

GREGORY THE GREAT, *Cura Pastoralis*
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment
England, Reading Abbey? c. 1230-1250

ii (modern paper) + 32 (parchment) + ii (modern parchment) + iii (modern paper) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, complete (collation, i-iv⁸), with signatures and a catchword in the third quire (f. 24v), ruled in lead or graphite with double vertical bounding lines, triple full-length vertical lines between text columns, and double, full-length horizontal bounding lines (two lines high) at the top and bottom of the text area, (justification, 168 x 105 mm.), written in black ink in a Gothic textualis script below the top line in two columns of 45 to 49 lines, with marginal additions by original and later hands, opening rubric, chapter headings, and line endings (“ammmmm...”) in orangish-red, one eighteen-line puzzle initial in blue and red with pen flourishes, two- to three- line initials in blue or red at most chapter headings (however, with several omissions), modern patch repairs to bas-de-page on ff. 1 and 32, the scribe has written around original holes and tears in some areas (ff. 2, 6, 14, 23, 24, 30), otherwise in excellent condition. Bound in modern red leather over boards by Donald Taylor of Toronto, title on spine, pages trimmed (see f. 21), stubs of modern paper reinforcements visible in gutter between gatherings, in excellent condition. Dimensions 230 x 160 mm.

This text has particular significance for medieval England. It was probably brought to England by St. Augustine of Canterbury in the sixth century and was translated into English c. 890 by King Alfred. This copy, certainly English, and possibly from the royal monastery at Reading, is thus of special interest. There is no modern critical edition of the work, which was so important for the relationship between religious communicates and the crown. Only six manuscripts of this text are listed in the Schoenberg Database since 1970 (some of multiple transactions).

PROVENANCE

1. The support, script and style of decoration in the manuscript suggest an origin and date in England in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Although, with the exception of one column on f. 1v, the text is written below the top line, the script and decoration suggest a date early in this period (an early date is also suggested by the script and decoration of the manuscript it was once bound with, formerly Bergendal MS 96 (see below). Marginal annotations and diagrams (e.g., f. 21) written in the same hand as the text, as well as omitted initials and chapter headings, suggest that the scribe made the text for his own use.

Once bound with Bergendal MS 96, which includes Gregory the Great's *Liber Dialogi* and Pseudo-Jerome's *Liber de Admonitione*. Although possibly of a slightly earlier date (text written above the top line), the script and decoration of this manuscript is clearly closely related to the manuscript described here (Sotheby's, 5 July 2011, lot 52; Pope, 1999, MS 96).

2. Possibly once owned by Reading Abbey, founded in 1121 by King Henry I. This royal abbey was one of the most important and wealthiest of the English Benedictine monasteries; their library was especially strong in patristic texts, often bound with more than one text in a given volume (Coates 1999, p. 37). Although the association with Reading Abbey is primarily suggested by subsequent ownership (see below), this hypothesis finds support (but not proof) from the codicological evidence.

The book has been trimmed and rebound, possibly eliminating some evidence of origin, but the lead or graphite rulings with horizontal bounding lines extending into the margins follow a pattern that has been associated with manuscripts of Reading Abbey (Coates 1999, p. 46-48): “[bounding] lines one and three and the antepenultimate and the last” (Coates, 1999, p. 47). Also, the opening initial “P,” a puzzle initial in red and blue, is embellished with flourishes that end in a fan-shaped design resembling a “tassel,” a characteristic ornament of Reading initials (Coates, p. 48). The manuscript, however, does not include the Reading ex libris, “hic est liber sancte Marie de Rading ...” (Coates 1999, p. 53). Reading Abbey was suppressed and its library disbursed unevenly after Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monastery in 1539 (Coates, 1999, p. 126).

