* 3.17.32 (1:135). See also *Dial.* 3.19.5 (2:348).

²¹² *Mor.* 5.22.43 (1:248).

²¹³ *Mor.* 13.16.19 (1:679-80). And because the cunning enemy proposes all sin, but we carry it through by consenting to his suggestions, it is aptly joined with: he has wounded my loins together.

unity with him.²¹⁴ Wicked practices belong both to the spirit that prompted them, and to the men who consent to them with their will.²¹⁵ This is indeed suggested by his fourfold method of sin, as outlined earlier. In this he argued that

In suggestione igitur peccati initium est, in delectione fit nutrimentum, in consensu perfectio.²¹⁶

Gregory therefore saw sin as beginning with the devil, but also as nurtured by the delight of man and perfected by his consent. Responsibility therefore lies with them both. Indeed, as Gregory also stated that if man does not delight then he does not sin, it would appear that responsibility for the first stage – *suggestio* – lies very clearly with the devil.²¹⁷ If this were not the case, then man would sin at the very suggestion of wrongdoing, and Christ himself would also have sinned when tempted by the devil, which he did not. Suggestion for sin, therefore, should be seen as something external to man, in that if he does not delight in it, fault for it cannot be imputed to him.

Gregory saw sinners as members of the devil's body, and said that the head can be denoted by the body, and the body denoted by the head.²¹⁸ This idea had a long Christian heritage and stemmed from the Pauline concept of Christ as head of the Church and of individuals within the church as the body of Christ.²¹⁹ Gregory wrote that as a result of this connection between the devil and sinners, men and women only do what the devil puts it in their hearts to do.²²⁰ Due to this clear identification of one with the other, the evil that men commit therefore cannot be completely separated from the evil that the devil attempts to bring about; in spite of this, however, Gregory was very clear that responsibility for sin still lies with men, as they consent to the devil's evil suggestions with their free will. Their blame, however, is less than that of the devil because they are made of flesh, and it is because of this that they are offered salvation.

²¹⁴ *Mor.* 13.16.19 (1:679-680).

²¹⁵ *Mor.* 15.26.31 (1:767-8).

²¹⁶ *Ep.* 11.56a [MGH numbering] (MGH 2:343). Therefore the beginning of sin is in suggestion, its nutrient comes from delight, and its completion is by consent.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Mor.* 13.24.38 (1:689); *Mor.* 4.11.18 (1:175-6); *Mor.* 3.16.29 (1:133); *Mor.* 13.10.12 (1:675); *Mor.* 13.24.38 (1:689).

²¹⁹ 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 1 Cor. 12:27.

²²⁰ *Mor.* 13.10.12 (1:675).

3.3. The End of Time and the Antichrist

The last books of the *Moralia* are more eschatological in tone than the earlier ones and contain many passages referring to the Antichrist.²²¹ This is largely a result of the subject matter of Job 40-41, as these passages contain lengthy descriptions of the figures of Behemoth and Leviathan, figures that Gregory associated with both the devil and the Antichrist. Isaiah 27:1, which calls Leviathan a serpent who will be slain, meant that such an association was easily made.²²² Indeed, 'Leviathan' was rendered in a variety of ways across translations, allowing for an easy association with other figures in the bible: the Greek Septuagint had rendered him as dragon,²²³ the Old Latin as whale (*cetus*), and the Vulgate as 'Leviathan'. Gregory was aware of the difference between the latter two.²²⁴ Gregory's association of Leviathan with the Antichrist is therefore easily explained, and in his exegesis of Job 40, he made connections with other passages of scripture which had come to be associated with this figure.²²⁵

Gregory also interpreted the word 'Behemoth' to mean the ancient enemy.²²⁶ Behemoth does not appear in the bible other than in Job 40:15 (=40:10 Vulg.),²²⁷ so it does not have the same varied scriptural presence as Leviathan, but Gregory also linked it to other verses, such as Apoc. 12:3-4²²⁸ and Apoc. 20:2, the latter of which makes an explicit connection between the dragon (*draco*), the old serpent (*serpens antiquus*), the devil (*diabolus*) and Satan (*Satanas*). Behemoth was therefore also associated with the dragon at the end of time, and thus also with Antichrist. Gregory

²²¹ Books 32 to 34 of the *Moralia* are particularly eschatological, although books 19 to 24 also contain apocalyptic aspects. A summary of Gregory's views concerning the end of the world and the devil's actions at that time can be found at *Mor.* 34.1.1 (2:1733). The majority of references to the Antichrist occur in book 29 and books 31-35 of the *Moralia*. This was found in a search of the distribution of word-forms in the database by Brepols Publishers of the CCSL edition of Gregory's *Moralia in Job*. This database is entitled Library of Latin Texts – Series A (LLT – A) and can be found at <http://www.brepolis.net/> (accessed 19 March 2011).

²²² See *Mor.* 4.9.15 (1:173-4) where Gregory combines discussion of Isaiah 27:1 and Job 4:8.

²²³ Kelly, *Satan*, 150-1.

²²⁴ *Mor.* 4.9.14 (1:172).

²²⁵ Eg. 2 Thess. 2:4; Apoc. 20:1-3. *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174); *Mor.* 4.9.14 (1:172).

²²⁶ *Mor.* 32.12.16 (2:1640).

²²⁷ The word does, however, appear in the plural in some places, where it is taken to mean 'beasts'. See G. E. Post, 'Behemoth' in James Hastings and John A. Selbie eds., *A Dictionary of the Bible. Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents including the Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1900), 3:266.

²²⁸ For example: *Mor.* 32.15.25 (2:1648).

wrote that our adversary (*adversarius noster*) is called by many things because he changes into various forms in the minds of those who are deceived by him.²²⁹ In his mind, therefore, the devil's different names reflect different aspects of his cunning, as he attacks different people in different ways.

Many early Christians had emphasised the humanity of the Antichrist.²³⁰ However, Gregory was somewhat different as he emphasised his relationship with the devil:

Vidit enim quod in fine mundi Satan hominem ingrediens, quem sacra Scriptura Antichristum appellat²³¹

Gregory therefore believed that the devil would take possession of a man and transform him into his tool; he therefore calls the Son of Perdition (the Antichrist) a vessel (*vas*) into whom the ancient enemy enters (*ingredior*).²³² He is also frequently known as the accursed man (*damnatus homo*) whom the Apostate angel will assume at the end of the world.²³³ It is also said that the devil will fill (*replere*) him.²³⁴ He is described as the devil's sword (*gladius*).²³⁵ The devil is therefore the active agent in the Antichrist; the man is merely his tool. Gregory's persistent designation of the Antichrist as a vessel (*vas*) also indicates this, as it shows that he viewed the Antichrist as something which both contained the devil and which did his bidding. Gregory therefore places emphasis on the devil, and not on the man.

Scripture does not say that the Antichrist is a man into whom Satan enters; rather, the relationship portrayed by scripture is that the coming of the Antichrist is in accordance (*secundum*) with the works of Satan, such as power, signs and lying wonders.²³⁶ This is therefore not an entirely scriptural interpretation of the relationship between the two, and Gregory was unlike most of the post-Nicene fathers insofar as his writings suggest that the Antichrist was an incarnation of the devil.²³⁷

²²⁹ *Mor.* 33.15.31 (2:1700).

²³⁰ Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 6.

²³¹ *Mor.* 15.58.69 (1:793). For he saw that at the end of the world Satan entering into the man, whom Holy Scripture calls Antichrist.

²³² *Mor.* 15.60.71 (1:796); *Mor.* 15.61.72 (1:797). For Son of Perdition, see: 2 Thess. 2:3

²³³ *Mor.* 13.10.13 (1:676). See also *Mor.* 34.4.7 (2:1737); *Mor.* 34.8.17 (2:1744).

²³⁴ *Mor.* 34.15.29 (2:1754).

²³⁵ *Mor.* 34.8.17 (2:1744).

²³⁶ 2 Thess. 2:9.

²³⁷ Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist*, 109.

Gregory's beliefs about the Antichrist were therefore mostly conventional, although unusual in a few respects: they were not wholly scriptural; he offered no physical description of him like some previous authors; and he depicted him as an incarnation of the devil. The introduction demonstrated that the Antichrist was often associated with specific political figures, such as Nero. However, in the *Moralia* he is not associated with a specific figure, although Gregory does say that the secular powers will be put at the disposal of the Antichrist.²³⁸ The ideas which saw political figures as the Antichrist, or saw him as a descendant of Ham clearly saw the Antichrist as human; Gregory, however, was not interested in this and instead focussed upon what is diabolical about the Antichrist, and not what is human.

This emphasis on the Antichrist's connections to the devil rather than on his humanity was a result of Gregory's tendency to search for parallels and repeated actions throughout history. This is demonstrated by the manner in which Gregory frequently spoke of the aspects of the Antichrist's career which bear similarities to those of the devil's. The most important thing to note is that the coming of the Antichrist and his defeat is wound up with the devil's fall, future rise, and future defeat. Gregory interpreted Apoc. 20:1-3, in which the devil is described as being bound, as evidence that the devil is currently hidden from sight, albeit with hidden influences upon the minds of men.²³⁹ He is now hidden (*occulte*) but in the future will openly (*aperte*) persecute.²⁴⁰ At present the power of the devil is scattered throughout the world in the agency of individuals, but at the end of the world he will gather his fury against the elect within himself.²⁴¹ It will be when the devil enters into that accursed man – the Antichrist – that he will display himself more openly.²⁴²

Gregory's typological understanding of sacred history meant that he discussed and thought of the career of the Antichrist primarily with reference to his narrative about the devil, and thus also saw the Antichrist as currently restrained, an interpretation that was encouraged by scripture.²⁴³ The Antichrist is already at work, as, like the devil, he is currently hidden in hearts of sinners.²⁴⁴ The similarities between the Antichrist's future actions and the devil's past actions is also shown by

²³⁸ *Mor.* 34.2.2 (2:1734).

²³⁹ *Mor.* 4.9.16 (1:174).

²⁴⁰ *Mor.* 18.42.67 (2:933).

²⁴¹ *Mor.* 13.10.12 (1:675).

²⁴² *Mor.* 33.39.68 (2:1731). See also *Mor.* 33.32.56 (2:1722).

²⁴³ 2 Thess. 2:7.

²⁴⁴ *Mor.* 19.9.15 (2:967); *Mor.* 33.35.60 (2:1724-5). See 2 Thess. 2:7.

the fact that the Antichrist will try to set himself up as God.²⁴⁵ As also said of the devil, the Antichrist is said to be the head of the wicked, and the wicked are said to be his members.²⁴⁶ These followers of the Antichrist preach him mainly by means of their conduct, although also by their words.²⁴⁷ Gregory therefore displays the same kind of fluid thinking with the Antichrist that he does with the devil, and employs the familiar image of the head being as one with the body.

The main actions of the Antichrist, however, will be in the future, at which time he will not only have eyes to foresee his evil designs, but will also use his mouth, and those of his wicked preachers, to pervert the minds of men.²⁴⁸ His miracles and lying wonders will bring confusion and doubt even into the minds of the elect.²⁴⁹ Just as in Eden the serpent pretended to provide something better than Adam and Eve already had, but in fact provided something worse, so shall the Antichrist and his followers pretend to offer one thing (light and vision), but actually give another.²⁵⁰ Gregory interpreted the second beast in Apoc. 13:11 as being the preachers of the Antichrist, the first beast being the Antichrist himself.²⁵¹ It is therefore possible to think of the Antichrist as a mass of individuals in the present as well as a defined single figure in the future.

If thinking of the latter, the time of the Antichrist is in the future, at which point an alliance between the devil and a man (who will become the Antichrist) will lead to an increase in the devil's power. At that time all his strength will be concentrated (*densare*) in that one man.²⁵² This union of man and devil will be accompanied by the withdrawal of signs and miracles from the church.²⁵³ It is by this union, therefore, that the devil's strength is allowed to increase. However, the relationship is symbiotic, as the devil's inhabitation of the man – whom Gregory points out was born a mere man – causes the man to increase his power, and thus to become the Antichrist.²⁵⁴ Gregory's understanding of the Antichrist was therefore

²⁴⁵ *Mor.* 29.8.18 (2:1446). See 2 Thess. 2:4.

²⁴⁶ *Mor.* 12.43.48 (1:657-8); *Mor.* 19.9.15 (2:967).

²⁴⁷ *Mor.* 33.35.60 (2:1724-5).

²⁴⁸ *Mor.* 33.33.57 (2:1723).

²⁴⁹ *Mor.* 33.36.61 (2:1726).

²⁵⁰ *Mor.* 33.33.57 (2:1723).

²⁵¹ *Mor.* 33.35.59 (2:1724).

²⁵² *Mor.* 32.15.27 (2:1651).

²⁵³ *Mor.* 34.3.7 (2:1737).

²⁵⁴ *Mor.* 32.15.27 (2:1650).

quite devil-centric, as not only will he largely be defined by his close relationship with the devil, but his actions are repetitions of those of the devil.

On the Antichrist's defeat, it has been argued that Gregory gave a confused account of the Antichrist's death by claiming that Christ would slay him (in accordance with 2 Thess. 2:8) and also that the archangel Michael would kill him.²⁵⁵ In the passage cited as evidence for the former, Gregory quotes extensively from 2 Thess. 2 and Dan. 7-8, both of which were traditionally associated with the Antichrist, and does indeed claim that someone will be killed not by angels or the saints, but by the breath of Christ.²⁵⁶ However, in this passage Gregory was speaking not only of the Antichrist but also of the devil. As part of his discussion, he linked 2 Thess. 2:4, in which Paul spoke of him 'who opposeth, and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped (*qui aduersatur et extollitur supra omne quod dicitur Deus, aut quod colitur*)', with Behemoth.²⁵⁷ In scripture, it is the man of sin, the son of perdition, that Paul speaks of in this passage; Gregory therefore saw the man of sin and Behemoth as equivalent. Indeed, the connection perceived from earliest Christianity between the man of sin and the Antichrist, combined with Gregory's idea that the Antichrist is a man into whom the devil has entered, makes such an association between the two easy to come by. Most significantly, however, Gregory drew out the diabolical, rather than human, nature of the Antichrist. The identity of the person or being who defeats the Antichrist was not a matter of confusion for Gregory, but a matter of little importance. The important thing that was being emphasised was the fact that he was defeated.

This demonstrates that Antichrist has a story of his own which is closely entwined with that of the devil. In Gregory's literal or historical interpretations of sacred history, in the future the devil will possess a man, and together they will become the Antichrist. He will be given all sorts of powers and it is through him that the devil will rise up again from his current bound position. The Antichrist will have many preachers and followers, but at the end of time, they will all be destroyed. The devil and the Antichrist are typologically linked, however, as the Antichrist's rise – which was for the purpose of being like God – is a repetition of the devil's first rise (and, historically, is associated with his second rise). Both the Antichrist and devil

²⁵⁵ Hughes, *Antichrist*, 109. See *Mor.* 32.15.27 (2:1650).

²⁵⁶ *Mor.* 32.15.27 (2:1650-1).

²⁵⁷ 2. Thess. 2.4; *Mor.* 32.15.17 (2:1650).

are currently at work, but hidden and restrained in power, and both are at the head of the body of sinners, and will both be cast down again at the end of time. The career of the Antichrist, therefore, in many ways recapitulates what has already happened: the devil will rise; the devil will lead many to destruction through deceptive arts; and then he will be cast down. The important thing here for Gregory the pastor was the deceptive nature of the Antichrist, and the fact that he will, in the end, be defeated.

PART TWO

3.4 The Devil in the *Moralia*: a Thematic Approach

The section above has isolated and analysed the main beliefs, arguments and doctrines about the devil that Gregory returned to most often, and has demonstrated that one of the best ways to understand how these worked in Gregory's mind is to think of a series of repeated and parallel actions – rooted in passages of scripture – which often have particular moral lessons attached. His portrayal of the devil was often more complex than this, however, and was often discussed as part of many wider ideas and concepts; this is further complicated by his desire that his eloquence match that of a river, flowing this way and that as edification demands. Gregory's principal ideas and ways of thinking about the devil are revealed not just by means of the repetitions he makes – outlined above – but also by the wider associations he draws. The *Moralia* is a particularly useful window into this as Gregory's relatively large degree of exegetical freedom meant that it is in many easier to follow the path of his thought, less constrained was it by the text he was commenting upon. Indeed, it was not his intention to lay out in an ordered fashion the minutiae of the devil's origins, actions and fate. The following section will identify some of the more abstract ideas and concepts – rooted in what has been discussed above – that underlined Gregory's beliefs about the devil, as well as the links that existed between them in his mind.

The following impressionistic analysis of the categories in which Gregory thought about the devil and the concepts that linked them will be underpinned by the following method and arguments. First, an understanding of Gregory's practice of *lectio divina* is essential to comprehending why and how different words, passages

and concepts were associated in his mind. For Gregory, *lectio divina* – holy reading – entailed meditating on certain passages of scripture, considering their various levels of meaning, and making associations with other verses as appropriate. It involved a close connection between reading and meditation, as scripture would provide the material for reflection,²⁵⁸ but would also involve the contemplation of the self and one's own sins. Gregory spoke of this method of reading and contemplating scripture as chewing and savouring it.²⁵⁹ Particularly importantly, however, it trained Gregory to read and think associatively, and is responsible for much of the flexibility of his thinking as touched upon in part one. Leclercq has spoken about the

phenomenon of reminiscence whereby the verbal echoes so excite the memory that a mere allusion will spontaneously evoke whole quotations and, in turn, a scriptural phrase will suggest quite naturally allusions elsewhere in the sacred books...Quite simply, the same words evoke similar quotations.²⁶⁰

Such a phenomenon is evident in the *Moralia* – particularly in Gregory's use of *testimonia* – and it is those words and concepts which evoke quotations concerning the devil that shall be explored here. One of the questions of this section, therefore, is on the words and concepts that evoked thoughts of the devil in Gregory's mind; another is how these were connected with what has been described in the previous section. In answering this question we will be heeding the call to study Gregory's thought processes and mental categories.²⁶¹

The connection between reading and meditation manifested itself in the words he wrote. Indeed, Leclercq continued, saying

reminiscence on the part of the monastic authors of the Middle Ages had a profound effect on their literary composition...an author may turn away from his original subject which he had started to treat, and apparently lose the thread of his discourse.²⁶²

and

²⁵⁸ See Brian Stock, *After Augustine. The Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 15-16.

²⁵⁹ *Hom in Ezech.* 1.10.3-4, pp. 145-6.

²⁶⁰ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 73-4.

²⁶¹ See Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 16-17.

²⁶² Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 74.

The plan really follows a psychological development, determined by the plan of associations, and one digression may lead to another or even to several others.²⁶³

Although in this passage Leclercq was referring to later authors, particularly Saint Bernard of the twelfth century, this is exactly the sort of phenomenon which one finds in the exegetical writings of Gregory the Great, particularly given, as discussed earlier, his fluid method of exegesis.²⁶⁴ This 'phenomenon of reminiscence' is evident in his use of *testimonia*, and not only did he frequently turn from one subject to another, but his letter to Leander in which he expressed his desire that his discourse follow the course of a river demonstrates that his adoption of this way of speaking and writing was both conscious and deliberate. It is by following these associations and tracing his 'reminiscences' that one can gain insight into how Gregory thought about the devil and the connections that he made during his particularly monastic process of meditative reading and exposition.

This can be approached in a methodical way. In the *Moralia*, the devil becomes a matter of discussion in three main ways. First, the book of Job contains explicit references to Satan or to other figures such as Leviathan that Gregory read as referring to the devil. This often led to the inclusion of the devil in Gregory's discussion, particularly when he was reading these verses historically or according to the letter. Secondly, the devil was discussed when Gregory took a word, phrase, concept, idea or group of words from the verse being discussed and interpreted them as relating to aspects of the devil's origin, actions, nature or fate in a non-historical reading of the verse. These might be directly connected to the word or associated with a characteristic of the object or action that the word denotes. Thirdly, Gregory sometimes digressed from another point, concept or discussion into discussions about the devil. These last two are often difficult to distinguish from one another, so will not usually be distinguished from each other here. The purpose of this section is to uncover some of the words, concepts and phrases that evoked the idea of the devil in his mind, thus offering a perspective on how Gregory's ideas about the devil worked that is slightly different from that usually offered. It is not meant to be an exhaustive study of this, however; it is more of an introduction.

²⁶³ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 74.

²⁶⁴ See pp. 62-3 above.

On the first of these, Gregory sometimes passed over passages in Job which contain obvious references to the devil. For instance, he said that he did not wish to go over Job 2:7 ('Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord') because he had explained it already.²⁶⁵ Gregory had not previously commented on this particular passage, but he had discussed the question of how it was that the devil can be said to come before God, so presumably did not wish to discuss this again. That he chose not to repeat this when so many other ideas were repeated (see section above) demonstrates that this idea was of little interest to him and that he believed it had little educative value.

Indeed, he said that he would not go over some passages containing Satan again because he wished to leave the plain or 'open' (*aperte*) parts and progress to the more difficult or 'closed' (*clausa*) passages.²⁶⁶ For some passages this may have been because he did not believe it contained a higher meaning (as Gregory did not believe all passages did), but it remains that he was still reluctant to repeat these ideas whilst repeating many others.²⁶⁷

Gregory skipped some interpretations without indicating that he had done so,²⁶⁸ although, as above, at other times he explicitly said that he had or would. The latter of these offers a more solid way of measuring Gregory's interest as the decision not to elaborate is made explicit by him and not read – perhaps incorrectly – into the text by the reader. From these times, which mostly appear in his exposition of Job 1-2 (as this is where literal references to Satan can be found), it appears that abstract facts about the devil which had no apparent moral application were of very little interest to Gregory.

This section is predominantly concerned with the second and third ways in which Gregory came to discuss the devil (although it will not distinguish between them). It will explore the kind of words and ideas in scripture (or in his preceding conversation) that inspired Gregory to discuss the devil, and why. It will do this by identifying and analysing the triggers that prompted Gregory's discussions about the devil. Some of the most frequent (and thus important) are grouped and discussed below.

²⁶⁵ *Mor.* 3.5.7 (1:119).

²⁶⁶ *Mor.* 3.28.56 (1:150).

²⁶⁷ Not all passages have a literal meaning: *Ep. ad. Leandrum*, 3 (1:4).

²⁶⁸ For example *Mor.* 3.12.25 (1:130).

3.4.1 Division

A major category of words and images which Gregory associated with the devil were those concerning the ideas of division, separation, isolation, solitude and banishment. Job 3:7 ('Let that night be solitary, and not worthy of praise')²⁶⁹ inspired Gregory to write about the devil's loneliness due to his loss of humanity: the devil now perishes alone (*solus*) because the many (*multus*) he destroyed are redeemed by Christ.²⁷⁰ He concluded this section by claiming that the night is solitary because no one is going with the damned apostate spirit to damnation.²⁷¹ This can be interpreted as referring to the salvation that is offered to humankind but not to the devil: the devil is therefore solitary in that he alone cannot, at the end of all things, be with God, the angels and the elect.

This is not surprising given that the devil is, in effect, the first exile,²⁷² and the first being to break up the angelic unity. Much of David Brakke's work has focused upon the role of the devil in late antique monasticism, particularly the role of the devil as an agent of division (as well as of combat).²⁷³ Looking at the letters of Saint Anthony, Brakke has argued that

Antony's demons operate as products, agents, and symbols of diversity and separation as opposed to uniformity and unity.²⁷⁴

Brakke relates this to the ascetic life, arguing that for Anthony, who considered the ascetic life to be a process of return to an original undifferentiated unity, 'the demons represent the tendency towards separation, division, and individuality'.²⁷⁵ In his pride, the devil seeks individuality, and thus separation and division.

A similar phenomenon can be found in Gregory's works, where the devil is associated with division, although the *Moralia* is not set in a monastery, and it therefore discusses division in the abstract. That is, the division that the devil causes in the *Moralia* is not the break-up of a monastic community, but the rupture of the

²⁶⁹ *Mor.* 4.8.13 (1:171-2). Job 3:7 ('sit nox illa solitaria nec laude digna').

²⁷⁰ *Mor.* 4.8.13 (1:172).

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² I would like to thank Katie Lynch for first suggesting this idea to me in conversation at 'The Devil in the Pre-Modern World' conference, Toronto.

²⁷³ Brakke, *Demons*; David Brakke, 'The making of Monastic Demonology: Three Ascetic Teachers on Withdrawal and Resistance' in *Church History* 70:1 (2001): 19-48.

²⁷⁴ Brakke, 'Monastic Demonology', 24.

²⁷⁵ Brakke, 'Monastic Demonology', 31.

angelic community and the division of the self against itself in a Pauline struggle, instigated by the devil. The devil in the *Moralia* is therefore primarily an agent of cosmic or personal division, rather than a monastic one, although, as shall be seen in the next chapter on the *Dialogues*, this is because of the subject matter of the *Moralia* and was not because Gregory's ideas about the devil were limited to this. This idea of solitude and division was rooted in Genesis, and the devil's attempted rise and consequent fall. Thus, this was not just an historical action on the part of the devil that then repeated itself through history, and which also had doctrinal significance, but it also served as the foundation of a wider category of ideas (such as division) that could be applied in a variety of contexts.

3.4.1.1. Movement, Change and Turbulence

Connected to the idea of division and the devil's fall is the idea of movement: it was at this point that the unity was broken. Notions of change, movement and turbulence therefore form another category of prompts and associations regarding the devil. For instance, Gregory interpreted Job 7:9 ('As a cloud is consumed, and passeth away: so he that shall go down to hell shall not come up')²⁷⁶ as referring to the hearts of men which are driven here and there by the blowing (*flatu*) of the malignant spirit.²⁷⁷ In this case he saw the hearts of men as moved by the breath of the devil, which was then connected to the movement of their desires.²⁷⁸ In describing both the devil and the individual's desires as affecting the hearts of men, this passage implies a relationship between the two, and suggests that the blowing of evil spirits is intricately joined to the desires of men and women: as the evil spirit blows, so the perverse desires of humankind move. These in turn drag the human heart to and fro.

Job 27:21 ('A burning wind shall take him up')²⁷⁹ was interpreted in a similar way. The burning wind was interpreted as the devil, who is said to excite flames of desire in the human heart and to drag men to an eternity of suffering.²⁸⁰ Like the example above, he does this by the breath (*flatu*, from *flatus*) of his evil

²⁷⁶ Job 7:9 ('sicut consumitur nubes et pertransit sic qui descenderit ad inferos non ascendet')

²⁷⁷ *Mor.* 8.17.33 (1:405).

²⁷⁸ *Mor.* 8.17.33 (1:405).

²⁷⁹ Job 27:21; *Mor.* 18.20.32 (2:906). ('Tollit [Vulgate includes: tollet] eum ventus urens').

²⁸⁰ *Mor.* 18.20.32 (2:906).

suggestion.²⁸¹ In this example the devil's breath sets the heart alight rather than blowing it to and fro, but the principle is the same: the movement or flame is initiated by the devil. He also brought in Jer. 1:13 ('I see a boiling caldron, and the face thereof from the face of the north')²⁸² as a further proof of his interpretation. Like that discussed above, this passage reveals much about Gregory's thoughts on the devil, movement, and the creation of a whirl of temptations in the minds of men, just as his exegesis of Jer. 1:13 lays out the connection between the actions of the devil and the desires that rage within men:

Olla numque succensa est cor humanum, saecularium curarum ardoribus, desideriorumque anxietatibus feruens. Quae a facie Aquilonis succenditur, id est diaboli suggestionibus inflammatur.²⁸³

Here, therefore, the heart is alight with the concerns of the world, but in the first place was lit by the suggestions of the devil.

As a further example, when Gregory subjected Job 39:20 ('the glory of his nostrils is terror')²⁸⁴ to exegesis, the idea of nostrils inspired Gregory to return to the idea of the devil blowing, or exhaling breath.²⁸⁵ He said that one of the things 'nostrils' represents is the breathed-out snares of the devil.²⁸⁶ In discussion of this Gregory also brought in the verse 'Out of his nostrils goeth smoke',²⁸⁷ which he interpreted as referring to the mist of wicked thought, instigated by the devil, that arises in the hearts of men.²⁸⁸ Gregory therefore connected words to do with clouds, breath and movement with the devil and his stirring up of thoughts and temptations in the heart.

The passages discussed above form the exegesis of scriptural verses containing references to clouds (*nubes*), wind (*uentus*), and nostrils (*nares*), and many of them, in the course of exegesis, contain some form of the word breath (*flatus*), which was one of Gregory's favourite ways of describing the devil's method of instigating sin. It is possible from these examples to see that in Gregory's mind smoke, clouds and

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Jer. 1:13; *Mor.* 18.20.32 (2:906). ('Ollam succensam [Vulgate includes: ego] uideo et faciem eius a facie Aquilonis').

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Job 39:20; *Mor.* 31.25.51 (2:1585-6). ('Gloria narium eius terror').

²⁸⁵ *Mor.* 31.25.51 (2:1585-6).

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Job 41:20 [= Job 41:11 Vulg.]. ('de naribus eius procedit fumus').

²⁸⁸ *Mor.* 31.26.51 (2:1586).

movement were associated with the devil and the ideas that he planted in the human mind. These words characterised the devil's method of instigation and give an impression of the effect that Gregory believed the devil had on humanity: he caused fog and cloud and the movement of his mind. This set of ideas is also discernable when Gregory spoke of the Antichrist. Thus the word 'sneezing' in Job 41:9 (Vulg) inspired Gregory to speak about Satan, Leviathan, Antichrist, malignant spirits, and reprobate men: the way in which a sneeze rises up in the chest is the same way in which pride rises up in these.²⁸⁹

This is associated more generally with Gregory's thought on temptation. For instance, Gregory used Job 13:25 ('Against a leaf, that is carried away with the wind')²⁹⁰ as an opportunity to talk about how the mind is beset by successive temptations, again employing the word *flatus*,²⁹¹ and again inspired by the ideas of movement (*rapere*) and wind (*uento*).²⁹² This time, however, he did not insert the devil into his discussion. The examples above, however, demonstrate that even when Gregory did not explicitly point out the devil's involvement, the devil was still considered to be the origin of these thoughts.

Gregory rooted this idea in Genesis and in the idea of the fall (of both the devil and humanity). This is best explained by looking at Gregory's explanation of humanity's changeableness. In book eight, Gregory said that after the fall the self became that very thing that it underwent, and found in itself changeableness.²⁹³ Thus, by falling, humankind experienced change – and became change. This manner of thinking can also be applied to the devil, as it was his fall that came first, and, as with division, the original moment at which change and motion were experienced was at the time of the angelic fall. Gregory's mind, working as it did in terms of such images, saw within the idea of falling the notion of movement and change. This network of abstract ideas, which could be applied to both the devil and fallen humanity, was therefore rooted in what Gregory believed were historical occurrences. Once one realises that Gregory thought in such terms and images, his thought and exegesis appear very ordered and logical.

²⁸⁹ *Mor.* 33.32.56 (2:1722).

²⁹⁰ Job 13:25.

²⁹¹ *Mor.* 11.44.60 (1:619).

²⁹² Job 13:25; *Mor.* 11.44.60 (1:619). ('contra folium quod vento rapitur').

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

Indeed, what can be seen here is a general connection in Gregory's mind between clouds, movement, fog and wind on the one hand, and temptation, sinful thoughts and the devil on the other. This connection is evident by the way in which certain words in scripture (clouds, wind, nostrils) very frequently led Gregory to discuss the devil and temptation, and also by how he used these kind of words in his descriptions, particularly *flatus*. This idea of the devil blowing successive temptations into the mind of an individual was one of several sets of images that Gregory used, the other main ones being the planting of a seed or the throwing of darts. In trying to determine the associations that Gregory made by looking at the movement of his thought, therefore, it appears that wind, clouds, gusts, tempests and smoke were all associated with the actions of the devil in Gregory's mind. This identification of another category of prompts and associations, and explanation of its origin, complements the earlier discussion on Gregory's three- (sometimes four-) fold method of temptation.

3.4.2 Darkness, Disguise and Obscurity

In book four of the *Moralia*, Gregory performed an exegesis of Job 3:3 ('Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said: A man child is conceived'):

Pereat spes ab apostata angelo illata qui diem simulans, ex promissione diuinitatis emicuit; sed noctem se exhibens, lucem nobis nostrae immortalitatis obscuravit. Pereat antiquus hostis qui lucem promissionis ostendit sed peccati tenebras contulit; qui quasi diem se blandiendo innotuit, sed usque ad tenebrosam noctem ex impressa cordis caccitae perduxit.²⁹⁴

When interpreting this passage, Gregory immediately jumped into contemplating the difference between night and day, leading him into a discussion of the devil, who is one, but appears as the other. In a similar way, when interpreting Job 3:9 ('Let the stars be darkened with the mist thereof'), yet again Gregory extracted the idea of a

²⁹⁴ *Mor.* 4.1.6 (1:167-8). Let the hope brought in by the apostate angel perish, who, disguising himself as day, shone forth with the promise of divinity; but showing himself as night, obscured the light of our immortality. Let the old enemy perish, who displayed the light of promises, and bestowed the darkness of sin; who by deluding became known as day, but who led us all the way to the dark night by imprinting our hearts with blindness.

contrast between light and dark and used this as a base from which to discuss the Antichrist, hypocrites, and the ancient enemy:²⁹⁵ in short, all those who appear bright, but who are in fact dark. This illustrates how his exegesis often worked: attaching a meaning to a phrase, often focussing upon one or two of its words, or latching on to one possible meaning of some of its words. It also demonstrates one of the major sets of words that Gregory associated with the devil: those relating to darkness, obscurity, falsity and disguise.

This list also includes the idea of sleep and dreams, times during which deception can occur. Consequently, when interpreting the passage Job 7:13-14 ('If I say: My bed shall comfort me, and I shall be relieved speaking with myself on my couch: Thou wilt frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions'), Gregory spoke of how the devil presents illusions and fantasies into the minds of the elect whilst they sleep, in order to lure them into sin.²⁹⁶

Gregory's contemplation on scripture was in part a contemplation on the images in scripture. Thus, it was not just passages that contained words explicitly relating to these things that led him to discuss the devil, but also the images of things that these words denoted. For instance, when discussing Job 4:11 ('The tiger hath perished for want of prey, and the young lions are scattered abroad'), Gregory pictured the tiger in his mind, and, realising that the tiger is variously spotted and has two colours, launched into a discussion of the devil who disguises himself as an angel of the light.²⁹⁷ This shows that in his contemplation of scripture Gregory sometimes focussed on the images suggested by the text, and not just the text itself, and that it was also from the world that he read these messages (and sought them). This example also shows that when contemplating scripture and the images it brought before his mind, Gregory was prompted to think about the devil whenever he came across anything that denoted a stark contrast.

This idea of a contrast also has its ultimate roots in Genesis and the devil's actions at the beginning of time. Not only can his high aspirations be contrasted with the depths in which he now resides, but as seen, the association with deception ultimately stems from Gen. 3:13, where the serpent is said to have deceived Eve. The connection with light and darkness is also biblical, stemming most directly from 2

²⁹⁵ *Mor.* 4.10.17 (1:174-5).

²⁹⁶ *Mor.* 8.24.43 (1:414-5).

²⁹⁷ *Mor.* 5.22.43 (1:247-8). He also interprets the same image as referring to hypocrites: *Mor.* 5.20.39 (1:245-6).

Cor. 11:14 ('Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light'), but what ought to be emphasised is that this idea is ultimately built upon the story of the devil and his actions at the beginning of time. The temptation of Eve therefore not only has an historical meaning (and sets the archetype for all future temptation), but the idea of deception it contains forms the foundation stone of a wider network of associated ideas, one that is also connected to the devil's attempt to be, at the beginning of time, what he is not: like God. Gregory therefore built an entire structure of repeating actions, moral lessons, and abstract concepts onto the seemingly simple stories he saw within the pages of Genesis, and it is by means that his ideas about the devil should be understood.

3.4.2.1. Battle

Gregory was also inspired to speak about the devil when he came across ideas and images concerned with opposition and battle. For instance, the presence of the words *rapere* and *armatus* in Job 5:5 led Gregory to interpret the verse as referring to the old enemy, who was armed, seizing the Jewish people.²⁹⁸ In his moral interpretation of this same passage, Gregory also took the opportunity to speak about the devil, writing that the devil is unarmed when he attempts to destroy a man altogether, but is armed when he deliberately leaves some things untouched so that, seeming good, no remedy is applied to that within him that is bad, and in order to lure others.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, in his interpretation of Job 7:1, Gregory deliberately discussed both the Old Latin and Vulgate translations. He appears to have considered them equally valid in that he was able to extrapolate lessons from them both, calling neither one nor the other more accurate. Rather, he considered them to have the same meaning.³⁰⁰ The difference in versions of Job 7:1 centred around the use of words *temptatio* (trial) and *militia* (warfare), with the Old Latin translations using the former and Jerome the latter. The passage runs 'The life of man upon earth is warfare', and Gregory understood *temptatio* to refer to our battle (*pugna*) with the

²⁹⁸ *Mor.* 6.4.5 (1:286-7).

²⁹⁹ *Mor.* 6.9.11 (1:291).

³⁰⁰ *Mor.* 8.6.8 (1:385).

evil spirits and *militiae* as our exercise against the devil.³⁰¹ He claimed that the trial that men suffer is itself warfare.³⁰²

This all demonstrates the profound effect of Gregory's monastic training on the shape of his thought. It is evident that Gregory read, thought and wrote associatively rather than with the intention of formulating and setting out watertight theological arguments. Whilst this is in part to be expected from a work of exegesis, the large degree of exegetical freedom he exercised meant that this is particularly pronounced in his works. This itself, as previously discussed, may have resulted from a lack of anxiety about loose interpretations of scripture and be an indication of the manner in which he indulged his own mental digressions. The effect of this on his discussion of the devil was extremely large: not only were his beliefs about the devil encapsulated in certain passages of scripture, which were themselves associated with various broader themes, but, as seen, his exegetical method affected his thinking to the point that his primary conception of salvation history was not linear but rather consisted of a series of set actions and truths that were performed and demonstrated across time. As shall be seen in future chapters, this affected Gregory's writings far beyond his exegetical works where one might expect it most.

3.5. The Fall

The ideas identified above are very closely linked to the ideas that Gregory had about the fall, which, in turn, were connected with many of his ideas on the devil and pastoral care. Many of these ideas will be returned to throughout this thesis, so an understanding of their place within Gregory's thought is necessary. The precise relationship between Gregory's ideas about the fall and those about the devil and pastoral care will be explored more fully in the next chapter, but first it needs to be discussed how, as result of the fall, humanity's way is currently hidden. In his discussion of Job 3:23 ('Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath encompassed with darkness?'), Gregory wrote that:

³⁰¹ *Mor.* 8.6.8 (1:385-6).

³⁰² *Ibid.*

Auctor enim noster, quia nobis in hoc exilio deiectis, lucem suae uisionis abstulit, sese nostris oculis quasi in tenebrarum latibulo abscondit.³⁰³

In this passage the same ideas of exile, falling, and darkness that are used to speak of the devil are used to speak of humanity: this is because these form wider categories of ideas that go beyond just the devil. The devil, however, as the first exile, the first creature to fall, and an angel of darkness disguised as light, is not only the origin of these ideas but their personification. As he will never be offered pardon, he is also never associated with returning to paradise or light.

It is also clear from this that, as a result of the fall, we are currently blind (*caecitas*).³⁰⁴ By this expulsion from paradise humankind lost the invisible light (*lux inuisibilis*) and can only now see with corporeal eyes (*corporea oculi*).³⁰⁵ Humanity is blind and inhabits a world of mist, confusion and darkness. This blindness (*caecitas*) is interpreted by Gregory in several ways. First, it separates us from God and obscures our future from us, so that we do not know to what end our actions lead, or how long we shall persevere.³⁰⁶ It is as a result of this that people do not realise that what they believe to be a sin is in fact a virtue, or what they think to be a virtue is actually a sin;³⁰⁷ this confusion is exploited and made worse by the devil. It is this blindness or lack of discernment which prohibits men from knowing whether their suffering stems from their virtue or their vice.³⁰⁸

Furthermore, the past, present and future are frequently misremembered or hidden from our view, and humanity is not able to share in the complete contemplation of God, who alone is able to stand still.³⁰⁹ The fall is therefore connected to movement and an inability to contemplate stillness. Men and women are unable to discern the ways of God, know whether or not they are saved, or easily distinguish between good and evil; they also do not know the future. The fall can therefore also be defined as a loss of discernment.

³⁰³ *Mor.* 5.7.12 (1:227). For our Author, when we were cast down into this exile, withdrew the light of His vision, and concealed himself from our eyes as if in a place of darkness.

³⁰⁴ *Mor.* 5.7.13 (1:227).

³⁰⁵ *Mor.* 5.34.61 (1:261).

³⁰⁶ *Mor.* 5.7.11 (1:225).

³⁰⁷ *Mor.* 5.7.12 (226-7).

³⁰⁸ *Mor.* 5.10.16 (1:228-9).

³⁰⁹ *Mor.* 5.34.63. (1:262).

Men and women therefore lack the pre-lapsarian vision with which to discern the devil, yet the devil makes this worse by taking on a plethora of shapes and forms in order to deceive their minds even further.³¹⁰ The devil therefore perpetuates, exploits and exacerbates the conditions that humankind finds itself in after the fall. Gregory's ideas about the characteristics of the fallen world and the devil are so closely entwined that the latter can only be understood in the context of the former; this is because the devil personifies the characteristics of the fallen world. The reasons for this have been identified in previous sections: the devil was the first to break the unity of creation; the devil experienced the first movement; and the devil was the first to deceive. As he will never be saved, the devil cannot and will not ever be associated with unity, stillness or light, as the elect of humanity are and will be. The association with these ideas is therefore firmer with the devil than with humanity, although it is of course necessary to be aware that they are not uniquely applied to the devil. However, just as it has been argued that in the writings concerning Saint Antony, demons were 'coextensive with fallen creation',³¹¹ so it can be said that in Gregory's *Moralia* one finds the devil coextensive with the fallen world. The blindness that now afflicts man prevents him from discerning the devil, whilst the devil goes out of his way to cloud the minds of men further. He tries to obscure the minds of the elect and to disturb their peace with thoughts. The devil is therefore associated with darkness, obscurity and change. In fact, just as God is unity, stillness and light, so is the devil division, motion and darkness; and it is these characteristics that the elect and sinners seek respectively.

