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POPE GREGORY THE GREAT AND A PROMINENT WOMAN OF HIS TIME

BY

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If the title "Great" applied to a historical personage may be rightly defined as implying the combination of high moral purpose with commanding ability, so used as to affect extensively the history of mankind, such title has been assigned duly to the first Pope Gregory. In all cases favorable circumstances are, of course, required, that the result may be actual, not mere potential, greatness. There must be suitable environments for the development and display of an influential life. Gregory might have lived and died with no renown beyond that of ascetic saintliness, had not circumstances called him from his monastery; in a less eventful age his great qualities still might not have found their adequate field for exercise. He stands out on the pages of history as a striking instance of a remarkable man, at a remarkable time, being placed by Providence in an office peculiarly suitable for the exercise of his powers, in the Roman Papacy. The position was not of his own seeking; he shrank from it. Greatness, in the sense of great estate, was "thrust upon" him; but when it came, he showed himself at once worthy of it. And it
is to be observed that, though he sought it not, yet in one sense he himself "achieved" it, inasmuch as it was his acknowledged fitness that caused all concerned in his elevation to force its acceptance upon him.

A brief preliminary sketch of the position of the Church, and especially of the Roman See, in relation to the world at the time of St. Gregory's accession, and of the causes that had led to the existing state of things, will assist our understanding of his field of work.

At the close of the sixth century, when the first Gregory became pope, Paganism had largely disappeared from the Roman Empire. It was no longer a power to be considered, though, in spite of repression, it still lingered extensively, especially in country places. Christianity was everywhere maintained and dominant. The emperors, too, whether orthodox or heretical, had taken a warm interest in church affairs, summoning councils, promulgating and enforcing their decrees. However morally corrupt society in high places might be, its atmosphere had been impregnated with theology. The result had been, among other things, a large advance in the importance of the hierarchy, and especially of the great patriarchal sees; but at the same time, in the East at least, there was a subservience to the imperial power, which, while treating prelates with much external respect, had been in
the habit of dictating to them, in fact, commanding their elevation or deposition, and at times presuming more or less even on their spiritual prerogatives.

It is to be observed, however, that, throughout the period referred to, the primatial See of Rome had occupied a peculiar position and had been less affected either by imperial domination or by doctrinal conflict than the patriarchates of the East. The tendency of events had been, in fact, to strengthen and illuminate the occupants of St. Peter's chair. With regard to the great controversies that had so embittered and divided the Church, the West had been comparatively free from them. The popes had taken little part in them, but they had supported uniformly the cause of orthodoxy. They had received and protected orthodox prelates who had fled to them under persecution; they had been represented, though not present, in all the general councils held in the East to define the faith and had ratified their decrees. Often they had been able to defy emperors who favored heresy with a spirit and success little known in the more subservient East, thus fulfilling their claims to be, as St. Peter's successors, the unfailing guardians of Apostolic tradition.

Political events had also favored the independence and influence of the Roman See. The removal of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine had,
from the very commencement of the State's acknowledgment of Christianity, left the bishops of the old city free from the depressing domination of a court from which their Eastern counterparts continually suffered. Freedom was further secured during the periods when there was a Western as well as an Eastern emperor, by the removal of the residence of the former under Honorius in 404 to Ravenna. Rome itself had, indeed, long before this removal ceased to be the usual residence of the emperors. Since the beginning of the reign of Diocletian, 277, they had held their court at Milan.

In such circumstances the importance of the popes had, since the time of Constantine, gone on increasing. To their acknowledged spiritual position as the occupants of the first see in Christendom, the successors of St. Peter, the sole great patriarchs of the West, was added a temporal position of no mean importance. As the most influential figures in the ancient imperial city, supported by the spiritual allegiance of the West, they had been enabled, though still subjects of the emperors, to hold their own against them in ecclesiastical matters with success. They became a power which had to be counted on by the State.

The invasions of the Roman empire by barbarian hordes, which had been the most important historical event of a century or two before the time of Gregory, had
politically strengthened the Papal power and opened the way for its development. The most memorable of these invasions—those which resulted in the capture of Rome itself—had been confronted by popes of eminence, who more than any others asserted and advanced the prerogatives of the Holy See.

Innocent I was pope when in 410 Rome fell into the hands of Alaric the Goth; Leo the Great when Attila the Hun, 452, and Genseric the Vandal, 455, were the successive conquerors. Each event, however, left the Church and the See of Rome in a higher position than before. They first accomplished the breaking up and dispersion of the old Roman families which had been the props of ancient heathenism and demolished the ancient temples. Afterwards these were left in ruins or converted into churches. All this was regarded as a divine judgment on old heathen, rather than on Christian, Rome. For the Gothic invaders, being Christians, though Arians, had respected places and persons of Christian sanctity; and Innocent, who had been providentially absent (not through cowardice, but on a mission of duty) during the siege and capture, when he returned to the city after the departure of the invaders, found himself in the position of prestige. He was henceforth without rival the greatest man in Rome, the head and organizer of a new Christian Rome rising out of the ruins of
devastated heathen Rome. Both his character and his conduct during the crisis, and his position afterwards, enhanced his power in proportion as those of the weak emperor Honorius, timidly inefficient at Ravenna, had decayed. Then when Attila with his heathens seemed to have Italy and Rome at his feet, it had been neither emperor nor general, but Pope Leo to whom credit was given for checking the Hun in his career of conquest. And when, soon afterwards, the Arian Vandal Genseric devastated Rome, it was the same great pope who alone obtained some mitigation of the horrors of the conquest. After that storm, too, had passed away, it left the Western Empire wounded to the death, but the See of Rome with its spiritual and political status unimpaired:

For in the misery and confusion to which Italy had been abandoned, the one survival of purpose and governing capacity was in the Roman Church. Great by necessities of the case; great by religious tradition; great by political position; great by the divisions of the Church, which needed an arbiter, and sought the most highly placed . . .; great equally in the name of the Apostles and of the Caesars, the Roman Church amid all the accumulations of misfortunes which fell on the city, only grew stronger and greater by the destruction of every rival authority within. . . . In this way the ravages of Alaric and Genseric had rendered more conspicuous the strength of that institution which ruled with undiminished loftiness amid the tremendous ruin which they had made.1

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When St. Gregory acceded to the papacy, the immediate authority of the Bishop of Rome was of two kinds: episcopal and metropolitan. His episcopate comprised only the city of Rome. As metropolitan he had supervision of the seven suffragan, afterwards called cardinal, bishops of the Roman territory, those of Ostia, Portus, Silva Candida, Sabina, Praeneste, Tusculum, and Albanum.

In Gaul, while still under imperial rule, the popes had long exercised spiritual authority. Disputes having arisen between the bishops of Arles and Vienne, Pope Zozimus had, as early as 417, assigned metropolitan rights to the former, making the bishop of Arles vicar of the Apostolic See.

Subsequent popes maintained this arrangement. Through synodal decrees and imperial edicts this process of exercising jurisdiction through Gallic representatives was stressed and clarified. The Council of Sardica, 347, promulgated the decision of the pope, Julius, to send judges throughout Gaul and other western provinces to hear on the spot the appeals of condemned bishops. Furthermore, during the pontificate of Leo I, the emperor Valentinian formally recognized the power of the pope to summon bishops from all parts to support his judgments.