3. On f. 1 upper margin, sixteenth-century inscription in pen: “J Reynoldes,” who owned several books from Reading Abbey, including two now at the Newberry Library with his signature and the date 1577 (Coates, 1999, p. 137, 145-146); on the same leaf in the right margin, eighteenth-century inscription in a different hand, in pen: “Rich: Bostocke.”
4. Bergendal MS 96 includes a list of the names of parishioners who gave donations for the casting of bells for a church in “Hesamsted” (East Hampsted, Berkshire), as well as inscriptions from J. Reynoldes and members of the Bostock family and others, including Andrew Bostock of Wrexham, North Wales (dated 1707), Hugh Jones, Thomas Hughes, and Robert Bostock.
5. Collection of Eric Kroner, sold at London, Sotheby’s 19 June 1990, lot 86.
6. Belonged to Joseph Pope (1921-2010) of Toronto, investor banker and prominent collector of medieval manuscripts, who acquired it from Sotheby’s in 1990 (see above); Bergendal Collection MS 95 (described in Pope, 1999, and listed online, “Bergendal Collection”; brief description in Stoneman, 1997, p. 202; an account of the collection is given in Pope, 1997).

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f. 1, [Preface, Letter to Bishop John of Ravenna], *Incipit liber pastoralis beati gregorii papae ad iohannem episcopum ravenmatem*, incipit, “Pastoralis curae me pondera fugere delitescendo voluisse ... in ipsa loquutionis nostrae ianua repellantur”;

Part I, Chapters 1-11: [Concerning the qualifications of one who comes to a position of spiritual leadership. Note most chapters are misnumbered, beginning with chapter 1; rubrics for chapters are omitted in this manuscript but given in brackets and based on the critical edition, Grégoire Le Grand, Rommel, 1992; English translations abridged from St. Gregory, Demacopoulos, 2007].

ff. 1-4v, [Ch 1, The inexperienced should not obtain authority], *ii Capitulum*, incipit, “Nulla ars doceri praesumitur, nisi intenta prius meditatione discatur ... profector ad portanda peccatorum curuantur onera qui sequuntur; ... [Ch. 11, Concerning what sort of person should not come to spiritual leadership; chapter break occurs differently from critical edition], *x Capitulum*, incipit, “Hinc etenim superna voce ad Moysen dicitur ... nunc is qui ad illud digne pervenerit, in eo qualiter vivere debeat demonstramus”;

Part II, Chapters 12-22: [Concerning the life of a pastor].

ff. 4v-10v, [Ch. 12, How one in the position of leadership ought to conduct himself; initial ‘T’ omitted] *xi Capitulum*, incipit, “[T]antum debet actionem populi actio transcendere praesulis ... paulo latius replicando disseramus”; ... [Ch. 22, The spiritual director’s devotion to the sacred law], *xx Capitulum*, incipit, “Sed omne hoc rite a rectore agitur, si supernae formidinis et dilectionis spiritu afflatus ... vectes a circulis numquam recedant”;

Part III, Chapters 23-64 [How the spiritual director should teach and advise the laity].

ff. 10v-32, [Prologue and Chapter 23, Diversity in the art of preaching] *xxi Capitulum*, incipit, "Quia igitur qualis debeat esse debeat pastor ostendimus ... modos per singula, quanta possumus brevitate pandamus"; ... [Ch. 64, Preaching by words and deeds; chapter heading and initial 'S' omitted], "Sed inter haec ad ea quae iam superius diximus caritatis studio retorquemur ... omne quod loquuturi sunt operibus clament;"

Part IV, Chapter 65 [That the preacher should not take pride in his life or preaching].

f. 32-32v, Ch. 65 [Chapter heading omitted], "Sed quia saepe dum modis congruetibus praedicatio ubertim funditur ... ut quia pondus proprium deprimit, tui meriti manus levet," *Explicit liber pastoralis gregorii pape urbis rome scriptus ad Iohannem.*

The text is complete, apart from two omissions, as follows: ff. 6v-7v, Ch. 17 [That the spiritual director be a humble companion to the good; initial "S" omitted], *xvi Capitulum*, incipit "[S]it rector bene argentibus per humilitatem socius, contra delinquentium ... Unde necesse est ut cun peccati vulnus in subditis corrigendo restringatur magna [f. 7v, col. 2, line 36, Chapter 17 breaks off mid-sentence and incorrectly continues into Chapter 18; about 40 lines of text omitted]; and ff. 9v-10v, Ch. 21 [How the spiritual director should discern when to apply correction], *xix Capitulum*, incipit, "Sciendum quoque est quod aliquando subiectionum vitia prudenter dissimulanda sunt ... vocum feruentius rapitur, oblitus sui esse videatur ... [text breaks on f. 10, col. 1, line 7; about 40 lines of text omitted] sed iam supernam patriam requirenti quanta eam ... quem sub eius venia fides, spes et caritas abscondit."