3.5.1. Contemplation

Gregory has been declared 'the doctor of contemplation', such is the prevalence of the idea in his works.³¹² Indeed, in his letter to Leander, he wrote that in the *Moralia* he would focus upon interpretations of Job which were related to questions of morality or contemplation.³¹³ Gregory presents contemplation as one means by which men can attempt to reverse the changing and divided state of the mind, which

³¹⁰ *Mor.* 33.15.31 (2:1700).

³¹¹ Brakke, 'Monastic Demonology', 47.

³¹² Leclercq, 'Teaching of St Gregory', 7.

³¹³ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:3).

as seen was created and perpetuated by the devil. Everything that men try to achieve through contemplation is therefore the opposite of what the devil attempts to create.

Let us look first at Gregory's idea of contemplation in a general sense before focussing upon its relationship to the devil. Cuthbert Butler has described Gregory's understanding of contemplation in the following way:

It is a struggle wherein the mind disengages itself from the things of this world and fixes its attention wholly on spiritual things, and thereby raises itself above itself, and by dint of a great effort mounts up to a momentary perception of the unencompassed Light, as through a chink; and then exhausted by the effort and blinded by the vision of the Light, it sinks back wearied to its normal state, to recuperate its spiritual strength by exercising the works of the active life, till in due time it can again brace itself for the effort of another act of contemplation.³¹⁴

Contemplation therefore involves moving the mind away from the corporeal and towards the spiritual, thus reversing the move from spiritual to bodily sight that occurred at the time of the fall. Furthermore, the idea of rising above oneself is directly opposed to that of falling. The third important point is that this moment of contemplation is only temporary. In his book on Ezechiel, Gregory divided the process of contemplation into several stages:

Primus ergo gradus est ut se ad se colligat, secundus ut uideat qualis est collecta, tertius ut super semetipsam surgat ac se contemplationi auctoris inuisibilis intendendo subiciat.³¹⁵

These steps will be explored in more detail and related to discernment in the next chapter, in which the relationship between Saint Benedict and the devil in the *Dialogues* is analysed. First, however, it should be noted that Gregory specified that in order to compose oneself, one must cast out all things of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste that occurs in bodily thought from the mind.³¹⁶ This idea had a long history, and a similar first stage can be found in Augustine's writings, where the first

³¹⁴ Butler, *Benedictine Monachism*, 84-5.

³¹⁵ *Hom. in Ezech.*, 2.5.9, pp. 281-2. 'Then the first step is to compose oneself, the second to see the like of this composure, the third to rise above oneself and by intention submit to the contemplation of the invisible Creator.' (Translation from Theodosia Tomkinson trans. *Homilies on the Book of the Prophet Ezechiel* (Etna, California: Centre for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008), 339-4).

³¹⁶ *Hom. in Ezech.*, 2.5.9, pp. 281-2.

stage also involves a turning of the soul towards itself.³¹⁷ Once these stages have been successfully passed through, in the moment of contemplation one sees a glimpse of God, although only a little, as in its present state humanity cannot know God. This is only temporary, however, and the individual soon finds their mind once again occupied by earthly things and blinded by confusion.³¹⁸

The language that Gregory used to describe the effects of contemplation is therefore the opposite of that with which he described the result of the devil's actions on the mind. In contemplation, a unity of vision is reached, and it is because humanity inhabits a fallen world that holy men seek desolate places away from the many tumults of earthly desires. This is because even the righteous are not currently at rest, although they will be in the future.³¹⁹ Contemplation is therefore one means by which men can escape the darts thrown by the devil, as the mutable and divided state of mind for which the devil is responsible can be momentarily reversed.

Many of Gregory's ideas about the devil are best understood in their fuller context, as his ideas flowed very freely from one to another. His practice of *lectio divina* meant that his mind linked certain concepts and ideas with others whilst he read and contemplated scripture. Gregory's characterisation of the devil and his description of his actions and effects upon men fit into a much wider picture in which it becomes possible to discern a very clear connection between Gregory's depiction of the fallen world and the devil. Gregory frequently described God as *Lumen incircumscriptum*, or boundless light.³²⁰ Just as the unity and light of heaven can be compared to the unity and light of God, so can the changeableness and darkness of the world be compared to the changeableness and darkness of the devil.

These ideas were not new to Gregory, but the extent to which they recur in the *Moralia* and encompass his thought is distinctly Gregorian and testament to the monastic foundations of his thought. Whilst Leclercq's description of Gregory as the father of contemplation³²¹ is something that might be expected from an individual concerned with mystical theology, it is true that the ideas of contemplation do recur

³¹⁷ Roger Hazelton, 'The Devotional Life' in Roy W. Battenhouse ed., *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 398-414, 405.

³¹⁸ *Hom in Ezech.* 2.2.12-14, pp. 232-5.

³¹⁹ *Mor.* 4.33.67 (1:211).

³²⁰ For example, see Leclercq, 'Teaching of St Gregory', 12 and Butler, *Western Mysticism*. 77. For an example, see *Mor.* 23.21.42 (2:1176).

³²¹ Leclercq, 'Teaching of St Gregory', 7.

in Gregory's work. Indeed, the concepts of interiority and exteriority that infuse Gregory's writings are themselves inherited, in Gregory's case, from the monastic contemplative tradition.

This sheds light onto the position of the devil within Gregory's spiritual – as opposed to theological – thought. For Augustine, developing his thought from a long tradition that he inherited from Plotinus, the first stage of contemplation is to look within oneself. The important thing here, however, is the identification within Augustine of the outer, the lower, and the dark with the changeable (and thus also the inner, the higher, and the light with the immutable and eternal).³²² These connections are those found in Gregory, and it can therefore be seen that there was an historical connection between the outer, lower, the dark, and the changeable. What occurs in the *Moralia* is that these themes and interconnections are emphasised to a great degree, especially with regard to the devil, and become evident as a result of Gregory's exegetical method.

3.6 Conclusion

Gregory's theology was underpinned by Augustinian orthodoxy and his ideas on demons and temptation suggest the influence of monastic works such as those of Cassian. The *Moralia* is a complex work, but from the repetitions that Gregory makes it is possible to identify those ideas which were most important to him: the fall of the devil (and how human pride replicates this); the power of God over the devil; the necessity and means of temptation; the rise of the devil at the end of time through the Antichrist; and the devil's fall and eternal damnation.

However, Gregory was not as concerned with speculative theology as he was with the moral lessons that could be drawn from scripture. As a pastor not living in an age of doctrinal controversy, it was his duty to equip those Christians under his care with knowledge about the devil with which to fight him. The need to edify professed Christians came before participating in doctrinal debates.

Gregory's portrayal of the devil in the *Moralia* was nevertheless distinctively coloured by a set of images and concerns that are distinctly Gregorian, if not entirely in origin, then most definitely in priority and concern. It was shaped by his practice

³²² Denys Turner, *Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 76-77.

of *lectio divina* and *contemplatio* which were also rooted in his monastic background. Tracing some of the associations that he made and investigating where the devil stood within the wider network of his thought is a more productive way of approaching the *Moralia* than asking pre-set questions on a series of doctrinal issues. Such a study demonstrates that his ideas about the devil were dominated by images, metaphors and vocabulary that he inherited from his monastic life. The ideas of interiority and exteriority, ascent and descent, light and darkness, immutability and mutability, solitude and multiplicity, and stillness and movement provided Gregory with the vocabulary and expressive framework with which to understand and describe the devil.

It is best to think of Gregory's devil as a performer of constantly-repeating actions which take place in the past, present, and future, and which also form the archetypes for the actions of human sinners and the Antichrist. Many of these, such as the fall, had moral lessons attached, and on top of this one finds that the devil is also at the core of a network of network of connected ideas and concepts. The bible, or the story about the devil that Gregory believed was contained in the bible, formed the structure on which all these things were based. Thus the devil's rise through pride creates the first division in creation, to be followed by Adam and Eve and the Antichrist. The devil's fall was followed by that of the first parents, and will be followed by those of the devil and the Antichrist at the end of the world. He is also an instrument of darkness and deceit, having exhibited this himself in his own fall. His blindness prevented him from seeing the correctness of light, unity and constancy. In the future the cloak under which he reigns will be lifted, and his persecutions will be more open. At the moment, however, he acts in secret and in disguise.

Furthermore, the connection between the fallen world and the devil meant that contemplation was presented as a means by which men might fight the devil. As the devil continues to darken humanity's already-dark understanding and introduces an ever-changing swirl of thoughts and sensations to the mind, so must men and women aim for the light, clarity and stillness that are offered by contemplation. In short, one way to defeat the devil is for men to try and attain that state of being which the devil destroyed and always attempts to prevent a return to: that which humanity held before the fall, before it was cast down into a world of division, change, struggle and darkness, all things initiated and perpetuated by the devil.

Chapter 4

THE DEVIL, THE *DIALOGUES*, AND PASTORAL CARE

In 593 Gregory the Great wrote a letter to Maximian, bishop of Syracuse, saying that he had been asked by his brethren (*fratres*) to write a work on the miracles of Italian holy men.¹ The *Dialogues* were written in response to this request, and are consequently believed to have been composed around 593-4.² In the work Gregory relates miracle stories whilst in conversation with a man named Peter, usually supposed to have been his deacon. The role of this interlocutor becomes more developed as the *Dialogues* progress, with Peter asking more searching questions and increasingly offering opposing points of view.³ Gregory's use of the dialogue

¹ *Ep.* 3.50 (1:195-6, at p. 195). In 1987 Francis Clark argued that the *Dialogues* were not written by Gregory but by a 'Dialogist' in Rome who inserted what Clark calls 'Inserted Gregorian Passages' (IGPs) – authentic Gregorian passages from works contained in the papal archive – into the work, amounting to about 25% of the total text: Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*. As part of this, he argued that this letter to Maximian was forged and inserted into the *Register* by the 'Dialogist': Clark, *Benedictine Monasticism*, 180-9. Clark reiterates his overall arguments regarding the *Dialogues* many times, such as in Clark, *Benedictine Monasticism* and summarising them most recently in Francis Clark, 'The Widening of Debate on the Origin of St Benedict's Biography', *The Downside Review* 122:428 (2004): 169-184. The majority of scholars still accept the *Dialogues* as a genuine Gregorian work, and it is therefore easier to list those who do not. Terrence Kardong agrees with and summarises Clark's arguments in Terrence G. Kardong, 'Who Wrote the *Dialogues of Saint Gregory?* A Report on a Controversy', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 39:1 (2004): 31-39, espec. p. 30. This seems to be a turnaround from his earlier comments on Clark's arguments in Kardong, 'A New Look at Gregory's *Dialogues*', *American Benedictine Review* 36:1 (1985): 44-63. Marilyn Dunn also agrees with Clark that they are not Gregorian, but argues that they were written in the 670s in England, rather than in Rome: Marilyn Dunn, 'Gregory the Great, the Vision of Fursey and the Origins of Purgatory', *Peritia* 14 (2001): 238-254, at pp. 238, 240. Robert Gillet also accepts the *Dialogues'* inauthenticity: Robert Gillet, 'Les *Dialogues* sont-ils de Grégoire?', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36:2 (1990): 309-314. The main arguments against Clark can be found in Paul Meyvaert, 'The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*: A Response to Francis Clark', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39:3 (1988): 385-381; Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Grégoire le Grand et ses "Dialogues" d'après deux ouvrages récents', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 83 (1988): 281-348 and Adalbert de Vogüé, 'Du nouveau sur les *Dialogues* de saint Grégoire?', *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 62 (2000): 193-198. Matthew Dal Santo has investigated Gregory's discussion of miracles in his letters, and has argued that there is no discrepancy between his attitude towards miracles here and in his *Dialogues*: Matthew Dal Santo, 'The Shadow of a Doubt? A Note on the *Dialogues* and *Registrum Epistolarum* of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604)', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61:1 (2010): 3-17, at p. 3. In this thesis the debate will only be referred to where it is relevant to the argument and concerns the representation of the devil.

² Moorhead, *Gregory*, 14. A person mentioned as alive in the *Dialogues* died in late 594 providing the later date.

³ As argued in John Moorhead, 'The Figure of the Deacon Peter in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great', *Augustinianum* 42:2 (2002): 469-79.

form therefore allowed him to explore the meaning of the stories more fully and to digress from his hagiographic tales into theological discussions.⁴

It is now thought that the *Dialogues* were aimed at an elite, educated audience which was most likely both clerical and secular: whilst Gregory's letter mentions his *fratres*, Gregory also sent a copy of the *Dialogues* to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards.⁵ The *Dialogues* consist of four books of which the fourth is quite different in content from the first three. The first two books each contain twelve chapters, with the first chapter relating the miracles of twelve holy men with the second constituting a *Life* of Saint Benedict.⁶ These two books are the shortest and the most strictly hagiographical. The third book is similar to the first in that it concerns a variety of holy individuals, rather than just one. However, it contains more theological discussion and a greater number of encounters with political figures, armies and non-Catholics than either the first or second book. It also contains several expositional passages in which Gregory explains the meaning of the stories; books one and two do not contain such conversational dialogue. The fourth book differs again from the first three in that it is a theological discussion between Gregory and Peter about the nature of judgement, the afterlife, and the Eucharist; it is therefore not a collection of saints' lives as such, but does contain stories to illustrate the points being discussed.

This current chapter is concerned with hagiography, and is therefore predominantly concerned with books one and two of the *Dialogues* and some saints' lives from book three. It looks at the devil's interactions with both saints and non-saints and will explore the structure of these stories, the use of the devil as a narrative device, and the messages that the figure of devil was used to impart. In contrast, chapter 5 is mainly concerned with the expositional passages in the *Dialogues*, and with the eschatological stories that are found in both this work and

⁴ Ibid. For further discussion of the use of the dialogue form in late antiquity see: Kate Cooper and Matthew Dal Santo, 'Boethius, Gregory the Great and the Christian 'afterlife' of Classical Dialogue', in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 173-189; Petersen, *Dialogues*, 23-24.

⁵ On Gregory's audience: Petersen, *Dialogues*, 21-22; Moorhead, *Gregory*, 15; De Vogüé, 'Introduction', 39-40. See *Ep.* 3.50 (1:195) for 'fratres'. This is usually taken to refer to the monastic and clerical elite within the papal household, rather than just the monks at St. Andrew's: McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, 53; Petersen, *Dialogues*, 21-22.

⁶ See De Vogüé, 'Introduction', 51-55 for the numerical significance of this. For more on the use of numbers in the second dialogue, see Pearse Cusack, 'Number Games and the Second Dialogue of Saint Gregory', *Studia Patristica* Vol. XV, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984).

Gregory's *Gospel Homilies*. The next chapter thus explores doctrinal, theological and eschatological points regarding the devil, rather than those relating to pastoral care and moral instruction.

Scholarship on the *Dialogues* has undergone major changes in recent decades. Discussion had previously focussed upon the relationship of the *Dialogues* to Gregory's other works, ignoring their place in the wider hagiographic tradition. As a result much of the scholarship was concerned with their seemingly anomalous place within the Gregorian canon, and with perceived differences between the *Dialogues* and Gregory's other works. Thus his writings were seen to contain both 'shrewdness and superstition', with the superstition belonging to the *Dialogues*, and the shrewdness to Gregory's other writings.⁷ The *Dialogues* were also called the 'joker in Gregory's pack' and compared with the 'grand company' of Gregory's other works.⁸

For the majority now working on Gregory, the *Dialogues* are no longer seen as problematic.⁹ Joan Petersen identified the problem that had beleaguered earlier scholarship when she said of many previous scholars that

They have not seen fully the scope of the *Dialogues* in relation to the culture of his age or compared them with the works of other writers with similar aims.¹⁰

Petersen went on to argue that the tradition of early medieval hagiography ought to guide how the *Dialogues* are interpreted.¹¹ Indeed, it is with this understanding that before her De Vogüé identified many of the *Dialogues*' literary debts.¹² These shifts, however, have been staggered rather than instantaneous, meaning that many criticisms against the old approach have been repeated by

⁷ Dudden, *Gregory*, 1:356.

⁸ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, quoted in F. Edward Cranz, Ruth J. Dean, Robert M. Luniansky et al., 'Memoirs of Fellows and Corresponding Fellows of the Medieval Academy of America', *Speculum* 61:3 (1986): 759-69, at p. 768.

⁹ Those who see them as problematic are mainly Francis Clark and Marilyn Dunn: Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*; Dunn, 'Origins of Purgatory'.

¹⁰ Petersen, *Dialogues*, xvi.

¹¹ *Ibid.* This forms the background to her more specific argument that Gregory had a greater knowledge of Greek and Greek literature (whether in the original or in translation) than is widely assumed: *Ibid.*, *passim*. As such, Petersen attempts to use the miracle stories to demonstrate that the *Dialogues* are influenced by eastern traditions: Petersen, *Dialogues*, *passim*. esp. pp. 116; 151-188.

¹² These can be found in the footnotes of his SC 251, 260, 261 edition of the *Dialogues*.

different scholars over a long period of time. Petersen was neither the first nor the last to approach the *Dialogues* from such an angle,¹³ but so persistent is the strand of scholarship which problematises the *Dialogues* by viewing them through a primarily Gregorian, rather than hagiographical, lens that as late as 2003 John Moorhead can be seen re-iterating this call for them to be viewed alongside the other hagiographic texts of this period.¹⁴ Indeed, it was because other questions about the *Dialogues* were still being asked that Petersen felt the need to pre-empt criticism by clarifying that she was not concerned with the ‘truth’ of the events recorded or with reconciling Gregory’s belief in miracles with his thought-processes as revealed elsewhere.¹⁵

Such reiterations have been necessary because the miracles within the *Dialogues* continue to be seen as problematic by a few. Whilst the earliest argument against Dudden’s questioning of Gregory’s ‘truthfulness’¹⁶ dates from the 1960s,¹⁷ changes in ways of thinking about the *Dialogues* did not occur instantaneously, and these questions have been revisited by McCready in his modern attempt to prove that Gregory believed his stories to be factually and literally true;¹⁸ McCready did this, however, whilst also demonstrating a deep appreciation of the *Dialogues’* literary and hagiographical context and the purpose of miracles in such texts.¹⁹ McCready’s work is therefore a much more sophisticated and learned approach to a question that Dudden had asked a century before. Perceived differences between the *Dialogues* and Gregory’s other works (and his contemptuous attitude towards the miraculous in saints’ lives) also constitute some of Francis Clark’s internal evidence for the *Dialogues’* inauthenticity.²⁰

¹³ For example, M. Mähler argued for particular biblical and hagiographical parallels in book 2 of the *Dialogues*: M. Mähler, ‘Évocations bibliques et hagiographiques dans la vie de saint Benoît par saint Grégoire’, *Revue Bénédictine* 83 (1973): 145-84. Pearse Cusack has investigated some of the *Dialogues’* literary debts: Pearse Cusack, ‘The Temptation of St. Benedict: an essay at interpretation through the literary sources’, *American Benedictine Review* 27:2 (1976): 143-163; Pearse Cusack, *An Interpretation of the Second Dialogue of Gregory the Great. Hagiography and Saint Benedict* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993). See also: Michaela Zelzer, ‘Gregory’s *Life of Benedict* and the Bible: the decoding of an exegetical program’, *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 44 (2009): 89-102.

¹⁴ John Moorhead, ‘Taking Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues* Seriously’, *Downside Review* 121, no. 424 (2003): 197-210.

¹⁵ Peterson, *Dialogues*, xxi.

¹⁶ Dudden, *Gregory*, 1:338-344.

¹⁷ W.F. Bolton, ‘The Supra-Historical Sense in the the *Dialogues* of Gregory I’, *Aevum* 33 (1959): 206-213, at p. 207.

¹⁸ For example, McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, 175.

¹⁹ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*.

²⁰ Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*.

There is therefore a divide between those still uncomfortable with the presence of the miraculous within the *Dialogues* (however subtly the question is phrased) and those who are willing to accept that Gregory and other authors of hagiography were writing according to the rules of a particular genre whilst in possession of a world-view quite removed from our own. Sophisticated analyses of the questions of ‘historicity’, late antique perceptions of ‘truth’, and the use of *topoi* and hagiographic commonplaces in saints’ lives have been asked of other late antique texts,²¹ but echoes of the old anxiety about the miraculous still exists when it comes to research on the *Dialogues*. In this thesis the question of Gregory’s ‘credulity’ is seen as irrelevant: not only is this word too value-laden, but it is a quirk of the scholarship and testament to the varied genres in which Gregory wrote that such questions are still being asked of the *Dialogues* at all.

Scholarship on the *Dialogues* has also frequently suffered from the tendency to study the work separately from Gregory’s other writings. This is related to the previous point in that the different nature of the *Dialogues* compared to Gregory’s other works has meant that even for those for whom this does not pose a problem (such as it does for Clark),²² the work is not often studied at the same time as Gregory’s other writings. This has manifested itself in two main ways: the *Dialogues* have frequently been overlooked in larger works on Gregory’s life and thought; and works which have appreciated the hagiographic heritage of the *Dialogues* have considered them within that context but not also within a Gregorian one. On the former, in spite of Moorhead’s assertion that the *Dialogues* are worthy of respect,²³ consideration of them is completely absent from his book on Gregory.²⁴ Likewise, in his seminal book, Markus admits that the questions asked of the *Dialogues* are of little interest to the work.²⁵ Markus, therefore, combines research into Gregory’s life and times with research into his religious thought, but does not think about where Gregory’s hagiography fits in with this. This chapter and the next will demonstrate this, with regard to Gregory’s ideas about the devil. Gillian Evans’ work on Gregory’s thought

²¹ For instance, Clare Stancliffe argued against simplistic attempts to determine whether the miracles in Sulpicius Severus’ *Life of Martin* were ‘true’: Stancliffe, *St. Martin*, 174-202, 205-214, *passim*.

²² See p. 113 note 1 above.

²³ Moorhead, ‘Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*’.

²⁴ Moorhead, *Gregory*. This deals with various aspects of Gregory’s thought but does not focus on the *Dialogues* or hagiography.

²⁵ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 16.

refers to the *Dialogues* only insofar as their theological discussions match or contrast those in the *Moralia* or other works, and discussion of the miracles and saints' lives with the *Dialogues* form only a small part of the work.²⁶ In these studies, discussion of the *Dialogues* focusses primarily upon their theology although Dagens does incorporate discussion of the *Dialogues* into his analysis of Gregory's other works.²⁷ In other works, the focus has been upon the *Dialogues*' eschatological nature, and particularly its ramifications for ideas such as purgatory.²⁸ In contrast, the works of Petersen, McCready and De Vogüé, which *are* concerned with the hagiographical parts of the *Dialogues*, do not look at Gregory's other works; the same is true for the plethora of French articles on the work.²⁹ This is, in part, because saints' lives and hagiography is an entire sub-set of historical enquiry, but this present study differs from many of those previously because it looks at the devil in the *Dialogues* as well as in Gregory's other writings.

4.0.1 Aims and Sources

Once it was no longer assumed that Gregory wrote the *Dialogues* simply because he was of a 'superstitious' mind, new questions began to be asked about his sources and purposes. As with other hagiography, the bible was the main influence on the *Dialogues*.³⁰ The other main sources were other saints' lives and popular oral stories. Amongst the most famous hagiographic texts in the west at this time were Athanasius' *Life of Antony* (in translation) and Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin*, both of which it appears Gregory knew.³¹ It has also been asked whether or not he knew the *Rule of St. Benedict*: whilst he mentions that Benedict wrote a *Rule* in the

²⁶ Evans, *Gregory the Great*.

²⁷ Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 299-303, 452-3 [index], *passim*. Dagens discusses the *Dialogues* in terms of providing *exempla*, showing by example what he discusses in the abstract in his other works.

²⁸ For instance: Dunn, 'Origins of Purgatory'; Rush, 'Struggle with the Devil'.

²⁹ These will be discussed in this chapter.

³⁰ This was so for most hagiography in the early medieval period. For more information, see E. Ann Matter, 'The Bible in Early Medieval Saints' Lives', in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, eds. Celia Chazelle and Burton Van Name Edwards (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2003): 155-165, especially pp. 155-6. For many of Gregory's hagiographic, classical and biblical sources see the footnotes to De Vogüé's edition of the *Dialogues*. For a summary and assessment of De Vogüé's findings see Kardong, 'A New Look', 44-63. For the major works on the *Dialogues*' relationship to the wider hagiographic tradition, see: Petersen, *The Dialogues*; McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*. See also the discussion of Mähler, 'Évocations bibliques et hagiographiques' below, pp. 120-1, in which Mähler points to particular classical, biblical and hagiographic references in the *Life of Benedict*.

³¹ Petersen, *Dialogues*, 119, *passim*.

Dialogues,³² it is now thought that he did not practise the *Rule* himself, although most scholars hold that he had a knowledge of its contents.³³ The difficulty of establishing Gregory's knowledge of other writers and of determining if and where he appropriated them means that the *Dialogues* have now been incorporated into the general debate concerning Gregory's education and sources, including the extent to which he was influenced by eastern, and particularly monastic, writings. Where possible and appropriate, possible borrowings or influences will be indicated in the text, although it ought to be said that this does not always indicate a direct reliance rather than a common written or oral source or the use of hagiographic *topoi* and commonplaces.

The exegetical and typological richness of Gregory's saints' lives has not always been appreciated; this is evidenced by the constant questions regarding the 'historicity' and 'truth' of their stories. It is in trying to apply a modern idea of history to Gregory's telling or re-telling of stories that has resulted in scholarly knots regarding the *Dialogues*. Whilst it is perhaps an assumption in itself that history does not consist of constantly-repeating events, and that therefore a typological reading of history should be seen as separate, rather than complementary, to one which records 'what happened', this is here merely acknowledged, and it is asserted that Gregory's stories are best seen within a typological and exegetical light. As seen, it is somewhat of an anomaly that such ways of thinking about saints' lives has been slow to affect Gregorian scholarship, but, in fact, many scholars over many years have demonstrated an awareness of the biblical and typological nature of many of the *Dialogues*' stories.³⁴ Indeed, the nature of the *Dialogues* is very mixed:

³² *Dial.*, 2.36 (2:242). In this place Gregory mentioned that there was a *Rule* and praised it, but did not discuss its contents. It is also quoted directly in the work on 1 Kings, but this is now believed to have been written in the twelfth century. The admission of this by De Vogüé caused Clark to argue that he should now also reconsider again his arguments for the authenticity of the *Dialogues*, since the mention of this *Rule* in 1 Kings was one of the proofs of this: Francis Clark, 'The Unmasking of the Pseudo-Gregorian Commentary on Kings and its Relevance to the Study of Benedictine Origins', *Studia Patristica* XXXVI, ed. M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold (2001): 3-8.

³³ The main scholar arguing that he did not know of Benedict's *Rule* is Marilyn Dunn: Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism. From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) and Marilyn Dunn, 'Asceticism and Monasticism, II: Western' in *Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 2. Constantine to c.600*, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 669-690, at p. 684. Part of her argument rests on her belief that the *Dialogues*, in addition to the work on 1 Kings, are inauthentic, thus leaving no work in which Gregory mentions the *Rule* directly.

³⁴ For example, see Mähler, 'Évocations bibliques et hagiographiques', 145-84. See the next paragraph for more information. More recently, see Zelzer, 'Gregory's *Life of Benedict* and the Bible', 89-102. See also De Vogüé, 'Introduction' in *Dial.* 1:25-178. William McCready has also written on the sources – oral, cultural and literary – for Gregory's tales: McCready, *Signs of Sanctity, passim*.

The miracles of fifth-and-sixth century holy Italian fathers were chosen and set down by Gregory the Great in a context that was narrative, exegetical, and theological at the same time.³⁵

Petersen has called for an even finer analysis of the typological nature of the *Dialogues*, arguing that scholars should look beyond the recording of literary similarities and instead focus on the fact that his hagiography was underpinned by exegesis and biblical typology.³⁶ She makes the case that

Once it is realized that Gregory's work as an exegete is not confined to his scriptural commentaries and homiletical writings, and that his typological interpretation is applied not only to biblical material but also to stories of the lives of holy men in Italy, the significance of his treatment of the miracle stories in the *Dialogues* becomes apparent, and the objections of some of his modern critics are less easily sustained.³⁷

Petersen has made the subtle but important distinction between the desire to create exact literary (and biblical) correspondences and the idea that they are the result not of this, but of Gregory thinking typologically about the world around him.³⁸ To give an example, earlier authors had seen in Gregory's *Life of Benedict* evidence of biblical parallels, particularly with the Elijah-Elisha cycle in 1 Kings and 2 Kings.³⁹ According to this interpretation, Gregory was setting Benedict up as an Elisha figure.⁴⁰ However, whilst Petersen welcomes the move away from viewing the *Dialogues* through an historical lens and towards appreciating their biblical character, she sees this as an 'over-literal' approach⁴¹ that is also too elaborate and

The specifics of possible borrowings, debts or allusions in the *Dialogues* and as discussed in these various works will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3 for relevant passages and, where less relevant to the main discussion, at least indicated.

³⁵ Sofia Boesch Gajano, 'The Use and Abuse of Miracles in Early Medieval Culture', in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, eds. Lester K. Little and H. Rosenwein (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998): 330-339, at p. 333.

³⁶ For example: Petersen, *Dialogues*, xvii, 30, *passim*.

³⁷ Petersen, *Dialogues*, 32. The modern critics that Petersen refers to are those such as Mähler. Their criticisms largely consisted of trying to explain away parts of the *Life of Benedict* that were not exactly parallel with the Elisa-Elisha cycle. Petersen argues that if one realises that Gregory was *thinking* and *interpreting* typologically, rather than trying to create exact parallels, these problems go away.

³⁸ Petersen, *Dialogues*, 31-2.

³⁹ See Mähler, 'Évocations bibliques et hagiographiques', *passim*.

⁴⁰ Mähler, 'Évocations bibliques et hagiographiques'.

⁴¹ Petersen, *Dialogues*, xvii.

superficial.⁴² In short, Gregory was not *creating* stories so that they would possess biblical echoes (and, in this case, so that he could set up Benedict as an Elisha figure), but was *interpreting* stories that he heard through the lens of his knowledge and understanding of the bible. The first of these presupposes that he began with the bible and wished to recreate its stories; the second that he began with the world and interpreted it through his reading of the bible. The implications of this (if this is a correct analysis) for this present study of the devil in Gregory's works will be drawn out in chapter 6. It is clear from this, however, that a knowledge of exegesis and typology is as necessary to understanding Gregory's *Dialogues* as it is to understand his exegetical and homiletic works, where the influence of exegesis is to be expected. Merely to list parallels between the bible and the *Dialogues* may be, as Petersen calls it, 'superficial'.⁴³

Questions have also been asked about the relationship of the *Dialogues* to the *Gesta martyrum*. The *Gesta* are a collection of stories dating from the fifth and sixth centuries about the (real and fictitious) Roman martyrs of pre-Constantinian Rome.⁴⁴ Many of these were circulating at the time of Gregory the Great and form part of the literary and hagiographical culture of his time.⁴⁵ In 1907 Albert Dufourcq argued that there was a close relationship between the *Dialogues* and the *Gesta martyrum*.⁴⁶ More recently this idea of a textual reliance has come under attack,⁴⁷ and in another argument, Sofia Gajano has argued that rather than complementing the *Gesta*, the *Dialogues* were written to provide an *alternative* to the stories of Roman martyrs in

⁴² Petersen, *Dialogues*, 28. For her views on this generally, see *Ibid.*, 28-32 and for examples, see *Ibid.*, 32-54.

⁴³ Petersen, *Dialogues*, 28.

⁴⁴ For more information on the *Gesta martyrum*, see The Roman Martyrs Project at the University of Manchester, directed by Kate Cooper at <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/cla/projects/romanmartyrsproject/> (accessed 28 June 2011). This website also contains a searchable database. There is also a special issue of *Early Medieval Europe* entitled 'The Roman Martyrs and the Politics of Memory' edited by Kate Cooper, which explains this project. *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000).

⁴⁵ For some general background on these stories and Gregory's time see Petersen, *Dialogues*, 59-66.

⁴⁶ Dufourcq, *Étude sur les Gesta Martyrum Romains*, 3: 294-5: 'il y a une étroite solidarité entre les Gestes et les Dialogues: ces deux séries de textes se complètent et s'éclairent l'une l'autre; leur rapprochement permet de reconstituer l'ensemble du mouvement légendaire dont les Dialogues ne donnaient qu'un fragment.'

⁴⁷ Petersen provides a detailed and nuanced rebuttal of this: Petersen, *Dialogues*, 56-89, esp. 88-9. She also argues that some stories in the *Gesta* may have derived from the *Dialogues*, that at other times there was a common source, and that between some stories there is no connection: Petersen, *Dialogues*, 73-81; 88.

the *Gesta*.⁴⁸ Gajano has argued that the *Gesta* provide a point of reference from which to assess the novelty of Gregory's hagiography.⁴⁹ Following on from this, it has been suggested that Gregory needed to do this because of his conflict with the Roman clerical establishment, and that both sides used the martyr cults to bolster their position.⁵⁰ Whether Gregory's promotion of confessors over martyrs was an aggressive and politically-motivated attempt to gain himself support, or the result of the changed religious circumstances of the sixth century, it remains that the martyrdom – and the enemy – in both are quite different. It is clear that the *Dialogues* were intended to provide an alternative idea of holiness to that of the persecuted martyr,⁵¹ and Gregory's discussion in book three about those who were openly martyred in times of persecution, and those who in time of peace suffer the hidden assaults of the devil,⁵² suggests that Gregory was pointing to this as a complementary idea of holiness.

Gregory's *Dialogues* have also been interpreted as an apology for the cult of saints against doubters who may also have held that such veneration was idolatrous.⁵³ According to this argument, the *Dialogues* should be seen, alongside Eustratius' *On the State of Souls after Death*, within the context of continuing Mediterranean-wide debate about the cult of saints.⁵⁴ Other arguments placing the *Dialogues* within the context of the east have been proposed, most notably the assertion, unconvincingly argued, that the *Dialogues* should be understood as a political writing and that they were intended to strengthen papal authority and the

⁴⁸ Sofia Boesch Gajano, 'La proposta agiografica dei 'Dialoghi' di Gregorio Magno', *Studi Medievali* 3rd ser. 21 (1980): 623-64, esp. pp. 660-1. See also Conrad Leyser, 'The Temptations of Cult: Roman Martyr Piety in the Age of Gregory the Great', *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000): 289-307, at pp. 291-2.

⁴⁹ Gajano, 'La proposta agiografica', 657.

⁵⁰ Leyser, 'Temptations of Cult', 289-307, espec. pp. 289, 303-5.

⁵¹ Markus, *Gregory*, 61-2. Stories of confessors rather than martyrs can be seen in other works of the time, such as in Gregory of Tours, 'Liber in Gloria Confessorum' in *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis. Miracula et Opera Minor*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1951): 294-370.

⁵² *Dial.* 3.26.7-9 (2:370-2).

⁵³ Matthew Dal Santo, 'Gregory the Great and Eustratius of Constantinople', 421-457. As part of his argument Dal Santo places emphasis on the interpolator Peter's comment that there were no miracles being performed in the Italy of his day, something that has often been dismissed as a rhetorical device. Dal Santo, 'Gregory the Great and Eustratius', 425.

⁵⁴ Dal Santo, 'Gregory the Great and Eustratius', 454-7. In this article Dal Santo argues for a common intellectual milieu between east and west. *Ibid.*, 455.

primacy of Rome.⁵⁵ There is therefore a lack of consensus regarding the larger purposes of this work, and this study of the *Dialogues*' key antagonist – the devil –, and the way in which Gregory portrayed his interactions with various saints and sinners, will clarify the wider political or religious messages of the *Dialogues*.

The *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies* are the only works in which the devil is presented as being physically manifest and where he is shown interacting with individuals. This chapter and the following will therefore give a very different view of how Gregory spoke of and used the devil in his works than the previous one. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first explores the nature of the devil's attacks against Benedict (and hagiogenesis), and the second section the methods by which Benedict fights back and emerges victorious. The latter then focusses upon the effects of this on certain aspects of pastoral care. The third section has a wider remit and explores the devil's interactions with both saints and non-saints. In doing so it identifies some of the main, general, messages Gregory intended to impart by means of his representation of the devil in the *Dialogues*, and discusses the pope's use of him as a narrative and didactic device. This chapter on the devil in the *Dialogues* will therefore make the connections between this work and Gregory's other writings clear, and will also add to present understanding of the *Dialogues*' messages.

4.1 Part One: the Devil and Hagiogenesis

The second dialogue, the *Life of Saint Benedict*, concerns just one holy man rather than many and therefore provides a good opportunity to analyse the changing relationship between the devil and saint. The book is a chronological account of Benedict's life in that it begins with his birth and progresses through his boyhood, youth and adulthood, ending eventually with his death; it is also thematic as many of its miracles are grouped into clusters or sets (often of three) which serve to illustrate particular points or virtues. The highly-structured nature of this book has been demonstrated by De Vogüé, who has argued that it can be divided into two parts, the first consisting of Benedict's youth, period in the cave, and time at Subiaco, and the

⁵⁵ Michaela Zelzer, 'Gregory's *Life of Benedict*: its historico-literary field', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2008): 327-337, at pp. 336-7. Zelzer only refers to two stories in the *Dialogues* in support of this argument.

second consisting of his life at Monte Cassino.⁵⁶ Both of these parts are themselves divided into three sections – thus forming a double triptych – with most of the second section devoted to themed supernatural stories.⁵⁷

In this dialogue, miracles and events involving the devil can also be grouped into sets of three (or sometimes four), resulting in a similar, although not identical, structure as that discerned by De Vogüé. The groups, determined here, are as follows: Benedict's personal struggle with and triumph over the devil;⁵⁸ the devil's attacks on Benedict's endeavours to build a monastery;⁵⁹ and the devil's attacks on the individuals (and morals) of Monte Cassino.⁶⁰ These divisions broadly correspond with those of De Vogüé: Benedict's personal struggle with the devil corresponds with the events leading up to the foundation of Subiaco; the devil's attacks on the monastery occur before the foundation of Monte Cassino; and the other attacks correspond with the rest of the miracles that occur in Monte Cassino. It is possible, however, to overemphasise the coherent structure of the *Dialogues*. There are, for instance, occasions (particularly in books two and four) where the events or miracles occur in groups of four. It is argued that on such occasions there is usually one story that has been inserted in to an otherwise well-structured piece, and that in this respect the *Dialogues* follow the *Moralia*, and that Gregory's diversions can serve as an indicator of the ideas that preoccupied him.

The first set consists of confrontations between Benedict and the devil which relate to the saint's spiritual formation. It is this first group that is analysed in the first section of this chapter. Benedict's trials begin when, in imitation of Christ⁶¹ and the desert fathers,⁶² he seeks solitude in an isolated cave.⁶³ Several features of these

⁵⁶ De Vogüé, 'Introduction', 58-59. First half: *Dial.* 2.1.1-2.8.9 (2:126-166); Second half: *Dial.* 2.8b-38 (2:166-249).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ The events with the bell, *Dial.* 2.1.5 (2:132); blackbird, *Dial.* 2.2.1 (2:136); and sensual image, *Dial.* 2.2.1 (2:136), which culminate in the open confrontation, *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:168-70).

⁵⁹ The devil's attacks on the physical construction of the monastery: the devil sitting on a building stone, *Dial.* 2.9.1 (2:170); setting fire to the kitchen, *Dial.* 2.10.1-2 (2:170-2); and overturning a wall, *Dial.* 2.11.1-2 (2:172-4).

⁶⁰ In these cases the devil attacks individuals other than Benedict, and Benedict rescues or scolds them.

⁶¹ Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

⁶² Retreat into the wilderness, or, in the east, the desert, was a feature of Christianity from its earliest years. For the individuals and writings that may have influenced Gregory most on this matter, see Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, which became the template for such saints' lives, and also the *Conferences of Cassian*, which are a collection of the wisdom he collected whilst in conversation with the eastern desert fathers.

⁶³ For this whole story: *Dial.* 2.1.4-7 (2:132-34).

interactions will be analysed in the following pages: what the devil did or tried to do; what form, if any, he took; how physically close he was to Benedict; who saw or heard or otherwise perceived him; and how the problem was resolved.

In his first attack, the devil attempted to thwart Benedict's efforts to reject the world by breaking the bell which was rung to inform Benedict that food had been left for him.⁶⁴ This indirect attack on Benedict's body, meant to destroy the system by which he received food, was intended to drive him back to inhabited places. In this story, the devil's form is not described, he is physically far from Benedict, and he is neither seen nor heard. The problem caused by the devil's actions is resolved by God, who in a vision commands a priest to take Benedict some food.⁶⁵ Consequently, in this story the incident takes place away from Benedict's body and comes to resolution through the intervention of God.

In his second fight against Benedict in the wilderness, the devil appears as a small and black bird (*nigra paruaque auis* and *merula*) which circles Benedict's face.⁶⁶ This bird withdrew when the saint made the sign of the cross.⁶⁷ Whilst there is a strand of late antique hagiography which saw birds as friendly to saints,⁶⁸ in this story the bird is firmly identified with the devil by virtue of his blackness and his aversion to the sign of the cross.⁶⁹ In this incident the devil is given a physical shape – albeit, as shall be seen, in a disguised form – and is seen by Benedict with his bodily eyes. Unlike his first contest with the devil, this time the latter's presence is

⁶⁴ *Dial.* 2.1.5 (2:132).

⁶⁵ *Dial.* 2.1.6-7 (2:134).

⁶⁶ *Dial.* 2.2.1 (2:136). See also *Mor.* 26.17.30-31 (2:1287-1289). In this passage as part of his exegesis of Job 35:11 Gregory interprets birds of the air (*caeli erudit*) as devils, and discusses how Christ and good men are superior to the beasts. As a result of the biblical dichotomy between dark and light, blackness came to symbolise evil. For a greater discussion of this within the wider context of scripture and Greco-Roman culture, see Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), 37-8, 44-6, 86-8.

⁶⁷ The use of the sign of the cross to dismiss the devil and creatures associated with the devil has a long history in hagiography. The most famous case in Gregory's time was perhaps Saint Antony using it against demons and advising such use: Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 13 and 23, pp. 199, 202. Also see: Cassian, *Collationes* 8.8.1, p. 303; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 106, found in 'Liber in Gloria Martyrum,' in *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis. Miracula et Opera Minor*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM, 34-111 (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1951), 11. (A bishop made a sign of the cross against a fly). For a general discussion of this see Dwayne E. Carpenter, 'The Devil Bedeviled: Diabolical Intervention and the Desert Fathers', *American Benedictine Review* 31, no. 2 (1980): 182-200, at pp. 197-8, 200.