All this represented the solidarity of the political position of the papacy. And elsewhere the barbaric
conquerors of Europe regarded with reverence the Bishop of the Eternal City as the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven had been entrusted. With what care and judgment Gregory cultivated the ground that was being made ready for the future harvest will be conveyed to us in some small way as we survey his peculiar success in the tactful handling of the Gallic spiritual and temporal authorities, and particularly of the crafty queen Brunhilda, indeed a prominent woman of his time.
CHAPTER II

COME EARLY CORRESPONDENCE OF GREGORY WITH
GALLIC CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LEADERS

--THE VIOLENCE OF THE FRANKISH COURTS

The only method which is possible for us to follow
if we would understand the relations of Gregory with the
princes of Gaul, and especially with the questionable Brun-
hilda, is to examine his correspondence with that country.
In nearly every letter which he sent to civil and ecclesi-
astical personages dwelling in Gaul we shall find some
point which we cannot afford to neglect if we would gain
a comprehensive view of his activity and designs.

His first communication with Gaul we trace in a
letter in which the newly elected pope announces his elec-
tion to the Archbishop of Arles. This was Virgilius,
originally a monk of Lerins, then abbot of the monastery
at Autun until 588, when he was made Archbishop of Arles.
But with the formal announcement Gregory lashed out
against a prevalent evil.

Plurimi si quidem Judaicae religionis viri in hac
provincia commanentes, ac subinde in Massiliae
partes pro diversis negotiis ambulantes, ad nos-
tram perduxere notitiam, multos consistentium in
illis partibus Judaeorum, vi magis ad fontem bap-
tismatis quam praedicatione perductos.}

1Gregory, Epistle I, Section 47. All the corre-
spondence of Pope Gregory appears in the Migne Patrologiae,
The zeal of the Christian Franks for their new faith had often shown itself in the violence they exhibited to its opponents. For the conversion of unbelievers, especially of the Jews, rough means had been used, even with royal sanction. Soon after the accession of Gregory to the throne of Peter complaints had been brought to him by some Roman merchants of Jewish tenets that their co-religionists in Marseilles were subjected to this treatment, and his intervention had been sought. Accordingly he seized the occasion of his writing to Virgilius of Arles to treat the matter. His letter is an illustration of the fine diplomatic tact which we shall be forced so often to admire in his conduct. The delicate compliment he pays Virgilius in insinuating that the persecution in Marseilles is not beyond his province, the skillful implication in joining the bishop of Marseilles with the archbishop of Arles as one to whom his election would be announced, smooth the difficulty of his task of correction. He praises the ardor of the bishop,


Theodore, yet urges that preaching, not persecution, should be employed to win the unbelieving.

Nor must we lose sight of these two facts, that the Jews appealed against a bishop of Marseilles to one whom they understood to be his superior, the pope, but that Gregory's reprimand is couched in words of brotherly counsel.

No record of communication between Gregory and Gaul during the next two years has reached us, but in 593 the silence is broken. In this year we find a letter of Gregory to Dynamius, who held the office of Praefectus Galliarum, or Frankish governor of the province of Arles. At the request of the bishop of Rome he had also acted as rector of an estate at Marseilles which formed part of the patrimony of St. Peter. This patrimony consisted of lands acquired by the Roman See to establish a revenue by which multitudes of poor might be supported. Even the smallest details of the administration of it did not escape the vigilance of Gregory, and we may well believe that from the very first he interested himself in the working of the patrimony at Marseilles.

3Cf. Gregory of Tours, op. cit., VI, 11, 286; VIII, 12, 384; IX, 22, 447. Theodore was bishop from 580 to 591 and incurred the displeasure of the king, Gontran, and his townsmen.

4Cf. Johannes Diaconus, Vita Gregorii, IV, 42. "Judaeorum perfideam rationibus magis quam violentiis excutere Gregorius decertabat."
But the first letter we have bearing upon the subject is this to Dynamius, in which he acknowledges the receipt of four hundred Gallic solidi, the rent collected and forwarded by the rector. In recognition of his faithfulness and care, Gregory sends him a cross, studded with relics of St. Peter's chains, and set in portions of the gridiron of St. Lawrence.

Suscepimus namque per Hilarium filium nostrum de praefatis Ecclesiae nostrae reditibus Gallicanos solidos quadringentos. Transmisimus autem beati Petri apostoli benedictionem, crucem parvulam, cui de catenis ejus beneficia sunt inserta. Quae illius quidem ad tempus ligaverunt, sed colla vestra in perpetuum a peccatis solvant. Per quatuor vero in circuitu partes, de beati Laurentii craticula, in qua perustus est, beneficia continentur, ut hoc, ubi corpus illius pro veritate crematum est, vestram mentem ad amorem Domini accendat.5

But before we pass on to the other affairs in Gaul, it will be necessary to glance at the political state of that country.6 Without tracing the course of the struggles concerning the succession from the time of Chlodwig, it may suffice to state that in 575 Gaul comprised three kingdoms,7 Austrasia on the Rhine, Neustria in the north and west, and

5Gregory, Epistle III, 33, dated April.

6See Gregory of Tours, op. cit., passim.

7It is impossible to define accurately the limits of these kingdoms. Their boundaries were continually shifting, and the relations of Western France, south of the Loire, and the coast of the Mediterranean have never been fully realized.
Burgundy between the Rhine and the Mediterranean, under the rule of the three grandsons of Chlodwig: Sigebert, Chilperich, and Gontran respectively. The first two had married two sisters, Brunhilda and Galsuinth, daughters of Athanagild, the Visigoth king of Spain. But Chilperich murdered Galsuinth and made Fredegonde, his paramour, who had instigated the crime, his queen in her stead. Brunhilda eagerly sought vengeance and stirred her husband Sigebert to attack his own brother. With Chilperich defeated and almost driven from his kingdom, Fredegonde procured the assassination of Sigebert. Sigebert's young son Childebert, whose death also was intended, was rescued and recognized as king by many of the Austrasian nobles. Chilperich, however, succeeded in seizing the treasures and most of the kingdom of Sigebert and banished Brunhilda. Hereupon Gontran adopted Childebert as his son, and, by rousing the warriors of Austrasia against Chilperich, compelled him to make terms by also adopting Childebert.

In 584 Brunhilda attained part of her vengeance by the assassination of Chilperich. Then Fredegonde fled to Gontran with her infant son. He extended his protection to her; he took under his control, as regent for the boy-king Chlotar, Neustria and that part of Austrasia which

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8 See Gregory of Tours, op. cit., passim.
Chilperich had conquered, thus gaining the enmity of Childebert. His severity produced an insurrection which compelled him to seek the alliance of Childebert by uniting Austrasia under him and naming him sole heir of Burgundy.

This then was the political picture that had developed out of the violence and intrigue of the three grandsons of Chlodwig when Gregory became bishop of Rome: Childebert was the king of Austrasia and heir to Burgundy; Gontran his uncle was king of Burgundy and regent of Neustria in the name of Chlotar, the son of his dead brother Chilperich. Brunhilda was all powerful at the court of her son Childebert, while Fredegonde with her son Chlotar remained under the care of Gontran.

In 593, Gontran died and was succeeded by Childebert, who thus combined in one kingdom Austrasia and Burgundy. One of his first acts was to remove the rector Dynamius from his patriciate. In the struggles arising from the protection afforded to Fredegonde in Burgundy, Dynamius had abandoned the cause of Brunhilda, and her son for that of Gontran. His office was too important to be entrusted to one on whom the new king could not

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9Gregory of Tours, op. cit., VIII, 288. "At Dynamius immemor fidel quam Childeberto regi promiserat, ad Guntramnum regem nuntios dirigit. . . ."
absolutely rely, and coveted by too many not to be bestowed as a reward on one of his friends.