The critical edition of *Régle Pastoralis* by Rommel and the translation into modern English by Demacopoulos are based on a single manuscript, Troyes, BM, MS 504, believed to have been transcribed by Gregory's secretary. See however Richard W. Clement, "A Handlist of Manuscripts Containing Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*," *Manuscripta* 28, no. 1 (March 1984), pp. 33-44, which counts "nearly 500 MSS in eighteen European countries" (p. 33). The handlist includes manuscripts in the United States but not Canada. Clement also mentions that there are six extant manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon translation (p. 36). The handlist was compiled from printed catalogues consulted at the Vatican Film Library and Newberry Library.

DECORATION

Written on parchment of uneven quality, this manuscript is characteristic of thirteenth-century books made for practical use. It includes one large, 18-line decorated puzzle initial in red and blue to open the text and several smaller initials in red and blue added to mark the major divisions of the text. Marginal annotations are found in two hands, one belonging to the original scribe and one to a later reader or owner, who sometimes drew ornamented symbols to draw attention to an omission or mistake (e.g., f. 2). The original scribe had to settle for parchment with holes and tears which he simply wrote around. Although not a work of luxury, the manuscript is a historically significant artifact representative of medieval texts made for learning and study.

The manuscript's text, the *Cura Pastoralis* by Pope Gregory I (540-604), was one of the most copied and translated works of the Middle Ages (Smyth 1995, pp. 530-534). Known by various titles, including *Regula Pastoralis* and *Liber Pastoralis*, the documentation for this particular manuscript has preferred *Cura Pastoralis*, thus followed here also. Gregory the Great wrote the *Cura Pastoralis* in the year 590, the same year he was elected to be pope. It comprises a handbook designed for bishops and priests, and is not only pragmatic but also sensitive to the various challenges of spiritual leadership. It is divided into sixty-five chapters organized into four parts: 1) concerning the qualifications of the one who comes to a position of spiritual leadership; 2) concerning the life of the pastor; 3) how the spiritual director who lives well should teach and advise the laity; 4) that the preacher, after he has done everything that is required, should return to himself so that he does not take pride in his life or preaching (St. Gregory the Great, 2007, p. 7-25). In the individual chapters

Gregory discusses predictable topics such as, "Concerning what sort of qualities should be present for one to assume spiritual leadership," (Ch. 10) but also explores more subtle issues such as how to advise, "those whose sins are minor but commit them frequently, and those who avoid small ones but occasionally fall into grave ones" (Ch. 57).

Gregory's text was introduced to England through St. Augustine of Canterbury, who brought the text with him on his mission to England in 597, undertaken at the direction of Gregory I himself (Gameson, 1999, p. 1). Because the *Cura Pastoralis* is a guide for leadership, it soon became recognized as useful to secular rulers and was translated into Anglo Saxon as *Pastoral Care* by King Alfred the Great (849-899) (Smyth, 1995, pp. 530-534). As Smyth explains, "Gregory's directives on the avoidance of flattery, on the need for a ruler to be popular with his subjects and to rule the wicked not the good, on the benefits of humility along with the caveat not to carry humility to extremes—all sum up the street wisdom of an Early Medieval politician" (Smyth, 1995, p. 532). Alfred, however, not only translated the *Cura Pastoralis* for his own use, but as apparent from his prefatory letter, intended it to be read by the bishops under his rule (Smyth, p. 542). Thus the continued study of this text in the later Middle Ages reflects the ties of religious communities such as Reading Abbey to the English crown. Unfortunately these were to be violently severed in the sixteenth century by King Henry VIII, who in 1539 ordered Abbot Hugh Cook (Faringdon) to be executed as a traitor for refusing to surrender his abbey (James, 1926, p. 82).

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Bergendal Collection

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/bergendalcoll/ms68.htm>

J. C. Almond, J.C., "Reading Abbey," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, Robert Appleton Company, 1911

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12673a.htm>

Reading Abbey Website (brief history and bibliography)

<http://www.readingabbey.org.uk/fora/lesabbey/read.htm#Historical>

Internet Medieval Sourcebook; English translation of Gregory, *Liber regulae pastoralis*

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/590greg1-pastoralrule2.asp>

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