⁶⁸ Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008), 25-27. This stems from 1 Kings 17:6 [= 3 Kings 17:6 Vulg.], where Elijah is fed by ravens whilst in hiding. The influence of this tradition on Gregory is evident late on in the *Life of Benedict*, where birds bring food.

⁶⁹ See also *Dial.* 2.4.2 (2:152). Blackness had long been associated with the devil, particularly in hagiography. See Andrew Nugent, 'Black Demons in the Desert', *American Benedictine Review* 49:2 (1998): 209-221.

solved not by God alone but by Benedict's employment of the power of God through his use of the sign of the cross.

It is at this point that Benedict was seized by an evil spirit (*malignus spiritus*), causing his mind to become filled with the image of a woman (*femina*).⁷⁰ As a result of this image, Benedict considered leaving the desert, but with the help of God's grace he returned to himself (*ad semetipsum reuersus est*).⁷¹ Benedict then flung himself into a patch of nettles so that by wounding his body he could cure the wounds of his soul.⁷² He did not suffer from sexual lust after this time, and would soon leave the wilderness to become an abbot.⁷³

The devil was therefore first mentioned but not described or given a particular form, then given the physical and tangible shape of a blackbird, and was finally said to have assaulted Benedict's mind with images. In these described episodes he also gets closer and closer to Benedict: he throws a stone from afar; he flutters before Benedict's face; and finally, he enters the saint's mind and influences what is seen within it, in a transition from a distant to a close external devil to an internal one. These all constitute attacks on Benedict's efforts at physical asceticism, moving from an attack on his body and food to an incitement of his sexual lusts.

The story of Benedict is therefore a lived example of the principle that the devil is the anvil upon which the saints are formed; he is thus directly involved in hagiogenesis.⁷⁴ Such conflict with the devil, and its necessity for hagiogenesis, can be seen throughout early Christian monastic literature. Thus, in fourth- and fifth-century Egyptian Christian monasticism, the idea of the monk was in part formed through imagining him in conflict with demons,⁷⁵ and it has been argued that neither monk nor demon can be understood without the other, as their identities were largely formed by their opposition to each other.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Richard Valantasis has discussed the role that demons play in perfecting the monk's body by means of helping the monk to locate those passions that need to be controlled.⁷⁷ He argues that as the other's only companion, the monk and demon become locked in an intimate

⁷⁰ *Dial.* 2.2.1 (2:136). Cf. Athanasius, 'Life of Antony' 5, p. 197; Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.21, p. 67.

⁷¹ *Dial.* 2.2.1-2 (2:136-7).

⁷² *Dial.* 2.2.2 (2:138).

⁷³ *Dial.* 2.2.3 (2:138).

⁷⁴ *Mor.* 34.6.11 (2:1741).

⁷⁵ Brakke, *Demons*, 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Richard Valantasis, 'Daemons and the Perfecting of the Monk's Body: Monastic Anthropology, Daemonology, and Asceticism', *Semeia* (1992): 47-79, at pp. 61-2.

conflict which Valantasis describes as ‘growth-orientated antagonism’.⁷⁸ The demon exposes the passions of the monk in a way unique to him, enabling the monk to emerge victorious with a new, perfect, body.⁷⁹ Such ‘growth-orientated antagonism’ can be observed in the *Life of Saint Benedict*.

These escalating temptations are therefore a perfect example of theology through hagiography: the phenomenon described in the abstract in the *Moralia* whereby the devil progresses in his temptations is acted out here in the interactions between the devil and Benedict. The devil’s actions also reflect Benedict’s growing spiritual status, as the devil is in some ways an ‘observer’, acting as an external gauge of a saint’s spiritual formation.⁸⁰ The devil, in his form, actions – and as shall be seen, speech – therefore serves as an indicator of the degree of sanctity possessed by the saint. The devil also increases his temptations and changes their form each time, showing how the devil increases his temptations against those who have already demonstrated virtue and strength against him. The devil therefore serves in these texts as an example of ‘gradational’ opposition, rather than ‘diametrical’ opposition.⁸¹ There is thus often a direct relationship between the severity of temptation and the level of holiness possessed by the individual being tempted.

4.2. Part Two: The Devil, the Pastor, and Contemplation

4.2.1 The Devil and Falling Below Oneself

At the culmination of Benedict’s first set of struggles against the devil, Benedict expelled a sexual image from his mind that had been planted there by the devil. In this triumph against the devil, Benedict is described as returning to himself (*ad semetipsum reuersus est*).⁸² To understand this phrase one should turn to Gregory’s words which are found just a little after this story:

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 73-4.

⁸⁰ As suggested by Dendel with regards the devil in Anglo-Saxon narrative literature. Dendel, *Satan Unbound*, 57-8.

⁸¹ See Charles F. Altman, ‘Two Types of Opposition and the Structure of Latin Saints’ Lives’, *Medievalia et Humanistica. Studies in Medieval & Renaissance Culture* n.s. 6 (1975): 1-11, pp. 1-5.

⁸² *Dial.* 2.2.1-2 (2 :136-7).

Duobus modis, petre, extra nos ducimur, quia aut per cogitationis lapsum sub nosmetipsos recidimus, aut per contemplationis gratiam super nosmetipsos leuamur.⁸³

Gregory then mentioned a person falling below themselves because their thoughts are unclean (*inmunditia*).⁸⁴ In both of these cases – falling below and above oneself, the former through sin and the latter through contemplation – the return is described as return to oneself (*ad se rediit*), and in the case of sin, also a collection of the mind to oneself (*se collegit ad cor*).⁸⁵ The implantation of the sexual image into Benedict's mind by the devil and Benedict's subsequent return to himself can be interpreted in light of this scheme of falling and rising outside of oneself. The incident contains the two necessary criteria: first, as Gregory's theoretical description of falling beneath oneself speaks of the cause being unclean (*inmunditia*) thoughts, it is right to connect this with this temptation because the image that the devil planted into Benedict's mind was unclean; and secondly, given the proximity in the text of the phrase '*ad semetipsum reuersus est*' to Gregory's explanation of how a person can leave themselves, it is argued here that it is appropriate to interpret the temptation in terms of this wider conceptual framework. In this sense Benedict is an example of lived theology, experiencing what Gregory describes in the abstract. At the culmination of Benedict's first set of temptations, therefore, the devil succeeds in drawing Benedict out of himself, so that he is below himself, only for Benedict to collect his thoughts rise above to himself once more.

This reading of the devil's last temptation of Benedict himself (as opposed to those on his community) differs from other similar assessments of Benedict's *Life*. The contemplative (or mystical) elements of the second dialogue have received most attention in French scholarship, although there are some exceptions.⁸⁶ Courcet has

⁸³ *Dial.* 2.3.9 (2:146). We are carried out of ourselves, Peter, in two ways, because either we fall below ourselves through sinning thought or we are raised up above ourselves by the grace of contemplation.

⁸⁴ *Dial.* 2.3.9 (2:146).

⁸⁵ *Dial.* 2.3.9 (2:146).

⁸⁶ For instance, of the French scholarship see Marc Doucet, 'Pédagogie et théologie dans la Vie de S. Benoît', *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 38 (1976): 158-173; Pierre Courcelle, 'La vision cosmique de saint Benoît', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 13 (1967): 97-117. Exceptions: Conrad Leyser and Carole Straw. Both make note of the contemplative and visionary (in a sense similar to St. Paul's 'Third Heaven') aspects of the *Life of Benedict*: Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 181-185; Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 97-102. For Gregory's ideas about contemplation, knowledge of oneself, and knowledge of God, and the relationship of Gregory's ideas to those of others (particularly Augustine and the Neo-Platonic tradition), see Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 176-184; Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 65-92; Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 31-44; Bernard McGinn, 'Contemplation in Gregory the Great' in *Gregory the Great. A Symposium*, ed. John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame:

argued that within Benedict's *Life* it is possible to discern Benedict's spiritual progression, and that the first of these stages occurs at the time of his re-retreat into the wilderness (see below for discussion of this).⁸⁷ It is argued here that such a spiritual progression certainly exists in the *Dialogues*, but, unlike Courcet, that – for the reasons stated above – the first of these steps, Benedict's 'return to himself', can be seen much earlier, where the saint expels a sexual image – planted by the devil – from his mind.⁸⁸ It is thus associated with the higher levels of combat with the devil. This also makes greater sense because it occurs at the end of a discrete set of temptations and a set period in Benedict's life after which his relationship with the devil and actions in the world change; the devil now attacks others (apart from one exception) and Benedict leaves the wilderness, having succeeded against the devil's temptations. Courcet's first and second stages are too close together, and do not allow for the effects of Benedict's spiritual progression to play themselves out.⁸⁹ The manner in which these did so will be explored in this chapter.

4.2.2 The Connection with the Stages of Contemplation

The following pages will demonstrate that in Gregory's mind there was a relationship between the higher stages of struggle against the devil, as experienced by Benedict at the end of his first set of miracles, and the first stages of contemplation. This particular connection has not been explored even in the works of those scholars who are concerned with the mystical elements of the second dialogue.⁹⁰ Studying the devil in the *Life of Saint Benedict* in the light of Gregory's ideas about contemplation makes clear many of the connections in Gregory's mind between his ideas on the devil, discernment, and suitability for pastoral office; the portrayal devil in the *Life* is therefore even more subtle and complex than previously realised. The argument that Benedict's *Life* contains episodes that can be classified as contemplative is not new, although this has been rather under-appreciated in

University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 146-167. Pearse Cusack's work also suggests an awareness of this as he notes that the second part of the second dialogue contains references to the joys and visions of heaven: Cusack, 'Number Games', 279.

⁸⁷ Doucet, 'Pédagogie et théologie', 160-1. Concerning *Dial.* 2.3.5-14 (2:140-150).

⁸⁸ *Dial.* 2.2.2 (2:138).

⁸⁹ Doucet, 'Pédagogie et théologie', 160-1.

⁹⁰ This connection is briefly alluded to in Doucet, 'Pédagogie et théologie', 166 and Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 97-102, espec. pp. 99-100, but only in passing and is not proved, explored, or explained.

English-language scholarship.⁹¹ Furthermore, current scholarship does not sufficiently explain what the *effects* of these contemplative episodes were for Benedict and, following on from this, *why* they were important for him. By the end of this section the answer to these questions will be shown to lie in the relationship between Benedict and the devil, illustrating the centrality of contemplation and the devil in Gregory's thoughts about the active life and pastoral care.

First, the incident discussed in the previous section, where Benedict expelled the image planted by the devil from his mind, can be related to Gregory's ideas on contemplation that he describes in his other works. To re-iterate, according to Gregory the first rung of contemplation runs thus:

Primus ergo gradus est ut se ad se colligat⁹²

Here, the verb used in the *Homilies on Ezechiel* to describe the first step of contemplation – *colligere* – is the same that is used in the *Dialogues* to describe the sinner's return to himself; the concept is therefore a similar one. In Gregory's non-hagiographical works, this contemplative stage comes after a preliminary one which involves ridding oneself of all thoughts of temporal glory and controlling the bodily appetites:⁹³ this too can be connected with the events in Benedict's *Life* as Benedict had already done these things when he abandoned his studies and was successful, in spite of the devil's attacks on him, in his practice of asceticism. Thus, in order to prepare for contemplation, one must do what Benedict did in the wilderness (which the devil tried to prevent): abandon the world and exercise self-control. Then, there is an association between Gregory's successful return to himself (after he had left himself because of the devil) and the first stage of contemplation as described in the *Moralia*. The culmination of Benedict's first set of temptations by the devil was, therefore, a very specific and rather complex example of hagiogenesis, one that involved falling out of and also rising back into oneself, and which fitted the more traditional hagiographical model of increased temptations in addition to incorporating Gregory's wider conceptual frameworks regarding contemplation and

⁹¹ That it contains such episodes: Doucet, 'Pédagogie et Théologie', 173. Conrad Leyser also demonstrates an awareness of this: Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 183.

⁹² *Hom. in Ezech.*, 2.5.9, pp. 281. Then the first step is to compose oneself. (Translation from Tomkinson, *Prophet Ezechiel*, 339-4).

⁹³ *Mor.* 6.37.56 (1:325).

exiting and re-entering oneself. In such a way the devil's attacks on Benedict are also related to the concepts of *intus* and *foris*. These words recur frequently in Gregory's writings and he structured many of his arguments and thoughts around these ideas.⁹⁴

Secondly, this alternative way of interpreting Benedict's interactions with the devil can be continued throughout the rest of the *Life*. Benedict, having triumphed over the devil, left the wilderness to become abbot of a nearby monastery.⁹⁵ This suggests that asceticism – and victory over the devil on behalf of oneself – was a prerequisite for a pastoral role; this is not surprising if one notes that Christ began his ministry only after he had been tempted by the devil in the desert.⁹⁶ In having thus achieved the first stage (returning to himself), therefore, Benedict is suited to guide other men. This first role did not go well for Benedict, however, and he had many difficulties during his first sojourn as a pastor. The monks disliked his strictness and eventually conspired to kill him; the poisoned glass of wine they gave to him, however, broke when he made the sign of the cross over it.⁹⁷ Benedict, after a short speech to the monks, decided to leave the monastery to return once again to the wilderness. A close analysis of these events reveals further particulars about the interactions between the saint and the devil, and the relationship of these to the transition from the solitary to the communal life.

On Benedict's second retreat into the wilderness Gregory wrote that:

Tunc ad locum dilectae solitudinis rediit, et solus in superni spectatoris oculis **habitavit secum**.⁹⁸

The important part of this story was isolated by Gregory through his use of the interlocuter Peter, who asked the character of Gregory what was meant by the phrase *habitavit secum*.⁹⁹ This gave Gregory the opportunity to explain that if Benedict had continued in his role over these difficult monks, he would have taken less care of himself (*minus curaret sua*) and diverted the eye of his mind from the light of contemplation (*a contemplationis lumine mentis suae oculum declinasset*).¹⁰⁰ As a

⁹⁴ See pp. 24-5 above.

⁹⁵ *Dial.* 3.2.2 (2:140).

⁹⁶ Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

⁹⁷ *Dial.* 2.3.4 (2:142).

⁹⁸ *Dial.* 2.3.5 (2:142). Then he returned to the place of his beloved solitude, and lived with himself alone in the eyes of the heavenly spectator. (My use of bold)

⁹⁹ *Dial.* 2.3.5 (2:144).

¹⁰⁰ *Dial.* 2.3.5 (2:144).

result of these things he might perhaps have left himself whilst also not finding them (*se forsitan relinqueret, et illos non inueniret*).¹⁰¹ It is here that Gregory discusses the two ways in which a person exits themselves, and this is why Doucet argues that Benedict's return to himself here as the first step in his spiritual progression.¹⁰² However, because this incident concerns a difficulty Benedict had as pastor, this is seen here as a *lapse*, and an argument for vigilance, even after initial victory over the devil. One does not stop sinning once one returns from the desert; rather, *all* sin causes a person to fall out of themselves.

Benedict therefore had to abandon his first pastoral position because he was in danger of neglecting himself and losing the light of contemplation. These two things are both directly connected to the devil, even though he is not mentioned in this instance. The belief that the pastor ought to care (*curare*) for himself was absolutely central to Gregory's thought. This care involved self-reflection and the contemplation of one's sins: so important was this idea to Gregory that the last book of his *Pastoral Care* is devoted to this point.¹⁰³ Part of this was because of the danger of pride: when the pastor does well, the devil – in the *Pastoral Care* called the cunning seducer (*seductor callidus*) – enumerates for the pastor everything that he has achieved, thus causing him to feel pride.¹⁰⁴ The good pastor must reflect on his own humanity, as even the prophet Ezechiel was reminded that he was a man: one must therefore recall one's infirmity.¹⁰⁵ It is when this fails to happen that the ancient enemy rules over the deceived mind.¹⁰⁶ However, more widely it is because the pastor must continually assess himself and take care of those in his care, which Benedict in this instance was unable to do. Gregory was very anxious about worldly and pastoral cares inhibiting the ability of an individual to engage in protective introspection; this is evident in many of his letters, where he expresses the same concern about himself.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, he wrote at length on this problem in a letter to his fellow bishops and patriarchs, writing that the pastor should have both compassion

¹⁰¹ *Dial.* 2.3.5 (2:144).

¹⁰² Doucet, 'Pédagogie et théologie', 160-1.

¹⁰³ *Reg. Past.* 4, lines 1-81, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 3 October 2011).

¹⁰⁴ *Reg. Past.* 4, line 12, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 17 October 2011).

¹⁰⁵ *Reg. Past.* 4, lines 60-69, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 17 October 2011).

¹⁰⁶ *Reg. Past.* 4, line 41, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 17 October 2011).

¹⁰⁷ *Ep.* 1.24 (1:22-32); *Ep.* 1.41 (1:47-9).

and contemplation and also of the effect of worldly cares on the bishop's ability to guide.¹⁰⁸ In Benedict's re-retreat into the wilderness, it is possible to see an instance of this playing itself out, with Benedict needing to retreat from the overwhelmingly difficult care of his monks.

4.2.3 Contemplation, Discerning the Devil, and Pastoral Care

The lesson of Benedict's interactions with the devil is therefore that the pastor must fight alone against the devil and then continually exercise self-care by means of introspective vigilance: these are the pre-requisites for a pastoral position. However, Benedict also returned to the wilderness because he had diverted the eye of his mind from the light of contemplation (*a contemplationis lumine*).¹⁰⁹ But why should this be necessary for a pastor? Over the next few pages it will be demonstrated that the answer to this can be found in its effects on the relationship between the pastor and the devil.

Immediately after Benedict's second period of isolated temptation he returned to the world and discerned the devil in the form of a little black boy (*niger puerulus*) who had been leading a monk astray.¹¹⁰ This is the second time that Benedict is depicted as discerning – rather than fighting without seeing – the devil, but it is the first time that he does so in order to thwart the devil on behalf of others. In the wilderness, he had not seen the devil, only suffered his effects, and even when Benedict knew others in his previous monastery were plotting against him (where the devil is not explicitly mentioned) this was an attack against *Benedict*, and the events had put *Benedict* at risk by preventing him from exercising care *for himself*. In his previous position as abbot, Benedict had been unable to reform the evil thoughts and

¹⁰⁸ Ep. 1.24 (1:22-32, at p. 27). For a discussion of the 'horizontal' nature of compassion and 'vertical' nature of contemplation, and how this fits into Straw's understanding of Gregory's conceptual framework of polarity and complementarity, see Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 91.

¹⁰⁹ *Dial.* 2.3.5 (2:144).

¹¹⁰ *Dial.* 2.4.2-3 (2:152). This order of temptations (a woman and then a black boy) follows the efforts of the devil against Saint Antony (Athanasius, *Life of Saint Antony* 5, 6, 23, pp. 196-7, 202). Here, the devil is said to represent lust, and to have taken on this form because it is in accordance with the colour of his mind. In the *Dialogues* story, however, it is not Benedict that the devil is attempting to deceive by disguising himself as such, but another monk; it is therefore part of a different group of miracles. Such differences are to be expected when there is a use of common *topoi* and when one allows for creativity and differences in circulating stories. In such a way Gregory's depiction of the devil at the beginning of book two of *Dialogues* reflects that in the tradition of the eastern desert fathers, in which the devil frequently takes on the form of beasts, women, and black boys. For more information on blackness in hagiography, see Nugent, 'Black Demons in the Desert', 209-221; Byron, *Symbolic Blackness*, 44-6, 86-8.

behaviour of the monks; but now, after he has undertaken a period of contemplation, he is able to perceive the devil and defend others from him. His power of discernment is directly related to his ability to protect and warn his flock. This is a significant development as it demonstrates his ability to fight against the devil *on behalf of others* rather than just *for himself*; and, although he has not yet become an abbot for a second time (he is a holy man whom the other abbot asked for help), this, the first of his discernment miracles, is what demonstrates his suitability for a pastoral position.

The changed relationship between Benedict and the devil since the latter's second period of solitude is demonstrated by an extremely striking confrontation between the two. This last, explosive, attack on Benedict was precipitated by the saint's overturning of idols and his conversion of pagan temples and people to Christianity.¹¹¹ Through anger and necessity, the devil increased his attacks against Benedict. The devil's reaction was as follows:

Sed haec antiquus hostis tacite non ferens, non occulte uel per somnium,
sed aperta uisione eiusdem patris se oculis increbat¹¹²

This sentence contains two key points which will be explored in the following pages: first, the fact that the devil could not take this silently, and secondly, the fact that this time he appeared unhidden and undisguised before Benedict's eyes. To take the latter point first, this sentence assumes that the default is that the devil will appear disguised or in a dream; it was because of this that Gregory took care to specify that the devil does *not* appear in this way, but that he appears before Benedict's very eyes, openly (*aperte*). By specifying that it was before his eyes, Gregory emphasised the point that this was a *physical* appearance perceivable by the *bodily* senses, again reiterating that it was *not* a dream or other mental image. Gregory did not let it rest here. The significance of this was such that he repeated it again, this time specifying that Benedict saw him with his bodily eyes (*corporales oculi*).¹¹³ Thus, after his period of contemplation, Benedict saw the devil undisguised and in his true, physical, form: enveloped in fire (*succensus*) and most foul (*teterrimus*). His mouth

¹¹¹ *Dial.* 2.8.10-11 (2:166-8).

¹¹² *Dial.* 2.8.12. (2:168). But the ancient enemy, not bearing these things silently, forced himself onto the eyes of the father, neither hidden nor in a dream, but in open sight.

¹¹³ *Dial.* 2.18.12 (2:168).

and eyes were also in flames.¹¹⁴ The lengths that Gregory went to make absolutely certain that his reader understood this to be the devil's true appearance shows that the decision not to describe the devil or to present him as disguised as in previous examples was a very deliberate one. This is also indicated by his comment at the beginning of this episode that:

Nam tanto post grauiora praelia pertulit, quanto contra se aperte pugnantem ipsum magistrum malitiae inuenit.¹¹⁵

Once again one finds the idea that the devil is now fighting in open sight. In saints' lives, the ability to discern was an indicator of sanctity. In Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, for instance, Anthony was able to discern spirits¹¹⁶ and Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin* is full of confrontations between the devil and Martin, from which the saint always emerges victorious.¹¹⁷ Indeed, in the *Life of Martin*, Martin was able to see the devil visibly and before his eyes, whether the devil was in his own form or under disguise.¹¹⁸ A key sign of sanctity, therefore, was the ability to discern the devil regardless of the form that he decided to take. In the *Dialogues*, Benedict gains this ability to discern the devil as he really is by means of physical asceticism and contemplation, particularly the latter. In the *Dialogues* the devil is also no longer silent, and speaks to Benedict and curses him.¹¹⁹ This incident will be discussed more fully in the next section, but its importance here is to demonstrate that the devil is now *audible*. The placement of these *open, physical, visible* and *audible* appearances of the devil after Benedict's two periods of contemplation is significant, because it is an argument for a relationship between contemplation and discernment, and thus also between contemplation and suitability for pastoral office.

In all of these phrases there is an emphasis on the undisguised appearance of the devil and Benedict's ability to see or hear him with his bodily eyes and ears. The repetition of this indicates that Gregory considered the point important, especially given what has previously been argued about his ideas concerning unrestrained

¹¹⁴ *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:168-70).

¹¹⁵ *Dial.* 2.8.10 (2:166). For afterwards he endured much more oppressive battles, as he found the master of malice fighting openly against him. (My use of bold).

¹¹⁶ Brakke, *Demons*, 36.

¹¹⁷ For example, Sulpicius Seuerus, *Uita sancti Martini Turonensis*, 6, <http://clt.brepolis.net/Ita/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 10 October 2011).

¹¹⁸ Sulpicius Seuerus, *Uita sancti Martini Turonensis*, 21, line 1, <http://clt.brepolis.net/Ita/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 17 September 2011).

¹¹⁹ *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:168).

speech and the pastor.¹²⁰ There is therefore a progression from an unseen devil to a disguised one, until eventually his true and hideous form is revealed. Contemplation had fundamentally changed the nature of Benedict's interactions with the devil, causing the devil to appear before Benedict undisguised, enabling him to protect others. Whilst this open appearance can partly be explained by the devil yet again increasing the severity of his attack, not only does the devil not actually attack Benedict here, but it is argued that this open attack was connected with Benedict's second retreat into the wilderness, which, through contemplation, gave him a greater ability to discern the devil.

The relationship between successful conflict with the devil and the lower levels of contemplation, and the relationship between the higher levels of contemplation and the ability to discern the devil, have not been adequately explored. There is passing reference – in the form of a sentence – to the effect of Benedict's contemplative episodes on his ability to prophecy, but otherwise these specific links have not been made or explained.¹²¹ This may in part be the result of the split in *Dialogues* scholarship between that which (now) looks at the work in terms of the influences of earlier hagiography (particularly English-language scholarship) and that which is focussed upon its mystical or contemplative aspects (such as in French scholarship). However, in the story of St. Benedict, there is a connection between the contemplative episodes and his battles with the devil, and these, as will be shown below, were underpinned by his ideas about divine and human knowledge on the one hand, and pastoral care and protection against the devil on the other.

First, however, it ought to be shown *why* there should be a connection between contemplation and discernment; doing so will also strengthen the argument that there is indeed such a connection. Why there should be such a connection is most easily explained using the third, climactic, contemplative episode of the *Life of Benedict*. In this story, Benedict rose before matins to pray at the window of a tower, and as he looked out he saw a light shining in the darkness.¹²² And then:

¹²⁰ See pp. 64-6 above.

¹²¹ Doucet, 'Pédagogie et théologie', 166.

¹²² *Dial.* 2.35.2 (2:236).

Mira autem ualde res in hac speculatione secuta est, quia, sicut post ipse narravit, omnis etiam mundus, uelut sub uno solis radio collectus, ante oculos eius adductus est.¹²³

The significance of this story to the present argument is found in Gregory's explanation. The intercoluter Peter brought out the important part of this incident by asking how it was that the whole world could be seen by one man, as if in one beam of light.¹²⁴ This offered Gregory the opportunity to explain that he was, without doubt (*procul dubio*), only able to discern (*cernere*) these things in the light of God (*in Dei lumine*).¹²⁵

Benedict was thus able to see these things because he was doing so in the light of God. This description of Benedict's vision explains very clearly why in Gregory's mind there was a close relationship between contemplation and the ability to perceive the devil. Benedict has moved out of himself to a place *above* (rather than to a place *below* as he did when the tempted by the devil), enabling him to participate in the vision of God and to see everything, if only for a moment, *as it is seen by God*. Once these incidents involving Benedict are understood to be participations in the *visio dei*, why they should enable Benedict to discern the devil, and the devil to appear in visible, audible and open form before him is obvious: if contemplation enables one to see as God sees, as God's eyes are not blinded by the fall as mankind's are, one can discern the devil unhidden by dreams or false form.

It goes, in fact, beyond this, as discernment does not only involve the devil: it enables a saint to perceive future events and to know what is happening elsewhere, all of which Benedict is able to do. In the previous chapter Gregory's conception of past, present and future was discussed: of course, one does not remain in this position, but the practice of contemplation can, such as in the case of Benedict, result in its effects (discernment) sometimes being granted by God.¹²⁶ In effect, one is

¹²³ *Dial.* 2.35.2-3 (2:236-8). Moreover, a very wonderful thing followed this, because, just as he recounted himself afterward, all the world, as if collected up under one ray of sun, was brought before his eyes.

¹²⁴ *Dial.* 2.35.5 (2:238-40).

¹²⁵ *Dial.* 2.35.6 (2:240). Therefore the man who saw a fiery globe and also saw angels returning to heaven without [far from] doubt was able to discern these only in the light of God.

¹²⁶ For the most important biblical passage underlying ideas about contemplation and knowledge of God see 2 Cor. 12:1-4 (¹If I must glory (it is not expedient indeed), but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven. ³And I know such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), ⁴That he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter.). For

given momentary and imperfect access to God's knowledge. This, and the relationship of this to the ability to discern the devil's actions across the historical timeline, is demonstrated by a section devoted to the single question of whether and how much of the mind of God is knowable to man.¹²⁷

In the *Moralia*, Gregory wrote that in God there is neither past nor future, and that all things are present to him.¹²⁸ He does not see the future, but sees the future as the present;¹²⁹ He views past, present and future from eternity, and thus looks upon them all at once, unlike men and women, who see them only as they occur in time.¹³⁰ The light of God therefore enables a partial participation in this transcendent vision. The connection between discernment of the devil (in the future as well as the past) and contemplation and the knowledge of God is demonstrated by the juxtaposition of a story involving discernment with a discussion about the ability of humanity to know the secrets of God.¹³¹ This conversation had its roots in the story of man who was possessed by a devil but whom no one had been able to exorcise.¹³² Eventually he came to Benedict, who expelled the demon from him. The saint went on to warn the man never to eat meat or to enter holy orders, because if he did, the devil would immediately claim him again. After many years had passed, the man became less fearful, and entered holy orders; as Benedict had predicted he was immediately possessed, and the devil never left him until the day he died. In short, therefore, Benedict saw the man and the devil's future actions.

Peter expressed amazement at this story, saying that from it it seems that Benedict knows the secrets of God, since he knew of the devil's future victory over the man.¹³³ Acting as interlocuter, Peter made the following observation:

Iste uir diuinitatis, ut uideo, etiam secreta penetruit, qui perspexit hunc clericum idcirco diabolo traditum, ne ad sacrum ordinem accedere auderet.¹³⁴

the dangers of pride that this could result in, see 2 Cor. 12:7 (And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me).

¹²⁷ For whole conversation, see: *Dial.* 2.16.3-9 (2:186-190).

¹²⁸ *Mor.* 20.31.63 (2:1050).

¹²⁹ *Mor.* 20.31.63 (2:1050-1).

¹³⁰ *Mor.* 9.47.72 (1:507).

¹³¹ For the rest of this story and paragraph, see: *Dial.* 2.16.1-2 (2:184-6).

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Dial.* 2.16.3 (2:186).

¹³⁴ *Dial.* 2.16.3 (2:186). That man of divinity, as I see even penetrated secrets, who observed that this priest was delivered to the devil, for which reason he should not dare to approach holy orders.

Peter's comment shows that the question of Benedict's foreknowledge, and how it was that he knew what the devil would do in the *future*, was the one that Gregory felt it most important to extract from this story. Furthermore, by means of this question and the discussion of man's knowledge of the secrets of God that followed, Peter establishes a specific connection between knowing what the devil will do (discernment/prophecy) and having access to the mind of God. As Gregory then produced no fewer than six scriptural passages on the issue which the characters Peter and Gregory debated, it was clearly a matter that he had thought about.¹³⁵ Gregory concludes, however, that even those that know God do not perceive His secret mysteries perfectly, by dint of their corruptible flesh.¹³⁶ Therefore, whilst the mind of God is not usually knowable, the mind of God is sometimes revealed to particular men by the means of hidden revelations, particularly if an individual lives according to God's laws and cleaves his soul onto His.

That the story about Benedict discerning the devil was the inspiration for this conversation demonstrates this key relationship between discernment of the devil and the successful execution of pastoral duties on the one hand, and knowledge of the mind of God and the spirit of prophecy on the other. Peter's statement, this entire conversation, and its basis in a story about the devil therefore establish a clear connection between a knowledge of the devil's future actions and access to the mind, or knowledge, of God. This explains why there should be such a connection between contemplation, discernment, and suitability for pastoral office. This in turn strengthens the assertion that there was such a connection, and the argument that the link between the active and contemplative lives was the sight to discern the devil that contemplation brings.

This topic was of major interest to Gregory. This is shown by similar things which indicated his interest in the *Moralia*: he devoted a large amount of space to the topic; he brought in many *testimonia* in order to support his points; and, relevant to the *Dialogues* only, he used the figure of Peter as a device to bring about further discussion. Indeed, whilst (as shall be seen) the fourth book of the *Dialogues* revolves around the question of what is seen and unseen, so too does the *Life of Benedict*, and the relationship of these things to the contemplative and active lives.

¹³⁵ 1 Cor. 6.17; Rom. 11.34; 1 Cor. 2.9-12; Rom. 11.33; Ps. 119.13 (=Ps. 118.13 Vulg.)

¹³⁶ *Dial.* 2.16.7 (2:190).

This can be seen the *Moralia*, where he told bishop Leander that he had often put his exposition into the background and concentrated on questions of contemplation and morality;¹³⁷ it is also evident in the story quoted above where Benedict had a vision of all creation: here Gregory deliberately departed from the main narrative in order to explain this vision. Gregory's explanation of this enlightened state should be considered in the same light as digressions should be in the *Moralia*: as clues to the ideas that interrupted Gregory's thought and that he felt it imperative to make clear. The identity of this passage as an aside is indicated by Peter's comment, immediately following this, thanking Gregory for his explanation and asking him to return to discussion of Benedict's virtues.¹³⁸ In such a way, the presence of Peter in the *Dialogues* and Gregory's adoption of the dialogue form enabled him to digress into explanations and side-points, albeit in a more structured way than in the *Moralia*; this enables the scholar to determine the flow and direction of his thought, and thus to identify those ideas that were constantly nudging at his mind.

4.2.4 The Devil and the Active and Contemplative Lives

In the *Moralia* Gregory wrote that

Neque enim perfectus praedicator est, qui uel propter contemplationis studium operanda negligit, uel propter operationis instantiam contemplanda postponit.¹³⁹

The preacher must therefore partake in contemplation alongside his pastoral duties. This chapter has demonstrated *why* there should, in Gregory's mind, be a relationship between the active and contemplative lives. The pastor's duties regarding the devil will be discussed more fully in the last chapter, but at present it is worth looking at a sermon Gregory preached to fellow bishops on Ezech. 3:17 ('Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel'):

Notandum quod eum quem Dominus ad praedicandum mittit speculatorem esse denuntiat. Cui enim cura aliena committitur,

¹³⁷ *Ep ad Leandrum*, 2 (1:3)

¹³⁸ *Dial.* 2.16.9 (2:190)

¹³⁹ *Mor.* 6.37.56 (1:325). For he is not a perfect preacher who either on account of the study of contemplation neglects works, or on account of concentration on works sets aside contemplation.

speculator uocatur, ut in mentis altitudine sedeat atque uocabulum nominis ex uirtue actionis trahat. Non est enim speculator qui in imo est. Speculator quippe semper in altitudine stat, ut quicquid uenturum est longe prospiciat. Et quisquis populi speculator ponitur, in alto debet stare per uitam, ut possit prodesse per prouidentiam.¹⁴⁰

The primary task of the preacher (or bishop) was therefore that of a *speculator*, or watchman, which, as seen, was primarily against the devil and his temptations and suggestions to the heart.¹⁴¹ This watchman ought to, according to Gregory, stand *in altitudine*, at great height. No one is a watchman who is in the depths (*quo in imo est*). Thus, whilst Benedict was still being drawn out – below – himself by the devil’s temptations, he could not exercise pastoral duties. Attaining height, however, involves engaging in the highest stage of contemplation, because this raises a person above themselves and this changes the pastor’s relationship with the devil by enabling him access – imperfect and momentary – to the mind of God. This gives him the vision necessary to fulfil his duties as *speculator*, watchman.

Benedict has been called a ‘visionary prophet of the last days’, a man who had ascended to the third heaven, and knew what was coming.¹⁴² This made him the perfect abbot, as he was able to perceive the devil, whether in the hearts of those in his care, or acting in the future. The most significant analysis of this vision of Benedict has been described by Conrad Leyser, who has made an extremely astute comparison between the tower (*turris*) on which Benedict stood in his last vision and the tower of the *speculator* in Ezechiel, relating this to the pastoral duties of the bishop.¹⁴³ Leyser does not write much on this or expand upon it, but this connection he makes strengthens the current argument, as it shows that Gregory was demonstrating symbolically – by means of a tower – what has already been argued here by means of a step-by-step analysis of the events of Benedict’s *Life*. Thus, in this *Life*, Benedict is *shown to be doing* what the tower demonstrates *symbolically*:

¹⁴⁰ *Hom. in Ezech.* 1.11.4, pp. 170-1. It is to be noted that the Lord declares that he whom He sends to preach is a watchman. For he to whom an alien charge is committed is called a watchman, so that he may sit in altitude of mind and derive the appellation of the name from the virtue of the action. For he is not a watchman who is in the depths. But a watchman always stands on a great height so that he can perceive from afar whatever is to come. And whoever is placed as watchman of a people must stand on a height through life so that he can benefit from foresight. (Translation from Tomkinson, *Prophet Ezechiel*, 215).

¹⁴¹ The work of Conrad Leyser is best on this topic: Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 160-3, 131-187, *passim*. See also his Conrad Leyser, ‘“Let me Speak, Let me Speak”: Vulnerability and Authority in Gregory’s Homilies on Ezechiel’, in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo* (Rome, 1991), 2:169-82.

¹⁴² Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 181-2.

¹⁴³ Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, 183. See *Dial.* 2.35.2 (2:236).

that contemplation (and climbing the ‘ladder’) is needed because it gives height and vision, enabling the pastor to guard more effectively. Furthermore, this current argument goes further than Lesyer’s comments as it is argued that this need for height and vision is specifically associated with the need to discern the devil, because, as seen in chapter 3, Gregory saw the devil at the root of all sin, and as desiring to perpetuate and exploit the consequences of the fall: darkness, confusion and deceit. In short, contemplation set Benedict, as it were, on a tower or up a ladder from which he could better survey the souls of his flock, and, argued here, discern the movements of the prowling lion.

4.2.5 The Vulnerable Pastor: Imperfect and Dangerous Discernment

The bishop or pastor therefore cannot see the devil (or the ‘other world’ or future) with his own eyes, but can only do so by means of self-control followed by contemplation. However, the vision associated with contemplation is imperfect and only momentary, and does not afford the *speculator* full sight. The imperfect vision that a person of the flesh can receive is, argued Gregory, is something that David and the apostle Paul are agreed upon.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, this is similar to what Gregory says in the *Moralia* regarding knowledge of God: even when we rise through contemplation (just as Moses rose up the mountain), God still has to descend (*descendere*) in order to reveal (*aperire*) himself somewhat to our senses (*sensus*).¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, He still only appears before us poorly (*tenuiter*).¹⁴⁶ It is because humanity is made of flesh that it can only see imperfectly, even when things are revealed to it.¹⁴⁷ Gregory also explained – again prompted by a question from Peter – that that even those blessed with prophecy (a term that can encompass discernment) sometimes have it withdrawn.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, even the bishop’s weapon against the devil – contemplation – can deliver him into the devil’s snares, as this (or rather, ecstasy) can pull a person up in pride, thus dragging them down in sin; there is a biblical basis for seeing such revelations as dangerous.¹⁴⁹ This demonstrates the

¹⁴⁴ *Dial.* 2.16.8 (2:190).

¹⁴⁵ *Mor.* 5.36.66 (1:264).

¹⁴⁶ *Mor.* 5.36.66 (1:264).

¹⁴⁷ The next chapter will demonstrate how this affected Gregory’s own representation of the devil to his readers. See pp. 178-84 below.

¹⁴⁸ *Dial.* 2.21.3-4 (2:198-200).

¹⁴⁹ 2 Cor. 12:7.

details of Gregory's point that the devil entraps men even as they try to escape his snares, quoted in the introduction.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Gregory's belief in the vulnerability to the devil even of those who have been granted such visions affected his practical politics, as shall be discussed in the last chapter. First of all, therefore, contemplation does not offer the pastor complete protection against the devil, as it gives still imperfect sight, and, secondly, it in fact creates a new vulnerability, as even those *speculatores* who successfully engage in it may become trapped by the devil, by means of pride.

This mystical and pastoral reading of the devil in the *Life of Benedict* demonstrates that there was an extremely close connection between the stages of contemplation and the stages of struggle with the devil, and that these things were closely associated with ideas of *intus* and *foris* and with rising and falling. Physical asceticism (in Benedict's case opposed by the devil) is important as it is the prerequisite for any pastoral role, and Benedict's escape from the devil is discussed in terms rising back up after being dragged down by temptation or pride. Retreat into oneself (Benedict's second retreat) also prevents a pastor from falling back down due to pride or the cares of the world; this is why Gregory is so afraid of worldly cares in his letters. Thirdly, the highest stage of contemplation enables him to participate in the *visio dei* and thus to discern the devil and defend his flock. It gives him the clarity of vision that enables him to see through the dark mists that envelop the fallen world, and enables him to fight the devil on behalf of others, rather than only on his own behalf. This is, of course, the ideal, and not all pastors are granted the prophetic powers of a David or Benedict; but it nevertheless remains that the pastor must keep guard and look to God to clear his confused vision. Discernment is essential for any pastor, as it is connected to the ability to protect; and from the *Life of Benedict* and the *Moralia* it is evident that the contemplative life is essential for the active life, for a pastor who does not contemplate cannot see, and a shepherd who cannot see the wolf cannot guard either himself or his flock.¹⁵¹ Lastly, this weapon of the pastor against the devil is not perfect or complete and can, by igniting pride, become a snare which the devil can use against him.

¹⁵⁰ See p. 10 above.

¹⁵¹ The effect of these beliefs on Gregory's conception of the church and his execution of the papacy will be explored in the final chapter.

4.3 Part Three: The Devil and Ordinary Men and Women

In the *Moralia*, Gregory explained that *all* life is trial against the devil.¹⁵² This is just as true in the *Dialogues*, where the devil does not only tempt individuals, like Benedict, who are undergoing hagiogenesis, or those who are preparing for a pastoral role. Rather, the devil attacks everyone: kings, bishops, abbots, monks, nuns, men, women and children. Moreover, in many of these stories the devil was used as a didactic device to impart certain messages and to make points about behaviour which were applicable to monks, clerics, and laypeople alike.¹⁵³

The devil often tempts monks and ordinary people in ways similar to his temptation of Saint Benedict; these non-saints, however, do not succeed against the devil as Benedict does and require a saint (sometimes Benedict) to save them. For instance, the devil persuaded a visitor to the monastery to break his fast¹⁵⁴ and possessed a cleric because he could not abstain from meat.¹⁵⁵ The devil thus tried to promote greed. He also punished it: in the story in the introduction concerning the nun and the lettuce, the nun had eaten the lettuce greedily (*auide*).¹⁵⁶ In seizing her, the devil punished her greed and disobedience (in not following the custom and blessing the lettuce first). This can be compared to Benedict's success in controlling his appetite and only eating bread to that is brought to him.¹⁵⁷ The others fail in the same thing that Benedict succeeded in – controlling his appetite – and this is demonstrated by the way in which they are either tempted to be greedy by the devil or are punished for it by him.

¹⁵² *Mor.* 8.6.8 (1:385-6). Job 7:1: 'The life of man upon earth is a warfare'. See also *Dial.* 3.19.5 (2:348).