It therefore became necessary that another rector of the patrimony of St. Peter would be appointed, and Gregory seems to have found no difficulty in obtaining the consent of Arigius,¹⁰ the new patrician, to act in that capacity until one could be sent from Rome. Accordingly, in 594 he wrote to the tenants¹¹ on the estate, announcing that he had determined to send them a rector from Rome; he bade them meanwhile diligently obey Arigius as became the servants of St. Peter. Let them hand over their rents to a board whom they should elect themselves; this council should retain the rents until the new rector should arrive. They would select for this trust, he was sure, only men on whose honesty he could rely.

Disposuimus enim hominem nostrum, qui vos possit tueri et regere, cum litteris commendatitiis ad excellentissimum regem, Christo auxiliante, transmittere. Sed viam tempus hiemis impedivit. Viro ergo glorioso Arigio patricio vos praevidimus commendandos, cui interim summa cum benignitate atque obedientia, sicut beati Petri famulos decet, obedire studete, atque ea quae pro ecclesiastica utilitate vobis praecipientur implete.¹²

¹⁰To this Arigius, Epistle VI, 57, and Epistle IX, 118, are addressed.

¹¹The conductores to whom this epistle is addressed were not really the tenants who were called coloni, but a kind of agents or "over-tenants."

¹²Epistle V, 31.
With his accession to the Burgundian throne, Childebert had become feudal lord of the southern bishoprics. He had apparently urged Virgilius, archbishop of Arles, to apply to Gregory for the pallium and the vicariate of Rome among the churches of Gaul. This Virgilius had done and the king had joined the request, which Gregory was glad to grant. The application of Virgilius, too, would seem to Gregory a gracious gesture on the part of the first prelate of Gaul, promising well for his reputation among all the bishops and for the success of his attempts to purify the religious life of Gaul.

Accordingly, he announces:

Sed quia cunctis liquet unde in Galliarum regionibus fides sancta prodierit, cum priscam consuetudinem sedis apostolicae fraternitas vestra repetit, quid alius quam bona soboles ad sinum matris recurrunt? Libenti ergo animo postulata concedimus, ne aut vos quidquam de debito honore subtrahere, aut praecellentissimi filii nostri Childeberti regis petitionem contempsisse videamur. . . . Quibusdam namque narrantibus agnovi quod in Galliarum vel Germaniae partibus nullus ad sacrum ordinem sine commodi datione perveniat. . . . Qua de re necesse est ut vestra fraternitas praecellentissimum filium nostrum Childebertum regem admonere studeat, ut hujus peccati maculam a regno suo funditus repellat. . . . Itaque fraternitati vestrae vices nostras in Ecclesiis, quae sub regno sunt praecellentissimi filii nostri Childeberti, juxta antiquum morem Deo auctore committimus. . . . Pallium quoque transmisimus. . . . Sicubi autem longius episcoporum quisquam pergere forte voluerit, sine tuae sanctitatis auctoritate ei ad loca alia transire non liceat. Si qua vero inquisitio de fide, vel fortasse aliarum rerum inter episcopos causa emerget, quae discerni difficilium possit, collectis duodecim episcopis ventiletur atque decidatur. Si
autem decidi nequiverit, discussa veritate, ad nostrum judicium referatur.13

To Virgilius his consent on the grounds of old custom.14

He urges him to exert his own utmost power, and also to stir up the zeal of the king, for the eradication of simony, which he had learned to be common in the Frankish kingdoms. The letter concludes with a description of the privileges thus conferred upon him. He is to be the representative of the Bishop of Rome to all churches within the kingdom of Childebert. No bishop was to leave his diocese without his consent. To decide questions of faith and disputes between bishops he must convvoke a court of twelve bishops. In any case which they could not decide they were to ascertain the facts and refer the decision upon them to the Bishop of Rome.

At the same time Gregory wrote to the bishops of Childebert's kingdom.

Ad hoc dispensationis divinae provisio gradus diversos et ordines constituit esse distinctos, ut dum reverentiam minores potioribus exhiberent, et potiores minoribus delectionem impenderent, una concordia fieret, ex diversitate contextio et recte officiorum geretur administratio singulorum. Neque enim universitas alia poterat ratione subsistere, nisi hujusmodi magnus eam differentiae ordo servaret. . . .

Et quoniam necesse est ut ad eum cui nostras

13Epistle V, 53.

14Cf. Epistle XI, 64. "Ab antiquis praedecessorum meorum temporibus pallium Arelatensis Episcopus accepit."
He reminds them that, if there is to be general harmony in any system, differences of rank are necessary. Even among the angelic hosts of heaven there are archangels. Therefore, to secure the integrity of the Catholic faith, and for the settlement of disputes between brother-priests among them, he had made Virgilius his vicar, and would have them obey him. Yet no important decision could be arrived at by Virgilius alone. A competent number of bishops is to be called in to decide difficult cases, while the Apostolic See must be appealed to in regard to matters involving much doubt or of very great importance. He urges them to attend the synods, or, if unable to do so, to send a representative. Without the consent of Virgilius they must undertake no long journey. He concludes by exhorting them to solicitude about their charge and announcing that he has ordered Virgilius to eradicate simony.

Accompanying these epistles he sent one to Childebert himself.

Laetos nos excellentiae vestrae vehementer fecit epistola, quae pia vos affectione de honore et

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15 Epistle V, 54.
reverentia sacerdotali testatur esse sollicitos. . . .

Pervenit autem ad nos, obeuntibus episcopis, quos-
dam ex laicis tonsurari, atque ad episcopatum praec-
cipiti saltu conscendere. Et qui discipulus non fuit,
inconsiderata ambitione magister efficitur. Et quon-
niam quod possit docere non didicit, sacerdotium tan-
tummodo gerit in nomine, nam laicus in sermone priste-
tino perseverat et operé. Quomodo ergo aliorum pro-
peccatis intercessurus est, qui sua primitus non de-
flevit? Talis enim Pastor non munit gregem, sed de-
cipit, quia dum contradicente verecundia non potest
aliis hoc quod ipse non facit suadere, quid est aliud
nisi ut plebs dominica praedonibus populanda remaneat,
et inde sumat interitum, unde salutiferae protectionis
magnum debuit habere subsidium?

Simul autem . . . est annuntiatum nobis quod
sacri ordines per simoniacam haeresim . . . con-
feruntur . . . hortamur ut tam destabile facinus de
regno suo excellenta vestra prohiberi praecipiat.16

In this he thankfully acknowledges the interest in the
priesthood and the devotion to Christianity of which his
letter had given proof. He takes the opportunity of be-
seeching him to lend his aid in the correction of the vari-
ous abuses in the churches of Gaul, lest the faults of
others should accuse his own soul of negligence.

The first of these is that laymen receive the tons-
sure and mount to the bishopric at one headlong leap. Asks
Gregory: Can one who has never been a scholar be a compe-
tent teacher? How can he intercede for the sins of others
who has first not bewept his own? Such a bishop is not a
shepherd, but a robber. The king would never appoint a
general whose valor and industry and patience had not been

16 Epistle V, 55.
tried. So it is disgraceful that men who know nothing of even the elements of Christian soldiery should seize upon the command.

