

Pastoral Rules: Pomerius, Gregory the Great and the Making of Patristic Tradition

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*Scholars have debated how the themes discussed by Pomerius in his *De vita contemplativa* found ample resonance across Gregory the Great's work, and reflect similar concerns. While it is impossible to determine whether the Roman bishop read the treatise authored by the North African rhetor, their parallel authority on the matter was recognised by Carolingian copyists, who often reported their works alongside each other. The discovery of a glossa sourced from Gregory's literary production in Pomerius' manuscript tradition might both substantiate this claim and shed some light on the networks of medieval scriptoria.*

There are clear echoes in the way Gregorian Rome¹ and fifth-century late antique Gaul² coped with a challenging transitional period. Indisputably, there are relevant similarities in the role that religious

BL = British Library, London; BNF = Bibliothèque nationale de France; NAL = Nouvelle Acquisition Latine; Bodl. Lib. = Bodleian Library, Oxford; BStK: Bergmann/Stricker-Katalog; CCSL = Corpus Christianorum Series Latina; CPL = Clavis Patrum Latinorum; MGH = Monumenta Germaniae Historia; PL = *Patrologia Latina*; SC = Sources Chrésiennes

All translations are the author's unless otherwise stated.

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¹ A more detailed account of the events leading to Gregory's election to the papacy is provided by R. A. Markus in his *Gregory the Great and his world*, Cambridge 1997.

² See W. E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: the making of a Christian community in late antique Gaul*, Cambridge 1994: at pp. 65–9 for the growing importance of Arles as a religious centre in Gaul; at pp. 69–71 for the impact of Visigoth invasions

men, like Gregory and Caesarius of Arles, were expected to play and the challenges they faced: under the weight of the expectations of their communities, those trained for ascetic life were summoned to exercise temporal power; the anxiety to legitimate their moral authority on both religious and secular matters was hanging over their heads.³ Gregory's immediate response was the composition of his *Regula pastoralis*:⁴ but was there already an authoritative framework on which the leaders of the Gallic Church would anchor their power at the end of the fifth century? Or, to pose the question differently, had the theoretical and practical foundations for the temporal government of the Church – the ones that Gregory would have to duly explicate again in Rome – already been laid out for Gallic bishops a century earlier?

To find an answer, one might usefully turn to the often-overlooked figure of the African rhetorician Pomerius.⁵

on Arles; and at pp. 88–110 for the challenges dealt with by Caesarius as bishop of Arles.

³ The question of whether Gregory had in mind a secular audience for his *Regula pastoralis* has been widely discussed. Robert Markus argued that 'it is a handbook as much for kings as for prelates': 'Gregory the Great's *rector* and its genesis', in Jacques Fontaine (ed.), *Grégoire Le Grand*, Paris 1986, 143. More recently, B. Lupton rekindled this debate; given the tight link between religious and secular power in the eyes of Gregory, he agreed with Markus' original assessment: 'Gregory never explicitly states that he wrote the *PR* to help guide temporal leaders, but based on his understanding of the role of the temporal office, it seems highly likely': 'Reexamining Gregory the Great's audience for the *Pastoral rule*', *Downside Review* cxxxiii/468 (2015), 197.

⁴ In a letter to his friend Leander of Seville, Gregory mentioned that he wrote the *Regula pastoralis* at the very beginning of his episcopate: *Epistulae* v.53, CCSL cxl.348. To further refine its date of composition, Bruno Judic noted that Gregory included several passages from the *Regula pastoralis* in the synodal letter he sent to the patriarchs of the Eastern Churches in February 591 (*ep.* i.24, CCSL cxl.22–32; SC cclxx.124–55), thus implying a *terminus ante quem*. It has been argued that many of the references to the *Regula pastoralis* found in the synodal letter could have actually been sourced from the *Moralia in Job*, thus disputing the dating of the *Regula pastoralis*. However, Judic shows that the word order of some extracts is much closer to the *Regula* than to the *Moralia*. This would mean that the extracts did not feed directly from the *Moralia* to the synodal letter but were mediated by the *Regula pastoralis*, which must therefore have been composed before February 591. See B. Judic, 'Introduction' to *Grégoire le Grand: Règle pastorale*, SC ccclxxi–ccclxxxii (1992), 21–2. It is interesting to note that Gregory the Great continued to refine and modify the work for some time before coming to a definitive edition. This can be seen from the corrections present on the illustrious *Codex Trecensis*, seemingly operated by Gregory or by a scribe under his direction: P. Chiesa, 'Oltre il «Codex Trecensis»: nuove prospettive a partire dalla «Regula pastoralis»', in Claudio Leonardi (ed.), *Gregorio Magno e le origini dell'Europa*, Florence 2014, 291–306.

⁵ The attribution of the name *Julianus* to Pomerius has been proved wrong by Leyser and it is probably due to an erroneous reading by Isidore of Pseudo-Gennadius' *notitia*: C. Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, Oxford 2000, 66 n.4.

The historical context

Pomerius was originally from North Africa,⁶ where he was known as a rhetor.⁷ The exact reasons and the timeframe of Pomerius' transfer to southern France are not easy to establish, but he was certainly in Arles around the last years of the fifth century.⁸ His departure from North Africa to Gaul is likely to be dated a few years earlier and it might be beneficial to understand why he chose Arles from among many potential destinations. Previous answers to this question provided by modern scholars have not been compelling.⁹ However, a detailed analysis of the

⁶ Pseudo-Gennadius informs the reader that Pomerius is *natione Maurus*: Gennadius Massiliensis, *De viris illustribus*, notitia 98, ed. E. Richardson, Leipzig 1896, 57–97; Caesarius' hagiographers record him as *Afer genere*. *Vita Sancti Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis*, ed. E. Bona, Amsterdam 2002, 1.9. If one believes Pseudo-Gennadius, Pomerius' birthplace can be placed somewhere in Mauretania; if the version of Caesarius' hagiographers is adopted, his native land could be either located in the Roman province of *Africa Proconsularis*, if the term *Afer* is taken in a narrow sense, or extended to anywhere in North Africa.