¹⁵³ Le Goff distinguishes between those stories in which the saint is the *exemplum* ('pre-exemplum'), and those in which the whole story itself is the *exemplum* ('exemplum'). In the former, the aim is to show the power of the saint, and to bring about devotion; in the latter, the aim is to impart an implicit or explicit moral lesson that the listener or hearer then follows in their own life: Jacques Le Goff, '<<Vita>> et <<pre-exemplum>> dans les *Dialogues* de Grégoire le Grand,' in *Hagiographie, Culture et Sociétés, IVe-XIIe siècles. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris* (2-5 mai 1979) (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981): 105-20, at pp. 110-11. It is argued here that the *Life of Saint Benedict* and other stories of the *Dialogues* sometimes had the dual function of demonstrating the power of the saint, and also of imparting a moral lesson that ordinary men and women could adopt in their own lives.

¹⁵⁴ *Dial.* 2.13.1-3 (2:176-8).

¹⁵⁵ *Dial.* 2.16.1-2 (2:184-6).

¹⁵⁶ *Dial.* 1.4.7 (2:42-4).

¹⁵⁷ *Dial.* 2.1.5 (2:132).

The way in which the devil both instigates and punishes sin in the *Dialogues* is comparable to the same dual role given to the devil in human salvation in the *Moralia*.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, whilst the previous sections spoke of Benedict and showed a man being successful against the devil, these stories demonstrate the vulnerability of ordinary men and women to him. Non-saints are not successful in their fight against the devil but need a saint to discern what is occurring and to defeat the devil on their behalf. Viewing Gregory's saints' lives from this perspective reveals a greater involvement of the devil in human affairs than would otherwise be apparent. Thus, Benedict saw that a monk who was regularly wandering off during prayers was doing so because he was being led astray by a little black boy, in this case representing the devil.¹⁵⁹ This man had succumbed to the devil, and without the saint would have continued to do so. Looking at the variety of people who need a saint to save them shows how pervasive the devil is in all spheres of life. This makes sense when one bears in mind how the temptations escalate the more one is able to withstand them (as Benedict did): non-saints, therefore, fall into sin as a result of much lesser temptations than saints. The story in the introduction, therefore, showing an apparently 'innocuous' devil, is no such thing: it shows that the devil was powerful in the face of the nun, as he is able to punish even 'small' sins, and is only dismissed by an abbot, Equitus, who, like Benedict, had first controlled all his carnal desires and then been cleared of them by an angel.¹⁶⁰ It is therefore of not surprise that the abbot easily dismissed the devil. The devil therefore both instigates and punishes the sins of non-saints, which tend to be sins of greed, lust, and disobedience. This also reflects the devil's complex role in promoting discipline or executing justice, and is a demonstration of the paradoxical relationship, explained by Straw, of complementarity and opposition that exists between God and the devil, with this complementarity being weaker than that between the active and contemplative lives.¹⁶¹

However, the devil promotes virtue not just by instigating and punishing vice, but also by acting as a model for sinners. The devil is thus used in a three-fold way to promote virtue, with this last one setting him up in a similar (but opposite)

¹⁵⁸ See pp. 76-7 above.

¹⁵⁹ *Dial.* 2.4.2 (2:152). For precedents of such representations of the devil in eastern and monastic literature see Nugent, 'Black Demons'.

¹⁶⁰ Equitus: *Dial.* 1.4.1 (2:38).

¹⁶¹ Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 257-60.

position as the saint. Benedict's last direct confrontation with the devil is particularly illuminative on this point. This last, open, attack occurred because the devil was not able to take Benedict's assaults in silence,¹⁶² causing him to taunt Benedict:

Prius enim hunc uocabat ex nomine. Cui cum uir Dei minime responderet, ad eius mox contumelias erumpebat. Nam cum clamaret, dicens : 'Benedicte, Benedicte', et eum sibi nullo modo respondere conspiceret, protinus adiungebat: 'Maledicte, non Benedicte, quid mecum habes, quid me persequeris?'¹⁶³

The devil begins by proclaiming Benedict ('*Benedicte, Benedicte*') and ends by cursing and insulting him in a pun on his name ('*Maledicte, non Benedicte*'). The pun is difficult to translate, but, translating Benedict's name too, means something akin to 'Blessed one, Blessed one...Cursed, not blessed'. This is a re-working of the biblical stories in which demons recognise and proclaim Christ.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, whilst demons are often forced to tell the truth in the presence of a saint,¹⁶⁵ this incident shows the opposite: the devil manipulating language in order to tell a lie. Dudden wrote of this attack that

He [the devil] is represented at one time as making his appearance all on fire with flaming mouth and flashing eyes, yet condescending to make a pun on the name of a saint.¹⁶⁶

This dismissal of the devil's pun as a condescension displays a gross misunderstanding of Gregory's conception of the role of the devil in the world and of what Gregory was intending to do with this incident. First, as demonstrated earlier, this episode is clearly an escalation, as in Benedict's *Life* the devil was initially not described and then took on increasingly insidious forms before eventually being revealed – and described – in his true shape. The current point being made, however, is that this pun should not be interpreted as trivial or harmless; rather, it is a case of an angry devil who cannot hold his tongue and who tells lies by manipulating

¹⁶² *Dial.* 2.8.12. (2:168).

¹⁶³ *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:170). First he [the devil] called Benedict by name. When the man of God did not respond, he soon he broke out insults against him. For when he shouted, he said: 'Benedicte, Benedicte!', and seeing him not replying, he immediately added 'Maledicte, non Benedicte! What do you want with me? Why do you attack me?'

¹⁶⁴ Mark 3:11; Luke 8:32.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 109-10.

¹⁶⁶ Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:368.

language and playing games. As seen, Gregory considered uncontrolled speech a sin, and the previous chapter discussed how the fall had provided patristic authors with the 'archetypal seduction through language'.¹⁶⁷ This original verbal deception, which can be associated with deceit and lies more generally, is also one of the groups of words and associations found in the *Moralia*, and which, in Gregory's thought, forms one of the models relating to the devil which is repeated time and again throughout history. Its roots can be found in the serpent's deception of Eve, and in its purest form this deception relates to language. Verbal manipulation, therefore, was not a mere game: it harked back to Eden, where the serpent seduced humankind.

Furthermore, the use of language to create delight but which did not inform or was intended to mislead was seen as dangerous.¹⁶⁸ Paul had proclaimed the testimony of God without eloquence or wise and persuasive words (1 Cor.2:1, 4); but the devil proclaimed the sanctity of Benedict – and then denied it – all with a play on words. The devil's speech is thus a misuse of eloquence, in which he does not even proclaim the truth. It is unlikely that Gregory inserted these words into the mouth of the devil for amusement alone, without any thought to its educative value. This does not mean that it was not also intended to amuse or was intended as humour, an often overlooked characteristic of early medieval texts.¹⁶⁹ It may also have formed part of the reading experience, perhaps of recognising parallels and biblical allusions. It is possible that, for Gregory, this incident was intended to be both entertaining and educative, and that this would be one way of catching the attention of an educated audience; indeed, such use of delight was not necessarily deemed wrong, as long as it was intended to impart truth or made the listener more disposed towards what was being said.¹⁷⁰ However, by putting such word games and linguistic manipulation into the mouth of the devil, Gregory was also making a clear statement as to where such verbal play belonged: in the mouth of devil, and thus, by implication, in the mouths of sinners. This was so even whilst Gregory turned this lying verbal play into an educative tool. Thus, this is not a case of an innocuous devil, but an instance of the

¹⁶⁷ Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, 99.

¹⁶⁸ Jager, *Tempter's Voice*, 104-5; See also Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 4, 12, 17, 19, 26, 25, 28, pp. 119-20, 135-6, 141, 144, 160-1, 161-3, 164-5.

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of this and the possible reasons, see Guy Halsall, 'Introduction', in Guy Halsall ed., *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002): 1-21.

¹⁷⁰ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 25, pp. 160-1.

devil repeating the verbal deception that caused humanity's fall, and of him being set up as a model for what men and women should *not* be like.

Benedict is the opposite model, for whilst the devil cannot bear Benedict's actions in silence, the man of God does not respond (*uir Dei minime responderet*), even though the devil calls out and curses him.¹⁷¹ Benedict, therefore, demonstrates the ideal of monastic patience, as he does not resort to angry speeches or curses even in the face of diabolical provocation.¹⁷² Anger that did not stem from righteous zeal but from anger or impatience was considered a vice in this period,¹⁷³ and here one can see Benedict exhibiting the opposite virtue, whilst the devil embodies the vice. The use of a pun emphasises the difference between them, and is therefore meant for emphasis, rather than as a condescension or because of any 'intellectually inferior' ideas about the devil that Gregory might have held. The devil taunts Benedict not because Gregory has abandoned the 'sombre' devil of the *Moralia*,¹⁷⁴ but because he is contrasting the two. Furthermore, the *Rule of St. Benedict* urges restrained speech and praises silence,¹⁷⁵ and says that it is better to remain silent because life and death are in the hands of the tongue.¹⁷⁶ As Gregory wrote that Benedict's life did not differ from his teaching in the *Rule*,¹⁷⁷ it is not surprising that he should present the saint as adhering to the *Rule's* precepts on silence. The devil is therefore presented not only as *doing* something against the saint, but also *as* something in comparison with him: by their actions Benedict and the devil exemplify virtue and vice respectively.

The devil is not involved in all instances where silence or controlled speech is promoted in the *Dialogues*,¹⁷⁸ although he is the main means by which this idea was put forward, and the incident described above demonstrates that the devil was

¹⁷¹ The devil cannot be silent: *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:168); Benedict does not respond: *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:170).

¹⁷² For more on anger and cursing amongst monks in this period, see Lester K. Little, 'Anger in Monastic Curses', in Barbara H. Rosenwein ed., *Anger's Past. The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 9-35.

¹⁷³ Little, 'Monastic Curses', 12.

¹⁷⁴ And, by implication, is not the author. Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 651.

¹⁷⁵ *Regula Sancti Benedicti* [RB], 6 found in Timothy Fry ed., *The Rule of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981), 190.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* See Prov. 18:21 ('Mors et vita in manibus linguae').

¹⁷⁷ *Dial.* 2.36.1 (2:242).

¹⁷⁸ For another story in which silence is promoted, but without the explicit involvement of the devil, see the story of Florentius, who is ministered to by a bear as a result of his silence: *Dial.* 3.15.1-10 (2:314-20). Cf. Mark 1:12-13 ('And he was in the desert forty days and forty nights, and was tempted by Satan; and he was with beasts, and the angels ministered to him.');

Job 5 :23 ('and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee'). Animals, and bears, were often the companions of saints in hagiography. For an analysis of this story within this wider context see Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 43-45.

posited the model for talkativeness whilst the saint was the model for silence. This is evident in a story about two talkative nuns whom Benedict warned to control their speech or else they would be excommunicated; however, they did not manage to do so and after their deaths their spirits were seen fleeing the consecrated ground in which they had been buried, indicating that they had been excommunicated.¹⁷⁹ Gregory noted that this excommunication had occurred without Benedict uttering a word after his initial warning, and he emphasised that the sentence was therefore not actually pronounced, but only threatened.¹⁸⁰ Consequently, Benedict excommunicated talkative nuns without speaking, creating another story in which his silence is contrasted with the talkativeness of others. Whilst in this case the devil is not explicitly present, by replacing the talkative devil with talkative nuns, Gregory explicitly drew out the fact that the lesson was also for ordinary people, giving a warning as well as a model: thus the stories appeal to those wanting to avoid punishment in addition to those aspiring to holiness.¹⁸¹

The lack of the devil in this story in spite of the other similarities demonstrates how in the *Dialogues* (as in the *Moralia*) the life of the devil serves as a template for all sinners, just as the life of the saint (or, rather, the life of Christ) serves as the template for the elect. The devil does not therefore just act against the saint, and form a part of his hagiogenesis, but acts as a parallel example in his own right. His talkativeness and manipulation of language in the face of Benedict's silence show him living a life that is opposite to that of the saint; and, further on, men and women who are shown to have followed the example of the devil are excommunicated or punished by fire, and shown living a life opposed to that of the holy man.¹⁸² Discussion of the role of the saint in setting an example has often neglected this fact that sometimes the devil (particularly in the *Dialogues*) also acts as an example, as the head of all sinners.

The devil also punishes those who speak out of turn as God's *exactor* and enforcer. For instance, Gregory tells a horrifying story about a five-year-old boy who had not been taught by his father to restrain his speech.¹⁸³ The son became very ill,

¹⁷⁹ *Dial.* 2.23.2-5 (2:206-8).

¹⁸⁰ *Dial.* 2.23.3 (2 :206).

¹⁸¹ Gregory believed that fear and hope (and then love) were the two ways of bringing about conversion: *Dial.* 3.38.2 (2:400). His stories were thus deliberately constructed to bring about conversion. See p. 168 below.

¹⁸² See the example in the next paragraph.

¹⁸³ *Dial.* 4.19.1-4 (3:72-74).

and as he was dying, malignant spirits (*spiritus maligna*) approached him, and he cried out saying that he could see Moorish men (*Mauri homines*) coming for him.¹⁸⁴ The boy died and was claimed by the devil as punishment for the blasphemy that his father had allowed to come from the boy's lips. Indeed, Gregory, when discussing the salvation of baptised children, distinguished between infants who are pre-verbal and children who can speak, saying that baptised children who can speak may not necessarily go to heaven as do baptised pre-verbal children.¹⁸⁵ Speaking, therefore, is a clear route to sin, even for children; and in this context the representation of the devil as a manipulator of language is not just a colourful story but one with deep theological and moral significance. Thus, in the *Dialogues*, one sees the devil acting in several ways in order to (directly or indirectly) promote controlled speech: he incites Benedict, trying to get him to speak; he acts as the *extractor* of God, punishing those who speak out of turn or blaspheme; and he is a model for sinners, as he himself manipulates language and twists it to tell untruths, as seen in his explosive burst to Benedict.

Gregory also used the figure of the devil to promote another virtue, one which he presents as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement. As seen (in the case of Benedict), a saint progresses from self-control to contemplation and from there gains the ability to discern the devil. There is, however, a virtue that is even greater than the ability to discern. This is found most spectacularly in a story which is quite atypical in terms of hagiographic representations of the devil. In this story, the magician Basil tricked his way into a monastery; the abbot Equitus, however, perceived that he was a devil and not a monk and told his bishop that this was so.¹⁸⁶ However, the bishop replied that the abbot was merely trying to find a reason to refuse his request; Equitus denied this, explaining that he was merely describing Basil as he saw him.¹⁸⁷ He did, however, tell the bishop that he would obey him and so received Basil into the monastery.¹⁸⁸ However, in an inversion of possessions where the afflicted call out proclaiming a saint, Basil then bewitched a beautiful nun who called out his name, saying that only he could cure her; the implication seems to

¹⁸⁴ *Dial.* 4.19.2-3 (3:72-4).

¹⁸⁵ *Dial.* 4.19.1 (3:72).

¹⁸⁶ *Dial.* 1.4.3 (2:40).

¹⁸⁷ *Dial.* 1.4.3 (2:40).

¹⁸⁸ *Dial.* 1.4.3 (2:40).

be that Basil was attempting to get access to the beautiful nun.¹⁸⁹ Once this bewitchment had been discovered, Equitus reiterated what he had already stated: that Basil was a devil, and not a monk.¹⁹⁰

In this story the figure of the devil was used as part of an argument for obedience and humility. Interestingly, Clark has argued that the abbots, monks and hermits in the *Dialogues* are 'strangely independent of the ecclesial structure and of episcopal oversight, such as Pope Gregory in his day still tried tirelessly to maintain'.¹⁹¹ However, a close study of the devil and reactions to him – such as in this example – reveals a somewhat different picture, and shows that the idea of obedience extends to the submission of abbots and monks to bishops. Indeed, this story is an argument for the superiority of ecclesiastical authority over ascetic authority insofar as abbots should obey bishops even when their powers of discernment say otherwise. Gregory drew the lesson of Equitus' obedience from this story very carefully by emphasising Equitus' ability to discern: Equitus therefore possesses ascetic authority, but he obeys the bishop when what he sees tells him to do otherwise. Even when a person knows they are spiritually superior, they still have the duty to obey those placed above them.

The devil is mentioned here not just as a *topos* whereby an evil man is described as a devil, but to elevate Equitus into a clear position of ascetic sanctity (by showing he can discern) from which height he can stoop more lowly in submission – which of course raises him up further in virtue. He is thus shown to possess even greater sanctity than the bishop, even as he stoops to submit himself to the bishop's authority. As with Benedict, Equitus had begun by defeating his carnal desires, after which he progressed to a position of authority and gained the ability to discern.¹⁹² The pinnacle of this, however, was his demonstration of humility and obedience. Indeed, it is by means of this humility that Equitus is able to escape the pride that the ability to discern can ignite.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ *Dial.* 1.4.4 (2:40-42).

¹⁹⁰ *Dial.* 1.4.5 (2:42).

¹⁹¹ Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 653. For more on Gregory's papacy as being distinctly monastic, see Peter Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church in the Seventh Century: the Legacy of Gregory I', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 25 (1974): 363-80, especially pp. 364-6. Llewellyn argues for a difference between 'Gregorian' or monastic mode of papal governance compared to a clerical one, with the clerical one eventually winning out after Gregory's death. See also Leyser, 'Temptations of Cult', 289, 292-3, *passim*.

¹⁹² *Dial.* 1.4.1 (2:38).

¹⁹³ 2 Cor. 12:7.

This story story can be compared to a similar one in which the devil also tries to deceive and the lesson extracted also involves humility. The story begins with bishop Fortunatus expelling a devil from a woman.¹⁹⁴ After this the devil decided to masquerade as a stranger, and walked up and down the streets of the city defaming Fortunatus, claiming that the bishop had thrown him, a stranger, out of his lodging leaving him nowhere to live.¹⁹⁵ This was of course true in that the bishop had expelled him from the woman, but it was misleading as it implied that the bishop had been inhospitable to a stranger, rather than to a demon. A man of the city heard him and welcomed the devil into his home.¹⁹⁶ However, the devil seized the man's son and threw him into the furnace (*pruna*).¹⁹⁷ When Peter asked Gregory why it was that the man was rewarded for his hospitality in this way, Gregory replied that it was because the man had accepted the stranger not because he wanted to perform a work of mercy, but because he had done so because he wished to be seen as better (*meliora*) than the bishop, by being hospitable where the bishop had not.¹⁹⁸ For this display of pride, the man was punished.¹⁹⁹

These two stories are very similar in that they both involve the ability to discern, the notion of showing hospitality to a devil, and obedience and/or disobedience to a bishop. In the second story, the layman is unable to recognise the stranger for the devil he is, whereas in the first story, the abbot recognises a man to be a devil. However, the abbot welcomes the devil because he does not wish to disobey the bishop, whereas the layman welcomes the devil because he wishes to appear better than the bishop. Over and above discernment, therefore, lies humility, the perfect antidote to the pride that discernment can bring.

The virtues that are promoted in the *Dialogues* through the lives of the saints are therefore the same that are promoted in the *Moralia* through the exegesis of scripture. In such a way, the *Dialogues* are a clear example of lived theology in which the virtues of self-control (abstinence from excess food, sexual relations, and speech) and humility (submission) are promoted whilst pride (disobedience) is punished. The devil promotes these virtues by tempting people to commit their

¹⁹⁴ *Dial.* 1.10.6 (2:96-8).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Dial.* 1.10.6 (2:98).

¹⁹⁷ *Dial.* 1.10 (2:98).

¹⁹⁸ *Dial.* 1.10.7 (2:100).

¹⁹⁹ *Dial.* 1.10.6 (2 :98).

opposing vices, punishing those who do commit them, and, by sometimes modelling these vices himself, demonstrating that they are indeed diabolical. The *Dialogues* were therefore carefully crafted and present the devil in ways consistent with both Gregory's other works and with wider hagiography.

The devil is the main antagonist in the *Dialogues*, and Gregory used him as a device to promote particular virtues in several ways: he instigates particular sins, just as he tempted Eve; he punishes these same sins, because he is under God's power and executes His justice; and he acts as a model, an alternative one to Christ. In this way his behaviour in the *Dialogues* adheres to the lessons of the *Moralia* regarding the relationship between the devil and human sin: he tempts men and women; he acts as God's *exactor* when sins are committed; and he is at the head of the body which contains all sinners. Thus, the books of the *Dialogues* are not just about saints, but also about sinners, as the devil's attacks on Benedict, which were aimed at preventing him from gaining mastery over his stomach, loins and tongue respectively, are also the same virtues that the devil can be seen both attacking and promoting in his temptations and punishments of monks, nuns, and members of the laity.²⁰⁰

The *Dialogues* preach theology and moral teaching through the behaviour of the individuals concerned. As examples of good Christian behaviour, the stories of the *Dialogues* are concerned with virtues not as abstract principles but as certain behaviours. Furthermore, when discussing the behaviour of sinning clergy or laymen, Gregory was pointing out the devil's direct involvement in their sin. The same standards that had been applied to those of the monastic vocation were now being applied to lay men and women, and they could not curse or speak out of turn, just as the monks within these stories could not. This can be seen to be part of the development of what Markus has called the 'ascetic invasion', that seeping into the city the values of the desert, and the increasing expectation that the clergy and laity would adopt ascetic ideals and patterns of behaviour.²⁰¹ Whilst Markus spoke predominantly of fifth- and sixth-century Gaul, in the *Dialogues* the devil is used in part to argue for the adoption of monastic virtues by the laity, suggesting that a

²⁰⁰ For instance: the devil causes a man to break his fast: *Dial.* 2.13.1-3 (2:176-8); the devil causes a bishop to lust: *Dial.* 3.7.2 (2:278-80); a boy is punished by devils for blasphemy, a sign of bad speech: *Dial.* 4.19.1-4 (3:72-74); and the devil punishes a layman's son because the man wished to appear better than a bishop, a sign of pride: *Dial.* 1.10.7 (2:100).

²⁰¹ Markus, *Ancient Christianity*, 199-211, espec. pp. 199-204.

similar phenomenon was occurring here. Everyone was encircled by the devil: when a man, not thinking, called the devil and asked him to take off his shoes (*'Veni, diabole, discalcia me'*), the devil, who had been standing beside him, appeared and began to untie his laces.²⁰² This prompted Peter to exclaim

Laboriosum ualde atque terrible est contra inimici insidias semper intendere et continue quasi in aciem stare.²⁰³

The lesson of the *Dialogues*, therefore, is not that the devil is playful, but that he is everywhere, dangerous, and ever-ready to ambush; he is involved in even supposedly 'minor' sins, including those committed by non-monks, whether clerics or laymen. The devil was not just in the desert or in the monastery: he was in everyday life.

As noted in the introduction, the idea that saints' lives can be arguments is now almost universally accepted, but in the case of the *Dialogues*, what the intended message was has not always been agreed upon.²⁰⁴ This study of the main antagonist in the *Dialogues* has demonstrated that the devil was used as part of an argument for the adoption of monastic virtues by men and women in the everyday life of late sixth-century Italy. Thus, the *Dialogues* were not concerned with the promotion of particular saints' cults or constructed as an argument for the supremacy of Rome.²⁰⁵ Rather, they were concerned with matters of personal behaviour and pastoral care, as Gregory used the figure of the devil in a variety of ways in order to promote monastic virtues to those outside of a monastic setting.

4.4 Conclusion

The devil's portrayal in the second dialogue, therefore, is an argument for asceticism and a balance between the active and contemplative lives. The devil tries to prevent Benedict from achieving self-control over his appetite, lusts, and speech, and Benedict's retreats into the wilderness and subsequent interactions with the devil

²⁰² *Dial.* 3.20.3 (2:350).

²⁰³ *Dial.* 3.20.3 (2:350). It is very laborious and terrible to always be exerted against the ambushes of the enemy, and to stand continually as though in battle.

²⁰⁴ See pp.121-3 for the possible purposes of the *Dialogues*.

²⁰⁵ That the *Dialogues* were an argument for Roman supremacy is the argument of Zelzer, 'Gregory's Life of Benedict: its historico-literary field'.

demonstrate the importance of contemplation for the pastor. Significantly, it demonstrates why this was important: as one progresses through the stages of struggle and then of contemplation, the relationship of the pastor with the devil is gradually changed, beginning with the pastor's ability to expel demonic images from his mind and eventually equipping him with the vision needed for pastoral office. Benedict becomes an abbot once he is able to exercise self-control: but he is a *better* pastor once he has undergone this further spiritual progression.

The character of the devil is also used to argue for the monastic virtues of self-control more generally – and, above all, humility. These rules apply to all people, not just saints, and the devil's actions promote these virtues, whether by instigating or punishing their opposite vices, or by providing models for these. The role of the devil in these books of the *Dialogues*, therefore, was not so much to promote particular saints' cults, but to promote particular virtues, in line with Gregory's monastic background and pastoral concerns.

Chapter 5

DIABOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY IN GREGORY'S *DIALOGUES* AND *GOSPEL HOMILIES*

In Gregory's *Gospel Homilies* and the last book of his *Dialogues*, the devil is a horrifying fiend of the afterlife, appearing to men at their hour of death; he pulls sinners down into the fiery depths of hell, fighting good angels for their souls. Not found in canonical biblical texts, these striking images are very different to the portrayals of the devil in the *Moralia*, where the devil is not physically described and discussion about his future revolves around his relationship with the Antichrist. They also differ from the earlier books of the *Dialogues*, where the devil tends to assume traditional biblical and hagiographical forms, such as that of a serpent or agent of possession. These stories in the *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies* therefore complement his descriptions elsewhere, and allow a valuable glimpse into Gregory's beliefs that cannot be gained from his other works. Studying these stories also provides a deeper understanding of the different ways in which this one idea – that of the devil – could manifest itself in a variety of genres. They also invite questions regarding what Gregory believed he was doing when he wrote such stories, and the effect of Gregory's beliefs regarding divine knowledge and human understanding on his representation of the devil.

Gregory's *Dialogues* find their closest parallel in his *Gospel Homilies*, and, as shall be seen, many of the stories that Gregory spoke of in his homilies were replicated in his *Dialogues*.¹ From 590 to 593, Gregory preached a series of homilies on the Gospels of which forty survive to the present day.² These sermons were delivered in the churches in and around Rome: twenty were delivered by Gregory himself, with notes being taken of their content, whilst the remainder were dictated by Gregory for another to read out.³ Those that had been written down by another

¹ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, 49. See pp. 169-74 below.

² Jean-Paul Bouhot, 'Les Homilies de Sainte Grégoire le Grand. Histoire des Textes et Chronologie', *Revue Bénédictine* 117, no. 2 (2007): 211-260, at p. 211. See also his letter to Secundinus, to whom he sends two books of homilies: *Ep.* 9.148 (2:698-704).

³ Bouhot, 'Les Homilies', 215. In this thesis these homilies are numbered according to the CCSL edition, where they are grouped into two books. The first book of twenty consists of those he dictated, and the second book of twenty consists of those he delivered.

were then revised by Gregory himself before publication, and they were written up in two books in 594.⁴ Their date of delivery is therefore slightly earlier than the *Dialogues*, although they were written up at a similar time.

These sermons were addressed to a wide audience which included all the Christians, including laypeople, who attended his services.⁵ However, by their content some do appear to have had a more specialised audience, such as bishops charged with preaching.⁶ Overall, however, the audience for the homilies was slightly wider and less elite than that for the *Dialogues*,⁷ and whilst the *Dialogues* are often concerned with both moral edification and points of doctrine, the homilies are often preoccupied with just morality.⁸ The homilies also contain many warnings about the proximity of the end of the world.⁹

This chapter will be looking at the doctrinal points made in the discursive parts of the *Dialogues* and will also be looking at book four of the *Dialogues* and the *Gospel Homilies*, exploring the relationship between the devil and eschatology, and the doctrinal and moral meaning of these stories containing visions of demons, hell and punishment. It thus covers much of the devil-related theology in the *Dialogues* and homilies. The previous chapter focussed upon the predominantly hagiographical and non-discursive books of the *Dialogues*, and explored the central role that the devil played in hagiogenesis, closely analysing the relationship between the pastor, the devil, contemplation and pastoral care. This present chapter, on the contrary, is concerned with the diabolology and related eschatology contained in the latter two books of the *Dialogues* and some of Gregory's homilies on the Gospels. It begins by looking at the doctrinal teachings regarding the devil that Gregory explicitly discussed in the *Dialogues*, before moving onto discussion of eschatology and visions of the other world in the *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies*. It therefore gives an overview of the main doctrines regarding the devil that are contained in the *Dialogues* and some of those from the *Gospel Homilies*.

⁴ Bouhot, 'Les Homilies', 211.

⁵ McCreedy, *Signs of Sanctity*, 52.

⁶ For instance: *Hom. In Evang.* 1.17, found at

<http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 10 October 2011).

⁷ McCreedy, *Signs of Sanctity*, 108.

⁸ McCreedy, *Signs of Sanctity*, 107-8.

⁹ For instance: *Hom. in Evang.* 1.1; 1.19; 1.17, all found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011).

5.1. The Principal Teachings of the *Dialogues*

In the third and fourth book of the *Dialogues*, Gregory's stories of saints, sinners, miracles and demons are often accompanied by explanatory passages. Indeed, the richest and most extended theological passages found in the *Dialogues* are situated in its last two books, which focusses on topics such as the moment of death, the events of the interim, and the efficacy of prayers and masses for the dead. As the figure of Peter challenges that of Gregory with increasingly difficult and searching questions, the pope takes the opportunity to dispel common errors and to explain and expound key points of doctrine in an ordered and clear manner. The dialogue form that Gregory adopted for this work on the miracles of holy men was flexible enough to allow for such a mixture of hagiography, exegesis and discussion. Significantly, however, these stories and their accompanying exegeses demonstrate a continuity with the *Moralia* with regards to which beliefs about the devil were emphasised, and the biblical passages that were used to underpin them.

In the *Dialogues* the figure of Gregory converses with the curious and ignorant Peter about the origin, role and place of the devil in both this world and the next. This usually occurred after Gregory had related a colourful story involving the devil, and these explanatory comments ought to be considered as intimately entwined with these stories that precede and inspire them. These discursive passages are mostly found in the third and fourth books and the points which they make tend to be made explicit in such a way only once across the work as a whole. Repetition is not the major gauge of a topic's importance in the *Dialogues* as it is in the *Moralia*; rather, in this much shorter work the fact that principles are expounded at all serves to demonstrate their importance in Gregory's mind. This section will analyse those expositional passages that concern the devil and their contexts. In doing so it will demonstrate that the books of the *Dialogues*, particularly the last two, serve as a compendium of the main beliefs that Gregory held about the devil. This will be further illustration of the point that, with regard to his ideas about the devil at least, Gregory discussed issues of doctrine with as much sophistication in the *Dialogues* as in the *Moralia*.¹⁰

¹⁰ This general point (not referring to diabolology specifically) is made by McCready *Signs of Sanctity*, 49; De Vogüé, 'Introduction', 32-3. This section will demonstrate that this is true for Gregory's diabolology and in doing so will demonstrate which ideas were most important to his mind.

5.1.1. The Power of God and the Power of the Devil

In book three of the *Dialogues*, Gregory related a story about a woman who had rejected marriage in favour of the religious life, thus going against the wishes of her father.¹¹ She was being instructed in the holy life by the saintly Eleutherius, and one day, when the said holy man was visiting her, they were approached by a man possessed by an evil spirit. The nun commanded the spirit to leave the man, but in response the demon complained that he had nowhere to go. In an echo of the biblical story he was ordered by the nun to enter into a nearby pig, which he did, killing it as he did so.¹²

Gregory's interlocuter Peter asked Gregory why the woman did this, in answer to which Gregory made explicit reference to Matt 8:31, which describes how Christ cured a demoniacs and drove their demons into some nearby pigs.¹³ He drew out the lesson that

Ex qua re hoc etiam collegitur, quod absque concessione omnipotentis Dei nullam malignus spiritus contra hominem potestatem habeat, qui in porcos intrare non potuit nisi permissus.¹⁴

The fact that the interlocuter asked this particular question and that this was the meaning that was given is evidence that for Gregory, the most important lesson from this story was not the power of the saint but the weakness of the devil. This story, therefore, demonstrated that the devil cannot do anything without God's permission. That it was a human woman who cast out the demon may have been intended as a further indication of the demon's weakness.¹⁵ Indeed, this is a striking departure from the biblical story where it was a male – Christ – who expelled the demons, and the fact that the demon had to ask the permission of a woman (rather than the male saint who was also present), may also have been to convey this meaning. Gregory

¹¹ For the following story and the whole paragraph, see *Dial.* 3.21.1-3 (2:352-4).

¹² Cf. Mark 5:11-14; Matt. 8:31.

¹³ *Dial.* 3.21.4 (2:354).

¹⁴ *Dial.* 3.21.4 (2:354). From which thing this is also gathered, that without the permission of omnipotent God the malignant spirit, who had not been able to enter into pigs without permission, has no power against humanity.

¹⁵ As suggested by De Vogüé in a note accompanying *Dial.* 3.21.3 (2:354-5, n. 3).

also drew a moral lesson from it, saying that men and women should, like the devil, also submit their will to God.¹⁶

The previous chapter demonstrated that the devil's weakness in the face of God was one of the key doctrines about the devil that was put forth in the *Moralia*, where it is repeated and found in digressionary passages.¹⁷ The *Dialogues*, however, are much shorter, and, being mainly a collection of saints' lives, discursive passages and sections where the stories are subjected to interpretation are few. Of the few explicitly-stated doctrines concerning the devil in the *Dialogues*, however, the devil's weakness in the face of God is one. That is, the fact that this principle is enunciated in such a way in the *Dialogues* at all is evidence of its importance in Gregory's mind. This explanatory passage is significant simply because it is an idea that Gregory chose to make explicit rather than demonstrate through hagiography. Thus in both works Gregory gave this teaching a position of importance: in the *Moralia* this is indicated by its repetition, and in the *Dialogues* by the fact that it is stated explicitly rather than left to the listener or reader to draw out. Furthermore, that this same doctrine is given in two works which have quite different audiences indicates that this was a lesson about the devil that Gregory believed it was necessary to impart to *all* his listeners or readers.

Secondly, this example supports the argument that for Gregory, the principle was contained in his mind within a biblical passage. Significantly, in this case the doctrine was encapsulated not just by any passage, but by one containing a *story* from scripture. The manner in which this affected how Gregory's ideas manifested themselves in his works and thought becomes clear when one studies the theological statement within its wider hagiographical context. As argued by Grover Zinn for the *Moralia*, one must not just look at passages on doctrine as de-contextualised 'brief treatises', but one should do so within their biblical (or hagiographical) context, as first and foremost they are exegetical passages.¹⁸ This principle ought to be adopted when attempting to understand Gregory's diabolology in the *Dialogues*, as in this work expositional passages are often deeply rooted in hagiographical stories.

Thus, this assertion of the weakness of the devil was embedded in the story of the nun and the pigs, which was based upon Matt. 8:31. Gregory also quoted Matt.

¹⁶ *Dial.* 3.21.4 (2:354).

¹⁷ See pp. 71-75 above.

¹⁸ Zinn, 'Exegesis and Spirituality', 168-9.

8.31 in the *Moralia* as a *testimonium* in order to illustrate the meaning of Job 1.11 (which he was subjecting to exegesis), in order to prove the same doctrine: that the devil has no power without divine permission.¹⁹ Chapter 3 showed how Gregory's primary manner of thinking about the devil was in the form of several key ideas which were encapsulated and explained by certain passages of scripture. In the *Moralia* these passages can be identified by looking at his use of *testimonia*, but in the *Dialogues*, this is illustrated by his invention or emendation of stories so that they echoed biblical ones and thus could be subjected to similar exegesis. In this case the story imitated Matt. 8.31, which itself resulted in an explanatory passage which resembled Gregory's exegesis of Job 1.11. It is also possible, however that these stories came to Gregory with the biblical allusions already embedded within them. However, it is the *inclusion* of this story in this form that demonstrates the influence of Gregory's exegesis on his hagiography and his mental storage of doctrinal truths by means of biblical stories.

Thirdly, Gregory's interpretation of both these passages were in keeping with the tradition of exegesis that preceded him. In his *Conferences*, for instance, Cassian had read from the example of Job and from the story of the pigs the lesson that demons have no power to hurt men and women without the permission of God.²⁰ He understands the trials of Job to have occurred with the permission of God, whilst the story of the demons and the swine is interpreted as indicating the demons' need for divine permission and their powerlessness without it.²¹

Furthermore, in Athanasius' *Life of Antony* the story of Matt. 8:31 and the example of Job are cited as scriptural proof when this principle is being discussed. Athanasius ended this passage with

And he has not power over swine, for as it is written in the Gospel, they besought the Lord, saying, Let us enter the swine Matthew 8:31. But if they had power not even against swine, much less have they any over men formed in the image of God.²²

This lesson calls to mind Gregory's assertion in the *Moralia* that

¹⁹ *Mor.* 2.10.16 (1:70). Job 1.21: But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has.

²⁰ Cassian, *Collationes* 7.22.1, p. 201.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Athanasius, 'Life of Antony' 29, p. 204.

*Si eicis nos, mitte nos in gregem porcorum. Qui enim per semetipsum ire in porcos non poterat, quid mirum si sine auctoris manu, sancti uiri domum contingere non ualebat?*²³

Consequently, in both the *Moralia* and the *Dialogues* traditional exegesis of his source material indicated that the passages should be interpreted in terms of God's power over the devil. Job 1 and Matt. 8.31 contain the passages which in late antique thought were believed to provide scriptural evidence for the power of God over the devil, and it is therefore unsurprising that such an interpretation should feature in the *Moralia*. However, the *Dialogues* contain a story which resembles Matt. 8.31 enough for Gregory's explanation of this passage to Peter to include the espousal of this principle. This example therefore illustrates the effect of Gregory's reading and his method of exegesis on his construction of stories in the *Dialogues*. Knowledge of late antique hagiography and exegesis therefore sheds light on the construction of the stories within the *Dialogues*, whilst also providing a connecting link between the *Moralia* and this work. However the stories came to him, and whether or not this story was invented, edited, or accurately reproduced by him, it was deliberately recalled and set down, and it is in this act of selection that Gregory displays his acceptance of this kind of story and interpretation, and the importance of this principle in his mind.

5.1.2. Pride and the Low Position of the Devil

A similar connection exists for another, very similar, theological principle discussed in the *Dialogues*: the idea that the devil fell as a result of pride, and that as a result he occupies a lowly, weak, position. In a story which deliberately recalled a famous hagiographical (rather than biblical) incident, Gregory told of the experiences of bishop Datius with the devil.²⁴ Bishop Datius was travelling, and heard that there was a house that no one would enter because it was inhabited by the devil, who was filling it with the noise of animals.²⁵ Bishop Datius decided to stay there overnight, during which time the devil imitated the roaring of lions and the sound of serpents,

²³ *Mor.* 2.10.16 (1:70). *If you cast us out, send us into the herd of pigs* [Matt. 8.31]. Indeed, he who is not able to go into the pigs by himself, what kind of strange thing is it if without the hand of the Author, he could not prevail to touch the house of the holy man?

²⁴ For the whole story, see: *Dial.* 3.4.2 (2:270-2).

²⁵ *Dial.* 3.4.2 (2:270).

pigs and mice.²⁶ In an explicit recalling of Isaiah 14.14, Bishop Datius denounced the devil, saying

Tu ille qui dixisti: Ponam sedem meam ad aquilonem et ero similis altissimo²⁷

He continued, saying that

ecce per superbiam tuam porcis et sorcibus similis factus es, et qui imitari Deum indigne uoluisti, ecce, ut dignus es, bestias imitaris.²⁸

As a result of this insult, the devil blushed (*erubuit*).²⁹ The reference to Isaiah 14.14 should not be taken as a theological statement separate from the story in which it is embedded, as it was intended by Gregory to serve as an interpretation of the story, and as an explanation for and proof of the devil's low position. The emphasis upon this was not random or incidental. Rather, these statements demonstrate that Gregory was interpreting the story of Bishop Datius in the light of the exegesis of similar hagiographical passages of other writers, for as with the previous example there are similarities here with Athanasius' *Life of Saint Antony*. In this work, Anthony, like Bishop Datius, was surrounded by the devil who took the form of various animals and who made incessant noise.³⁰ Also like Bishop Datius, Anthony was not perturbed by this and called out, mocking the devil and telling him that his animal form was a consequence of his lowered status.³¹ Gregory was therefore following tradition in choosing to interpret this kind of diabolical manifestation as an indication of the devil's humbled position. Gregory therefore invented or altered a story so that it resembled an incident in the widely-disseminated *Life of Antony*, or deliberately repeated one which already did so, enabling him to include a reference to Isaiah 14:14, one of the biblical passages which encapsulated one of Gregory's main beliefs about the devil.

²⁶ *Dial.* 3.4.2 (2:270).

²⁷ *Dial.* 3.4.2. (2:272). You who said: I will set my seat up high [literally: in the north] and I will be like the Most High. See Is.14.14.

²⁸ *Dial.* 3.4.2 (2 :272). Behold, through your pride you have become like pigs and rats, and because you who are unworthy wished to imitate God, behold, as is appropriate, you imitate beasts.

²⁹ *Dial.* 3.43 (2 :272).

³⁰ Athanasius, 'Life of Antony' 9, p. 198.

³¹ Athanasius, 'Life of Antony' 9, p. 198.

This story connects the devil's low position with his fall, and the fact that he has been stripped of his high estate: he is therefore humbled in his place and form. The story of the woman and the pigs demonstrates the weakness of the devil in terms of his abilities. This connection between the devil's fall and his low estate and lack of power adds to the arguments given in chapter 3, which connected the events in the devil's life with Gregory's theological doctrines about him. That is, the devil's fall is an event that happened at the beginning of time that not only repeats over time, but also demonstrates a fact of doctrinal significance: that the devil is lowly and less powerful than God. His account of the devil's activities at the beginning of time, therefore, gave Gregory stories from which to extract doctrines and from there to form his diabolology.