In this same dispatch to Childebert there was recalled another abuse, the heresy of simony, that "the holy orders are subject to money" is mentioned by Gregory. Let his excellency stamp out this detestable crime. Every man that buys these sacred offices is, he pronounced, convicted of unfitness for them. Finally, he begs the king to give all possible help to Virgilius in the discharge of his new duties.

It was apparently in the following month that Gregory sent Candidus, a trusted member of the group of priests whom he was training in Rome, to assume the office of Rector of the Estate of St. Peter at Marseilles. This was in accordance with the policy which he had adopted elsewhere.17 His predecessors had been content to leave the control of these estates to the bishop of the diocese or some noble of the vicinity. But Gregory had seen how useful it would be to have in different regions these

17 Epistle IX, 65. "Cavendum est . . . ne saecularibus viris atque non sub regula vestra degentibus res ecclesiasticae commitantur sed probatis de vestro officio clericis." Also see Joannes Diaconus, op. cit., II, 15. "Nemo laicorum quodlibet . . . ecclesiasticum patrimunium procurabat sed omnia ecclesiastici munia ecclesiastici viri subibant."
servants responsible to himself alone, gathering information and keeping watch for him over the conduct of the bishops. One of his biographers speaks of him in respect to this as "an Argus with a hundred eyes casting his glances over the length and breadth of the whole world." He even gave these rectors commission to hear charges preferred against bishops.

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18 Joannes Diaconus, op. cit., II, 55. "Per procuratores ecclesiasticorum patrimoniorum velut Argus qui-dam luminosissimus per totius mundi latitudinem suae pastoralis sollicitudinis oculos circumtulerit."

19 Epistle, XI, 37. "Si quis vero clericus vel laicus contra episcopum causam habuerit, tunc te interponere debes ut inter eos aut ipse cognoscas aut certe te admonente sibi judices eligant."
Pope Gregory's new relations with the Frankish court opened to him a field in which much might be done for the Apostolic See and for Christianity. This relationship therefore he zealously cultivated. He accordingly seized the opportunity of the departure of Candidus to improve his standing with Childebert and to address the all-powerful queen-mother, Brunhilda.

This brings us to deal with one of the points at which Gregory's fame has been most subject to criticism. It is true that attempts have been made to whitewash the character of Brunhilda; it is also true that some critics have crucified her character without a fair trial.

To understand the capacity which this queen might have possessed for either good or evil, whatever the case may be, it is necessary to prove her background and analyze the trials of her earlier life. A general impersonal picture of the Frankish courts has already been presented. A closer inspection may prove helpful.

Sigebert, King of Austrasia, had married in 568 Brunhilda, a princess from Spain, remarkable, according to
the testimony of the historian Gregory of Tours, for "beauty, distinction of manner, charm, and sound moral training," at least at the time of this union.

Of this marriage were born a son and two daughters. The tragic story of this unfortunate queen opens with seven years of married happiness and peace, which, during her long life, and not through her own fault, she was never to know again.

During these quiet years, jealous hatred was silently at work in the Kingdom of Neustria, where her brother-in-law King Chilperich lived, like most of the Merovingian princes, a life of gross immorality.

Inspired by the example of Sigebert, he expressed a wish to give up his sordid amours and marry a princess worthy of his royal station. After taking solemn oaths to reform, he was accorded the hand of Brunhilda's elder sister, Galsuinth. Chilperich did not keep his promise; at the instigation of his criminal associate, Fredegonde, the poor princess was cruelly put to death.

Brunhilda appealed for justice to King Gontran of Burgundy, and Chilperich was compelled to surrender part of his territory to Austrasia in compensation for the

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1Gregory of Tours, op. cit., IV, 27, 216. "Erat enim puella elegans opere, venusta aspectu, honesta moribus atque decora, prudens consilio et blanda conloquio."
crime. A long struggle followed between the two kingdoms, marked by repeated acts of clemency on the part of Sigebert and of perfidy on the part of Chilperich.

Sigebert, in the moment of victory over his treacherous brother, was assassinated by emissaries of the blood-stained Fredegonde. Brunhilda, now a prisoner with her little son, faced the situation with energy and resource. She managed to arrange for the escape of the boy Childebert, who was carried safely back to Austrasia and there recognized by the nobles as lawful king.

The situation of the queen after the assassination of her husband was a perilous one. She was threatened with immediate death, whether by poison, secret dagger, or open murder, she could not tell. She saved herself for her boy's sake, of that there can be little doubt; she married the son of her husband's murderess.

Merovee, son of Chilperich, fell to the charm of Brunhilda; they were married, in defiance of canon law, by Bishop Pretextatus at Rouen, where the queen was a prisoner. Gregory of Tours, in his account of this drama, is sparing of comment and unfortunately also of detail. He gives only the outline of the story.

Many historians have smugly blamed the queen for such treachery to the memory of her murdered husband. But the full force of these terrible events is missed
unless the fact be realized, which the study of her life makes certain, that the queen loved and respected her husband Sigebert, the noblest of all the Merovingian race. The boy Childebert was alive and safe, for the moment, in Austrasia; but not safe for long, if alone and an orphan, from the fury of Fredegonde.

To marry the weak Merovee offered a chance of safety for herself, her boy, and his inheritance. The very next day Merovee was pursued by the enraged Chilperich, caught and shut up in a monastery; he vainly endeavored to rejoin Brunhilda and shortly afterwards committed suicide.

Meantime the queen had succeeded in returning to Austrasia. For eight years she continued to struggle against the constant intrigues of Chilperich and Fredegonde, until in 583 she succeeded in establishing her son firmly upon his throne. Shortly after this, Chilperich was assassinated, and legend, with impartial improbability, has accused sometimes Brunhilda, and sometimes Fredegonde, of directing the hand of the unknown criminal.

In 592 King Gontran died in his bed; Childebert succeeded him, and for three years ruled over Austrasia and Burgundy. In 595 the young king died a sudden but apparently natural death. Brunhilda, left with the charge of two grandsons, Theoderic and Theodebert, ruled as queen
regent over the two kingdoms.

She was once more alone to face the revengeful, jealous Fredegonde and the no less savage nobles of her own kingdom. The darkest pages of her story were yet to come.

Knowledge of history in Gaul up to the date 590 is based on the "Historia Francorum" left by Gregory of Tours, an accurate and reliable chronicle. However, at about this year there came to Gaul a band of Irish monks under St. Columbanus. These men, preeminently Columbanus, are reputed to have received some "rough treatment" from Queen Brunhilda. The chief, if not the only source of information, is the monk Jonas of Bobbio. The narrative of Jonas strikes a new note. Brunhilda is represented as a second Fredegonde; she is accused of encouraging the immorality of her grandchildren, who took after their villainous granduncle Chilperich. According to Jonas, Columbanus, on first meeting the queen, was asked by her to bless the illegitimate offspring of her grandchildren, and indignantly refused.  

This incident, which cannot be checked by any evidence from Brunhilda's side, finally led to the expulsion of Columbanus and his monks from Gaul. This description 

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2 Jonas of Bobbio, Life of Saint Columban (University of Pennsylvania, Department of History, 1927), passim.
of the queen as an immoral and wicked woman is not in harmony with the history of her youth and early middle age as told by Gregory of Tours, or with what remains of her correspondence with Pope Gregory the Great, who is a witness to her good character.