These examples also suggest that Gregory was not just transmitting traditional interpretations but that he was actively seeing them in what he heard and creating opportunities to give them: that in the *Dialogues* Gregory could choose which stories to insert and extrapolate lessons from, and that in the *Moralia* he could choose the direction and length of his exegesis, shows that he had an active role in promoting these topics. Gregory was therefore not beholden to his source material or tradition but actively saw, sought and created opportunities where he could put forward these doctrines concerning the devil, even though his expression of these principles was influenced by the scriptural and exegetical traditions that came before him. Gregory's hand can nonetheless be seen in the control he exerted over what he discussed and how he discussed it. What one therefore has in the *Dialogues* is a situation where exegetical tradition provided the basis for the stories which Gregory inserted or chose to amend. This demonstrates the exceedingly exegetical and biblically-based conception that the Gregory had of the devil: as in the *Moralia*, in the *Dialogues* there are certain key concepts which are encapsulated by the same few passages of scripture.

5.1.3 The Necessity of Temptation

Another discussion of doctrine began when Peter, having noticed that many stories told to him did not feature the devil, asked whether or not he had tried the holy men they concerned. Gregory responded in the affirmative, as even though the devil is not explicitly mentioned

Sine labore certaminis non est palma uictoriae. Vnde ergo uictores sunt, nisi contra antiqui hostis insidias decertauerunt?³²

The necessity of temptation by the devil for perfection was therefore explicitly drawn out of the saints' lives of the *Dialogues*. This belief is also found in the *Moralia*, where Gregory wrote that the devil is the anvil upon which the saints are formed,³³ and is also shown by means of example in the second dialogue, where Benedict's period of hagiogenesis is intricately wound up with his conflict with the devil.³⁴ Again, the dialogue form enabled Gregory to place a question in the mouth of Peter that would enable him to express this point, and that he did so in a work that is mainly saints' lives demonstrates the importance of the idea to his mind. There are few non-eschatological points of diabolology that are made in the *Dialogues* by means of conversation rather than by means of a hagiographic demonstration, and the inclusion of this principle in one of these passages is an argument itself for its importance in Gregory's mind. It also demonstrates that one should assume that struggle with the devil was involved in stories of saints even when it is not explicitly mentioned.

5.1.4 The Certainty of the Devil's Damnation

The fourth dialogue insists that the devil is beyond redemption.³⁵ This comes about in a roundabout way, however, and is not the doctrine that is actively being promoted but is one that it is assumed the reader or listener holds. Whilst Peter and Gregory discussed the efficacy of prayers and mass for the dead, Gregory attempted to explain why the elect in heaven do not pray for the damned in hell.³⁶ In order to do so he drew a parallel between the devil and the unrepentant dead, saying that the elect do not pray for those in hell because the damned have already squandered the time for repentance (life), which is like why no one prays for the devil, because he is

³² *Dial.* 3.19.5 (2:348). Without the effort of battle there is no palm of victory. Therefore, from where come the victors, unless they have fought against the ambushes of the ancient enemy?

³³ *Mor.* 34.6.11 (2:1741).

³⁴ See pp. 123-7 above.

³⁵ *Mor.* 34.19.38 (2:1760). See also *Mor.* 32.23.47 (2:1665).

³⁶ *Dial.* 4.46.8 (3:164)

beyond redemption.³⁷ One does not, therefore, pray for a being – human or angelic – that cannot repent. Like the ideas of the devil’s weakness and the necessity of temptation, this doctrine also (as seen) had its roots in the devil’s life near the beginning of time, when after the fall of humankind God did not ask the devil what he had done, which Gregory interpreted as meaning that he was not offered the chance to repent.³⁸

In this discussion Gregory’s character appears to assume that Peter already accepts the principle that the devil is beyond redemption. The analogy between the devil and the damned can be found in Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, although here, unlike in the *Dialogues* and *Moralia*, Augustine’s primary intention was to prove that the devil cannot be saved, and he did so by explaining that the church does not pray for the wicked angels for the same reason it does not pray for the irreligious dead.³⁹ Gregory’s analogy, therefore, which appears in both the *Moralia* and *Dialogues*, is an inversion of that found in Augustine; the comparison is the same, but the point being made and that being assumed are reversed. For Gregory, part of this difference can be explained by his preference for points of doctrine that can be turned into a moral lesson: this abstract principle that the devil cannot be saved is therefore used to explain why prayers for the already-damned do not work, and that for men and women repentance must therefore happen here and now.

5.1.5 The Devil, Fear, and the Economy of Salvation

The *Dialogues* abound with visions of the devil: he is seen by sinners and by saints; he appears before the dying and those very much alive; he appears in his true form and in a wide variety of disguises. He is seen in this world, where he tempts men and women, and in the next, where he fights angels for human souls. Many of these visions had a particular purpose, which is best explained by looking at another story in the third dialogue which is accompanied by explanation. In one such story a Jew sought shelter in the temple of the god Apollo, and even though he was not a Christian, he crossed himself.⁴⁰ After a time he saw demons enter the temple, who

³⁷ *Dial.* 4.46.8 (3:164).

³⁸ See pp. 80-1 above.

³⁹ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 21.24 (2:790).

⁴⁰ For the whole story, see *Dial.* 7.1-10 (2:278-284). Again, this story may be just one version of similar ones that were being told at this time. Moorhead has said that it is possible that the story came

then began to report their doings to a chief demon, who had asked those beneath him how they had gone about ensnaring people.⁴¹ One demon reported that he persuaded a bishop to touch a woman on the back; the head demon was ecstatic at this, and proclaimed that this demon would be rewarded above the others.⁴² The demons then noticed the presence of the Jew, and turned to him to ask why it was he dared enter their temple.⁴³ One of the demons, however, noted that he had crossed himself, and said that whilst he was an empty vessel (referring to his Jewishness and lack of baptism), he was nevertheless crossed; the demons then disappeared.⁴⁴ At length the Jew informed the bishop of this vision, and the bishop repented of his actions whilst the Jew was converted to Christianity.⁴⁵

There are many significant aspects to this story: the association of the demons with a pagan temple; the power of the sign of the cross to dispel demons; the planting of lust into the mind of a bishop by a demon; and the conversion of a Jew by means of a vision and fear. As with many of the other stories contained in book three, the discussion that followed this story allows the reader to discern what lesson from the story Gregory considered most important. In this case, Gregory explained that by this one action – a vision of the demons – one was brought to conversion and the other to the continuance of a holy life.⁴⁶ Thus the purpose of this vision was to convert someone into or confirm someone in the faith. Furthermore, Gregory's interlocuter claimed that hearing these things had brought about fear (*metus*) and hope (*spes*) in him.⁴⁷ This is significant because fear and hope both played a role in bringing about compunction. In the third book (the same in which this story occurs), there is a discussion on this topic, in which Gregory says that there are two sorts of compunction (*compunctio*), one based upon fear (*timor*), and the other founded on love (*amor*).⁴⁸ Hope is on the way from fear to love, as once one has feared for one's

to Gregory's attention from a 'floating fund of orally transmitted tales of ascetics', as he has identified a similar story that was circulating in the mid-sixth century. See Moorhead, 'Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*', 199. The interest here, however, is Gregory's inclusion of the story in the *Dialogues* and his accompanying explanation, which are both significant.

⁴¹ *Dial.* 3.7.4 (2:280).

⁴² *Dial.* 3.7.5 (2:280-2).

⁴³ *Dial.* 3.7.6 (2:282).

⁴⁴ *Dial.* 3.7.6 (2:282).

⁴⁵ *Dial.* 3.7.7-9 (2:282-4).

⁴⁶ *Dial.* 3.7.9 (2:284).

⁴⁷ *Dial.* 3.7.10 (2:284). These deeds that I have heard bring about fear and hope in me.

⁴⁸ *Dial.* 3.38.2 (2:400).

sins and the terrors of punishment, and wept for them, one is then filled with a certain security regarding pardon, which then leads to love and joy.⁴⁹

This therefore provides a larger framework within which the story and Peter's response can be explained, as fear can lead to hope (or a belief in pardon), which can lead to love. The vision of demons was granted to the Jew so that he might bring the bishop back to godly life and also that he himself might convert; by telling the story, the character of Gregory evoked fear and then hope in Peter; and, by implication, by re-telling this story of demons in the *Dialogues*, Gregory the pope can evoke fear, hope and conversion in his audience. The *Moralia* also contains the lesson that fear is the first stage of repentance, and in the *Dialogues* one can see this transition from fear to conversion played out, rather than merely described.⁵⁰ In both the *Moralia* and *Dialogues*, it is often the devil that instigates this fear.

This idea was not unique to Gregory: in Cassian's *Conferences*, for example, the desert father Chacremmon claims that there are three things that restrain people from vice: fear of hell and of the law; hope for the kingdom of heaven; and a love of virtue.⁵¹ He claims that the first degree is fear, which can then progress to hope.⁵² Chacremmon (and by implication Cassian), however, saw these two as inferior to the third motivation, which is a love of the good. This story of the Jew who is converted and of a subdeacon who is inspired to fear and hope is, therefore, a double conversion, in both cases inspired by the devil, whether through a vision or a story of a vision. Fear and hope were both motivators of conversion: note that Peter begins with fear and then progresses to hope, an order that would not have been accidental, as the higher emotion is hope. This story about the devil did not inspire hope, then fear, but fear then hope. This was a major purpose of Gregory's use of the devil: conversion through fear. Whilst this is an instrument and method of conversion used by God, it is also adopted by Gregory. Visions of the devil, therefore, can act as catalysts for salvation.

5.2 Visions of the Devil

⁴⁹ *Dial.* 3.38.2 (2:400).

⁵⁰ For the role of pain in the *Moralia* see Hester, *Eschatology and Pain* and Patrick Catry, 'Épreuves du juste et mystère de Dieu'.

⁵¹ Cassian, *Collationes* 11.6.1, pp. 317-18.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Visions of the devil experienced by ordinary men and women are found in great number in the fourth dialogue and Gregory's *Gospel Homilies*. The fourth book of the *Dialogues* tackles questions related to the nature of the afterlife, actions within it, and the relationship between this world and the next. It culminates in the ability of Mass said in this world to help some men and women (not all) after death.⁵³ The *Gospel Homilies* contain several eschatological sermons which call men and women to repent either because the end is nigh or they do not know the day that they will die. These two works contain several similar themes, and there are some stories involving the devil which are common to both.

5.2.1 Visions at the end of life

In the *Dialogues*, there are three stories in which sinners have visions of dragons or devilish creatures on their deathbeds, and as they appear consecutively it is apparent that they should be considered together.⁵⁴ Indeed, the fourth dialogue is as structured as the first three, and consists of a variety of stories which are, in the main, grouped into sets of three, each set concerned with similar points of doctrine or morality. The driving force of this book is the dialogue between the figures of Gregory and Peter, and it differs from the third as the stories are brought in to illustrate the doctrinal points, rather than the discussion serving to explain the stories.

The first of these stories in the *Dialogues* concerns a monk named Theodore, who joined a monastery with his brother, but as a result of circumstance rather than desire.⁵⁵ Theodore was ill-suited to the monastic life and was vocal about his dislike of it. One day he became very ill, and whilst he lay dying he is said to have seen a dragon (*draco*) take his head into his jaws. He told the brothers to stand back because their presence was preventing the dragon from devouring him; his fellow monks, however, could not see the dragon, but they told him to make the sign of the cross. He, however, replied that he could not, and in response the monks continued to pray and, as a result of their prayers, Theodore was released from the dragon's grasp and recovered from the plague, and after a long illness, he died.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Dial.* 4.58.6 (3:200).

⁵⁴ These stories can be found in the following places: *Dial.* 4.40.2-5 (3:140-2); 4.40.6-9 (3:142); 4.40.10-12 (3:144-6).

⁵⁵ The following story can be found at *Dial.* 4.40.2-5 (3:140-142).

⁵⁶ *Dial.* 4.40.5 (3:142).

Theodore had therefore been given this vision to bring him to repentance. In the statement that preceded this story, Gregory had said that some men are granted visions of their future punishment whilst still alive, and that this is sometimes for their own benefit and sometimes for the benefit of those around them.⁵⁷ The purpose of this story was therefore to illustrate this point.

The first story of this *Dialogues* triptych, therefore, has an optimistic ending: the sinner gains the impetus to repent by means of a terrible vision, and is also granted time in which to do so. The second story does not end happily, however. This story concerned the conceited man Crisaurius who, being a slave to lust in life, when he lay dying saw with his open eyes (*apertis oculis*) foul (*teter*) and the deepest black (*nigerrimos*) spirits, who wanted to take him to hell (*inferna*).⁵⁸ This can be compared to when Benedict saw the devil, not secretly or in a dream (*non occulte uel per somnium*), but openly (*aperte*),⁵⁹ where he appeared as enveloped in fire (*succensus*) and most foul (*teterrimus*).⁶⁰ Whereas such vision was a victory for Benedict, the sinner Crisaurius could not bear to look at the spirits, and so turned to face the wall: but the spirits were there also.⁶¹ Consequently, not only did he see the demons in their true form, but he also could not *not* see them: the sight of the demons was forced upon him, just as before it had been hidden from him. He called out to God, asking that they be held off until morning so that he could repent, but this was denied and he died.⁶² The reason for this vision was that others might be warned from it, as it did not help Crisaurius.⁶³

The third story in this set concerned a monk renowned for his sanctity.⁶⁴ As a result of his reputation, when he became ill his monastic brothers expected to hear an inspirational lesson from him. However, as he lay on his deathbed, he revealed that a dragon (*draco*) was coiled around his feet and knees, and stealing his breath from his mouth; this was because whilst he had a reputation for fasting, he had in fact been eating in secret.⁶⁵ Like the man in the second story, he was not delivered from this

⁵⁷ *Dial.* 4.40.1 (3:138).

⁵⁸ *Dial.* 4.40.7 (3:142).

⁵⁹ *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:168).

⁶⁰ *Dial.* 2.8.12 (2:168-70).

⁶¹ *Dial.* 4.40.8 (3:144).

⁶² *Dial.* 4.40.6-9 (3:142-44).

⁶³ *Dial.* 4.40.9 (3:144).

⁶⁴ For whole story: 4.40.10-12 (3:144-6).

⁶⁵ *Dial.* 4.40.11 (3:146).

dragon.⁶⁶ The lesson that Gregory drew from this story was similar to that of the previous one: the vision was not for him, but for those who witnessed it.⁶⁷ These stories therefore all have different outcomes: in the first, the man is saved; in the second, the man pleads to be saved but is not; and in the third, the man, seeing his doomed fate as certain, tries to warn others.

The first and second stories from this triptych also appear in Gregory's *Gospel Homilies*, the first one twice and the second one once.⁶⁸ There are some slight differences between this telling and those in the *Gospel Homilies*: whilst in the *Dialogues* version Theodore repented and then suffered physically for a long time (*diu*) before dying, in *Hom. in Evang.* 1.19 he is said to have been saved, but to *still* be suffering from a long purgative illness. Contrary to both of these, in *Hom. in Evang.* 2.21 it is said that he died a few days later, having been delivered from the dragon and having repented.⁶⁹ However, the moral that Gregory drew from each of the stories was the same, as in each the man was given time to repent. The discrepancy between the *Dialogues* and the first homily version (in which he is still alive) may have been due to time: Gregory may well have delivered the homily before the man's death, as these were delivered in the first years of his pontificate, and written the *Dialogues* version after the man's death, as these were written 593-4. The moral brought out of each is the same, however, suggesting that whether Theodore lived a long while or a short while afterwards was an extraneous detail that Gregory did not deem it overly important to keep consistent; rather, the significant thing was that he had been given time to repent.

Furthermore, the version of this story in book one of the homilies Gregory did not name Theodore directly. However, as so many of the details are the same, it is highly unlikely that Gregory was referring to a different story. Both stories contained the following details: two brothers joined Gregory's own monastery; one brother was committed to the monastic life but the other was not; the monk who disliked it wished to leave the monastery; this monk caught the plague and almost died; the

⁶⁶ *Dial.* 4.40.12 (3:16).

⁶⁷ *Dial.* 4.10.12 (3:16).

⁶⁸ Theodore (first story): *Hom. in Evang.* 1.19 and *Hom. in Evang.* 2.21; Crisaurius (second story): *Hom. in Evang.* 1.12, all found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011). These homilies are based upon Matt. 25:1-13, Matt. 20:1-16, and Matt. 22:2-14 respectively, which are all Matthean Kingdom of Heaven parables.

⁶⁹ *Hom. in Evang.* 2.21, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011).

monk saw a dragon trying to devour him; and the monks surrounding him could not see the dragon but told him to make the sign of the cross.

In his first retelling of the story in the *Gospel Homilies*, where the man is still alive, Gregory used language relating to vision and knowledge in order to describe both *what* happened and *why* it happened:

Ecce iuuenis prauus draconem **uidit** in morte, cui seruiuit in uita; nec **uidit** ut uitam funditus perderet, sed ut cui seruierat **sciret**, **sciendo** resisteret, ipsum que resistendo superaret, et eum a quo prius **non uidens** tenebatur, **uidit** postea ne teneretur.⁷⁰

Theodore, therefore, came to see and understand his slavery to the devil, as illustrated by the words in bold. Before this vision, he was blind and ignorant, but as he neared death, the blindness that had prevented him from seeing what truly was – the identity of the devil and his own slavery to him – was lifted and cleared. This was a reversal, even if temporary, of the blindness that has, in the thought-world of Gregory, afflicted men and women since the fall. On this Gregory wrote the evil spirits surround the person on all sides, bringing before their eyes the wrong they have committed.⁷¹ The ability to see the devil and demons is therefore sometimes granted by the creatures themselves, but not so that the person can repent, but because they wish to taunt the sinner even further, and only become visible once they believe the person has no time to repent. The previous chapter showed that such discernment was only granted to Benedict after self-control and contemplation. However, this passage and the fourth dialogue demonstrate that it is at the moment of death that some men and women – sinners rather than saints – are granted this same ability to see. In the first example, visibility is granted to Theodore by God, in order that the person might be driven by fear to repent; in the second example, the demons make themselves visible, because they wish to torment the dying monk further by demonstrating his enslavement to them.

⁷⁰ *Hom. in Evang.* 1:19, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011). Behold! The corrupt young man sees in death the dragon he served in life. He does not see so that his life should be completely destroyed, but so that he should know whom he had served, and by knowing, should resist, and having resisted, should overcome him. Previously not seeing by whom he was being held, afterwards he saw so that he might not be possessed. (My use of bold.)

⁷¹ *Hom. in Evang.* 1.39, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011).

The purpose of these anecdotes was to demonstrate that repentance is both necessary and urgent. However, in order for blind humanity to be convinced of this necessity there has to be at least a temporary parting of the clouds. At this moment the true form of demons came to light, and the dying sinner was allowed to see the form of the beings that had attacked and persuaded him his entire lives. In order for there to be conversion through fear,⁷² the thing that is to be feared has to be made known and visible. This story can be compared to that of the Jew who converted, although in that case the Jew was not near death.

Other revelations are also made at the time of death, when a person's iniquities of works, speech and thought are brought before the mind.⁷³ A person's true self and sins are therefore sometimes made manifest to them at the moment of their death. This forced contemplation of one's sins and discernment of the devil is a replication for sinners of what saints voluntarily do and achieve. The parading of sins before the mind is what one is supposed to do in the first stages of contemplation; that the devil brings the sins of deed, speech and thought before the sinner so that the depth of their iniquity becomes known is almost an inversion of this practice. As already seen, Gregory wrote that collecting oneself and bringing one's sins before one's eyes was the first stage of contemplation, and it has been argued that in the case of Benedict this led to an increased ability to discern the devil, and to see him in open sight.⁷⁴

The fourth dialogue is therefore different from the second in that visibility and visions of the devil come about as a result of proximity to death rather than as a consequence of asceticism and contemplation. This is because it concerns sinners and not a saint, and the points being illustrated are different. In the case of Benedict, seeing the devil is a good thing: it is a sign of his sanctity. He deliberately seeks it because it not only helps in his own fight against the devil, but enables him to see the devil on behalf of others, thus enabling him to perform his pastoral responsibilities. For some sinners, it is an act of divine grace, enabling conversion; for others, it is an act of diabolical spite, designed to bring about despair in a sinner who realises that he is damned. In the latter case, Gregory makes use of these stories so that they become lessons for his listeners or readers, just as another consequence of such

⁷² See Hester, *Eschatology and Pain* and Catry, 'Épreuves du juste et mystère de Dieu'.

⁷³ *Hom. in Evang.* 1.39, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/lta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011).

⁷⁴ See pp. 127-40 above.

visions is that the person is damned but those around him are converted. The default is that men and women cannot perceive the devil: however, if one is granted sight, either through the practice of asceticism or God's grace, then one can see him, and repent.

5.2.2 Visions of the Afterlife

Characters in the *Dialogues* are also terrified into repentance by being given visions of the afterlife, in which demons often feature. These also offer insight into the actions of demons in this place. Again, there are three stories on this topic. The first concerns a hermit Peter who died and came back to life, claiming that he saw the fires of hell and men from the world being thrown into them.⁷⁵ He was, however, saved by an angel who told him to leave and to think about how he would live from then on. He came back to life and lived a godly life. Gregory began this story by commenting that God sometimes allows things such as this as an act of mercy.⁷⁶

Another story concerned a man called Stephen who died one night and was led into hell, at which point he saw things of which he had previously heard but not believed.⁷⁷ However, he was brought before a court to be told that he was not the right Stephen, and that it was in fact Stephen the blacksmith that was wanted, and the Stephen who was dead came to life, and Stephen the blacksmith died.⁷⁸ At a similar time, however, another man had a vision and saw a dark, reeking river which could be crossed by a bridge, and on whose other bank was a pleasant meadow full of pleasant odours and houses of gold.⁷⁹ The river was nearer to some houses than others, and so some were touched by its odours, whilst others were not.⁸⁰ People would attempt to cross the bridge, but sinners would fall from it into the waters whilst the elect would walk over it.⁸¹ In this vision he saw the sinner Stephen mentioned above slip whilst trying to cross the bridge: angels tried to pull him up,

⁷⁵ For the whole story, see: *Dial.* 4.37.2-4 (3:126-8).

⁷⁶ *Dial.* 4.37.2 (3:126).

⁷⁷ For the whole story, see: *Dial.* 4.37.5-14 (3:128-134). This part: *Dial.* 4.37.5 (3:128).

⁷⁸ *Dial.* 4.37.6 (3:128). Cf. Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 12.15, page 644, lines 8-13, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/lta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011). In this story, a man named Curma fell into unconsciousness and went on a tour of paradise and hell. In the end, when he woke, it transpired that he had been called out of life by mistake, and that at the moment he woke another man named Curma had died.

⁷⁹ *Dial.* 4.37.8 (3:130).

⁸⁰ *Dial.* 4.37.9 (3:130).

⁸¹ *Dial.* 4.37.10 (3:130).

whilst devils tried to pull him down into the river.⁸² Gregory says that the outcome of this struggle is unknown.⁸³

When Peter asked Gregory how it could be that someone could be called into the other world by mistake, Gregory replied that it was not an error but a warning, so that what they had heard of that they would not believe, they might now see and be afraid.⁸⁴ Visions of hell and the demons within it are therefore occasionally accorded to men and women so that they might repent. In cases of visions of the afterlife, what is revealed is not the devils that have held the soul during life, but those which will attempt to claim it after death.

These stories therefore had a moral meaning and an educative purpose, but can the actions of the demons within them (such as physically trying to pull sinners down) be taken literally? Gregory's comments on some other passages offer insight into this. On this story Peter asked Gregory what was meant by the fact that some houses were touched by the smell and others not, and why it was that Stephen saw a bridge and a river.⁸⁵ Gregory replied that the bridge shows that the path to eternal life is narrow, and that the river signifies the putrefaction of carnal vices (*carnalium putredo uitiorum*).⁸⁶ From this it can be determined that these fantastical stories involving the devil in the afterlife and struggles on bridges should be understood primarily in terms of their didactic purpose: to teach that there is a struggle between the good and bad angels for the human soul, and that the road to salvation is narrow. Furthermore, on the question of gold houses, Gregory wrote that no one of sane understanding would think that gold was needed in the afterlife; however, what this

⁸² *Dial.* 4.37.14 (3:134). See also Gregory of Tours, *LH* 4.33, pp. 227-8 for another late sixth-century story of a man having a vision of the afterlife which featured a narrow bridge, river of fire, and house (this time white) on the other side. For early manifestations of the idea of a fiery river within a Christian context see also the *Apocalypse of Saint Paul*: Fritz Graf, 'The Bridge and the Ladder: Narrow Passages in Late Antique Visions' in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, eds. Ra'anan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19-33 at pp. 23-4. Precedents have been sought for Gregory's description of hell. Petersen agrees that the most likely influence was the fourth-century apocryphal *Apocalypse of Saint Paul*, which was available in Latin translation at this time. This contained a description of a river similar to that found in the *Dialogues*. (Petersen, *Dialogues*, 87). McCready rejects this due to the differences between the accounts, and suggests another possible literary source: the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. Overall, however, McCready argues that this all demonstrates is that this idea of a river and judgement had entered the realm of folklore in the sixth century, to be picked up by Gregory's source (McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, 137-8, n. 64.)

⁸³ *Dial.* 4.37.14 (3:134)

⁸⁴ *Dial.* 4.37.2 (3:126).

⁸⁵ *Dial.* 4.38.2 (3:136).

⁸⁶ *Dial.* 4.38.3 (3:136).

shows is the sort of works the person performed during life.⁸⁷ This suggests that this description of the house need not be taken literally. Thus, regarding the visions of demons, these are not necessarily representations of the devil's 'real', physical actions in the afterlife, and it is possible to see them as demonstrating the point that demons fight angels for souls.

However, some parts of this story had a literal meaning, as demonstrated by Gregory's use of scriptural evidence to prove that bad smells will afflict the damned in the afterlife, for which he cites Gen. 19:24 (the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah with sulphur and fire) as evidence.⁸⁸ As seen, however, this also had a moral meaning, demonstrating that Gregory was content to interpret his own stories in several ways. The sometimes literally true and sometimes allegorical or moral nature of the passages within this story can be explained with reference to Gregory's own interpretation of scripture. In a letter to Leander, bishop of Seville, Gregory wrote that not all verses of scripture contain a literal sense, and that this sometimes brings about error instead of instructing the reader.⁸⁹ Often the contradictions of the literal sense serve to show that a verse's deeper meanings ought to be sought.⁹⁰ The first part of this chapter demonstrated how Gregory treated hagiography as he did scripture, subjecting it to exegesis in a similar way. Consequently, it is indeed true that these stories do not teach otherworldly geography and that we are not here presented with a strict article of faith,⁹¹ but with stories which have meanings on several different levels, just like scripture. On this point Jane Braun (using Gregory the Great as an example) has argued:

otherworld geography was above all an *allegorical* geography, meant to be understood on multiple levels. The primary purpose of otherworld narratives was not the transmission of factual information.⁹²

In fact, it would be erroneous to see the entire tale as either literal or allegorical or moral (for instance), as Gregory's singling-out of different passages for different

⁸⁷ *Dial.* 4.37.16 (3:134).

⁸⁸ *Dial.* 4.39.1 (4:138).

⁸⁹ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 3 (1:4).

⁹⁰ *Ep. ad Leandrum*, 3 (1:5).

⁹¹ As also argued in Graf, 'Bridge and the Ladder', 26.

⁹² Jane Braun, 'Last Things', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol. 3. Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600-c.1000*, eds. Thomas F.X. Noble and Julia M.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 606-24, at p. 611.

interpretations within this one story demonstrates that, like in scripture, one verse (or sentence) can have one sense, and the next another. Consequently, it does not just work as a 'whole' but as a series of images, some of which have literal truth and some not. Thus, in the case of Gregory's interpretation of the narrow bridge and the demons, it can be argued that he saw this as possessing an allegorical meaning, but it is unclear – because he does not tell us – whether he also deemed it to be literally true. That is, the man Stephen may have been given a vision of something which is not literally but is metaphorically true. These visions of the devil and demons in the afterlife should not, therefore, necessarily be taken as accurate representations of what the devil does in the afterlife.

The prime reason for these visions, however, was to give sinners the chance to repent or to worsen the punishment of the damned.⁹³ By temporarily lifting the blindness that afflicts men and women, so that they can see the devil on earth and glimpse their future, God is able to engender fear – and thus hope and conversion. It is at these moments that God allows sinners to discern the devil in the true form – a gift granted most usually to saints – and it is at the moment of death that the state of an individual's soul is made clear. Death is therefore a moment of revelation. This is also so for some sinners, for the devil and demons sometimes make themselves manifest to those who are almost beyond redemption. The ability to see the devil and one's enslavement to him is therefore tied to time as well as sanctity.⁹⁴

In his turn, Gregory reveals the devil to his listeners and readers, and uses stories of the devil and demons to bring about fear and conversion. He was self-conscious in his use of these stories about the devil to bring about fear, as he commended on this directly several times in his homilies, revealing that he also took great care to ensure that any fear he inspired was balanced by the hope he gave in Christ.⁹⁵ This was a result of his commitment to pastoral care: his realisation that he was preaching to a mixed audience, some of whom would be inspired by fear and some by hope, necessitated a varied approach and mix of tones, even within the same

⁹³ *Dial.* 4.37.14 (3:134).

⁹⁴ For more on this see Peter Brown, 'Gloriosus Obitus: The End of the Ancient Other World', in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, eds. W. E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999): 289–314, at pp. 299–300.

⁹⁵ *Hom. in Evang.* 1.11, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011).

homily. It was also to help guide his listeners through a middle course so that they might avoid the danger of despair on the one hand and the arrogant assumption that they would be saved on the other.

5.3 The Devil and Gregory's Wider Conceptual Framework

Gregory's ideas about the devil operated within his larger conceptual framework of visibility (and understanding) and invisibility (and lack of understanding). These ideas shaped much of what Gregory believed about the fall, salvation, and the purposes of scripture and the preacher. The dividing line between the two came into being as a result of the fall, and the idea of being able to discern the diabolical from the divine was intricately wound up with these larger ideas. This post-lapsarian blindness did not just have an affect on humanity's ability to see the devil, but also on the ability of the pastor and God to communicate his presence, involvement and actions in such a way that men and women, whose understanding of divine speech was now impaired, could understand. This in turn affected how the pastor, who could discern the devil, portrayed him back to those within his care.

These ideas can particularly be seen in fourth book of the *Dialogues*. This begins with a discussion of humanity's fall into ignorance, and compares its effects to those of people in a situation reminiscent of Plato's cave: just as a woman cast into a prison might remember what is outside, but a son born to her might not believe that there exist such things as a sun, and a moon, and stars, so Adam managed to retain a memory of paradise; but those who come after him, having lost the ability to see invisible things, doubt that there is anything but that which can be seen of the material world.⁹⁶ It is this that visions of demons (and angels) serve to rectify.

In his exegesis of Song of Songs, Gregory explains a second problem: that men and women cannot comprehend what they hear. This means that, for the pastor who *can* discern the devil, it is that much more difficult to warn his flock. Gregory wrote that

Postquam a paradisi gaudiis expulsum est genus humanum, in istam peregrinationem uitae praesentis ueniens caecum cor ab spiritali intellectu habet. Cui caeco cordi si diceretur uoce diuina: 'Sequere deum'

⁹⁶ *Dial.* 4.1.1 (3:18-20).

uel 'Dilige deum', sicut ei in lege dictum est, semel foris missum et per torporem infidelitatis frigidum non caperet, quod audiret.⁹⁷

Consequently, when God speaks plainly to men and women, they cannot hear. As a result of this, God communicates via enigmas, or allegories, and thus cloaks his divine voice in that which humanity knows.⁹⁸ This can be related to Gregory's discussion of contemplation in the *Moralia*, where he described how when God shows Himself through a crack (*per rimas*), He does not speak to us but whispers (*sussurare*), as He can only reveal himself in such a way that is perceivable by the human mind.⁹⁹ There are two reasons for this: God's ineffability, and humanity's blindness and inability to comprehend. The latter of these affects men and women's vision of the devil, as it is because humanity's eyes are blind that it cannot fully see, even when something is revealed to them. For Gregory, the devil may therefore also have been unknowable – not, as with God, because of his nature, but because of his constant deceit, the blind nature of humanity, and the inability of the human mind to see him indirectly by means of what they are told. Gregory therefore believed that not only can men and women not see, but that they also cannot hear or understand when they are warned of what they do not see; the fall was, therefore, indeed a failure of mutual intelligibility.¹⁰⁰

The consequences of this were enormous: it made it extremely difficult for God or the pastor to warn men and women about their greatest enemy, the devil. Gregory approached this the way that he believed God did, by cloaking what is not seen (the devil) in what is known (stories). This influenced Gregory's portrayal of the devil as like God he had to communicate his message in such a way that his audience would understand, and thus also used stories possessing multiple meanings. Consequently, one finds Gregory speaking in a multitude of ways about a being that itself takes on a multitude of forms.

In Gregory's case this is complicated even further by his acute awareness of different sorts of characters and his insistence that the pastor must change how one

⁹⁷ *In Cant.* 3–4. After the human race was expelled from the joys of paradise, it went on a pilgrimage of this present life with a heart blind to spiritual understanding. To which blind heart if the divine voice were to say 'Follow God' or 'Love God', just as it was ordered in the law, once sent outside, by means of the dull torpor of inconstancy it would not grasp what it hears.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Mor.* 5.29.52 (1:253–4).

¹⁰⁰ Evans, *Gregory the Great*, 100.

speaks of a thing in order to suit one's audience.¹⁰¹ Determining how Gregory envisaged the devil in his mind is therefore a very difficult task, and this adds yet another layer of confusion as to what, in modern terms, one might say in his mind the devil 'actually was' or 'actually did', for Gregory's beliefs about the limited ability of men and women to understand what they are told of divine truths meant that he revealed them, as it were, as though still under a veil. However, whilst for modern scholars the use of stories and allegories might be seen as making what Gregory was trying to say less clear, Gregory believed that it did just the opposite, and that it replicated scripture in making divine truths easily accessible to the fallen and ignorant mind. Gregory was not obscuring the truth, but describing what men and women could not see in terms of what they could. Gregory's beliefs about humanity's inability to comprehend what is spoken to them of things they do not know underpinned the manner in which he tried to reveal the devil to those who could not see him.

Consequently, understanding Gregory's stories about the devil is even more complicated task than previously realised. From viewing them in terms of Gregory's credulity, to realising that many had biblical parallels, to the leap that Gregory was not necessarily recreating biblical parallels but interpreting stories he heard by means of them,¹⁰² there is now another layer: even once Gregory understood – or partly understood – who and what the devil was, the fallen nature of humanity meant that he could not speak plainly to them, but had to reveal the truth via allegories and stories. It is this point that some of the debate over whether he 'really' believed the stories he told does not fully take into account the extent to which Gregory's ideas about the fall affected what men and women could know and how they could communicate: Gregory had to cloak the truth in stories about things that people knew, because they could not understand; and in cloaking his stories about the devil in allegory, Gregory was merely doing what God was doing, as explained in his preface to his homilies on the Song of Songs. Consequently, understanding Gregory's portrayal in the *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies* requires not just an understanding of how he perceived the world, but also of how he believed he could communicate this truth back to his flock.

¹⁰¹ *Reg. Past.* 3, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 12 Oct 2011).

¹⁰² See pp. 118-23 above for changes in *Dialogues* scholarship.

It is not always the pastor, however, who makes known those things that are hidden, like the devil. Sometimes it is proximity to the end that brings about this clarity. This can be at the end of time or at the end of the world. In book four of the *Dialogues*, Peter asked why it seemed that many things of the spirit were becoming clearer, and that the end of the world was increasingly making itself known by means of visions and revelations.¹⁰³ In answer Gregory replied the world has been in night, but that as the dawn nears, some of the light of the spiritual – or next – world is mixed with the darkness of present one.¹⁰⁴ This illustrates the connection in Gregory’s mind between time and revelation: as time moves forward, so the shadows created by the fall begin to clear as they are dispersed by the coming dawn.

As seen, the increased visibility of the devil at the end of life or time is noticed in several of his works. At death, some men and women see the devil to whom they have been enslaved; at the end of time, by means of the Antichrist, the devil will be shown for what he is, when he and the Antichrist will operate openly; and, furthermore, at the end of the world, the world is shown to be what it is: mortal. These things all relate to visibility, and it is within this wider context that Gregory’s ideas about the devil operated; indeed, the devil was the personification of this blindness and confusion, and he actively tried to exploit and exacerbate the situation. Gregory’s ideas about the devil were also linked to the idea that everything created (humanity, the angels, and the world itself) comes to be revealed for what it is – much of which is demonstrated in at the time of the Apocalypse.

Peter Brown has argued that the late sixth and seventh centuries saw an ‘imaginative shift’¹⁰⁵ resulting in a ‘significantly different constellation of relations with the other world’.¹⁰⁶ This ‘other world’ as understood in this context consists of angels, demons, and other figures of the afterlife as well as the topographical features of heaven and hell such as rivers, lakes, and mansions. Brown argues that these things were now perceived as closer than they were before, as evidenced by the increase in descriptions of otherworldly visions and journeys.¹⁰⁷ The proximity of the ‘other world’ to this one, and when, where, and by whom it could be accessed is relevant to the present discussion of the relationship of the devil to this world, as it

¹⁰³ *Dial.* 4.43.2 (3:154).

¹⁰⁴ *Dial.* 4.42.2 (3:154).

¹⁰⁵ Brown, ‘Gloriosus Obitus’, 290.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 291-4.

suggests that Gregory saw the devil as closer – or more perceptible – to present than previous generations. Indeed, the discussion between Peter and Gregory concerning the increase in visions at the end of the world suggests that, at the very least, the devil is now more visible than he was.¹⁰⁸

Peter Brown argues

The barrier between this world and the other world was rigid enough...But it was a barrier that was frequently broken. Angels and demons shared the same physical space as human beings. Angels stood close to hand, to impart comfort and guidance to the faithful. Demons would frequently create chill pockets of moral and physical disorder in the everyday world.¹⁰⁹

Whilst Brown's discussion in this chapter is extremely astute, one point needs to be made: it is wrong to think of the devil as of the other world, as he is of this world, and humanity's problem is that it cannot see him. It is not at all spectacular or strange, or the breaking of a barrier, for the devil to share the same space as human beings. What is strange, however, is that he is ever seen. Visions of the devil are not glimpses into the other world, but windows into this one, where the eyes of humanity are normally blind due to the legacy of Adam. As demonstrated, these visions may not always be *literal* or what one might today call 'factual' glimpses, but this is because these visions must speak in a language that is comprehensible to humanity's stunted intellect. There is, as it were, a blindness of the mind as well of the eyes, the former pointing towards an inability of the imagination to envisage what it cannot see even when it is told of it. Consequently, such visions illuminate the devil's presence for men and women by means of a somewhat indirect light, as that is how God speaks to them.¹¹⁰

In the discussion between Peter and Gregory, it is said that the light of the next world sometimes shines into this one: this world is of the devil, and this other one, from which the light shines, is of God. This 'light' shines into the present world, making the things – such as the devil – that are within it visible.¹¹¹ In the previous chapter, it was seen how Benedict saw the entire world, as though caught up in a single ray of the sun; Gregory had said that this was possible because he saw

¹⁰⁸ *Dial.* 4.43.2 (3:154).

¹⁰⁹ Brown, 'Gloriosus Obitus', 291.

¹¹⁰ See the preface to the *Song of Songs*, pp. 178-9 above.

¹¹¹ *Dial.* 4.43.2 (3:154).

everything in the light of God (*in Dei lumine*).¹¹² Regarding the devil, therefore, and Peter and Gregory's discussion of the approaching end, this light shines into *this* world, making it clear that the devil is not of the other world, but of this one. Even though Brown mainly discusses visions of the afterlife, in Gregory's works these do not necessarily need to be considered visions into the 'other world', but can rather be seen as indications that light has penetrated this world. This light grants a degree of divine understanding – which sees past, present, and future simultaneously – and which therefore shows both what things are and what will be. Indeed, as seen, in the sight of God, past, present and future are all one:¹¹³ visions which reveal the devil's actions in the past and future – including the afterlife – are therefore not so much journeys into another world as seeing all the truth of this one (such as the sin of one or the salvation of another), revealed through the lens of eternity. Thus, when Gregory and Peter discuss why it is that visions of demons and angels and the afterlife are becoming more frequent, it is because the light of God is revealing *this* world for what it is.

These visions of the devil – in both this life and the next – are therefore only about the mixing of different worlds insofar as the light from God's world sometimes crosses into this one, the fallen world of humans and demons. In Gregory's thought structure, the main faultline is not between this world and the next, but between what is of God and what is not, and between what of this world we see and what of it we do not. In the visions in Gregory's works, the glimpses that we see are of this world, *as it is*; even the visions of the future and the life to come are nothing but the truth of this world revealed. These are held together at once in the mind of God, and, like Benedict or Job, this transcendent viewpoint – part of which gives the ability to see the devil in the present time and in the future – is sometimes given (in part) to men and women.¹¹⁴ It is this that happens when the light of the other world, the world of God, enters this one.

The fourth dialogue also contains another idea which, in a roundabout way, influences what is known about the devil in this world. This is the idea of

¹¹² *Dial.* 2.35.6 (2:240).

¹¹³ *Mor.* 20.31.63 (2:1050-1); *Mor.* 9.47.72 (1:507).

¹¹⁴ See *Mor.* 11.20.31 (1:604) for Gregory's interpretation Job 13.1, where Job sees everything all at once, like God.

purgatory.¹¹⁵ The question of Gregory the Great and the origin of purgatory is a topic outside the remit of this thesis, but several wider arguments surrounding this question are very pertinent to this study. First, it has been argued that Augustine, increasingly convinced of the utter sinfulness of man, began to see *peccata levia* – the slight sins of everyday living – as needing just as much purgation and forgiveness as *crimina*.¹¹⁶ This assertion has led to further speculation that this forced him to conceive of a period of post-mortem purgation:

He [Augustine] would not have taken the momentous step of introducing an ambiguous wedge of “temporality” into his notion of eternal life, if such small “trespasses” had not, in some way, delayed the soul in its impatient yearning for eternal rest. Nor would he have toyed...with the notion of an *ignis purgatorius*, of a “purgatorial fire” of some sort, if he had not already committed himself to a notion of the seriousness of the “unpurged”, small sins on which that fire would play. Somewhere between Augustine and Gregory, the “birth of purgatory” began in the birth of a new interest in the *peccata levia*, in the “sinfulness of everyday life”.¹¹⁷

The idea of purgatory was, according to this argument, necessary because of the re-evaluation of the gravity of sin that occurred under Augustine. This ‘peccatization’ of the world¹¹⁸ points to an increased sense that men and women are nothing but sinners, and the saturation of all human thought and action with sin. It was this, according to Brown, that necessitated a need for some form of purgation.

¹¹⁵ The presence or not of this idea in Gregory’s *Dialogues* – and the implications of this – is debated. For more information on the topic, see Moreira, *Heaven’s Purge*, 6-9, *passim*; Marilyn Dunn, ‘Origins of Purgatory’, 238-54; Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (London: Scholar Press, 1984); Graham John Edwards, ‘Purgatory: Birth or Evolution?’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36:4 (1985) 634-646; See also Matthew Dal Santo, ‘Philosophy, Hagiology and the Early Byzantine Origins of Purgatory’, *Studies in Church History* 45 (2009): 41-51, at p. 45. Dal Santo also discusses the development of purgatory within different traditions, east and west.

¹¹⁶ Brown, ‘Gloriosus Obitus’

¹¹⁷ Brown, ‘Gloriosus Obitus’, 309-10. Also see Peter Brown, ‘The Decline of the Empire of God. Amnesty, Penance, and the Afterlife from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, in *Last Things. Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. C. Walker Bynum and P. Freedman (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000): 41-59. See also Peter Brown, ‘The End of the Ancient Other World: Death and Afterlife Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’, *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Vol. 20. 1999, pp. 19-85. A movement of purgation from the day of judgement to the interim has also been fleetingly suggested (but not elaborated on) by others, such as Milton Mc.C. Gash in Milton Mc.C. Gash, ‘Some Theological Reflections on Death from the Early Church Through the Reformation’ in *Eschatology and Christian Nurture: Themes in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Religious Life*, ed. Milton Mc.C. Gash, Variorum Collected Studies Series: CS681 (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2000): I:99-136, at pp. 106-7. The Augustinian works that are usually referred to with respect to this doctrine are *Enchiridion* 29, pp. 108-110 and *De Civitate Dei* 21, 2:758-805.

¹¹⁸ Peter Brown’s phrase in Brown, ‘Gloriosus Obitus’, 313.

It is within this framework that many of Gregory's representations of the devil ought to be understood. The chapter on the *Moralia* illustrated the involvement of the devil in all sin, and the nature and strength of his schemes. It is therefore anyway to be expected that the devil is involved in small sins. However, pointing out the devil's involvement in sin also makes it known how serious a sin it is; given this increased concern with 'small' sins, the devil's involvement in, to the modern mind, inconsequential actions is to be expected. Consequently, when a devil unties a man's laces after the man has thoughtlessly called the devil to him and told him to do so, this is a demonstration that the devil is everywhere, and a sign of the severity of his sin; it is also indicative of the manner in which Gregory, as pastor, must speak to an audience whose understanding is blunted by the fall.¹¹⁹ It is not just a folkloric-type tale (and if it is also this this does not detract from the argument, and is certainly not an argument for the 'unChristian' or otherwise 'inferior' Christianity of Gregory), but an indication that the devil was standing next to the man, unseen, ready to answer the man. It was also intended to show that the man's apparently minor sin was actually major. The same goes for the story of the devil and the lettuce, quoted in the introduction: this representation is not because the devil in the *Dialogues* is innocuous or 'un-Christian'; rather, it is indicative of the devil's pervasive presence, the severity of apparently 'minor' sins, the devil's shifting form, and the manner in which Gregory, as pastor, can often only warn his blind flock of the devil's presence in indirect ways, such as through allegories, stories and comparisons.

5.4 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter demonstrated that in the *Dialogues* there are several main ideas about the devil which Gregory deemed it useful and necessary to impart in the form of exposition. The very fact that it was these ideas about the devil, and not others, that he took time to explicitly explain shows the importance of them to his mind. This set of connected ideas – the weakness of the devil, the devil's lowly position, the necessity of temptation, and the inability of the devil to be saved – are also given an important place in the *Moralia*, in which work their importance is demonstrated by their repetition and presence in digressionary passages.

¹¹⁹ For the story of the devil and the laces, see *Dial.* 3.20.1-3 (2:350-2).

Furthermore, Gregory's diversions and discussions in the *Moralia* are underpinned by many of the same Gospel passages on which the stories of the *Dialogues* are based, which shows the role that these had on both what and how Gregory thought about the devil.

The second part of this chapter has looked at the fourth dialogue and Gregory's *Gospel Homilies*, particularly at those stories involving visions of the devil, either at the end of life or in the afterlife. In this analysis the role and place of the devil in these events has been uncovered, particularly the way in which proximity to the end sometimes served as a moment of revelation, thus meaning, when considered alongside the second dialogue, that discernment is related to time as well as sanctity. It explored the various roles that these visions performed, such as bringing about fear and repentance, and linked this to how it is at the end of time that the state of the human soul, the devil, the Antichrist, and the world itself are all shown to be what they are. Gregory's ideas about the devil therefore had a place within a wider intellectual framework which encompassed ideas about the fall, blindness, contemplation, discernment, and pastoral care.

Chapter 6

THE DEVIL IN THE LIFE, LETTERS AND ECCLESIASTICAL POLITICS OF GREGORY THE GREAT

The surviving correspondence of Gregory the Great far outweighs that of other figures of his age. Some 854 of his letters survive, forming the largest extant corpus of papal letters from this period.¹ These letters contain numerous references to the devil and provide ample evidence for the influence of his diabolology on his perception of events and execution of papal duties. His letters demonstrate the relationship between his diabolology, ecclesiology, and his understanding of the Roman primacy, and are evidence as to how his ideas and ways of thinking about the devil – explored in previous chapters – affected his understanding of his role and his reactions to worldly events. Gregory’s letters to the imperial family, patriarchs, bishops, kings, administrators and friends therefore enable the historian to step from the world of Gregory’s ideas and to see how his beliefs about the devil translated into action. In such a way this chapter bridges the frequent divide between studies on Gregory’s thought and studies on his pontificate and papal achievements.²

This chapter will begin by discussing the main contexts in which the devil appears in Gregory’s letters, focussing on what this says about Gregory’s beliefs about the devil, the church, and the pastoral mission of bishops. It will then take as a case study the controversy over the patriarch of Constantinople’s use of the title ‘Ecumenical Patriarch’.³ This conflict reached its height in 595 when Gregory sent a number of letters on the matter, and also rose again in 597 when the new patriarch of Constantinople also adopted this title. In these letters Gregory frequently associated the use of this title with the activities of the devil and the Antichrist. This chapter will show that Gregory’s ideas and ways of thinking about the devil had a profound

¹ Detlev Jasper, ‘Through the Pontificate of Gregory the Great’, in *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Detlev Jasper and Horst Fuhrmann (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001): 7-87, at p. 70.

² This study therefore follows in the vein of Markus, who bridged this divide in 1997. See Markus, *Gregory the Great* and p. 27 above.

³ For a standard account of this topic see S. Vailhé, ‘Le titre de Patriarche Oecouménique’, *Échos d’Orient* 11 (1908): 65-9 and S. Vailhé, ‘S. Grégoire le Grand et le titre de Patriarche Oecouménique’, *Échos d’Orient* 11 (1908): 161-71.

influence on his beliefs about pastoral care and the papal primacy, and consequently affected his actions and papacy as a whole.

The majority of Gregory's letters are contained in his register, the *Registrum epistularum*. However, as the original register has been lost, we are reliant upon transcripts made at a later date, and the register as it is known today is thus a reconstruction based upon three independent manuscript traditions of excerpted letters.⁴ Pope Hadrian I's (r.772-795) collection of 684 extracted letters ('R') was preserved in many manuscripts in the ninth to fifteenth centuries and forms the bulk of our reconstructed register.⁵ These may have been extracted in order to preserve the contents from deteriorating originals which were deemed of special importance in defining points of law, as papal letters were increasingly important in the early middle ages in clarifying matters of practice and doctrine.⁶ Two earlier collections of extracts from this register ('C' and 'P') were composed in the first half of the eighth century,⁷ and the earliest manuscripts of these to survive date from the late eighth century.⁸ There are also a few letters from other collections.⁹

The original register is therefore thought to have been larger than its modern size. However, whilst it had been believed that what survives must be a very small proportion of Gregory's output,¹⁰ it is now argued that this is probably an overestimation, and that only a dozen or so letters were lost.¹¹ It almost goes without saying that the closer the number of letters the reconstructed register has to the original, the more representative it is of Gregory's views.

The letters contained in the register are not the only letters believed to have been written by Gregory, however. The *Responsa*, the questions sent to Gregory by Augustine of Canterbury and Gregory's replies, have also been considered authentic by various scholars, although not universally.¹² Gregory is also believed to have

⁴ Reginald L. Poole, *Lectures on the History of the Papal Chancery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 20-21, 37; Jasper, 'Gregory', 71; Martyn, 'Introduction', 13.

⁵ Jasper, 'Gregory', 71.

⁶ Jasper, 'Gregory', 71, 7-87; Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 25, 32-3.

⁷ Jasper, 'Gregory', 72.

⁸ Jasper, 'Gregory', 72.

⁹ Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 32.

¹⁰ Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 32.

¹¹ Martyn, 'Introduction', 13.

¹² For instance, Markus and Meyvaert argue for their authenticity. For an outline of the debate, see Martyn, 'Introduction', 61-66. Norberg decided not to include this letter in his CC edition due to its

written a letter under Pope Pelagius II's name, the significance of which will be discussed later.¹³

6.0.1 Composition and Authorship

The evidence points towards the majority of Gregory's letters originating in his own mind rather than in administrative templates. In a letter to Secundus, a monk in Ravenna, Gregory wrote that he had written to Bishop Marinianus to warn the bishop that he was neglecting some of his duties.¹⁴ He wrote that

uero eum per epistulam meam de anima sua admonui, sed nil mihi omnino respondit; unde credo quia ea neque legere dignatus est. Pro qua re iam necessarium non fuit ut eum per epistulam meam admonere aliquid debuisssem, sed tantum illa scripsi quae in causis terrenis consiliarius dictare potuit. Nam ego ad hominem non legentem fatigari in dictatu non debui.¹⁵

Gregory then urged Secundus to speak to Bishop Marinianus about those things that Gregory had put in the letter, but which Marinianus would not read about.¹⁶ This passage has been interpreted as meaning that Gregory had more personal involvement in letters which involved spiritual matters than he did in ones concerning worldly affairs;¹⁷ indeed, Gregory's comment that '*sed tantum illa scripsi quae in causis terrenis consiliarius dictare potuit*'¹⁸ supports this interpretation insofar as it suggests that writing on worldly matters was more easily delegated as it was something that others were able to do. This letter does thus seem to constitute evidence that Gregory delegated some of his letter-writing to officials. Over and above this, however, it is proof that under normal circumstances Gregory would

absence from the register. Ewell and Hartmann, however, included it in the MGH with a warning (*Ep.* 11.56a).

¹³ Meyvaert, 'Letter of Pelagius II', 94-116. The letter is *Ep.* 3 in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum epistolarum*, 2, appendix 2, 449-67.

¹⁴ *Ep.* 6.33 (1:406-7). He criticises what appears to have been a general neglect of duties due to a preference for the contemplative life. In an earlier letter Gregory had expressed his concern about the lack of support Bishop Marinianus had been showing some monasteries. *Ep.* 6.28 (1:400-401).

¹⁵ *Ep.* 6.33 (1:406-7, at p. 407). In truth I warned him concerning his soul by means of my letter, but he did not respond to me at all – for which reason it was no longer necessary that I ought to warn him at all through my letter, but I wrote as much that an advisor was able to dictate on earthly subjects. For I should not be wearied dictating for a man who does not read.

¹⁶ *Ep.* 6.33 (1:406-7).

¹⁷ Dag Norberg, 'Style personnel et style administratif dans le *Registrum Epistularum* de Saint Grégoire le Grand', in R. Gillet ed., *Grégoire le Grand* (Paris, 1986), 489-497, at p. 489.

¹⁸ *Ep.* 6.33 (1:406-7, at p. 407).

dictate letters concerning spiritual matters (including the reprimanding of bishops) himself rather than delegate the task. That he explained why he did not dictate another letter himself shows that his active participation in the composition of such letters was the norm.

It is useful here to discuss Gregory's involvement in a letter written under Pope Pelagius II's name to the Three Chapter Schismatics.¹⁹ It is now believed that Gregory was the author of this letter²⁰ which was intended to convince the Istrians that condemnation of the Three Chapters did not contravene the christology of the Council of Chalcedon (451).²¹ Whilst at first glance Gregory's authorship would seem to suggest that popes sometimes even delegated the writing of important letters on spiritual affairs, his involvement should in fact be considered a special case, and indicative of the opposite. What it in fact demonstrates is that Gregory's ability, knowledge, and orthodoxy were trusted to the extent that he was given a key role in the fight against schism, and was allowed to compose a letter under the name of the pope in order to heal rifts in the church. Far from demonstrating that popes delegated letter-writing as a matter of course, the content and importance of this letter suggests that Gregory was chosen for this task because of the expertise that he possessed. It should also be remembered that Gregory was not merely a scribe within the papal administration: at this time he was serving as *apocrisiarius* in Constantinople. Gregory's composition of this letter is therefore proof of the respect in which he was held, rather than evidence of a tendency for papal delegation when it came to the writing of letters of a theological nature; his expertise also makes it more likely that he wrote the theological letters sent under his name.

It should also be noted that there are many letters whose direct dictation by Gregory is virtually beyond doubt. Norberg asserts that there are some letters for which Gregory's direct authorship cannot be disputed, due to the degree of personal information they contain and because of the presence of facts that only he could have known.²² Amongst the letters he selects as indisputable are those to personal

¹⁹ See p. 189, note 13 above.

²⁰ Meyvaert, 'Letter of Pelagius II', 94-116. His argument is based upon the vocabulary and grammar of the letter.

²¹ Carole Straw, 'Much Ado About Nothing: Gregory the Great's Apology to the Istrians', eds. Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene. The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 121-160, at pp. 122; 130; *passim*.

²² Dag Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres de saint Grégoire le Grand?', *Studi Medievali* 3rd series 23 (1980): 1-17, at p. 1.

acquaintances and friends,²³ including those letters to Leander, Bishop of Seville, and to Maximian, Archbishop of Ravenna.²⁴ Indeed, the personal nature of these letters means that it is reasonable to consider them an authentic product of Gregory's mind. This is supported by Norberg's findings that there are differences in the use of the *cursus* between the personal and administrative letters.²⁵ Specifically, Norberg has found that letters of a more personal nature which appear to have dictated by Gregory himself do not use the *cursus*, whereas more routine letters, written by employees of the chancery, employ it more often.²⁶

Norberg thinks it unlikely that non-personal letters concerning recurring issues were always dictated by Gregory himself.²⁷ He divides administrative letters into two groups, resulting in the following three classes of letter: personal letters which must have been written by Gregory himself; administrative letters which contain formulas which pre-date Gregory; and administrative letters which do not follow a form.²⁸ It is possible to divide the letters another way, into those which concern spiritual affairs and those which concern worldly ones.²⁹ It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Gregory dictated letters concerning spiritual matters as a matter of course, and that those to friends and acquaintances containing personal information were also directly dictated by him.

6.0.2 The Use of Formulae

In spite of this, however, the extent to which the letters as a whole were a product of Gregory's own mind rather than a product of the papal chancery cannot be answered with complete certainty. As the head of a large administrative system, Gregory was aided in his writing of correspondence by a chancery consisting of a wide variety of employees.³⁰ The actual writing of papal letters was performed by notaries

²³ Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 1.

²⁴ Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 3. A full list of those he directly points out as being authentic for this reason are: *Eps.* 1.41; 3.64; 11.21; 5.36; 5.38; 11.27; 9.229; and 1.24 (translated into CC numbering).

²⁵ Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', *passim*.

²⁶ Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 1.

²⁷ Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 4.

²⁸ Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 6.

²⁹ Norberg, 'Style personnel et style administratif', 489.

³⁰ For more information on the papal chancery in this period see Richard Pollard, 'The Decline of the *Cursus* in the Papal Chancery', *Studi Medievali* (2009): 1-40, at pp. 9-10; Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 13-19.

(*scriniarii*).³¹ Many parts of the letters, most particularly the beginning and end, were written according to various templates.³² In the transcripts that survive, however, some of these have been omitted or shortened, perhaps because they were deemed irrelevant to the preservation of the contents.³³

These particular formulae do not concern us here, but they were not the only ones found within papal letters. One of the most frequent occasions on which formulae were used was in letters relating to the appointment of bishops. Letter 2.22 is frequently pointed out as formulaic in this respect.³⁴ This short letter instructs Bishop Benenatus to visit the neighbouring see of Cumae to start the process of electing a new bishop, its previous one having died.³⁵ John Eidenschink, in his study of formulae in letters relating to the appointment of bishops,³⁶ notes that there are two formulas employed by some of these letters.³⁷

This was not the only occasion, however, when papal letters relied upon templates. The *Liber diurnus* was a manual containing the most common formulae used by the papal chancery in the early middle ages.³⁸ It was collated, added to and used by the papal chancery over several centuries, and although the exact date of its birth is disputed, the majority of scholars believe that it was compiled after Gregory.³⁹ Furthermore, even in places where Gregory's formulas are found in the

³¹ Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 15-16.

³² Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 21-25.

³³ Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 21. See also Dag Norberg, *In Registrum Gregorii Magni studia critica* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska, 1939)

³⁴ For instance see John Eidenschink, *The Election of Bishops in the Letters of Gregory the Great* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 26; Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 4. See also Norberg's notes in his CC edition. This letter is numbered 2.25 in the MGH.

³⁵ *Ep. 2.22* (1:108-9). See Norberg, *studies critica*, 9-10. From Norberg it is evident that whilst elements of this formula can be found in a letter of Pope John II from 534, none of the similarities quoted concern this study of the devil.

³⁶ Eidenschink, *Bishops*, 22-29.

³⁷ Eidenschink, *Bishops*, 22. In his discussion he explores further some of Norberg's findings as found in Norberg, *Studia Critica*, 9-10.

³⁸ The formulas it contained related to the constitutional and legal measures that the chancery had to carry out most frequently. For an edition, see *Liber Diurnus Romanorum Pontificum*, ed. Hans Foerster (Francke Verlag Bern, 1958). For more information see Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 6 and Richard Pollard, 'Decline of the *Cursus*', 24-5.

³⁹ For instance, earlier estimates considered it to have taken its present form between 685 and 781, with some sections dating from an earlier time. See Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 6. Karl Morrison considers it to have been added to at various dates from the sixth century to the beginning of the eighth: Karl F. Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church 300-1140* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 156. More recent scholarship dates it later. Carol Lanham and Hans Foerster date it to the eighth century, with some elements from the seventh and maybe earlier centuries. See Carol Lanham, *Salutatio Formulas in Latin Letters to 1200: Syntax, Style, and Theory* (Munich: Bei der Argeo-Gesellschaft, 1975), 3. Richard Pollard believes it was composed in the late eighth or early ninth century, with some of its formulas dating from the sixth to eighth centuries: Pollard, 'Decline of the *Cursus*', 24.

Liber diurnus, these seem to originate with him. For instance, Eidenschink believes that some formulas, such as that concerning the appointment of an episcopal visitor to oversee an election, have their origin in Gregory's time, since they do not seem to have been used before then.⁴⁰

From Norberg's work, however, it is evident that even if the *Liber diurnus* had not taken its proper shape by the time of Gregory, the papal chancery of his time still used templates, protocols and stock phrases from an earlier period.⁴¹ However, many of these are considered to be a reflection of Gregory's mind in spite of their formulaic nature. An example of this is his use of *servus servorum Dei*⁴² which has been seen as reflective of Gregory's conception of his role. Some phrases cannot therefore be disregarded merely because they are repeated, and Gregory's use of *servus servorum Dei* demonstrates that what might be seen as a mere *topoi* or turn of phrase are often in many cases invested in meaning and deliberate.

Indeed, it is difficult to believe that Gregory would have allowed letters to be issued in his name that contained orders or doctrines that he disagreed with. In fact, the amount of ink that Gregory devoted to John of Constantinople's use of the title 'Ecumenical Patriarch'⁴³ and his deliberate refusal to style him as such in the letters he wrote to him suggests that it is unlikely that he would have allowed the use of inaccurate or misleading protocols.

Consequently, whilst Norberg has pointed out that in circumstances like these one must sometimes be satisfied with arriving at nothing more than a degree of likelihood,⁴⁴ the available evidence makes it reasonable to agree with John Martyn that, in spite of their use of formulas, the letters issued in Gregory's name should be considered an authentic product of his pontificate.⁴⁵

6.0.3 The Letters

⁴⁰ Eidenschink, *Bishops*, 24-25.

⁴¹ In his most recent CC edition of the letters, in his notes Norberg has indicated those places where common formula are used; these do not concern us here. See also Pollard, 'Decline of the *Cursus*', 25 and Thomas F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter. The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 220-1.

⁴² Poole, *Papal Chancery*, 23.

⁴³ See pp. 200-211 below for discussion of this.

⁴⁴ Dag Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres?', 1.

⁴⁵ Martyn, 'Introduction', 14.

Gregory corresponded with ecclesiastical and secular figures from both the east and west.⁴⁶ Amongst his major eastern correspondents was the emperor Maurice, to whom he addressed many letters.⁴⁷ He also wrote to the eastern patriarchs on ecclesiastical and theological matters and in the west to Gaul, Britain, North Africa, and Spain. However, by far the largest proportion of his letters were addressed to places in and around the Italian peninsula.⁴⁸ These were primarily concerned with administrative matters in the papal patrimonies⁴⁹ and ecclesiastical affairs in the sees directly subordinate to Rome.⁵⁰ The administration of these estates occupied much of Gregory's time, as evidenced by the large number of letters he wrote to those responsible for their care. The largest number of letters to a single individual, for instance, were to Anthelm in Naples, who administered the papal patrimony of Campania,⁵¹ and many of Gregory's other main correspondents were based in important patrimonies.⁵² These letters concerned matters such as rents and discipline. Gregory's main correspondents therefore consisted of bishops, patriarchs, the imperial family, and rectors and administrators.

In the first section some general observations shall be made about Gregory's portrayal of the relationship between the bishop and the devil. In the second section we will move onto a specific controversy, the debate over John of Constantinople's use of the title 'ecumenical patriarch'. Through this controversy various themes will be explored in Gregory's conception of the devil and his place in the life of the individual, the church, and the secular and religious worlds as a whole. We will conclude in the third section.

⁴⁶ For a good summary and table of the distribution of Gregory's correspondence see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, Appendix, 206-9. For a map showing the distribution see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, xx-xxi.

⁴⁷ The most important for present purposes of which are 5.37 (1:308-311) and 7.30 (1:490-1).

⁴⁸ See Markus, *Gregory the Great*, Appendix, 209.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages 476-752* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 312-3. During Gregory's pontificate the most extensive papal estates – known as the patrimonies of Saint Peter – were found in Sicily, Campania, Ravenna and Istria, and also around Rome in the Appian and Tuscan patrimonies

⁵⁰ At the time Gregory was writing the following were directly subject to Rome in terms of episcopal elections: most of Italy (other than the north), Sicily, and Corsica. In the west, outside of the Roman province were the metropolitan sees of Sardinia, Milan, Ravenna, and Aquilcia, and also the various ones in Illyricum, Gaul, Britain, and Africa.

⁵¹ Martyn, 'Introduction', 100. He had 34 letters addressed to him.

⁵² Including sub-deacon Peter of Sicily and Januarius, bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia. Martyn, 'Introduction', 98-99, 101.

6.1 Bishops, Bishoprics, and the Devil

Gregory frequently used the idea of the devil to explain why unfilled bishoprics and inadequate episcopal leadership were dangerous. He was concerned that if the flock lacked the care of a bishop, it would easily fall into the snares (*laquei*) of the one lying in wait (*insidiatoris*).⁵³ He frequently expressed such concerns, such as to Boniface, bishop of Reggio, to whom he wrote that he was concerned that without the government of a pastor, the people of Carinae (who were without a bishop) might be siezed by the cunning enemy.⁵⁴ Gregory's response to the risk posed by this empty bishopric was to combine the sees of Reggio and Carinae.⁵⁵ Two passages very similar to that found in the letter to Boniface⁵⁶ can be found elsewhere; this is because a formula appears to have been used in these three particular cases.⁵⁷ However, it is very probable that Gregory was the first to use this as there do not seem to be any letters of previous popes that correspond to it.⁵⁸ In fact this formula, including the warning about the devil, would later be found in the *Liber diurnus*.⁵⁹ Its appearance in this handbook of papal formulae demonstrates the influence of Gregory's letters over future papal correspondence, for, as discussed earlier, it is believed that the *Liber diurnus* was composed later than Gregory, and is in part indebted to his *Register*.⁶⁰ It is therefore likely that this particular phrase originated with Gregory or at the very least with his administration.

In other cases, formulae do not seem to have been used. In these, Gregory frequently stressed the need for action on the basis that the flock is more vulnerable to the devil when the bishop is not there to protect it. The frequency of this sort of warning in Gregory's letters demonstrates the importance of the idea to Gregory. The idea of the bishop as shepherd was believed to have a biblical basis. Indeed, such ideas, expressed in a variety of ways, are rife in Gregory's other letters. For instance, bishoprics were not meant to be left empty for more than three months⁶¹ in

⁵³ *Ep.* 1.79 (1:86-7).

⁵⁴ *Ep.* 6.9 (1:377-8, at p. 377).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ep.* 6.9 (1:377-8).

⁵⁷ For instance see also: *Ep.* 2.42 (1:130-31, at p. 130); *Ep.* 3.20 (1:165-6). See Eidenschink, 'Bishops', 97. *Ep.* 2.42 and *Ep.* 3.20 have some slight differences to *Ep.* 6.9.

⁵⁸ As is the opinion of Eidenschink in Eidenschink, 'Bishops', 97. n. 3.

⁵⁹ Foerster ed., *Liber Diurnus*, 82. V9 = C9 = A1.

⁶⁰ See pp. 192-3 above.

⁶¹ *Ep.* 7.39 (1:503); *Ep.* 7.14 (1:463-4, at p. 463).

case the ancient enemy tore apart the Lord's flock whilst it was lacking a shepherd.⁶² Gregory therefore wrote of one of his prime patriarchal duties – the election of bishops – in terms of the pastoral need to protect the flock from the devil. In a similar vein, in a letter to John, bishop of Prima Justiniana, Gregory advised that the bishop should be watchful (*uigilans*) and concerned (*sollicitus*) in his guard (*custodia*), so that the wolf lying in wait (*lupus insidians*) does not harm the sheep.⁶³

Similarly, in a letter to Aregius, a bishop in Gaul, Gregory wrote

Simus in custodia uigilantes, aditus contra hostis insidias solliciti muniamus. Et si quando per deuia ouem de commissis gregibus error abduxerit, toto illam annisu ad caulas reuocare dominicas contendamus⁶⁴

As seen, the relationship between the devil and the bishop was frequently depicted using biblical imagery: battle imagery, consisting of fortifications, war, darts and arrows;⁶⁵ pastoral imagery, consisting of sheep, a shepherd, and a wolf;⁶⁶ and the third involving a prowling, roaring lion.⁶⁷ These images are the main ones that Gregory used when describing the devil in these letters. The application of these phrases to his warnings about errant bishops and empty bishoprics demonstrates that at the core of his understanding of the role of the bishop were these key biblical passages. Furthermore, as this is the most frequent context in which the devil is mentioned, it shows that as far as Gregory's papal duties were concerned, it was in his thoughts about maintaining a church of strong bishops that the devil made his most frequent appearance.

To examine this idea further, there are several key ideas that demonstrate the relationship in Gregory's mind between the actions of the devil and the role of the bishop, which can be compared to his thoughts on the devil in his other works. First, when speaking of the devil and the church, Gregory frequently spoke of a place

⁶² *Ep.* 7.39 (1:503).

⁶³ *Ep.* 5.16 (1:282).

⁶⁴ *Ep.* 9.220 (2:790-92, at p. 791). Let us be vigilant in keeping watch and careful in protecting entrances against the snares of the enemy. And if error should ever lead a sheep away from the flocks entrusted to us, and off the beaten track, let us strive with total exertion to recall it to the Lord's sheepfolds. (Translation from Martyn, *Letters*, 2:689). See also *Ep.* 11.9 (2:871-2, at p. 871).

⁶⁵ Ephes. 6:11-15.

⁶⁶ Shepherd: John 10:11. Wolf: Matt. 7:15; John 10:12; 1 Peter 2:25. The Vulgate rendered this latter verse using the word *episcopus*: *erratis enim sicut oves errantes sed conversi estis nunc ad pastorem et episcopum animarum uestrarum* (For you were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls).

⁶⁷ 1 Peter 5:8. Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

(*locus*) or entrance (*aditus*) into which the devil tries to enter. This has to be fortified (*munire*)⁶⁸ or placed under guard (*custodia*)⁶⁹ by the bishop. There are a variety of circumstances which could be deemed an entrance. Secondly, vigilance (*vigilantia*) has to be observed by all bishops in order to fulfil this duty. In this way Gregory perceived the episcopacy as a defensive wall against the devil. This idea of a gap or weakness is the same that one finds in Gregory's discussion of the devil and the individual, and also the devil and the monastic community; the principle stands for the church too. The structure of the church was the outer defence against the devil.

Gregory viewed heretics as individuals who had placed themselves outside this protective structure. Whilst bishops were a bulwark against heresy,⁷⁰ being a heretic put an individual outside of their protection. Thus, in a letter that Gregory wrote in the name of Pelagius II to those who would not condemn the Three Chapters, Gregory accused the schismatics of standing outside the sheepfold and putting themselves at risk from the prowling devil.⁷¹

‘Quia enim leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret’, scio et vos stantes extra caulas ovium.⁷²

Heretics and schismatics cannot therefore be protected from the prowling devil because they are not within the sheepfold of the one, true, church.

Their position as the outer defence of the church meant that bishops also had to stand steadfast against diabolical attacks themselves, as inadequate bishops were just as dangerous as empty bishoprics. In fact, because of the role that bishops played in defending their flocks, the devil would also deliberately target them, because by doing so he could capture those they guarded more easily.⁷³ They thus had to guard against such sins as simony, which according to Gregory was instigated by the devil and also the first crime against the church.⁷⁴ He expressed doubt that a bishop infected with simony would be able to protect his flock with his prayer if he himself

⁶⁸ For instance, *Ep.* 9.219 (2:679) and *Ep.* 9.220 (2:790-92).

⁶⁹ For instance, *Ep.* 5.16 (1:282).

⁶⁹ *Ep.* 9.220 (2:791).

⁷⁰ *Ep.* 4.35 (1:255-6, at p. 255).

⁷¹ *Ep.* 3 in Ewald and Hartmann eds., *Registrum epistolarum*, 2, Appendix 3, 449-467, at p. 450.

⁷² *Ibid.* ‘Because the roaring lion circles around looking for whom to devour’, and I know you stand outside of the sheepfold.

⁷³ *Ep.* 2.39 (1:125-7, at p. 125).

⁷⁴ *Ep.* 9.214 (2:772-5, at p. 773); *Ep.* 9.216 (2:776-9, at p. 777). See Acts 8:18-24 for the story of Simon Magus and the first attempted act of simony.

was exposed to the darts of the devil.⁷⁵ Bishops who were guilty of this sin were therefore compromised in their ability to protect the church from the devil's attack. In such a way bishops could lead their flock to hell through bad leadership.⁷⁶ As a result of this high degree of responsibility placed upon their shoulders Gregory warned that bishops would have to give an account of their episcopacy.⁷⁷

Gregory applied this same idea to religious communities, who also had to guard against attacks by not allowing the chance for temptation by leaving such gaps. Thus, soldiers who had been billeted in a nunnery must be removed so that the devil cannot find an opening.⁷⁸ Gregory's whole attitude to the devil, the church, and monastic communities is best summed up by his question:

Nam quid prodest cuncta munisse, si per unum locum perniciosus hosti
praebeatur accessus?⁷⁹

In short, Gregory saw the devil as an ever-present prowling threat, and the church as a fortification or sheep-pen placed in defence around the faithful. The bishop must always exercise vigilance, looking both without and within, as empty bishoprics and incompetent bishop create gaps in this defensive wall. This, therefore, is why the bishop must gain victory over the devil on behalf of himself and gain the gift of discernment, as discussed in the chapter on the *Dialogues*: he is a wall through which the devil can enter, or past which the devil can sneak. He is one of many watchmen, placed in a circle encircling and guarding the souls within the church. As demonstrated previously, he must have sight so because if he cannot see, no one can; but he must also be present, and his place stand neither empty nor filled by a sinner, for then the devil can sneak through.

6.2 The Devil and the Controversy over the Title of 'Ecumenical Patriarch'

⁷⁵ *Ep.* 9.216 (2:776-9, at p. 778).

⁷⁶ *Ep.* 5.4 (1:269-70, at p. 269).

⁷⁷ *Ep.* 5.15 (1:280-81).

⁷⁸ *Ep.* 9.208 (2:767). See also *Ep.* 9.111 (2:663-664, at p. 663).

⁷⁹ *Ep.* 9.219, line 149, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/Default.aspx> (accessed 04 April 2012). What is the benefit in having fortified everything, if ruinous access is provided for the enemy through just one gap? (Translation from Martyn, *Letters*, 2:687).

Gregory's conception of the devil as a performer of repeated actions and his fluid understanding of the relationship between the devil and the sinner affected the manner in which he interpreted events in the world around him. His biblically-inspired belief that the church was a fortification against the devil also had such an effect. This is no more evident than during his arguments with successive patriarchs of Constantinople over their use of the title of 'ecumenical patriarch' (*patriarches oikoumenikos*; *patriarcha universalis*). The patriarchs had used this title to refer themselves for approximately a century by the time Gregory was writing;⁸⁰ Gregory, however, claimed that a previous pope, Pelgus II, had objected to its use.⁸¹ Throughout his own papacy Gregory made an 'unbroken series'⁸² of complaints against the title, although the main period of conflict occurred in 595 when Gregory sent letters to the patriarch,⁸³ emperor,⁸⁴ emperor's wife⁸⁵ and other patriarchs⁸⁶ expressing his anger at the use of the title. In these he accused the patriarch of imitating Lucifer⁸⁷ and of anticipating the Antichrist,⁸⁸ and warned his fellow patriarchs about the devil's role in the title's use.⁸⁹ John died later in 595, but conflict flared up again in 597 when John's successor, Cyriacus, continued to use the title, in spite of Gregory having warned him several times.⁹⁰ In spite of this, however, his arguments and criticisms were largely ignored, and the title was adopted by the Roman See by the end of the seventh century.⁹¹

This conflict came at a particularly difficult time for Gregory. Several years previously Gregory's attempts to negotiate peace with the Lombards came to nothing when in 593 Rome was besieged, causing him to cut short his sermons on Ezechiel.⁹² Gregory had already been frustrated in his attempts to organise the defences of the

⁸⁰ Markus, *Gregory*, 91. *Eps.* 5.39 (1:314-18); 5.41 (1:320-5); 5.344 (1:329-37).

⁸¹ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-25, at pp. 320-1); *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-37, at pp. 329-30).

⁸² R.A. Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 31 (1981): 21-36, at p. 31.

⁸³ *Ep.* 5.37 (1:1:308-11); *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1).

⁸⁴ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-37).

⁸⁵ *Ep.* 5.39 (1:314-18).

⁸⁶ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-25).

⁸⁷ (*imitandum*). *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 331).

⁸⁸ (*praecurrit*). *Ep.* 7.31 (1:490-1, at p. 491).

⁸⁹ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-25).

⁹⁰ *Ep.* 7.28 (1:125-7).

⁹¹ Dudden, *Gregory*, 2:224. Dudden notes that this title made it into the *Liber diurnus*. For a detailed discussion of its use by different popes, see Stephan Kuttner, 'Universal Pope or Servant of God's Servants: the canonists, papal titles, and Innocent III', *Revue de droit canonique* 31 (1981): 109-150, reprinted in Stephan Kuttner, *Studies in the History of Medieval Canon Law* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1990), VIII.

⁹² *Hom in Ezech.* 2.10.24, pp. 397-8.

city, and after this seige Gregory entered into peace negotiations again, acting as a go-between between the Lombards and the emperor. As a result of these problems the relationship between Gregory and the emperor was already at a low point in 595, and it is at this time that the controversy over the use of the title began in earnest.

6.2.1 The Devil and the Patriarch

Gregory's arguments against this title, most of which incorporated the figures of Lucifer, the devil, and the Antichrist, were multifaceted and complex.⁹³ This section will explore what he argued and implied about the relationship between the devil and the patriarch, at the level of the patriarch's own actions and his own body and heart. The following sections will then step back and explore the effect that Gregory believed the patriarch's actions had on the level of the church community and then, finally, on the scale of the entire world. In doing so it will demonstrate the varieties of scale that Gregory thought in regarding the devil and how his ideas about the devil and the dangers of this title affected his perception of world events and his reactions to them. This study will also demonstrate the influence of his diabolology on his understanding of the pentarchy and the Roman primacy, thus showing the profound effects of his beliefs about the devil on his papacy.

In a letter written to John in June 595, Gregory equated the patriarch's actions with those of Lucifer in Is. 14.13-14, asking him

Quis, rogo, in hoc tam peruerso uocabulo nisi ille ad imitandum proponitur, qui, despectis angelorum legionibus secum socialiter constitutis, ad culmen conatus est singularitatis erumpere, ut et nulli subesse et solus omnibus praeesse uideretur? Qui etiam dixit: *In caelum conscendam, super astra caeli exaltabo solium meum. Sedebo in monte testamenti, in lateribus aquilonis. Ascendam super altitudinem nubium, similis ero altissimo.*⁹⁴

⁹³ Although Gregory never referred to the devil as Lucifer, for the remainder of this chapter the word 'Lucifer' will be used to describe the devil as he was in the past, at the beginning of time when he fell. In his letters Gregory discusses the devil as he appeared in the past, appears now, and will appear in the future, and thus the word 'Lucifer' is used here for clarity.

⁹⁴ *Ep. 5.44* (1:329-337, at p. 331). Who, I ask, is proposed to be imitated by this very perverse title unless it is him, who, despising the legions of angels set in place sociably with him, tried to break out to the height of singularity, so that he might be seen to be beneath no one and to be alone at the head of all? Who indeed said: *I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of the sky. I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, on the sides of the north. I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.* [Isaiah 14:13-14].

Gregory made this connection with Is. 4:13-14 several times⁹⁵ and accused John of trying to be like (*similis*) Lucifer in his appetite for this perverse title (*peruersi nominis*),⁹⁶ and of imitating the enemy's pride (*superbiam hostis ipsius imitamur*).⁹⁷

In his letters to the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch (which are identical to each other), Gregory again used the devil but in doing so made a slightly different argument:

Aduersarius quippe diabolus, qui contra humiles *saeuiens sicut leo rugiens circuit, quaerens quem deuoret*, non iam, ut cernimus, caulas circuit, sed ita ualide in quibusdam ecclesiae necessariis membris dentem figit, ut nulli sit dubium quia, nisi unanimiter fauente Domino cunctorum prouida pastorum turba concurrat, omne quod absit citius ouile dilaniet. Perpendis, frater carissime, quis e uicino subsequitur, cuius et in sacerdotibus erumpunt tam peruersa primordia. Quia enim iuxta est ille de quo scriptum est : *Ipse est rex super uniuersos filios superbiae* ; quod non sine graui dolore dicere compellor, frater et coepiscopus noster Iohannes mandata dominica, apostolica praecepta, regulas patrum despiciens eum per elationem praecurrere conatur in nomine.⁹⁸

In this letter, Gregory employed similar images to those discussed in the previous section: that of the devil entering the sheepfold by means of certain members of the church. By emphasising this, Gregory was suiting his argument to his audience, as the protection of the flock was the duty of these bishops.

To the emperor Gregory used yet a different, albeit related, argument, in addition to reiterating those about Lucifer and the devil. In particular, he emphasised the idea of the Antichrist, a figure that he did not mention in his letters to either John of Constantinople or the other patriarchs:

⁹⁵ Such as in *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at pp. 331-2).

⁹⁶ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 332).

⁹⁷ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 334).

⁹⁸ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-25, at pp. 323-4). Italics are those in the edition.

Indeed the enemy the devil, who, raging against the humble, *prowls round like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour* [1 Peter 5:8], no longer encircles the sheepfolds, as we see, but he fixes his tooth so strongly in certain indispensable members of the church, that there is no doubt that, unless with the support of the Lord a crowd of all the prudent shepherds unanimously join the battle, he will, God forbid, quickly tear all the sheepfolds to shreds. Consider carefully, dearest brother, who follows closely nearby, and in whose priests so many perverse beginnings break out. For he is nearby about whom it is written: *he himself is king over all the children of pride* [Job 41:34], with respect to which not without heavy grief I am compelled to say, our brother and fellow bishop John, despising the Lord's commands, apostolic teachings and the rules of the fathers, tries through pride to surpass him in title.

De qua re mihi in suis iussionibus dominorum pietas praecepit, dicens ut pro appellatione friuoli nominis inter nos scandalum generari non debeat. Sed rogo ut imperialis pietas penset quia alia sunt friuola ualde innoxia atque alia uehementer nociua. Numquid non cum se Antichristus ueniens Deum dixerit, friuolum ualde erit sed tamen nimis perniciosum? Si quantitatem sermonis attendimus, duae sunt syllabae, si uero pondus iniquitatis, uniuersa perniciēs. Ego autem fidenter dico quia, quisquis se uniuersalem sacerdotem uocat uel uocari desiderat, in elatione sua Antichristum praecurrit, quia superbiendo se ceteris praepōnit, nec dispari superbia ad errorem ducitur, quia, sicut peruersus ille Deus uideri uult super omnes homines, ita, quisquis iste est, qui solus sacerdos appellari appetit, super reliquos sacerdotes.⁹⁹

It is likely that these three letters were sent out at the same time as each other. Consequently, their subtly different emphases are not explained by a change of mind, but (at least in part) by Gregory carefully aiming his argument at his audience: the offending patriarch should be afraid that he is emulating Lucifer; the other patriarchs should be concerned that the defensive structure of the church is crumbling; and the emperor should be worried that the time of the Antichrist, whose coming will bring destruction to the entire world and be herald of the end, is near.