This is the woman addressed by Gregory in terms of the highest admiration. He praises her "illustrious goodness so pleasing to God," known alike for her "prudent care" in the government of the kingdom and for "the admirable training" in the true faith which she had given to her son. He never weary of expressing his admiration for the Christian devotion:

Excellentiae vestrae Christianitas ita nobis veraciter olim innotuit ut de bonitate ejus nullatenus dubitemus; sed magis certum modis omnibus teneamus, quia in causa fidei devote et studiose concurrat, et religiosae sinceritatis suae solatia copiosissime subministret. . . . Excellentia ergo vestra, quae prona in bonis consuetit esse operibus, tam pro nostra petitione, quam etiam divini timoris consideratione, eum (Augustinum episcopum gentis Anglorum) dignetur in omnibus habere commendatum, atque ei tuitionis suae gratiam vehementer impendat, et labori ejus patrocinii sua ferat auxilium; et ut plenissime possit habere mercedem, ad supra scriptam Anglorum gentem sua tuitione securum ire providat, quatenus Deus noster qui in hoc saeculo vos bonis sibi placitis decoravit, hic et in aeterna requie cum suis vos sanctis faciat gratulari.3

and "scrupulous sincerity" of her character:

Epistolarum vestrarum series, quae religiosum animum et piae mentis studium continebat, non solum

3Epistle VI, 59.
voluntatis vestrae fecit nos laudare propositum, sed etiam libenter invitavit postulata concedere. Nec enim nos negare decuit, quod Christiana devotio et recti cordis desiderium flagitabat, praesertim dum illa postulari et tota amplēcti mente cognovimus quae et credentium fidem valde protegere et animarum saltem operari nihilominus poterunt ac servare. 

for her reverence for the *priesthood*:

Quanta in omnipotentis Dei timore excellentiae vestrae mens soliditate firmata sit, inter alia bona quae agitis etiam in sacerdotum ejus laudabiliter dilectione monstratis; et magna nobis fit de Christianitate vestra laetitia, quoniam quos venerantes ut famulos revera Christi diligitis, augere honoribus studetis.

and for her zeal in the propagation of the *faith*:

Gratias omnipotenti Deo referimus qui, inter cetera pietatis suae dona quae excellentiae vestrae largitus est, ita vos amore Christianae religionis implevit, ut quidquid ad animarum lucrum, quidquid ad propagationem fidei pertinere cognoscitis, devota mente et pio operari studio non cessetis.

for the virtue, wisdom and justice of her *government*:

Cum in regni regimine virtus justitia et potestas egeat aequitate, nec ad hoc alterum sine altero possit sufficere, quanto in vobis amore horum cura praefulget, ex hoc utique patenter ostenditur, dum turbas gentium laudabiliter gubernatis. Quis ergo haec considerans de excellentiae vestrae bonitate diffidat, aut de impetracione sit dubius, quando illa a vobis quae subjectis vos lubenter posse novit impendere duxerit postulanda?

The letters sent by Gregory the Great to Brunhilda

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4 Epistle VI, 50.
5 Epistle IX, 11.
6 Epistle XI, 62.
7 Epistle IX, 117.
are written in dignified language and with the politeness that the circumstances demanded. The pope repeatedly had sent instructions and advice to the queen as to the management of affairs of Church and State; he insisted with distinct sternness on the urgency of suppressing simony and maintaining discipline among the Gallic clergy.

Thus, there are two versions of Queen Brunhilda's character. On the one side are Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great, both contemporaries, very distinguished men of the age and in a position to know the facts. On the other side is Jonas, the monk of Bobbio, not a contemporary, obscure in his own day, and known to posterity only through the survival of his hagiographical writings.

And yet, as one writer observed:

Now it is a curious fact that nearly all historians, both ancient and modern, have followed Jonas. Among the rare exceptions are Bossuet and Sir Charles Oman, who both refuse to follow the popular tradition. Most Catholic historians have shown no mercy to the memory of Brunhilda. Ozanam calls her a "second Jezebel." Montalembert accuses her of murdering St. Didier, a charge for which history can show no shadow of evidence. Healy in "Irish Saints and Scholars" speaks of her as the "infamous queen-mother." D'Alton, in his "History of Ireland" denounces her with thoughtless rhetoric: "Greedy of absolute power, blind to religious obligations, deaf to the voice of nature itself . . . the struggle between St. Columbanus and the wicked old woman was bitter and prolonged."

The wickedness of the queen has an interest and an importance which extend further than the local history of Gaul in the sixth century because her name has been coupled with that of Gregory the Great, who has been accused of having connived for political reasons at her criminal misconduct.

This accusation has been so widely and so consistently repeated that it may be said to have a definite and almost unshakable position in the historical textbooks used in this country. The charge against Pope Gregory can be shown to be at least without sufficient evidence. Although repeated by successive generations of respected historians, the charge could have been at any time recognized as weak.

Conclusive proof of the instability of the accusation can be stated in a few paragraphs; it could have been so stated at any time during the last three centuries. But the popular historians in England and in Scotland evidently did not expose the facts. They apparently copied the scandal one from the other without the slightest suspicion entering their minds that they were propagating an infamous calumny.

The story was part of the great anti-papal tradition. That Gregory winked at the murders and immoral intrigues of which Queen Brunhilda has been accused, was
repeated by historians without hesitation. From the popular point of view it was just what might be expected, because there was already a similar tale to the discredit of the great pope. Historians had registered against him a "previous conviction." Everyone knew how, when the Emperor Phocas in Constantinople had succeeded to the throne, after murdering his predecessor Maurice with peculiar brutality, Gregory wrote him a letter of congratulations.

Gloria in excelsis Dec, qui, juxta quod scriptum est, immutat tempora, et transfert regna; et quia hoc cunctis innotuit quod per prophetam suum loqui dignatus est, dicens: Quia dominatur excelsus in regno hominum, et cui voluerit ipse dat illud (Dan. IV,14). In omnipotentis quiop Dei incomprehensibili dispensatione alterna sunt vitae mortalis moderamina, et aliquando cum multorum peccata ferienda sunt, unus erigitur per cujus duritiam tribulationis jugo subjectorum colla deprimantur, quod in nostra diutius afflictione probavimus.

... De qua exsultationis abundantia roborari nos citius credimus, qui benignitatem vestrae pietas ad imperiale fastigium pervenisse gaudemus. "Laetentur coeli, et exsultet terra" (Psal. XCV,11), et de vestris benignis actibus universus reipublicae populus nuncusque vehementer afflicitus hilarescat.9

To several British historians in the eighteenth century, convinced as they were that the word "pope" was synonymous with "anti-Christ," the character and record of Gregory, who could not be refused the title of "great," had been a cause of embarrassment. For it was not enough to assert that his humility was affected, that his services

9Epistle, XIII, 31.
to the civilization of Europe had been prompted solely by ambition, or that his zeal for reform was merely an artful dodge for the advancement of his office. Something more than mere assertion was required to tarnish the reputation of so great a man.

The letter to Phocas provided exactly what was wanted. Here even the greatest of popes was discovered to be no better than the others.