The latter two letters will be discussed in more depth in the next two sections, but they are both important for the present discussion because they also demonstrate the ways in which Gregory envisioned the relationship between the patriarch and the devil. In all of these letters Gregory claimed that his main objection to the title was that its use demonstrated a lack of humility. He believed that in styling himself ‘ecumenical’, John was attempting to set himself above the other patriarchs, and that, therefore, use of the title was a sign of pride. This gave Gregory the opportunity to make a very direct comparison between this action and that of Lucifer at the time of the angelic fall. Thus in these extracts John is said to be trying to imitate (*imitandum*) Lucifer,¹⁰⁰ and Gregory emphasises that John is trying to be beneath no

⁹⁹ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491). On this matter, the piety of your Lordship has advised me in your orders, saying that trouble should not be generated between us, because of the use of a frivolous title. But I beg your imperial Piety to realize that some frivolous matters are quite harmless, but others are extremely harmful. When Antichrist comes and says that he is God, surely it will be extremely frivolous, but yet all too pernicious? If we consider the amount of letters, there are just two syllables, but if we consider their weight of wickedness, there is universal ruin. But I say confidently that, whoever calls himself a ‘universal’ priest, and desires to be called so, anticipates [or surpasses] Antichrist in his pride. For he puts himself above all others by being arrogant, and he is not being led into error by a different sort of pride. For just as that perverse man wants to appear as God above all human beings, even so, the man, whoever he is, who seeks to be called the only priest, wants to appear above all other priests. (Translation from Martyn, *Letters*, 2:487).

¹⁰⁰ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 331).

one (*nulli subesse*), and attempting to be above all (*omnibus praesse*). By using this title he was placing himself at the head (*praepone*) and trying to surpass (*praecurrere*) even the devil. Like the devil in Isaiah 14:13-14, John is trying to exalt himself above others. By quoting Job 41:43, Gregory was also placing John as one of the devil's children of pride (*filios superbiae*). We can also see that in this same pride John was anticipating or surpassing (*praecurrit*) the Antichrist.¹⁰¹ In the *Moralia* Gregory describes the Antichrist as a man into whom Satan enters when the world is at its end;¹⁰² and, as such, the Antichrist's ambitions mirror those of the devil: to ascend to the clouds and be like the Most High. John is therefore also described in terms of isolation and separation, reflecting the words and ideas that Gregory associated with the devil as determined in chapter 3.

In the relationship Gregory drew between Lucifer and John was an implicit recognition of the latter's patriarchal status. Gregory believed that Lucifer was created at the head of the angels, but was meant to be in communion with them, and not separate or above them. As patriarch, John had been given pride of place within the community of bishops, just as Lucifer had been given within the community of angels; yet Lucifer strove to be more, and thus fell, just as Gregory believed John was now trying to do. The similarities between them therefore included the high place that God had already given them, and not just their similar attempts to be like God.

Pride had been the sin which led Lucifer to break away from the other angels and thus to root of all sin, and in the *Dialogues* the actions of Saint Benedict were an argument for pride's opposite, humility, an idea which is brought out repeatedly and explicitly in the *Pastoral Care* in which Gregory warned, in his last section, that all preachers should return themselves.¹⁰³ In this work Gregory warns that the cunning seducer (*seductor callidus*) reminds the person who has been raised up of all they have done well, exalting the individual in pride.¹⁰⁴ In his letters, one can see that for Gregory this idea was not just an abstract one, but one that he applied to the world around him, including the ecumenical patriarch.

¹⁰¹ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491).

¹⁰² *Mor.* 15.58.69 (1:793).

¹⁰³ *Reg. Past.* 4, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/Default.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2011).

¹⁰⁴ *Reg. Past.* 4, line 12, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/Default.aspx> (accessed 26 September 2011).

The parallels go even further than this, however, as it is argued here that Gregory believed that the patriarch was attempting to usurp Christ, and thus, by implication, God. In his letter to the patriarch John, he began by saying that Christ was the head of the ecumenical church, before accusing him of trying to put Christ's limbs (the members of the church) under his own head.¹⁰⁵ The accusation is clear if indirect: if Christ is the head of the body, and the patriarch is attempting to put himself at the head of Christ's body, then the patriarch is trying to be Christ, because Christ is the head. Consequently, if Christ is the ecumenical bishop, then the patriarch's adoption of the title was blasphemous, and was indeed an attempt by a man to be like God, and the accusation that the patriarch is emulating Lucifer and anticipating the Antichrist – both of whom (according to Gregory's reading) are said in scripture to try and be like God – is not just a convenient accusation but one founded in Gregory's theology and his beliefs about the devil, Christ, and humankind.

John, therefore, was, in Gregory's mind, given a parallel position over men and women – that of patriarch – as the devil was given over the angels, and, like the devil, he was now trying to be greater than he was, and to break away from the unity he was supposed to enjoy; and, like the devil, then Adam and Eve, and like the Antichrist in the future, the patriarch is trying to be God, as it is Christ who is the head of the ecumenical church. In the third chapter, it was argued that Gregory's method of exegesis and typological mode of thinking profoundly affected his conception of the devil and history, meaning that Gregory saw the devil as setting the archetypes for many future, evil, actions. The patriarch fits this mould perfectly: he was placed in high estate, but was trying to raise himself up even further, and to be God. Gregory's interpretation of this incident therefore stemmed from his particular view of history which saw historical events as evocations of sacred events, and as imbued with a similar divine significance.

Gregory's tone in these letters has been described as manipulative, intended to frighten the patriarch into submitting or to scare the emperor into intervening. Indeed, his use of language in these passages has been characterised by Jeffrey Richards as 'splendid "hellfire and damnation" rhetoric',¹⁰⁶ an interpretation which fits his discussion of the controversy in terms of a conflict over primacy between

¹⁰⁵ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 331).

¹⁰⁶ Richards, *Consul of God*, 219.

Rome and Constantinople.¹⁰⁷ However, it has been alternatively argued that Gregory's talk of the end of the world was not just a homiletic device or a literary trope.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Gregory's invocation of these figures was not necessarily just literary trope or even just the result of urgency and apocalypticism; rather, it was indicative of the very nature of the way in which Gregory thought. It was perfectly natural for a man who made associations between the Old and New Testaments, and then between the Old and New Testaments and hagiography, to then make the leap to applying the same patterns and correspondences – which were all seeped in divine significance – to the world of his own experience. This is not to deny any deliberate manipulation, as it has already been established that Gregory often used fear of the devil as an instrument for conversion, and his moulding of his argument to different people also demonstrates that there was most definitely a degree of calculation. However, what this shows is that Gregory saw the actions of the patriarch within a framework whereby the same sinful actions – set in motion by the devil – are repeated again and again throughout time.

Gregory did not only see the patriarch's actions in these terms, however. In his letter to his fellow patriarchs, Gregory warned about the devil fastening (*figere*) his tooth (*dens*) into certain necessary (*necessarius*) members of the church.¹⁰⁹ What exactly did this mean, however, and what was Gregory arguing? In a letter that Gregory sent to these same patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, but two years later, Gregory reiterated his condemnation of the patriarch's (now Cyriacus rather than John) use of the title, but also, significantly, he brought up a discussion about a theological debate regarding whether or not the devil enters into the hearts of men.¹¹⁰ He argued that, in fact, the devil can enter into the body of the individual, and that it is heresy to think otherwise.¹¹¹ The scriptural passages he used in evidence were John 13:27 ('After the morsel, Satan entered into him') and John 13:2 ('The devil had already entered into the heart of Judas to betray him').¹¹² It is significant that Gregory should discuss this particular point of theology at this time and with these particular bishops. As this

¹⁰⁷ Richards, *Consul of God*, 217.

¹⁰⁸ That it was not so in this controversy specifically, see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 93. For how Gregory's apocalypticism was not just a trope more generally, see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁹ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:323).

¹¹⁰ *Ep.* 7.31 (1:492-5).

¹¹¹ *Ep.* 7.31 (1:492-5, at p. 494).

¹¹² *Ep.* 7.31 (1:492-5, at p. 494).

discussion was included in a letter in which he also criticised the patriarch Cyriacus' use of the title, it suggests that he was trying to remind them that the devil can possess the hearts of men and women, and that this is what was happening with Cyriacus.

Even more significantly, however, Gregory had begun his discussion of this question by describing how John, the previous patriarch of Constantinople (who had used the title), had sent some extracts from the synod of Ephesus to Gregory. This was done as part of a discussion about a group of heretics whose beliefs were, according to John, contrary to this synod.¹¹³ Gregory claims that within these extracts was a claim that the devil does *not* enter into the hearts of men, and that anyone who claimed this was declared anaethema; Gregory said that he then searched for what he could find for himself concerning the synod of Ephesus, and that he could find no mention of this declaration.¹¹⁴ He then continued, giving the scriptural evidence mentioned above, proving (in his mind) that the devil *does* enter into the hearts of men and women, and that the heresy is to think that he does not.¹¹⁵ Gregory does not say this, but it is possible that he connected John sending him falsified synodical acts which said the devil could *not* enter into men's hearts with the patriarch's continual refusal to repudiate the title; indeed, if true, it could possibly have been a subtle attempt by John to retaliate after Gregory's accusations that he was the Antichrist, especially, as seen, the Antichrist was considered to be a man into whom the devil entered.

Overall, however, this suggests that Gregory wished to remind the recipients that diabolical possession is something attested to in scripture; or, indeed, to argue against what those in the east might have heard to the contrary due to erroneous synodical records. Gregory said that he felt it necessary to warn them, lest similar errors crept into teachings where they were.¹¹⁶ This letter demonstrates several things. First, that Gregory believed – or was content to have it known that he believed – that the devil does indeed enter into the hearts of men, causing them to commit evil. Secondly, that he believed error had crept into some churches of the east concerning this point; and, thirdly, that it was necessary for him to mention this fact to his fellow patriarchs at the same time as warning them about the use of the

¹¹³ *Ep.* 7.31 (1:492-5).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

ecumenical title, whilst also making it known to them that the previous person who seemed to believe this error – John – was a previous holder of this title. Therefore, it was not, for him, merely symbolic to say that the devil entered into a man: Gregory believed that there was scriptural proof that the devil did, in fact, physically possess the body of the individual, and that to say otherwise was heresy. This letter was also, however, closely tied up with much of the politics of the time.

This suggests that Gregory saw the appropriation of the ecumenical title as the result of the actual possession of John's body by Satan, and this letter can be seen as arguments for the very real (rather than figurative) involvement of the devil. Indeed, Hervé Savon has suggested that Gregory's words were not merely examples of rhetoric and hyperbole, but that his use of the figure of the Antichrist was central to how Gregory perceived the incident.¹¹⁷ As we have seen, on the connection between the title and the Antichrist, Gregory wrote that

Numquid non cum se Antichristus ueniens Deum dixerit, friuolum ualde erit sed tamen nimis perniciosum? Si quantitatem sermonis attendimus, duae sunt syllabae, si uero pondus iniquitatis, uniuersa perniciēs.¹¹⁸

Savon has interpreted this warning within the context of the appearance of the Antichrist in Revelations:

Il faut penser ici à l'importance du nom dans les chapitres de l'Apocalypse où l'on a traditionnellement reconnu l'Antéchrist. L'apostasie générale, en dehors des élus qui ne fléchiront pas, sera scellée en quelque sorte par le nom de la bête inscrit sur la main ou le front de ses adorateurs. Ce nom d'orgueil, Grégoire semble l'avoir entrevu sur le front de Jean le Jeûner. Dès lors, il ne s'agissait plus seulement à ses yeux d'empiètement juridictionnel, de manquement regrettable à humilité, toutes fautes susceptibles de plus ou de moins, mais d'enrôlement dans le corps de Satan.¹¹⁹

First, Savon attributes a very literal meaning to Gregory's use of the term 'Antichrist', indicating that it is not just hyperbole. He has identified a connection

¹¹⁷ Hervé Savon, 'L'Antichrist dans l'œuvre de Grégoire le Grand', in R. Gillet ed., *Grégoire le Grand* (Paris, 1986), pp. 389-405, at pp. 398-9.

¹¹⁸ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491). When Antichrist comes and says that he is God, surely it will be extremely frivolous, but yet all too pernicious? If we consider the amount of letters, there are just two syllables, but if we consider their weight of wickedness, there is universal ruin. (Translation from Martyn, *Letters*, 2:487)

¹¹⁹ Savon, 'L'Antéchrist chez Grégoire', 399.

between the mark of the Antichrist and the patriarch's name of pride. Given Gregory's concern with titles and the significance with which names are accorded in Apocalypse 13:16-17, Savon argues that Gregory's criticism stemmed as much from his belief that Satan was directly involved as anything else.¹²⁰

This connection between the Antichrist, the patriarch, and the title can be explored further. In his letter to the emperor, Gregory berated Maurice for having told him that they should not let trouble come between them because of a frivolous title (*friuli nominis*).¹²¹ In response Gregory replied that when the Antichrist comes and says he is God, this will be frivolous, but still ruinous (*pernisiosus*).¹²² In this title Gregory saw universal ruin (*uniuersa pernicies*).¹²³ In mentioning the title to his fellow patriarchs, Gregory did not associate it with the Antichrist, but described it as prideful. This particular connection, therefore, was emphasised when speaking to the emperor, although he did bring in this connection later on when speaking to John's successor, Cyriacus, in which he told him to remove the arrogant title,¹²⁴ also saying

Et quia hostis omnipotentis Domini Antichristus iuxta est, studiose cupio ne proprium quid inueniat non solum in moribus sed neque in uocabulo sacerdotum.¹²⁵

Here both the morals or behaviour (*mos*) of priests as well as their words or titles (*uocabulum*) are described as potential possessions of the Antichrist. In Apoc. 13:16-17, we find that the Antichrist is described as having marked his name, or the number of his name, on the head of his followers.¹²⁶ It is therefore the name of the Antichrist, rather than just any title of pride, that they carry. Consequently, in warning that he hopes the Antichrist finds nothing of his own (*proprium*) in the titles of priests, it appears that Gregory is implicitly claiming that this title may be that of the Antichrist, which has been placed on the head of one of his followers. Here Gregory is not saying that he hopes the Antichrist will not find a title of sin or pride

¹²⁰ Savon, 'L'Antéchrist chez Grégoire', 404, n. 111. See also Apoc. 13:16-17: ¹⁶And he shall make all, both little and great, rich and poor, freemen and bondmen, to have a character in their right hand, or on their foreheads. ¹⁷And that no man might buy or sell, but he that hath the character, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

¹²¹ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491).

¹²² *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491).

¹²³ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491).

¹²⁴ *Ep.* 7.28 (1:486-7).

¹²⁵ *Ep.* 7.28 (1:486-7, at p. 487). And because the Antichrist, the enemy of the omnipotent Lord, is nearby, I keenly hope that he does not find anything of his own not only in the morals but in the words of priests.

¹²⁶ Apoc. 13:16-17.

amongst priests: he is saying that he hopes he will find nothing *of his own*. Gregory was therefore interpreting events around him in the light of Apoc. 13:16-17 and Gregory's warning very clear. This is further evidenced by Gregory's scripturally-supported belief that the Antichrist already has followers. Consequently, therefore, Gregory makes a connection between the Antichrist's name and the patriarch's title, suggesting that the patriarch is not just trying to surpass the Antichrist in his pride, but that the name he bears is, in fact, the Antichrist's, marked on his forehead as foretold in scripture. Indeed, Gregory accorded great importance to titles, which can be seen in his adoption of the title '*servus servorum dei*', which may have been a deliberate adoption of a title of humility as compared to the patriarch's adoption of a title of pride.¹²⁷ Furthermore, as seen, claiming such a title in Gregory's mind contradicts the virtue of humility, another key theme in Gregory's works.

The idea that the Antichrist was at the head of the body of sinners, with his followers serving as his hand and feet meant that one could speak both of the head – the single man possessed by the devil – and his followers as one entity. Indeed, Gregory had had problems with John, patriarch of Constantinople other than the use of this title. He believed that John let people be falsely accused of heresy¹²⁸ and that he was a negligent bishop, not knowing when the wolf was tearing apart some of his sheep.¹²⁹ His relationship with the patriarch was therefore fraught, even without the problem of this title.

Gregory's description of John's behaviour as an emulation of Lucifer and an anticipation of the Antichrist demonstrates a similar fluidity of thought, as it shows Gregory flitting between the past, present, and future. The introductory section to the *Moralia* discussed how Gregory's typological mode of thinking meant that he looked for patterns, parallels and correspondences across salvation history, and in using these figures of Lucifer, the devil and the Antichrist, Gregory was doing just this, applying the figure of the devil as he is manifested across the historical time-line and applying his actions to one of followers, the patriarch, this latter association being made in accordance with the biblical connection between the head and the body. Thus, the previous chapter established that Gregory's method of exegesis affected his interpretation of stories and writing of hagiography; one can see evidence of this

¹²⁷ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 94.

¹²⁸ For instance: *Ep.* 6.15 (1:384-5).

¹²⁹ For instance: *Ep.* 3.53 (1:199-200).

search for ever-repeating events in his interpretation of John of Constantinople's actions. The world and the actions of the devil within it were to be read through the same interpretative lens as the Old and New Testaments, meaning that John's actions could be seen in terms of Lucifer's past aim to be like God, and the Antichrist's future reach for the same thing.

This was not only rhetoric or a simple referencing of similarity; rather, it was testament to his belief that the world as well as scripture reverberates with key events of sacred history – in this case the action of reaching above oneself through pride. For Gregory the exegete this story had an historical root in Genesis, a moral dimension insofar as it served as a warning against pride, and also had associations with concepts of exile, separation and division. Markus has explored how views on the interpretation of scripture may have helped shaped views on how to interpret experience more widely.¹³⁰ It seems that concerning Gregory, this did have an effect on his interpretation of the world around him.

In conclusion, therefore, Gregory was of the belief that the devil could and did enter individuals. This was a phenomenon attested to in scripture, argued for by Gregory in a letter, and was something that Gregory believed was occurring in the case of John of Constantinople. In this case the problem is presented as a spiritual one personal to John. However, Gregory's way of viewing the world also meant that he saw John's appropriation of this title in terms of an action that had its roots in sacred history and which therefore possessed 'vertical' as well as 'horizontal' meaning; as a result John was influenced by the devil even whilst at the same time he was emulating and precipitating him in his past and future actions. Consequently, John's actions are also said to stem from a desire to be above others and to be alone, and also to have the same result as those of Lucifer, leading to division. These actions were all associated with the devil, as seen in the first chapter. For Gregory, every word and phrase of scripture was important; he would agonise over different meanings, and bring conclusions from even minor things. It is very probable that this same extraction of meaning from tiny detail was also evident in his reading of world events. The use of this title was a personal sin on the part of John as it demonstrated the control that the devil had over his body and actions. Given the way Gregory thought, his quick association of actions in the world around him with occurrences in

¹³⁰ Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 2.

sacred history is to be expected; there is no need to over-emphasise a jurisdictional conflict (see below) or to explain away his language as manipulative rhetoric alone. Gregory read John's actions as he would read a person's deeds in a saint's life: in biblical terms and as signifying certain truths over and above the historical or literal. The association of the title with pride, and the role of the devil in the patriarch's appropriation of it, were reasons enough for Gregory to call on John to disregard the title.

6.2.2. The Devil and the Community of the Church

There was therefore a problem in that the patriarch had succumbed to pride and let the devil into his heart. In Gregory's mind, his patriarchal position meant that the effects of this reached far beyond the fate of his own soul, and could potentially affect the salvation of those in his care. According to Gregory's understanding of the relationship between the bishop and the devil, it put the patriarch's entire flock at risk. John (and then Cyriacus) was not just a bishop, but a patriarch. Gregory's description of John's actions in these terms stemmed from the belief that for John to claim this title was to remove a defensive tower from the fortifications of the church, leaving a gaping hole through which the devil could enter. In part I we saw how in Gregory's mind bishops act as defences which protect the members of the church from the devil, but which leave dangerous gaping holes when they are empty, or are inadequately filled. This is something which John of Constantinople has clearly failed to do.

Gregory's belief that the whole flock was at risk from the patriarch's lack of humility is best explored by means of a passage from Gregory's work on *Ezechiel*. In this Gregory interpreted the Old Testament verse 'their whole body was full of eyes round about all four' [Ez. 1:18] with the aid of the New Testament story of the hypocritical, praying Pharisee [Luke 18:11-12]. This Pharisee had an eye looking towards abstinence, mercy, and giving thanks to God, but had no eye to the preservation of humility. On this Gregory said

Et quid prodest quod contra hostium insidias pene tota ciuitas caute custoditur, si unum foramen apertum relinquitur, unde ab hostibus intretur? Quid ergo prodest custodia quae pene ubique circumponitur, quando inimicis tota ciuitas per neglectum loci unius aperitur?

Pharisaeus autem qui ieiunium exhibuit, decimas dedit, Deo gratias retulit, quasi pene per circuitum in suae ciuitatis custodia uigilauit. Sed quia unum in se foramen superbiae non attendit, ibi hostem pertulit, ubi per neglegentiam oculum clausit.¹³¹

The pharisee – or the patriarch of Constantinople – is vigilant on almost every side, except that of humility. And it is through this gate that he submitted to the enemy, granting him access to the city, or flock. It is therefore not only John who is overcome by the devil in this matter, but, because he is a bishop, his whole city – or bishopric – is at risk from the devil too. The language in which vulnerability to the devil this is discussed, whether in terms of a place (*locum*), entrance (*aditus*), or a hole (*foramen*), is similar whether on the level of the individual or of the church. Gregory was therefore concerned that John's pride provided the devil with a gap by means of which he could attack his flock. Gregory's conception of the relationship between bishops and the devil in the context of the church as a whole as discussed in the first section can therefore be seen to have affected his interpretation of this incident.

This case, however, was more dangerous than any other, as John's status as patriarch, and not just bishop, meant that his pride put the church at an even greater risk. It was Gregory's duty to respond to this threat, as in a letter to Bishop Columbus, Gregory had written that, as successor of Saint Peter, it was his duty to meet the common enemy.¹³² It was therefore Gregory's responsibility, as the successor of Saint Peter, to do all he could to counter these attempts of the devil to attack the shepherds of the church. Gregory believed that Rome was at the head of the church: in the case of litigation against bishops, litigants were in the first instance to go to their own bishop,¹³³ if, however, he had no bishop or patriarch, the case must be held by Rome, because it was the head of all the church.¹³⁴ Gregory also

¹³¹ *Hom. In Ezech.* 1.7.6, p. 86. And what good is there in carefully guarding almost the entire city from the wiles of the enemy if a single gate [or gap] is left open whereby it may be entered by the enemy? What good therefore is the guard which is placed around on almost every side when the whole city is opened to its enemies through the neglect of a single place? For the Pharisee who practiced fasting, gave tithes, offered thanks to God, as it were, vigilant in the protection of his city on almost every side. But because he did not watch the gate [or gap] to himself of pride, there he submitted to the enemy where he closed his eyes through neglect. (Translation from Tomkinson, *Prophet Ezekiel*, 116.).

¹³² *Ep.* 2.39 (1:125-7, at p. 125).

¹³³ *Ep.* 8.49 (2:1058-1064).

¹³⁴ *Ep.* 8.49 (2:1058-1064, at p. 1062).

defended the apostolic succession,¹³⁵ and saw Constantinople as ultimately subject to the Roman See.¹³⁶

Consequently, his position as Peter's successor meant that Gregory had a duty to speak out when he believed that a bishop was under the influence of the devil. As seen in part one, it was the duty of the bishop to step into any gaps created by empty bishoprics (by appointing a new bishop, or by merging bishoprics where this was not possible) or by the ineptitude or sin of another bishop. In a letter to the other four patriarchs and to Anastasius, the ex-patriarch of Antioch, Gregory wrote a very extensive account of the role and responsibilities of the bishop.¹³⁷ According to Gregory, it was imperative that the pastor should know when to speak, and when to keep silent.¹³⁸ He wrote that

Saepe namque rectores improvidi, humanam amittere gratiam formidantes, loqui libere recta pertimescunt, et iuxta ueritatis uocem nequaquam iam gregis custodiae pastorum studio sed mercennariorum uice deseruiunt, quia ueniente lupo fugiunt, dum se sub silentio abscondunt.¹³⁹

Elsewhere, Gregory talks of darts of words (*verborum iaculis*) in the fight against the wolf (devil).¹⁴⁰ When someone is in error, therefore, it is the duty of the bishop to speak out, and by doing so he can set a wall (*murus*) against the enemy.¹⁴¹

Gregory's interpretation of *οἰκουµενικός* to mean *universalis* meant that he perceived a very grave threat in the church, and, as the ever-prowling devil necessitated vigilance on the part of bishops, he therefore had to warn all he could. Furthermore, Gregory's belief that the devil was always prowling round like a roaring lion influenced the way in which he perceived the conflict, and the arguments he used against John of Constantinople.

¹³⁵ *Ep.* 5.37 (1:308-11).

¹³⁶ *Ep.* 9.26 (2:586-7, at p. 587).

¹³⁷ *Ep.* 1.24 (1:22-32).

¹³⁸ *Ep.* 1.24 (1:22-32, at p. 25).

¹³⁹ *Ep.* 1.24 (1:22-32, at p. 25). For often improvident bishops, fearful of losing human favours, 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 endeavour of shepherds, but rather in the manner of hired servants, because they flee as a wolf approaches, while hiding themselves under silence. (Translation from Martyn, *Letters*, 1:138). This passage is repeated word-for-word in *Reg. Past.* 2.4, lines 5-9, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 October 2011).

¹⁴⁰ *Ep.* 2.39 (1:125-7, at p. 126).

¹⁴¹ *Ep.* 1.24 (1:22-32, at p. 26).

The use of this title was not only a personal sin on the part of John, inspired by the devil, and it not only put his own flock at risk, but it was also divisive and had a consequent erosive effect on the defensive structure and unity of the church:

Ecce ex hoc nefando elationis uocabulo ecclesia scinditur, fratrum omnium corda ad scandalum prouocantur.¹⁴²

John's actions therefore tore away at the church. This is because a feature of pride is that it is, essentially, an assertion of individuality. That Gregory saw this as problematic is evident from his language: John attempts to be like Lucifer and break out to the height of singularity (*culmen singularitatis*); and here he will be alone (*solus*), tearing up (*scindere*) the church. These words are similar to the words and concepts that Gregory associated with the devil identified in the *Moralia* chapter. The emphasis here is upon lack of solidarity and communality. As demonstrated, Gregory associated the devil with division, stemming from his rupture of the cosmic harmony; here one can see the devil playing a similar role in the church as a whole.

6.2.2.1 The Devil, Episcopal Collegiality, and Papal Primacy

Gregory had another, extremely significant, argument as to why this title could not be used. This section will show that that Gregory's diabolology shaped his ideas about the pentarchy and the papal primacy, and that these beliefs affected his actions during this controversy. This argument stemmed from Gregory's interpretation of the word *οἰκουμενικός*, and at the core of this particular argument was that in using this title, the patriarchs of Constantinople were denying the episcopal status of all other bishops:

Nam si unus, ut putat, uniuersalis est, restat ut uos episcopi non sitis.¹⁴³

And that

Si enim hoc dici licenter permittitur, honor patriarcharum omnium negatur.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 335). Behold, by this abominable title of exaltation the church is torn, and the hearts of all its brothers are provoked into temptation.

¹⁴³ *Ep.* 9.157 (2:714-16, at p. 715). For if a single man, I believe, is universal, it remains that you are not bishops.

Gregory took the word *οἰκουμενικός* to mean something akin to *universalis*, or universal, resulting in an interpretation in which an ecumenical patriarch was, in fact, bishop of the entire world, and there were no other bishops or bishoprics. Anyone who awards this title to a single person thus compromises the universality of the church, for the title *universalis* could be applied only to the church entire, and not to one particular bishop.¹⁴⁵ Thus Gregory's argument was that in calling himself 'Ecumenical Patriarch', John was not only raising himself *above* all the bishops (a sign of pride), but was also denying that the others *were* bishops.

This may have originated in Gregory's misunderstanding of the word *οἰκουμενικός*; this in fact forms one main interpretation of the incident.¹⁴⁶ Central to this is the question of Gregory's knowledge of Greek, a question which remains unresolved.¹⁴⁷ Of greatest significance here is his knowledge of or access to those who understood specialist Greek theological terms, rather than his general knowledge of the language. A. Tuilier has suggested that Gregory's interpretation of the word *οἰκουμενικός* to mean *universalis* was, in part, a result of his transcription of the Greek word *οἰκουμενικός* into the Latin *oecumenicus*,¹⁴⁸ resulting in a slightly different understanding of the word due to the different meanings of the Greek *οἰκουμενικός* and the Latin *oecumenicus*.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, it appears that for Gregory the term designated the entire world, but for those in the east, it referred to the empire.¹⁵⁰ It has also been suggested that such misunderstandings were cultural as well as linguistic.¹⁵¹ In any case, whether or not this was rooted in a cultural or linguistic misunderstanding, Gregory argued that John was claiming that he was the only patriarch, and the only bishop.

¹⁴⁴ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-25, at p. 324). For if he is permitted to say this freely, the honor of all patriarchs is denied. See also *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 329).

¹⁴⁵ Claude Dagens, 'L'Eglise universelle et le monde oriental chez saint Grégoire le Grand', *Istina* 4 (1975): 457-475, at pp. 469-71.

¹⁴⁶ For instance: John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 305.

¹⁴⁷ See p. 33 note 142 above.

¹⁴⁸ A. Tuilier, 'Le sens de l'adjectif *οἰκουμενικός* dans la tradition patristique et dans la tradition byzantine', ed. Cross Frank Leslie, *Studia Patristica*, Vol. VII (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 413-24, at p. 423.

¹⁴⁹ Tuilier, 'Le sens de l'adjectif *οἰκουμενικός*', 423.

¹⁵⁰ Dagens, 'L'Eglise universelle', 471.

¹⁵¹ Dagens, 'L'Eglise universelle', 473; Philippe Henne, *Grégoire le Grand* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 246.

This controversy has also been interpreted as a power conflict between the sees of Rome and Constantinople. For instance, Jeffrey Richards has argued that

The conflict over the 'Oecumenical Patriarch' title dominated Gregory's relations with the church of Constantinople, and highlights the considerable insecurity that Rome still felt about its position, and the tenacity with which the popes defended their primacy against attack.¹⁵²

Similarly, Walter Ullmann argued that the conflict was about matters of jurisdiction and that Gregory disliked John's use of the title because of its implications for the primacy of the Roman See.¹⁵³ As part of this, Ullmann also argued that Gregory's missionary activities were in part a response to John's appropriation of the title.¹⁵⁴ Ullmann asked why it was that Gregory did not protest against the use of this title before June 595, and concluding that Gregory's protestations to the east concerning the title were inspired by his missionary efforts in England.¹⁵⁵ He wrote that

The mission to England occasioned Gregory's protest. What the title meant was that the patriarch claimed universal jurisdictional power, the same claim that was enshrined in the *principatus* of the Roman Church. The envisaged extension of Christianity and the consequential exercise of the *principatus* of the Roman Church necessitated a sharp remonstrance against the title claimed by the patriarch. In order to safeguard the claim of the Roman *principatus* towards the West, Gregory I was bound to protest vigorously to the East.¹⁵⁶

However, not only is the timing of this out, as Gregory's main flurry of letter-writing occurred in 595, which is too early for it to have been affected by the English mission, but Markus has argued convincingly against Ullmann's argument, saying that Gregory's hatred of the title had nothing to do with *principatus*, nothing to do with the English mission,¹⁵⁷ and that it was not a conflict over the status of the two sees.¹⁵⁸ Alternatively, he has argued that (my use of bold):

What he was defending in this controversy, based as it was on ancient misunderstanding and a certain inflation of trivialities, was the honour

¹⁵² Richards, *Consul of God*, 217. See also *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁵³ Ullmann, *Papal Government*, 36-7.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Ullmann, *Papal Government*, 37.

¹⁵⁷ Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 32.

¹⁵⁸ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 93.

and rightful status of each and every bishop, not the Roman *principatus*... There is no reason, therefore, for reading either the conflict with Constantinople over the title of 'ecumenical patriarch' or the sending of the mission to the English, linked or separately, in terms of a desire to 'emancipate' the papacy from its 'Byzantine captivity'. The vision of a Western Christian society linked to the *principatus* of the Roman Church and unrestricted by its subjugation to the ecclesiastical establishment of the Byzantine Empire was not Gregory's vision.¹⁵⁹

Gregory, according to this interpretation, was defending the status of all bishops, not promoting Rome. Markus therefore agrees with Gregory's own representation of his position, an interpretation which appears to be correct. First, as Markus has shown, Gregory's protestations formed an 'unbroken series',¹⁶⁰ and it was more that his arguments became more urgent in 595, not that they started then. Secondly, it is argued here that this is consistent with Gregory's approach shown in 595-7 with regards Cyriacus when Gregory began with gentle reminders not to use the title, and only became forceful in his language in 597 when it was clear that Cyriacus had not listened to him.¹⁶¹ Gregory did not wish himself to become the cause of division between him and the patriarch, which is why, in addition to possible strategic calculations, he did not *begin* with such harsh words. This provides an explanation for why Gregory should appear angrier in 595 than in 590. Thirdly, and most significantly for present purposes, it is also argued here that it is possible that the events preceding 595 – particularly the Lombard invasions of 593 and the failed negotiations of 595 – had had such a profound effect on Gregory that he was now viewing worldly events in eschatological terms as never before. The effect of the Lombard invasions in giving an apocalyptic flavour to Gregory's other works has already been noted,¹⁶² and it is argued here that it is possible that these events had led to Gregory viewing the situation with the patriarch with more urgency, and to him looking for signs of the end or actions or events which might precede it. The parallels between the actions of John and the actions of Lucifer could only have further convinced Gregory that the end was nigh. Consequently, this was not, at heart, a struggle for power between the patriarchs; rather, worldly events had pushed Gregory further towards his already-strong tendency to view events in biblical terms.

¹⁵⁹ Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 33.

¹⁶⁰ Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 31.

¹⁶¹ He mentions the topic gently in *Ep.* 7.5 (1:447-8), but returns to the topic forcefully a year later when he evokes the Antichrist in *Ep.* 7.28 (1:486-7, at p. 487).

¹⁶² Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 51-3.

It is also entirely possible that the previous problems that he had had with John of Constantinople did not endear him to the pope. None of this is to deny that this conflict involved different ideas of who had power over whom, but it is to say that it did not begin by a desire on Gregory's part to assert to Petrine supremacy. In fact, by admonishing the patriarch, Gregory was not so much asserting it as exercising the responsibilities that, in his mind, came with it.

It is of course impossible to ascertain Gregory's motivations and private thoughts beyond all doubt, but his actions were certainly consistent with one who was not asserting his own supremacy. For instance, when Bishop Eulogius addressed him as ecumenical patriarch, Gregory rebuked him with the same vehemence with which he had rebuked others.¹⁶³ Furthermore, as Gregory makes the point that neither Peter nor the saints claimed or could claim the title, these assertions of primacy should be seen as emphasising how far the patriarch was rising above his station than as assertions of superiority alone.¹⁶⁴ He also did not interfere with the election of bishops and other matters which concerned the other patriarchates. Any conflict that there may have been, therefore, concerning the position of Rome relative to the other patriarchates was not played out in the controversy over this title.

Consequently, Gregory's eschatological tone and invocation of the devil in these letters cannot be accounted for by a desire to 'emancipate' the papacy from the Byzantines.¹⁶⁵ The only emancipation that Gregory was seeking in this conflict was that of John from the devil, as the patriarch (and by implication the church) was enduring both a real and symbolic diabolical enslavement. Indeed, Gregory did not wish to 'emancipate' the west from the east as such a thing would be a form of separation, and his association of division with the devil meant that he would try to join together, and not separate, the two sees. Furthermore, the next section will demonstrate how Gregory believed that the five patriarchs were dependent on one another, for reasons to do with his diabolology. His use of fiery devil-related rhetoric was therefore not an attempt to defend papal supremacy but was indeed an attempt to

¹⁶³ *Ep.* 8.29 (2:550-53).

¹⁶⁴ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337, at p. 332).

¹⁶⁵ As argued in Ullmann, *Growth of Papal Government*, *passim*, 106. For the idea of a 'Byzantine' papacy, see also Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 307-310 and Lynn White Jr., 'The Byzantinization of Sicily', *The American Historical Review* 42:1 (1936): 1-21.

defend ‘the honour and rightful status of each and every bishop’.¹⁶⁶ Why, however, was it so important that this be defended? It is shown below that Gregory’s beliefs about the devil and the church explain *why* he should defend the status of all bishops rather than argue for papal supremacy. In giving such an explanation, the next section also gives further evidence in support of this interpretation.

6.2.2.2 Universal Vulnerability to the Devil

Gregory asserted the episcopal status of each and every bishop because in his mind, if there was only one bishop, the church and every soul within it would be in grave danger. This was because the fate of the entire world would then be wound up in a single man. If Gregory’s interpretation of what the ecumenical title meant was correct, and there was only a single bishop, then the whole church would be at risk:

et cum fortasse is in errore perit qui uniuersalis dicitur, nullus iam episcopus remansisse in statu ueritatis inuenitur¹⁶⁷

This idea was so important to Gregory that he repeated it several times, to different individuals:

si unus episcopus uocatur uniuersalis, uniuersa ecclesia corrui, si unus uniuersus cadit.¹⁶⁸

Gregory therefore argued that if there is only one bishop, and that bishop falls into error, then there will no longer be any bishops standing in the truth – because if this bishop does truly and accurately hold the title of *universalis*, then there will *be* no other bishops.

As discovered earlier, Gregory saw bishops as defences against the devil, and empty bishoprics (and inadequate bishops) as gaps through which the devil can enter. Anyone who stands outside the church, such as heretics, has no protection from the prowling wolf, and if the devil succeeds against a bishop, then his flock is

¹⁶⁶ Markus, ‘Gregory the Great’s Europe’, 33.

¹⁶⁷ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-25, at p. 324). And when perhaps he who is called universal perishes in error, no bishop will be found to have remained in a place of truthfulness. See also *Ep.* 5.37 (1:308-11).

¹⁶⁸ *Ep.* 7.24 (1:478-80, at p. 479). If one bishop is called universal, the universal church falls, if the universal one falls.

also liable to fall. Given this model of the church, it is clear why Gregory was fearful: if John is the only bishop, and John falls, then there will be no church to defend against the devil, and the whole of humanity will be left unprotected. The wolf will no longer be circling round the wall of bishops, but inside the defensive camp of the church. Furthermore, Gregory described the devil as having his tooth in the patriarch:¹⁶⁹ if the patriarch were the only bishop, then the devil would have his teeth in every member of the church. Thus, just as elsewhere Gregory wrote that the devil targets bishops as this gives him access to their flocks, so could John not be 'ecumenical', because if he were the only bishop, then targeting such a bishop would yield the devil even greater prize: the entire world.

Gregory's ideas about the devil were therefore central to his conception of this incident (given his interpretation of the title) because his beliefs concerning the vulnerability of all men and women – including pastors, popes and patriarchs – to the devil meant that having only one man guarding the flock put the entire world in grave danger. Gregory believed that nobody was above error and that no man or woman was immune to the wiles of the devil. In the *Pastoral Care*, Gregory warned that the devil can succeed even against pastors who have previously been successful against him, and warned that they must exercise eternal vigilance.¹⁷⁰ In such cases the devil works by means of igniting and encouraging pride: the case of the patriarchs of Constantinople fits this scenario perfectly. Even popes are not immune from error, as in the *Dialogues* Gregory recounts a story about a pope who had been misled about the sanctity of an abbot by his advisors' lies.¹⁷¹ When questioned by his interlocuter Peter as to how so great a pope was deceived about so great a man, the figure of Gregory replied, essentially, that one should not be surprised, as we are deceived because we are men.¹⁷² Whilst this story does not involve the devil directly, it does contain the idea that popes can commit errors of judgement, and there is no great leap from believing that a man can be misled by the lies of a man to believing that he can be misled by the deceptions of the devil. Most telling, however, are Gregory's words which humanise the pope and discuss this fallibility in terms of his humanity: of course great popes can be deceived – they are men. It is precisely because of this universal fallibility that a collegial episcopal structure is necessary.

¹⁶⁹ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:323).

¹⁷⁰ See p. 132 above.

¹⁷¹ *Dial.* 1.4.9-19 (2:46-56).

¹⁷² *Dial.* 1.4.19 (2:54).

The relationship between Gregory's diabolology and his ecclesiology, and thus between his ideas about the devil and his conception of the pentarchy and the papal primacy, have not previously been explored. A work which has been particularly neglected in explaining the controversy over the ecumenical title, the *Pastoral Care*, sheds further light on this question of why a collegial pentarchy should be necessary. In this, Gregory discusses how those of superior rank should consider the power of this rank, but how they are equal in nature to those beneath them.¹⁷³ In this, the principle of papal primacy is discussed in terms of equality and fallibility.¹⁷⁴ Gregory writes about Peter (the first pastor) and his humility, and quotes Acts 10:26 which discusses Peter's actions after Cornelius had laid himself at Peter's feet.¹⁷⁵ Peter responded by lifting Cornelius up, saying: 'Arise, do not do that; I myself am a man' (*surge, ne feceris, et ego ipse homo sum*).¹⁷⁶ Peter, the man into whose hands Gregory believed the Keys of St. Peter had been placed, therefore acknowledged his humanity, just as in the *Dialogues* Gregory acknowledged the humanity of a pope and the imperfect prophecy of the biblical patriarch David.¹⁷⁷ Immediately prior to the discussion of Peter in the *Pastoral Care*, Gregory had written that the ruler sometimes lifts himself up in pride, and becomes like the apostate angel; this was particularly so when a man disdains to be like a man.¹⁷⁸ To follow Peter, therefore, is to acknowledge one's humanity, but to follow the devil is to attempt to rise above one's nature to be like God. Thus, whilst Peter accepts his humanity and humbles himself, the prideful pastor sees himself as above men and, like the devil, aspires to be like God. One of Gregory's intentions was therefore to make men and women realise their human nature, and thus also their vulnerability.

As seen earlier, Gregory believed that the patriarch was trying to usurp the true ecumenical head of the church – Christ. The fact that Christ can be what the patriarch claims to be demonstrates this point about fallibility. It is significant because Christ both *can be* and *is* the head of the ecumenical church because he is

¹⁷³ *Reg. Past.* 2.6, lines 13-16, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2011).

¹⁷⁴ In this context 'fallibility' means ability to do wrong or make a wrong judgement or to fall into the devil's temptations. It is not meant in a modern sense.

¹⁷⁵ *Reg. Past.* 4.6, lines 81-4, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2011).

¹⁷⁶ *Reg. Past.* 4.6, lines 81-4, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2011).

¹⁷⁷ *Dial.* 1.4.9 (2:54); *Dial.* 2.16.8 (2:190).

¹⁷⁸ *Reg. Past.* 2.6, lines 56-7, found at <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/llta/pages/Toc.aspx> (accessed 20 September 2011).

not vulnerable to the devil. The fate of the world can be tied up in Christ, the universal head of the church, as he stands incorruptible against the devil. This is demonstrated in scripture and by Gregory's reading of Christ's temptation in the light of his three-fold method of temptation. Gregory's arguments against the use of the ecumenical title therefore demonstrate the influence of his beliefs about the vulnerability of all men and women – even popes and patriarchs – to the devil on his ideas of the church and its structure.

Gregory's writings abound with references to the ways in which watchmen (bishops) become blind to the devil, and the main way in which this occurs is through pride. It is a consequence of this vulnerability of all men to the devil that one man cannot be a universal priest. Thus, whilst others have also argued that Gregory's objection to the title stemmed from his belief that it threatened the 'collegiate' structure of the pentarchy,¹⁷⁹ what this analysis demonstrates is that this itself was a consequence of his belief in the vulnerability of all men and women to the devil. This argument therefore adds to scholarly understanding about the devil by demonstrating that Gregory's ideas about the devil led Gregory to uphold such a structure in the first place.

Gregory's pontificate has also been called a 'Byzantine Papacy', meaning that Gregory participated in the Byzantine system and accepted the pentarchy.¹⁸⁰ This was without sacrificing the idea of papal primacy, however, as this was something that Gregory also asserted whilst simultaneously being a major witness to what Meyendorff calls the 'ecclesiology of communion' which bound east and west.¹⁸¹ Meyendorff called this a 'Janus-like equilibrium' whereby the apostolicity of Rome was upheld at the same time as the pentarchy was accepted.¹⁸² Indeed, Gregory's assertion of the Petrine supremacy whilst simultaneously arguing for collegiate responsibility makes this mixed view an accurate one. The important thing is that, for Gregory, Christ's words to Peter and the apostolicity of the Roman succession were not the only factors influencing Gregory's understanding of his own position; unlike Leo I, who was very vocal in his assertion of papal supremacy, Gregory tempered this with an acknowledgement that all men and women are vulnerable to the devil inherited from his monastic life. Thus, several factors influenced his

¹⁷⁹ Martyn, 'Introduction', 76.

¹⁸⁰ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 331, *passim*.

¹⁸¹ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 307.

¹⁸² Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 331.

understanding, not just apostolicity, ancient privilege, and respect for council rulings, but also his conception of the church, fear of the devil, and ascetic outlook which saw all life as struggle against the devil. A prime reason for this was the vulnerability of all men, even popes, to the devil.

Consequently, during the controversy over the ecumenical title, one can see Gregory applying his ideas regarding bishops forming a defensive structure against the devil to the situation. According to this idea, empty bishoprics had to be filled and inadequate bishops had to be replaced. Over and above this, however, the idea of an ever-prowling devil necessitated some degree of collegiate priesthood. This was necessary so that if one bishop or patriarch succumbed, all did not fall. Gregory's dislike of the title was rooted not only in his hatred of pride, but also in the need he saw for defence. The vulnerability even of bishops to the devil necessitated watchfulness, and, as the successor of Saint Peter, it was Gregory's job to ensure that the devil did not compromise any members of the church. He had, in effect, to act as a watchman on behalf of his brothers in the pentarchy. Gregory's ideas about the devil as contained in his exegetical, hagiographical and instructive works can therefore be found to have influenced his reactions to real-world events. Gregory's ecclesiology was therefore a mixture of a collegiate system whereby the pentarchy was upheld, and a hierarchical one whereby the pope, as the successor of Saint Peter, had the responsibility to ensure that none of the bishops or patriarchs fell into error. However, just as Peter had acknowledged that he was just a man, so must popes and patriarchs. He had to ensure that no gaps – whether vacant bishoprics or erring bishops – appeared in the edifice of the church through which the devil might enter.

6.2.3. The Devil and the Fabric of the World

The use of the ecumenical title by patriarchs of Constantinople put not just their own souls at risk, but threatened the unity of the church and the safety of the people within it. It also, according to Gregory, heralded the end and threatened the entire world. Furthermore, it was also not just the patriarchs who had a responsibility to speak out against this work of the devil, but also the responsibility of the emperor. Gregory wrote to Emperor Maurice for help, arguing that he had a responsibility to do so and also that the use of the title threatened the empire:

Illis ergo pietas uestra praecipiat ne quod per appellationem friuoli
nominis scandalum gignant, qui in superbia et typho ceciderunt.¹⁸³

In his closing paragraph to this letter, Gregory revealed the two things which he hoped the emperor, if governing correctly, would benefit: the peace of the church and the advantage of the empire.¹⁸⁴ In Gregory's mind the fate of the church and the empire were intertwined, a relationship that Gregory emphasised in his letters to the emperor regarding the dangers of the title. Thus Gregory combined his thoughts on the title with the problem of the Lombards. 595 was a period of crisis for Gregory, as at this time peace negotiations with the Lombards broke down.¹⁸⁵ The emperor had apparently laid the blame at Gregory's feet and accused him of naivety (*fatuus*) in his dealings with Ariulf, the Duke of Spoleto.¹⁸⁶ Gregory defended his actions to the emperor in a letter sent in the June of 595.¹⁸⁷ In the same month (and received by the emperor in the same batch¹⁸⁸), Gregory criticised John of Constantinople's use of the title, and connected this issue with the problem of the Lombards:

culpa nostra hostium gladios exacuit, quae reipublicae uires grauat.¹⁸⁹

The sins of the church, therefore, spread outwards, and have an effect upon the empire, strengthening the power of the empire's enemies. In his introduction to this letter, Gregory wrote that

uidelicet pie ueraciter que considerans neminem recte posse terrena
regere, nisi nouerit diuina tractare, pacem que reipublicae ex uniuersalis
ecclesiae pace pendere.¹⁹⁰

Thus, not only was the strength of the church determined by the strength of its bishops, but Gregory also argued that the peace of the empire was linked to that of

¹⁸³ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491). Therefore let your piety instruct those who have fallen into pride and arrogance not to give birth to temptation through the appropriation of a frivolous title.

¹⁸⁴ *Ep.* 7.30 (1:490-1, at p. 491).

¹⁸⁵ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 104.

¹⁸⁶ *Ep.* 5.36 (1:304-7, at p. 304).

¹⁸⁷ *Ep.* 5.36 (1:304-7).

¹⁸⁸ Martyn, *Letters*, 2:350, n. 74.

¹⁸⁹ *Ep.* 5.37 (1:308-11, at p.308). Our sin sharpens the swords of the enemy, which burdens the strength of the republic.

¹⁹⁰ *Ep.* 5.37 (1:308-11). Namely, he considers piously and truthfully that nobody is able to rule earthly things unless he learns how to manage divine things, and to weigh the peace of the republic by the peace of the universal church.

the church. As these letters were written at the height of the Lombard invasion, it is no surprise that to Gregory's mind the ruptures in the church were responsible for the horrors he saw around him. He wrote that the emperor ought to seek the peace of the church in order to stem war, and that he should use his power over the patriarch, because

Dum enim ista reprimitis, rempublicam subleuatis, et dum talia reciditis,
de regni uestri prolixitate tractatis.¹⁹¹

Gregory here connects the peace of the church with the peace of the empire, and asks the emperor to use the chains of his authority to oblige (*astringat*) the patriarch to give up the title. It is therefore the duty of the emperor as well as the other patriarchs to ensure that this title, which is a symbol of both pride and disunity, is cast aside. Indeed, in his letter to Empress Constantina, Gregory used religious arguments and quoted Isaiah 14:13-14, comparing the patriarch to the Antichrist and Lucifer who spurned the other angels.¹⁹² Gregory thus used similar arguments with the empress as with the emperor. He asked Constantina for help on the grounds that as much as she serves God in the truth, so much will she securely control the world entrusted to her.¹⁹³ This use of the emperor's wife shows Gregory employing whatever tactic he can in order to defeat the threat from the devil that he sees posed by the patriarch of Constantinople. Indeed, in many ways, Gregory has adopted the tactics of the devil, and begun to use the the wife as a way to get to the husband; this is like the devil does in Genesis with Eve, and in Job with Job's wife.

Gregory thus argued that aiding him in the quarrel would help them rule the empire more successfully, because they would be fulfilling their duty. The responsibilities of the emperor towards the church had been recognised by Emperor Justinian (527-65).¹⁹⁴ Justinian had recognised that the authority within the church was shared between the five patriarchates, and that the imperial powers had a responsibility to defend orthodoxy.¹⁹⁵ In the preamble to his addition to the Code, his *Novella 6*, Justinian wrote that the priesthood and imperial dignity are the two great

¹⁹¹ *Ep.* 5.37 (1:308-11, at p. 308). For when you repress such things, you raise up the state, and when you cut back things, you pull them from the whole extent of your kindgom.

¹⁹² *Ep.* 5. 39 (1:314-18, p. 316).

¹⁹³ *Ep.* 5.39 (1:315).

¹⁹⁴ Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 51.

¹⁹⁵ Chadwick, *East and West*, 52.

gifts from God, and that the dignity of priests was a source of care to the emperors.¹⁹⁶ Gregory's request for help from the imperial powers demonstrates that he too held this view, or was at least prepared to call upon it. For Gregory, therefore, it is also the responsibility of the secular powers to ensure that those who attempt to emulate the devil or act on his instigation are prevented from doing so.

Markus has compared Gregory's thought with that of Gelasius before him, and has written that

Gelasius had been able to drive a wedge between the sacred authority of the clergy and the power of secular rulers; but there was no room for such a division in Gregory's world. The Church had become a public institution of the Empire and the Empire itself was deeply and thoroughly 'ecclesiastified'.¹⁹⁷

Markus argues that Gregory did not conceive of the empire and the church in dualistic terms, and that in his mind there was no division between the authority of the clergy and the power of the secular rulers.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, elsewhere he describes a 'radical integration of Church and Empire' one which had developed in the hundred years preceding Gregory.¹⁹⁹ According to Markus, Gregory saw the two functions of the secular and spiritual rulers as complementary.²⁰⁰

In his dealings with the emperor and his pleas for help, it is possible to discern Gregory's assumptions about the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical power. Hipshon argues that whilst one cannot find speculation on kingship in Gregory's works, one can find a practical theology.²⁰¹ As seen, such a practical theology – one in which the power of the state is employed in the church's fight against the devil – can be seen in Gregory's letters. Gregory's appeals to the emperor, however, and his comments on imperial responsibility, stemmed from the danger he saw in the church and his belief that, as Peter's successor, that he must employ all means at his disposal to rid the church of the threat posed by the use of the ecumenical title.

¹⁹⁶ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 208-9.

¹⁹⁷ Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 22.

¹⁹⁸ Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 22.

¹⁹⁹ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 84.

²⁰⁰ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 86-7.

²⁰¹ David Hipshon, 'Gregory the Great's 'Political Thought'', in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53 (2002): 439-453, at p. 451.

Part of this did involve being deliberately manipulative. Gregory's decision to refer to either Lucifer or the Antichrist when speaking to different people does not appear to have been arbitrary, but was done in order to formulate his arguments in such a way that they had maximum effect. Where Gregory makes a direct analogy, for instance, he refers to Lucifer when speaking to John and to the Antichrist when speaking to anyone else. Thus, when writing to the emperor and the emperor's sister, John is said to be anticipating the Antichrist.²⁰² When writing to John himself, the patriarch is said to be emulating the devil.²⁰³ And when writing to his fellow patriarchs Eulogius of Alexandria and Anastasius of Antioch, John is emulating neither Lucifer nor the Antichrist; rather, the devil has sown the seeds of discord and John must be stopped in order to protect the church from attack.²⁰⁴ This sentiment that this was part of a diabolical attack on the church is also found in a later letter also to fellow bishops.²⁰⁵ Gregory does not equate John with the Antichrist when writing to John himself, and he does not equate him with Lucifer when writing to anyone but John. Gregory can therefore be seen carefully crafting his replies so as to cause maximum effect according to the individual. John emulating Lucifer's past actions is a problem personal to John, whose salvation will be threatened; John's actions being part of a present diabolical attack on the church is a problem for Gregory's fellow patriarchs, who are a part of the church; and John's actions being a prefiguring or foretelling of the Antichrist is a problem for the emperor, because the apocalypse is universal, encompassing both the spiritual and secular worlds.

If the patriarch of Constantinople was the Antichrist, or heralded the Antichrist, then that would mean that the end of the world was near: warning John and then Cyriacus therefore became even more important, for both Gregory and (in Gregory's mind) the emperor. Apocalyptic passages abound in Gregory's works dating from the years 593-5. In both his *Homilies on Ezechiel* and his *Dialogues* Gregory writes of the destruction of Rome.²⁰⁶ Gregory was at the very centre of

²⁰² To Emperor Maurice *Ep.* 5.37 (1:308-11) to Maurice's wife Constantina *Ep.* 5.39 (1:314-18, p. 316).

²⁰³ *Ep.* 5.44 (1:329-337).

²⁰⁴ *Ep.* 5.41 (1:320-325).

²⁰⁵ *Ep.* 9.157 (2:714-16).

²⁰⁶ For more on how late sixth-century Rome seemed burdened with death and decay, see: Robert E. McNally, 'Gregory the Great (590-604) and his Declining World', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 16 (1978): 7-26, p. 7. For more on Gregory's eschatology, see: Claude Dagens, 'La fin des temps et l'Église selon Saint Grégoire le Grand', *Recherches de science religieuse* 58 (1970): 273-88. For the

these wars, trying to defend the city and failing in his efforts to bring about peace. From Gregory's perspective, therefore, Rome was fallen and besieged, a great patriarch had fallen to pride, and the emperor, the secular power, was doing little about either. Gregory's association of the patriarch of Constantinople with the Antichrist may therefore have also stemmed from this link between the patriarch and the emperor. As Gregory wrote in the *Moralia*, when he comes the Antichrist will be allied with the secular powers.²⁰⁷ The emperor, therefore, may have been an arm, or facilitator, of the Antichrist. Gregory's apocalyptic thought is outside the remit of this thesis, but it needs to be discussed insofar as the devil's actions and the Antichrist's coming are very much associated with it.

6.3 Conclusion

In consequence, therefore, Gregory's letters illustrate his understanding of the relationship between bishops and the devil, by means of his explanatory passages on the topic and his actions towards the patriarch. His diabolology informed his ecclesiology insofar as a primary duty of bishops was to keep watch against an ever-prowling devil (1 Peter 5:8). Indeed, the two ideas that sum up his thought are prowling on the part of the devil, and vigilance on the part of the bishop. The vulnerability of all bishops to the devil necessitated some sort of collegial episcopacy, albeit with Rome still at the head. In his letters one therefore sees the assumption with which his entire mind was immersed: that the devil was everywhere, and that the church acted as a fortification against him.

His letters also demonstrate the exegetical manner of his thinking, and his ready willingness to flit between past, present, and future and between microcosm and macrocosm. The controversy over the ecumenical title demonstrates not only the fluidity of his thoughts concerning the devil's actions in the past, present, and future, but also that of his ideas concerning the inter-relationship between the body of John, the community of the church, and the world entire. John's pride marks a crack in the relationship between him and God; his position as bishop means that this crack is also in the church; and the mutual dependence of the church and empire meant that it could not be ignored by the secular powers, as it resulted in secular conflict and the

wider context, see A. Vasiliev, 'Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: West and East', *Byzantion* 16:1 (1944): 462-502.

²⁰⁷ *Mor.* 34.2.2 (2:1734).

collapse of peace. Such cracks are entrances or spaces through which the devil can enter. The effect that the diabolical possession of just one man can have on the entire world is itself evidence of the fallacy of the title: no bishop can be ecumenical, because if that one body falls, then so does the whole church, to be followed quickly by the whole world. If John's body represents the church, then if his body falls to the devil, then so does the entire structure, leaving no defensive tower or watchman to defend humanity from the prowling lion.

Consequently, Gregory's vehemence in this controversy cannot be attributed to an attempt on his part to assert the papal primacy, or be dismissed only as manipulative 'fire and brimstone' rhetoric; rather, his accusations that John and Cyriacus were emulating Lucifer, led by the devil, and anticipating the Antichrist should be seen as reflecting a very real belief that the devil was, in fact, involved. At the root of all of Gregory's arguments was fear: fear that an empty bishopric will give entrance to the devil; fear that the patriarchs are imitating Lucifer; fear that the church will fracture; and fear that if the patriarch is indeed ecumenical, then the church could fall – indeed, would fall, if he is already in the clutches of the devil. However, fear was not only the cause, but also the remedy. As seen in the *Moralia* and the *Dialogues*, fear is the route to repentance, and in the *Dialogues*, the devil appears in order to frighten and bring about repentance. In his letters, Gregory employs the figure of the devil to the same effect: in fact, it is his duty to do so.

In those places in his letters where Gregory uses the figure of the devil, therefore, one need not posit an opposition between Gregory being truthful and Gregory being manipulative, or between Gregory putting forth his true views and exaggerating for dramatic effect. His extensive use of the figures of Lucifer, the devil, and the Antichrist can be explained by the fact that his fears about the devil and the church lie at the root of his fears about the title. At the same time, however, Gregory employed such language against the patriarchs because fear of the devil also lay at the heart of his weapon against this threat. Gregory saw the title as a threat to church unity, and even as a threat to its existence, all of which gave the devil an opening; as the successor of Saint Peter, it was Gregory's duty to speak out, and in doing so, he employed a tactic that he claims in the *Moralia* and *Dialogues* is used by God: the use of fear of the devil in order to frighten into repentance. As we saw earlier, Gregory saw the devil's very real involvement in the controversy, which is one reason why he is invoked in these letters; the other reason is because Gregory,

the chief watchman, is using a divinely-inspired tactic: using the image of the devil in order to inspire fear, so as to bring about repentance. Consequently, Gregory's tone and language in these letters was deeply rooted in his theology and beliefs about sin, repentance, and salvation, and the role he believed the devil played in trying to bring out division in the church.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

Our understanding of the early medieval papacy is so profoundly shaped by the writings and achievements of Gregory the Great that it is easy to forget that he was the first monk ever to sit on the throne of Saint Peter. His monastic background lent a distinctive flavour to both his thought and action, and had a very real effect on his papal career and his understanding of episcopal office. This is particularly evident in his ideas about the devil, as his belief that the devil is ever-present, intelligent, and involved in even apparently minor sins affected the way in which he viewed the world and how he performed his pastoral duties; they also affected his understanding of the Roman primacy, as his belief in the vulnerability of all men and women – including popes, prophets and patriarchs – to the devil resulted in a less vehement assertion of this than that of some of his predecessors. He therefore carried his ideas about vigilance and introspection with him into papal office. Indeed, Gregory's authorship of a work concerned with pastoral care is testament to his belief that it is so hard to resist the devil, temptation and sin that a pastor cannot adequately fight them either himself or on behalf of others without education, as he needs to be equipped with the same knowledge of human nature that is already possessed by the devil. Above all, however, the legacy of Gregory's monastic education can be seen in the profound influence that his practice of exegesis, method of *lectio divina*, and contemplation on biblical passages had on his beliefs about the devil and his application of these to the world around him.

Gregory believed that the devil was of supreme intelligence, present everywhere, mostly invisible, and fiercely tenacious. He believed that no one, not even a pope or patriarch, was invulnerable to him. The apparent contradiction set out in the introduction between the scheming devil of the *Moralia* and the 'innocuous' devil of the *Dialogues* is a false one: the devil of the *Dialogues* demonstrates the saturation of human activity in sin, and the tainting of all human wrongdoing, no matter how minor, with the actions of the devil. The devil of the *Dialogues* is, in fact, an extremely terrifying one. Thus, in the story where a man calls on the devil to untie his laces, and the devil does so, this is not trivial, but demonstrates the gravity of the

man's sin and the presence of an invisible devil at his side; indeed, this is the moral that the interlocuter Peter draws from the story.¹ Similarly, when a nun who forgets to make the sign of a cross ends up with a devil within her, this demonstrates the ease with which the devil – even if he is not even trying – can gain mastery over a person.

This can be associated with Brown's 'peccatisation of the world':² as minor sins were promoted to major sins, it is argued here that for Gregory, this meant ensuring that those in his care realised that the devil was involved in even the smallest incidents of wrongdoing. That is to say, when in his works the devil is said to be involved in what to the modern mind is a 'trivial' event, this is not a trivialisation of the devil, but an amplification of the sin. By showing the devil as present even in these incidents, Gregory was ensuring that his audience was aware of the elevated nature of their sin: the devil does not gain his status from what a modern audience deems a big or small sin, but the sin gains its status from its clear association with the devil. It has been demonstrated that Gregory believed the devil to be involved in all sin: consequently, the adoption of a pessimistic viewpoint results not just in a peccatisation of the world, but a 'diabolisation' too. If the world and human action are overwhelmed in sin, then so are they overwhelmed with the devil.

For Gregory, the devil is a deceiver and the father of lies.³ The world is fallen and belongs to him, as he is the prince of this world.⁴ If humanity's vision of this shape-shifting devil has been obscured even further by its own fall into blindness. Consequently, the devil is not of the other world, but of this world; it is merely that humanity cannot see him. Thus the discernment granted to pastors⁵ and the visions given to the dying⁶ are not visions of the other world, but are examples of men and women being granted momentary sight of *this* world. This also sometimes happens as the end of the world nears: by means of an imperfect participation in the *visio dei*, some are able to see events, including those involving the devil, as they really are. As this is through the vision or light of God, the viewer is often placed in a transcendent position, with the devil's actions in the past, present and future all available to view. This is a much more accurate way of understanding some of the

¹ *Dial.* 3.20.3 (2:350). See p. 154 above.

² See pp. 184-5 above.

³ Gen. 3:13; John 8:44.

⁴ John 12:31.

⁵ See chapter 4, pp. 127-43.

⁶ See chapter 5, pp. 169-74.

visions in the *Dialogues* than asking whether Gregory meant, for instance, that a particular action of the devil is occurring now or in the future. Thus, the issue at hand is not the boundary between this world and the next, but the division between the sight of God and the sight of man, one which can see the devil, and the other which cannot.

Furthermore, Gregory's belief that men and women are unable to comprehend what is plainly told to them of sacred matters means that making the devil's presence known to them is even more difficult. Just as God reveals the truth to humankind in ways in which it can understand, so Gregory cloaks what is not seen and known – the devil – in what is seen and known. The devil is therefore often veiled even as he is being revealed, as humanity's fallen intellect cannot comprehend him unless the pastor clothes him in things that are familiar to it. Thus, a creature who deliberately disguises himself is described by a pastor with imperfect sight to a blind flock using images that they can understand rather than by describing what is necessarily 'actually' there. All discussions of visions of the devil in Gregory's works need to begin with this understanding. Therefore, the problem affecting humanity is the post-lapsarian blindness that thwarts its ability to see and comprehend this world as it is: inhabited and ruled over by the devil.

Pastoral Care: the bishop, the church, the pope, and the devil

Gregory was living at a time when doctrine had largely been defined and much of western Europe was Christian, and he was therefore less concerned with abstract ideas about the devil than with how lessons could be drawn for men and women. Indeed, Gregory's ideas about the devil cannot be separated from his concern with pastoral care. Gregory believed that the bishops formed a defensive wall around all orthodox Christians, outside of which the devil prowled; schismatics and heretics wandered outside this wall, and did not get the bishops' protection.⁷ The devil, usually invisible to human eyes, would be discerned by the watchman, the bishop, enabling him to defend himself, his flock, and, when necessary, his fellow bishops and patriarchs.⁸ The pastor, however, could not see this devil unless he had first exercised self-control, successfully fought against the devil's temptations, and,

⁷ See chapter 6, pp. 195-98.

⁸ See chapter 5, pp. 140-2 and chapter 6, pp. 195-98.

finally, (preferably) engaged in contemplation so as to gain a momentary glimpse of the *visio dei*.⁹ This temporarily cleared his eyes of the darkness that clouds the vision of all men and women, enabling him to perform his function as watchman. Gregory's ideas about the devil and discernment, concerned as they were with ascetic authority, were very monastic, and were at the centre of his conclusions about the complementarity of the active and contemplative lives.

Furthermore, his work on Ezechiel discusses the danger of the watchman leaving just one gap open to the devil. This affected his performance of papal duties, as his belief that even patriarchs and bishops were vulnerable to the devil meant that, in his mind, a collegial episcopal structure was necessary; this was so even though he also asserted the primacy of Rome. His ideas about the vulnerability of all men to the devil, therefore, resulted in a different balance in his mind between the ideas of collegiality and papal supremacy than some of his predecessors, particularly Pope Leo I (440-461), who forcefully asserted the Petrine supremacy. Leo's arguments had been couched in legal terms, as he argued that the pope had inherited the see from Peter, whereas Gregory's arguments were inherited from his monastic life, and came from his practice of self-reflection and his consciousness of his own fallibility in the face of the power of the devil.¹⁰

Gregory's ideas about the devil's attacks on individuals, religious communities and the church therefore caused him to educate other pastors about these things. In his *Pastoral Care*, Gregory tried to ensure that bishops and Christian rulers were equal to the devil in their knowledge of human nature and its frailty, and that they had the same ability as the devil to shape their arguments to different people. In the *Moralia* Gregory was very conscious of how the devil frames his arguments to appeal to people's weaknesses; in his *Pastoral Care*, the ruler is taught about the different kinds of people and how they are best approached and persuaded away from sin. Gregory was thus attempting to educate rulers into being the devil's equal, and the application of this principle – that the pastor, like the devil, must adapt his way of speaking to suit his audience – can be seen in Gregory's own works: the diversity of writings, particularly the difference between his *Moralia* and the stories in his *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies*, may not just be the result of genre but also an active attempt on the part of Gregory to win against the devil whilst employing the

⁹ These are the broad arguments of chapter 4.

¹⁰ See chapter 6, pp. 214-223.

same tactic of fine-tuning his message to his audience. That is, as pastor, Gregory must be more persuasive and knowledgeable about human nature than the devil. Thus one sees Gregory acting in a similar way to the devil but in order to bring about the opposite.

Similarly, at the beginning of this thesis the devil's tenacity and cunning were described: the devil starts with gentle persuasions, eventually getting stronger; this same phenomenon can be seen in Gregory's rebukes to the patriarchs of Constantinople, where he begins with a verbal admonishment, progresses onto oblique written references, before employing all the arguments at his disposal. He also stresses different things to different people: to bishops he emphasises ruptures in the church, and to the emperor, the Antichrist, the apocalypse, and the effects on the secular world. This awareness of audience, message, and method of persuasion that Gregory demonstrates in his own letters (and writings as a whole) is something that he also attributes to the devil, and which may well have shaped his own view of him: the devil is like Gregory, thinking about his recipient, and carefully using the correct arguments and tone in order to persuade. And, like the devil, the bishop cannot give in, as this is also a war of tenacity between the bishop and the devil, with the soul of another at stake.

In this battle of wits the pastor, or Gregory, often adopts the skill of the devil in order to succeed against him. Thus, in the *Moralia*, the devil uses Job's wife as a ladder from which to climb into Job's otherwise impenetrable heart; and in Gregory's letters, one sees the pope writing to the emperor's wife, urging her to speak to her husband, and using the emperor's wife – his weakness – as a ladder into *his* heart.

The pastor, saint, bishop, or Gregory himself also set or follow models that are opposite to the devil (or, rather, which follow the alternate model of Christ). Thus, in the *Dialogues*, the devil speaks and taunts Benedict, playing games with language; Benedict, however, is silent. In the *Moralia*, Gregory discusses how there is a time to speak and a time to be silent; and in his own works Gregory sometimes calls himself to silence. Furthermore, when speaking of the title of 'ecumenical patriarch', he warns that the Antichrist may find something of his in the words of priests. Other examples where the devil sets the opposite example can be seen, such as when the saint, by means of discernment, reveals things where the devil hides them, and where the saint exhibits humility whilst the devil demonstrates his pride.

Gregory's diabolology therefore had a very clear effect on his ecclesiology. Immersed as he was in self-reflection and thoughts of diabolical attacks, in his monastic mind he was pre-occupied with the question of gaps and holes left open to the devil. This was particularly so because of his consciousness of his own personal vulnerability. He extrapolated from what he believed and felt on an everyday basis to his thinking about the community and the world, and, when he became pope, these ideas of temptation and vulnerability affected his actions.

The devil in history: the devil's actions as a 'type'

Many of Gregory's beliefs about the devil were biblically-based and orthodox. In the earlier chapters of this thesis Gregory's ideas about the devil's creation, involvement in temptation, and role at the end of the world were analysed, and it was shown that the discursive sections of the *Dialogues* repeat (and sum up) the main theological ideas about the devil (such as the power of God over the devil) that emerge most often in the *Moralia*. However, whilst these things are important, listing Gregory's stance on a variety of doctrinal issues is a very limited way of determining how the idea of the devil actually worked in Gregory's thought. The most accurate and productive way of understanding this is to think of the devil, in the earliest moments of creation, as having set the 'type' or mould of a series of actions and processes, and then these actions and processes repeating themselves throughout history, both by the devil and by men and women. In short, the stories about the devil that Gregory saw in Genesis provided him with an interpretative tool through which to understand the devil's actions throughout all of history. The devil in Gregory's writings is thus a performer who repeats the same actions time and again in repetition of his actions at the beginning of the world. This understanding was the result of Gregory's application of his typological way of interpreting scripture to the world around him, and, given Gregory's pastoral concerns and exegetical mind, is a more productive way to think of his ideas about the devil than merely listing what he thought on a collection of doctrinal issues, as it explains how the idea actually worked in his mind. Much of the focus on the devil – which until recently was subjugated to the study of saints – concerned his role as the antithesis to the saint, rather than as a

model or performer in his own right. The typological aspects of his representation have not been discussed so readily.

This was very much the result of his method of *lectio divina* and his practice, as an exegete, of seeing several layers of meaning in each passage of scripture; he was used to flitting between past, present and future and seeing both literal and allegorical meaning. Thinking typologically about history and the world was not new, but what is significant about Gregory is the extent to which it coloured his understanding. Importantly, however, this phenomenon is usually discussed with reference to Christ, the church and the saints, but not with regards the devil: this idea, accepted in other areas, should also be applied to the devil, even though it means, in some senses, that the devil at different times is almost a type of himself. It is not, therefore (for example), just that Job is a type of Christ, but that in Job, the devil acts in repetition (and perhaps as a 'type') of himself in Genesis.

Understanding what some of these actions and processes were also makes it possible to see some of the connections that existed in his mind and to see why his mind jumps from one idea to another. This thesis has identified some of these actions by identifying the 'pegs' (scriptural words or phrases) on which Gregory placed many of his ideas about the devil.¹¹ From this analysis it was determined that Gregory thought about the devil as a series of images or actions: rising through pride (and division), falling (and binding), darkness (and deceit), temptation, battle, and movement.

The devil serves as the original 'type' or model for the behaviour of lifting oneself up in pride. This concept had its roots in allegorical readings of Is. 14:14, Gen. 1:18, Ezech. 28 and Dan 11:36. It was also applied to the future as a result of 2 Thess. 2:4, where it is said that the Man of Sin (the Antichrist) will sit in God's temple and act as though God. This idea was rooted in what was believed to have been an historical action of the devil, and was adopted as a model through which much of scripture was interpreted.

Gregory applied this concept to different contexts and on different scales. An individual could set himself up as God; this was particularly a risk for those who had already been placed in high estate, which is why Gregory warned rulers of this in his *Pastoral Care*. For the pastor, pride was the sin that returned to catch the pastor who

¹¹ See the second part of the *Moralia* chapter, pp. 95-112 above.

had been successful in defeating other sins. The pastor may, therefore, have originally demonstrated humility by means of obedience, but his success might cause pride in him anew. This is the topic of several parts of the *Dialogues* and the *Pastoral Care*. On the level of the religious community, pride was to be found in disobedience, which is why in the *Dialogues* Gregory promoted its opposite, obedience. Those monks and nuns who were not obedient in these stories were punished, or the devil is shown to have been directly involved in this disobedience. In lay contexts, it is shown by a lack of humility or respect towards ecclesiastical figures, such as in the case of Fortunatus who attempted to shame the bishop but was punished by losing his son.

Gregory's actions in the controversy over the title of 'Ecumenical Patriarch' demonstrate that these ideas were not just held in the abstract but applied to situations that he found himself in. Just as Petersen argued for the *Dialogues* that Gregory's typological mode of thinking affected the way in which he interpreted stories that he heard, so it is argued here that this mode of thought and application of patterns affected his understanding of events around him: thus, just as the King of Tyre in Ezechiel 28 was read in the light of the devil, so were the actions of John of Constantinople. In all of these cases Gregory was not just seeing parallels, but was identifying what he believed to be a constantly-repeating action which had been put in motion by the devil.

Identifying these repeating actions is helpful to the historian because Gregory often associated them with other, more abstract, ideas. For example, the devil's attempt to rise up to be like God was at heart a separation, a self-exile from the other non-rebellious angels which resulted in a divide in the angelic harmony. Whilst the devil had been created greater than all the angels, it had been intended that they remain united and unseparated.¹² The ideas of separation, division and exile were therefore ones that Gregory associated with the devil, as demonstrated by his use of many scriptural words or phrases with such a theme on which he pinned ideas about the devil. In the *Dialogues* this manifested itself as separation from the community, and when discussing John of Constantinople, Gregory used words denoting separation and isolation when describing the patriarch's actions.

¹² *Mor.* 32.23.48 (2:1666-7).

The devil's fall is an action that is also repeated, and seen, for instance, in his binding and casting down at the end of time. The association between the head and the body (see below) meant that this can also be seen in the fall of man and the descriptions of, for instance, Benedict 'falling below himself' in the *Dialogues* as a result of his temptation by the devil.

Furthermore, just as the action of rising through pride was also taken to signify division, so the action of falling is given further meaning, and interpreted as indicating the power of God over the devil. This forms one of the main doctrinal ideas about the devil that Gregory repeated in the *Moralia* and which he gave special mention to in the *Dialogues*; for Gregory, the truth of this abstract idea is evident by the action of the devil's casting-down and binding. The devil is cast down and bound, and currently restrained in his temptations; and in the future he will be defeated once more. Again, there is the lack of concern about chronology, but a focus on the repeated action – falling and binding – and what truth this signified: God's power over the devil.

The devil's temptation of Eve set in motion the three-fold (sometimes four-fold) model for temptation that Gregory applied to Job, Christ's temptation, and the current temptation of men and women. This is perhaps the easiest model to see, as Gregory, perhaps borrowing it from Augustine, sets this model out very clearly. Furthermore, in Genesis, the serpent is said to have deceived (*decipere*) Eve (Genesis 3:13). This, combined with John 8:44 which describes the devil as a liar, set the devil up as the master of deceit and disguise: yet again the devil's actions at the beginning of time set up the model which then repeated itself through time. Ideas about the devil's darkness and disguise are described in the abstract in the *Moralia*, explained in concrete form in the *Dialogues* where the devil takes on various physical disguises, and then applied to real situations in his letters. Job's friends deceive him, heretics mix truth and lies, and in the future the Antichrist will show deceiving signs and wonders: these are all repetitions of this first deceit.

Gregory also associates the devil with movement and change. This can be compared with the unchangeableness of God. He calls the devil the master of confusion, and it is therefore no surprise that the pastor's defence against him is contemplation, and focussing on a single light.

Scripture often supported this chronological flexibility, just as it supported flexibility of scale and number. Thus, scriptural passages which suggested an equivalency between the head (the devil) and the body (sinners) meant that what was applied to the devil could also be applied to his followers, that is, sinning men and women.¹³ Gregory's explicit acknowledgement that the devil acts as a model just as Christ does also made the application of the devil's actions to men and women easier. Furthermore, men and angels are linked as they are the only two rational creatures in all creation.¹⁴ Thus what was said of the devil could be said of his followers, and pride was seen as the root not just of all worldly sin but the sin from which all human sins follow, even in the present. Taking pride as an example, the devil's action at the very beginning of time set a model not just for the devil but for all creation, and is to be copied over and over by men and women until the end when the Antichrist, following this same pattern, will set himself up as God. Similar ideas can be seen in things like falling or deceiving: evil men and women deceive, but will be cast down.

The flexibility that resulted from Gregory's fluid method of exegesis also made it very natural for Gregory to make associations across different scales and contexts. To take the controversy over the title of 'Ecumenical Patriarch' as an example, on the smallest level Gregory believed that an internal conflict was occurring between the patriarch and the devil, and that, according to his discussion of the devil's attacks in the *Moralia*, the devil had crept through a hole in the patriarch's heart; on the second level, he believed this created a defensive gap in the wall of the church, and threatened the souls within it; and on the third level he associated these ruptures in the church with war, the apocalypse, and the antichrist. Gregory therefore applied the idea of a divisive and cunning devil on multiple levels – the individual, the church, and the world – and not just to multiple times. In such a way a knowledge of the core 'ideas' or 'types' which dominated Gregory's ideas about the devil is more useful when attempting to see how his diabolology affected his understanding of the world than merely listing his stances on key issues.

Gregory's flexible method of exegesis therefore had a very large influence on how he understood the devil's actions within the world. His beliefs about the devil were not only significant in a horizontal perspective, but also in a vertical one, as

¹³ 1 Cor. 12.12-28; 1 John 3:8-10; 1 John 2:18.

¹⁴ *Mor.* 32.12.17 (2:1641-2).

every action of the devil (or sinner or the Antichrist) signified an event or truth within the larger scheme of salvation history. As mentioned in chapter 3,

At an early stage, therefore, students of the Scriptures perceived that to every event, person or group in history there was, so to say, a vertical point of reference as well as a horizontal. The historical fact was really there: it had its locus in time and place, but it signified more than itself.¹⁵

Frances Young has written that

it is the “recapitulative” force of typology which is most important...From Romans through Irenaeus to the later Fathers, Adam and Christ are found in typological parallel, Christ recapitulating and reversing Adam’s Fall. But this basic pattern is recapitulated in other narratives. Particular times, persons, acts, places, are overlaid by universal, mythical or cosmological “types”, and liturgically anticipate the Eschaton.¹⁶

Such a pattern of recapitulation, or at least of prefiguration and emulation, is certainly found in the narrative of the devil and also of men and women; the pages above demonstrate the models or ‘types’ regarding the devil’s actions which Gregory gained from his reading of scripture and then applied back to scripture as well as to hagiography and the world. Young continues:

What we discern and label “typology” is more often than not the metahistorical, “universal” narrative of Fall and Redemption “recapitulated” time and again within history, so that narratives are configured according to this interpretative framework.¹⁷

Indeed, many narratives in the past, present and future, and which were biblical, hagiographical, and real-life, were configured to Gregory’s interpretative framework centered on the narrative of the devil’s fall and actions at the beginning of time.

Thus the first rupture in God’s creation - caused by Lucifer’s rebellion against God – reverberates and repeats itself multiple times and grows in strength throughout history, until at last there is no time for repentance, the time for movement passes,

¹⁵ Marjorie Reeves, ‘The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages’ in *Reading the Text. Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory*, ed. Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991): 12-63, p. 13.

¹⁶ Young, ‘Typology’, 42.

¹⁷ Young, ‘Typology’, 43.

and the elect and sinners are now divided from another, forever separated. One thus travels from a perfect, unified, creation to an eternally-divided world, at the centre of which is the devil, who caused the first fracture in the fabric of creation. Every human sin is a recapitulation of this original crack, every communal disobedience another, and every schism or church division yet another; and this great crack, caused by the devil's pride and perpetuated by his temptation of humanity, becomes cemented when, after Judgement, all created beings are on one side or the other, on the side of God or the devil, never to cross over. In this way the divisions that one sees the devil causing in the heart of John of Constantinople, or in the community led by Saint Benedict, or between Catholics and heretics are all manifestations and representations of this first, original division created by the devil's self-separation from the community of angels. This, then, is why the words and ideas associated with exile, separation, and division were ones which Gregory associates with the devil, because this was a diabolically-inspired pattern that Gregory saw in scripture, hagiography, the world around him, and in the future. This is the manner in which Gregory's ideas about the devil's fall (to take an example) worked in his mind.

In consequence, therefore, this study of the devil in Gregory's works has demonstrated the complexity of his ideas and their place within Gregory's wider thought. The devil is, according to Gregory, a creature of deceit and darkness, and these ideas fit into Gregory's wider conceptual structures regarding contemplation and the apocalypse, both of which are associated with revelation or greater sight. His portrayal was dominated by scripture and influenced by his exegetical mode of thinking, meaning that he applied similar ideas across time, scale, and context. He was also very much influenced by ideas of vulnerability and preoccupied with vigilance, which affected ecclesiology and ideas about papal office. His beliefs about the devil therefore affected his conception of the church, his politics, and his ideas about the active and contemplative lives.

This thesis has therefore illustrated the limited nature of the approach which either looks at too few of his genres or which merely lists his position on certain doctrinal issues: the merit in this study is that it has demonstrated the effect that the connections he made as part of *lectio divina* had on his perception of events in the world around him and consequently upon his political actions. It has also demonstrated the merit of viewing his understanding of the devil not in linear terms,

but in repetitive and vertical ones. Gregory's conception of the devil was as a performer who repeats certain actions, with each action possessing divine significance whilst also often proving a particular point of doctrine. Typology, therefore, ought also be applied to our understanding of the devil, and the devil's actions at the beginning of the world should be seen as setting in motion a series of types and models which constantly recur. Above all, however, it should be recognised that for Gregory, the devil and his actions are hidden from us in a mist of blindness, deceit and confusion: he hides himself from our sight; our sight is blind so we cannot see; and the limits of our fallen and fleshly mind mean that we cannot comprehend the warnings about him that we do receive. Thus, when he is 'revealed' to a person, either by God or the pastor, he is in fact clothed in what the individual knows, and thus veiled another time. The warnings from pastors come from those who themselves have only momentary and imperfect glimpses. It is therefore not surprising that Gregory represented the devil in so many ways, as not only does the devil have many names, shapes and faces, but Gregory had to clothe him in order to make him comprehensible to the blind eyes and dulled minds of his flock.

ABBREVIATIONS

Apoc.	Apocalypse
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogues</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Epistle (From the Letters of Gregory the Great)
Ephes.	Ephesians
Gen.	Genesis
<i>HF</i>	<i>Historia Francorum</i>
<i>Hom. in Evang.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Evangelia</i>
<i>Hom. in Ezech.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Ezechiel</i>
Matt.	Matthew
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
In Cant.	<i>Expositio in Canticum Cantiorum</i>
Is.	Isaiah
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia in Iob</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised Edition)
Sept.	Septuagint
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
<i>Reg. Past.</i>	<i>Regula Pastoralis</i>
SRM	<i>Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
Thess.	Thessalonians
VL	Vetus Latina (Old Latin Bible)
Vulg.	Vulgate
Zech.	Zechariah

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