It is difficult to give any idea of the joy with which this discovery was hailed in the eighteenth century, by generations of both British and Continental historians, without quoting a long series of extracts from writers whose names and works are forgotten, although the errors which they helped to propagate still live. Bower, the apostate Jesuit, cheerfully concluded in the eighteenth century:

Here was a stain on the character of Gregory, which all his virtues will never wipe out. And what can we expect from other popes when even a Gregory did not scruple to employ, and by employing to sanctify, in the opinion of his successors, the most criminal methods to support and maintain the dignity of his See?10

Bolingbroke, however, did even better; he wrote that Gregory "flattered Brunhault and abetted Phocas."11


This verdict of guilt imposed by such notable historians was sufficient to satisfy the compilers of historical textbooks and encyclopedias which spread the information among the English-speaking race.

The cogency of the charge, however, depends on the assumption that the pope, when he wrote to Phocas, knew that he had succeeded to the throne by violently murdering his predecessor. This has been properly recognized in the "Cambridge Medieval History":

We are shocked as we read Gregory's cordial letters to the brutal murderer of the Emperor Maurice; but we must remember that the pope had no representative at Constantinople to tell him what had happened . . . he wrote as an official of the Church to an official of the State and he mingled with his formal words of congratulation . . . no words of personal adulation. 12

Both from the occasion and the text it is evident that the letter was a formal document; but to describe the official words of the pope as base flattery is unhistorical. Such a judgment is clearly the result of prejudice. Even Hodgkin, a critical student of the sources, fails to make any allowance for the diplomatic character of the pope's letter, or for the conditions under which it was written. However, he was too well informed about the history of Gaul in the sixth century to accuse Gregory of

flattering Brunhilda.

I do not, like many authors, couple the name of Brunichildis with that of Phocas, in considering the indictment against Gregory. His letters to the Austrasian queen are too courtly, too eulogistic; but after all, she was a great queen, and her really atrocious crimes were, I think we may safely say, all committed after the death of Gregory.13

Hodgkin did not discuss the possibility that Gregory might have had no knowledge of the events at Constantinople:

The one great blot on his escutcheon, his jubilation over the downfall of Maurice, and his fulsome praise of the tyrant his successor, can be palliated by no lover of truth and justice.14

Gregorovius was equally decisive:

Only with shame can we read these letters. They constitute the single stain on the life of the great man, and remain to detract from his renown.15

The guilt of Gregory the Great, then, on the double count of his letter to Phocas and his flattery of Brunhilda was accepted without hesitation by the historians of the nineteenth century on the grounds that a pope is more likely than not to do such things. The evidence was either not examined or not examined fairly. Even so


careful a scholar as Bury was not able on this occasion to escape the influence of a judgment which, although in every case a prejudgment, was the almost unanimous decision of historians.

As Hallam wrote:

The flattering style in which this pontiff (Gregory) addressed Brunhault and Phocas, the most flagitious monster of his time, is mentioned in all civil and ecclesiastical histories.\(^\text{16}\)

There is little doubt that Bury allowed his critical sense to be overwhelmed by the consensus of previous historians. In his *History of the Later Roman Empire* he presents the case against Gregory at some length:

It has been especially urged that there was no apocrisarius at Constantinople at the time to inform him (Gregory) of the details, and that he had merely heard the bare fact that Phocas had succeeded Maurice. Here again we have no proof of the extent of the pope's information; but it seems gratuitous to assume that he knew nothing of the details. Such an assumption would not be made in the case of anyone but a saint; the ground for the exemption being that the character of a saint is inconsistent with the authorship of a letter in which the perpetrator of such acts as those of Phocas is not merely acknowledged but eulogized. But we must remember the ideas which were prevalent at the time . . . Maurice was, in the eyes of Gregory, a pestilence to the Empire and a foe to the Church; his death was a consummation eminently to be desired, and he who should achieve such a consummation was a person eminently to be blessed. There seems therefore no reason to suppose that Gregory was not aware that the feet of Phocas, as he ascended the throne,

\(^{16}\text{Henry Hallam, View of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages (London: Oxford Press, 1819), II, 229.}\)
were stained with the innocent blood; he looked upon the acts as a political necessity, for which it would have been hardly fair to condemn the new emperor. . . .

It may be noted that the correspondence with Brunhilda and that with Phocas, taken together, make the case against assumption of ignorance stronger. If we assume knowledge in the one case, we may assume it in the other, and it is gratuitous to assume ignorance in both cases.17

It is important to notice exactly the process and the points of Bury's summing-up of the case against Pope Gregory. The suggestion that, according to the "ideas prevalent at the time," popes were likely to connive at murder when their interests were at stake is an expression of the prejudice of the court where the pope is being tried; neither historically nor justly can such a statement be accepted as part of the evidence against the accused.

The case against Pope Gregory, as presented by Bury, rests entirely upon the assumption of Queen Brunhilda's habitual misconduct, at the time, or before the time, she was receiving his letters of congratulation and praise. If the conduct of the queen had really been criminal, Gregory must, of course, have been aware of the fact. It would then be quite logical to conclude that since

Gregory could flatter Brunhilda, knowing her to be vicious, he might well have written to Phocas, knowing him to be a murderer. For, "if we are to assume knowledge in the one case, we may assume it in the other."

But the whole argument rests upon a false premise. Gregory's ignorance of the crimes alleged against Brunhilda can be proved with certainty because the charges brought against her concern incidents alleged to have occurred after the pope's death.

If any witness were needed to testify to the sobriety of Brunhilda's conduct up to the death of Pope Gregory, the testimony of St. Columbanus may be admitted. A few dates will make the point clear.

Gregory died in 604; his last letter to the queen was written in 602. But Columbanus did not openly "come into collision" with Brunhilda till 610. At least this letter date marks the actual conflict between the intentions of the Irish monk and the Frankish queen. If, then, Gregory in Rome is to be blamed for his failure to rebuke Brunhilda in 602, the apparent silence of Columbanus in Gaul is even more questionable.

But there is no more reason for asserting that the pope had written with undue adulation than for assuming that Columbanus, who was on the spot, had kept silent when he should have spoken. For it is quite certain that,
until after Gregory's death, the conduct of Brunhilda was neither reckless nor infamous.

The pope wrote several letters to Brunhilda congratulating her upon her good works. He cannot be blamed for failure to foresee that after his death she would be accused, on unstable evidence, of all sorts of terrible crimes. The charge against Pope Gregory of having written to Phocas, knowing him to be a murderer, a charge which seems to be ever linked with the charge regarding Brunhilda, must therefore stand by itself. The burden of proof that he had, or could reasonably be supposed to have had, such knowledge rests with the accusers.

When a man is accused of conniving at murder, he should not be condemned without proof. There is no evidence that Gregory knew what had happened at Constantinople; the presumption is all the other way. Phocas was crowned in November. He at once sent special messengers to Rome, where they arrived at the end of April, almost exactly five months later. Gregory wrote in May.

Quite likely the envoys of Phocas would not say anything about the murder. How then could Gregory have known? Who was at Constantinople ready to take the responsibility, the risk, of sending a special emissary to Rome to inform the pope of what had happened? And even if such a messenger had been sent, how could he have
arrived as soon as, or even shortly after, the official expedition which would naturally have special transport facilities? The guilt of Gregory cannot be held as proved until these questions have been answered. That so many modern historians should have repeated this serious charge against Gregory the Great, without having considered these points, should not pass unnoticed.

And yet, how unnoticed have such questions been! A brief survey of some historical opinions brings out the point. In the work, Leaders and Landmarks of European History by A. R. Hope-Moncrieff and H. J. Chaytor, Pope Gregory is given his place as a leader and landmark, but on page 180 the "guilt" of both Gregory and Brunhilda is confirmed with confident emphasis:

There seems no doubt that Gregory stretched his conscience to stand well with the new power; as also he had too civil relations with the Frankish Queen Brunhilda . . . a tenfold murderess.

There seems no doubt that the compilers of this history must have discovered some previously unsuspected source of information about the sixth century. For although Gregory in their pages still only connives at murder, with the Frankish queen that unpleasant crime has become a habit; and the "guilt" of Gregory, who has too civil relations with such a monster, is, of course, considerably aggravated.
The accusations brought by historians against Queen Brunhilda and the crimes she is accused of having committed after the death of Pope Gregory, her friend and counsellor, rest upon evidence of a more doubtful character.

Godefroid Kurth wrote:

Never has any writer of value failed to hesitate before the figure of Queen Brunhilda and ask himself whether she has really deserved the reputation she has been given in history.¹⁸

It is not the intention in these pages to exonerate Brunhilda from all personal guilt in her domestic affairs. The purpose has been to assay the facts pertaining to Pope Gregory's knowledge of her at the time of his correspondence with her. Nevertheless, it is helpful to see once again the opinions of some historians concerning her character.

Among the few English writers who have hesitated before condemning the queen of the Franks, the most worthy of note is Hallam. However, his final reaction is less venerable. He coupled, like all his contemporaries, the name of Queen Brunhilda with that of her lifelong enemy Fredegonde; but he added in a footnote that there had been in the seventeenth century a difference of

opinion among the critics as to the true character of the Frankish queen, and he advised his readers to "consult Pasquier on the one side . . . Gaillare on the other . . . the last is unfavorable to Brunhault and perfectly satisfactory to my judgment."19

Perhaps it seemed to Hallam and to his numerous disciples that upon this question of the queen's reputation, fundamental to a correct knowledge of sixth-century Gaul, it was sufficient to compare the opinions of previous inquirers and to be "satisfied."

Practically all the historians in the nineteenth century agree in condemning Brunhilda. Probably some of them were unconsciously influenced by unworthy motives. Some saw in the antagonism of this queen and St. Columbanus the old struggle between Church and State. They took sides against the queen, not after analyzing the character of the evidence, but at once and instinctively, on the general principle that it is "wicked" to oppose the Church. On the other hand, the spectacle of a "wicked old woman," cursed by the Celts and flattered by the pope, afforded to many writers a satisfaction that was partly sectarian.

Thus there was gradually built up the unanimous

19 Hallam, op. cit., I, 6.
"verdict of history." This verdict, by mere repetition, seems to have imposed itself upon the popular mind and received from all sides a blind nod.

But the history of sixth-century Gaul made it necessary to restrict the alleged evil conduct of Brunhilda to her old age. Montalembert in a well known history kept close to the traditional story.

Brunhault as she grew old . . . preserved neither generosity nor uprightness. Her thirst for sovereignty led her so far—she whose youth had been without reproach—as to encourage her grandsons in polygamy . . . she made her grandson repudiate his lawful bride. . . .

That the queen was responsible for the immorality of her grandsons and that she encouraged them in the practice of evil is just what any Irish disciple of St. Columbanus, indignant at the expulsion of the monks from Gaul, would have readily accepted as the whole truth. There is, unfortunately, no account of the quarrel written from Brunhilda's side; but the evidence as to her character provided by Gregory of Tours and by Gregory the Great makes this story at least improbable. After all, she had brought up her son so well that she received a special letter of congratulation from Pope Gregory; that she failed with her

grandsons is more likely to have been her misfortune than her fault.

As has been alluded to previously, the canonization of Queen Brunhilda because of saintly habits possessed throughout her earthly life is no more plausible than the quick condemnation of Pope Gregory for the unscrupulous expediency in his relations with her. Nevertheless, apart from the polite salutation which Gregory conveyed to her, the pure respect which he held for her during his pontificate is obvious from another quarter.

The abuses of the Frankish churches had scarcely diminished since Gregory first was brought into communication with them. And so, he attempts to enlist Brunhilda's energetic help in putting an end to these violations. Evidently Gregory considered the Frankish queen not only to be in a strategic position, but also willing and competent in the task of reforming Christian morality among the Franks. Such traits might add some much needed lustre to the character of Brunhilda among historians. At any rate, Pope Gregory urged the queen frequently to purify the religious practices of her subjects. The continued tree-worship and animal sacrifices among the common people were to be crushed. Moreover, as one of the pope's letters explained, the old evils of simony and the appointment of laymen to the episcopate must be extirpated.
Quorum (sacerdotum) officium in tantam illic, sicut didicimus, ambitionem perductum est, ut sacerdotes subito, quod grave nimis est, ex laicis ordinentur. Sed quid isti acturi, quid populo praestituri sunt, qui non ad utilitatem, sed fieri ad honorem episcopi concupiscunt? Hi ergo qui necdum quod docere debant didicerunt quid aliud agunt, nisi ut paucorum provectus illicitus fiat multis interitus, et in confusionem ecclesiasticæ moderationis observantia deducatur, quippe ubi nullus regularis ordo servatur?

Nec illud quidem quod similiter emendationi tradendum est praeterimus, sed omnino execrabile, et esse gravissimum detestamur, quod sacri illic ordines per simoniacem haeresim, quae prima contra Ecclesiam orta et districta maledictione damnata est, conferantur. Quia igitur tantum facinus non solum illis periculum, verum etiam vestro regno satis est noxium, salutantes vestram excellentiam paterno affectu, petimus ut de hujus pravitatis emendatione Deum vobis placabilem faciat. Et ut nulla deinceps valeat occasione committis, synodum fieri jussio vestra constitut, ubi, praesente dilectissimo filio nostro Cyriaco abbate, sub districta anathematis interpositione debeat interdici, ne ullus ex laico habitu subito ad episcopatus audeat gradum accedere, neque pro ecclesiasticis ordínibus quilibet quidquam dare vel ausus sit accipere, ut Dominus et Redemptor noster sic quae vestra sunt faciat, sicut excellentiam vestram in ilis quae sua sunt pia esse viderit devotione sollicitam.

Omnino praeterea admirati sumus cur et in regno vestro Judaeos Christiana mancipia possidere permittitis. Quid enim sunt Christiani omnes nisi membra Christi? Quorum videlicet membrorum caput cuncti novimus quia fideliter honoratis.21

To achieve this end, Gregory asked Brunhilda to convoke a synod whereby the bishops might anathematize offenders in these respects. He concluded this missive by expressing his surprise in learning that Jews in the queen's domain

21Epistle IX, 109.
were permitted Christian slaves and exhorted the swift correction of this evil.

Some time later in a letter to Brunhilda Gregory bemoaned the condition of the clergy in some Gallic regions.

Multorum igitur ad nos relatione pervenit, quod dicere sine afflictione cordis nimia non valemus, ita quosdam sacerdotes in illis partibus impudice ac nequiter conversari, ut et audire nobis opprobrium et lamentabile sit referre. Ne ergo postquam hujus nequitiae hucusque se tendit opinio, aliena pravitas aut nostram animam aut vestrum regnum peccati sui jaculo feriat, ardenter ad haec ulciscenda consurgere, ne paucorum facinus multorum possit esse perditio. Nam causa sunt ruinae populi sacerdotes mali. . . . Nec enim sunt dissimulanda quae dicimus, quia qui emendare potest et negligit, participem se procul dubio delicti constituat. Providete ergo animae vestrae, providete nepotibus, quos cupitis regnare feliciter, providete provinciis, et priusquam Creator noster manum suam ad feriendum excutiat, de rectione hujus sceleris studiosissime cogitate, ne tanto postmodum acerius feriat, quanto modo diutius clementer exspectat.22

So shameless and evil are the lives of some ecclesiastics that he is shocked to hear, and hesitates to speak of their conduct. But, since those whose place it was to correct this have neither the anxiety to discover it nor zeal to punish it, the pope urges the queen to nominate a person whom he might send from Rome to reform these abuses.

From instances of this sort is it not possible

22Epistle XI, 69.
that Brunhilda might be judged as possessing a few good qualities of life, so that she might be entrusted with sacred tasks by Gregory without the latter suffering from complete depravity of character, or even childish gullibility, as the case might be?

On one occasion, a letter came from Brunhilda, begging Gregory to grant a charter to a church, a monastery for women, and a hostel which she had erected at Autun.

Gregory promises Brunhilda to exert his influence to bring about the desired treaty, praises her zeal and good works, and confirms the privileges of her institutions as she had wished.

Epistolis autem vestris indicantibus agnoscentes ecclesiam vos sancti Martini in suburbano Augustodunensi, atque monasterium ancillarum Dei, necnon et xenodochium in urbe eadem construxisse, valde laetati sumus, et gratias omnipotenti Deo retulimus, qui cordis vestri sinceritatem ad haec operanda compungit. Qua de re ut nos bonis vestris in aliquo participes haberemur, privilegia locis ipsis pro quiете et munitione illic degentium sicut voluistis, indulsimus, nec excellentiae vestrae amplectenda nobis desideria vel ad modicum differre pertulimus.23

His letter to Brunhilda also deals with two noteworthy points. Apparently she had sent to Rome a certain Menna, bishop of Telo in Provence, to defend himself against a charge of heresy.

23Epistle XIII, 6.
Mennam vero reverendissimum fratrem et coepiscopum nostrum, postquam, ea quae de eo dicta fuerant requirentes, in nullo invenimus esse culpabilem, qui, insuper, ad sacramissimum corpus beati Petri apostoli sub jurejurando satisfaciens, ab his quae objecta ejus opinioni fuerant se demonstravit alienum, reverti illuc purgatum absolutumque permisimus, quia sicut dignum erat ut, si in aliquo reus existeret, culpam in eo canonicam puniremus, ita dignum non fuit ut eum adjuvante innocentia diutius retinere vel affligere in aliquo deberemus.24

Gregory announces that Menna has successfully rebutted the accusation, and that he has therefore sent him back to his post in honor.

She had also asked him whether he might raise to the episcopate one who, following the not infrequent use of the Franks, had two wives. This, of course, Gregory forbade according to the canons, advising her to do nothing which might counteract her many deeds of piety and religion.

Similiter vero de quodam bigamo requisiti, an ad sacrum ordinem potuisset accedere, juxta canonicam regulam omnino vetuimus. Absit enim ne vestris temporibus, in quibus tam multa pia ac religiosa agitis, aliquid contra ecclesiasticum institutum fieri permittatis.25

Again, very important were the documents that Gregory sent to Gaul in the form of charters of privileges which, at the request of Theodorich and Brunhilda,

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
he granted to the hostel, monastery, and church founded by the latter at Autun.

The charter of the hostel, which with the necessary alterations is the same as the other two, lays down that, on the death of the abbot, his successor shall be appointed by the king, the consent of the monks being necessary; that money shall never be paid to anyone, even the king on account of the ordination of an abbot; that the abbot shall never be deprived or deposed, unless a definite charge of evil-doing having been laid against him, the bishop of Autun with six other bishops shall after examination declare it proved. The abbot shall never hold a bishopric with his abbacy. No monk shall ever be removed from the hostel for promotion by a bishop without the abbot's consent. These decrees shall be binding forever.

Item constituimus ut, obeunte abbate atque presbytero suprascripti monasterii atque xenodochii, non alius ibi quacumque obreptionis astutia ordinetur, nisi quem rex ejusdem provinciae cum consensu monachorum secundum timorem Dei elegerit ac praeviderit ordinandum. Hoc quoque praesenti capitulo subjungimus, ut locum avaritiae excludamus, nullum de regibus nullum de sacerdotibus, vel quemcumque alium personam de ordinatione ejusdem abbatis, vel quibuscumque causis, ad xenodochium ipsum pertinentibus, audere in auro sive alia qualibet specie commodi quidquam accipere, neque eundem abbatem ordinationis suae causa dare praesumere, ne hac occasione ea quae a fidelibus piis locis offeruntur, aut jam obleta sunt, consumantur.

... abbatem atque presbyterum praedicti
xenodochii nullo modo privandum deponendumque esse censemus, nisi causa specialiter criminis exigente. Unde necesse est ut si qua contra eum hujusmodi querela surrexerit; non solus episcopus civitatis Augustodunensis causam examinet, sed, adhibitis sibi sex aliis coepiscopis suis, subtili hoc investigatione perquirat, quatenus, cunctis concorditer judicantibus, canonicae distictionis censura aut reum ferire, aut innocentem possit absolvere.

... decernimus ut nullus eorum qui eidem xenodochio atque monasterio abbas, aut presbyter in posterum fuerit ordinatus ad episcopatus officium quacumque obreptione sit ausus accedere, nisi prius abbatis officio sit privatus, aliusque loco ipsius subrogatus. ... Episcopum vero tollendi de eodem loco monachum ad ecclesiasticum ordinem promovendum, vel pro aliqua quacumque causa, sine consensu abbatis atque presbyteri, habere licentiam prohibemus.26

It is quite significant that Gregory, on the few occasions described, so readily placed trust in the Frankish queen, Brunhilda. He appeals to her as to one who realizes the necessity of religious observances and will attempt to satisfy this need.

If the vehement charges against Brunhilda concerning her obviously corrupt character in the days of Gregory's pontificate, coupled with the assertions of Gregory's full awareness of this fact, were held as valid, then how much more vehemently could charges be levelled against him? And this could be done not merely for his unworthy flattery, but also for the jeopardizing of souls dwelling in Gaul, but under his supreme spiritual care.

26Epistle XIII, 8.
We cannot blindly condemn the tact employed by Gregory in his approaches to Brunhilda. Prudent courtesy is not opposed to sanctity of life in any individual, least of all a pope. Gregory had been trained for a life of politics. After he had become a monk, he had been sent as a papal ambassador to Constantinople. In that atmosphere of intrigue he was compelled to practice the art of diplomacy. As bishop of Rome, he found it necessary to be a man of God in the world, and in the affairs of the world. State-craft may result in pure craft; diplomacy may lead to double-dealing. We have remarked already of the tact with which Gregory could rebuke abuses, judiciously commingling commendation with reproof, praise with exhortation. It is true that herein lay a danger: in a prudence that avoided at all costs offending the powerful, in an unbridled desire to gain the support of those who were able to give effect to his designs. But did Gregory succumb to such a danger? Was he an adulator of the rich, a jester at the Frankish court?

When his growing acquaintance with the evil state of the Gallic churches showed him the need of bringing every possible influence to bear upon it, if it were to be remedied, Gregory determined to appeal for help to Brunhilda. He felt that her good will must be utilized. Of
course, his diplomatic abilities gave direction to his sincerity, but certainly "unworthy flatteries" were not the result. Such a charge requires more evidence than presumption can afford.
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