⁷ It is reasonable to believe that Pomerius received a proper rhetorical training. The refined letters addressed to him by Ruricius and Ennodius reveal the education and cultural background of the recipient: Ruricius of Limoges, *epp.* 1.17, 2.10, 2.11, ed. M. Neri, Pisa 2009; Ennodius, *Epistularum libri IX* 2.6. Moreover, the treatise *De vita contemplativa*, with its references to Greek culture (Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 3.27; 3.31.2, *PL* lix.415–520, which reprints the edition of J.-B. Le Brun des Marettes and D. Mangeant, Paris 1711 in the appendix to the works of Proper of Aquitaine, alongside Mangeant's editorial *Admonitio* [*PL* lix.411–14]), and its Ciceronian (Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 3.31.4) and Vergilian quotations (*De vita contemplativa* 3.31.4), effectively reinforces the deductions previously illustrated. On the contrary some scholars, on the basis of a passage from *De vita contemplativa* (3.34.2), argued that Pomerius did not receive any rhetorical training and instead was self-taught: F. Degenhart, *Studien zu Julianus Pomerius*, Eichstätt, 1905, 2; M. J. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius: the contemplative life*, Westminster, Md 1947, 196 n. 151. This assertion is quite weak: Pomerius' statement looks more like a literary *topos* of false modesty or an explicit refusal of rhetoric, rather than a precise, autobiographical reference.

⁸ This can be inferred from two different sources. The first one is Caesarius' hagiographers, who report that Pomerius taught the future bishop when he arrived from Lérins around 498: *Vita Sancti Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis* 1.9. The second is a letter from Ruricius, who asks bishop Eonius to send Pomerius over to him: see Ruricius of Limoges, *epp.* 2.9.6. Taking into account that Eonius died in 501 or 502 (W. Klingshirn, 'Church politics and chronology: dating the episcopacy of Caesarius of Arles', *Revue des études augustiniennes* xxxviii [1992], 85–6) and that he must have been still alive when Pomerius arrived, it is obvious that Eonius' death is a *terminus ante quem* for Pomerius' relocation. Combining this information together, there is clear evidence that Pomerius was in Arles at the end of the fifth century.

⁹ Most accept Pomerius' move to Arles as a matter of fact, without inquiring too much about the reasons: Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 73; Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius*, 4. The preface to the Italian translation of *De vita contemplativa* supports the thesis that Pomerius chose to move to Arles because of the wealth, culture and beauty of the city: these all seem good reasons, but do not help to explain why Arles specifically over

Prosopography of the late Roman Empire,¹⁰ conducted by Mommaerts and Kelley, can help solve this enigma, at least partially. It highlights how both Ruricius and Ennodius, who addressed letters to Pomerius, and Firminus Arelatensis, who appears to have been very close to him in Arles, are linked through the family tree of the *Anicii*, thus establishing a clear link between Pomerius and this family. Moreover, the two scholars include in the ranks of the *Anicii* a Felix Ennodius who was *proconsul Africae* between 408 and 423, hence showing the presence of the *Anicii* in North Africa since the beginning of the fifth century.¹¹ It is therefore fair to assume that Pomerius, while too young to meet Felix Ennodius directly, had already been introduced to some other members of the *Anicii* family while he was in North Africa and that, perhaps because of the pressure of the Vandal persecutions,¹² he left for Arles to rely on Firminus' and Gregoria's patronage.¹³ Notably, they also encouraged the young Caesarius to learn from Pomerius, although it is difficult to know exactly what Pomerius taught the future bishop of Arles.¹⁴ It is none the less

many other cities: Giuliano Pomerio, *La vita contemplativa*, trans. M. Spinelli, Rome 1987, 9–10.

¹⁰ See A. H. M. Jones and J. R. Martindale, *The prosopography of the later Roman empire*, II: AD 395–527, Cambridge 1980.

¹¹ See T. S. Mommaerts and D. H. Kelley, 'The Anicii of Gaul and Rome', in John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: a crisis of identity?*, Cambridge 1992, 111–21.

¹² The Vandal persecutions of the Nicene Church reached their climax under Huneric's rule (477–84). The main source for this period is Victor Vitensis, *Historia persecutionis Africanae Provinciae, temporibus Genserici et Hunirici regum Wandalorum*, ed. K. F. Halm, MGH, Auctores Antiquissimi, iii/1, Berlin 1879. Jonathan Conant provides a detailed analysis of the movements of several North African refugees across the Roman world: *Staying Roman: conquest and identity in Africa and the Mediterranean*, 439–700, Cambridge 2012, 68–90.

¹³ It is difficult to clarify the relationship between Firminus and Gregoria. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 13, suggests they were married, while R. A. Kaster proposes that Firminus was Gregoria's son: *Guardians of language: the grammarian and society in late antiquity*, Berkeley, CA 1988, 343. However, the relationship between the two is not clear, as indicated by Bona: *Vita Sancti Caesarii*, 207.

¹⁴ As highlighted by Bona (*Vita Sancti Caesarii*, 208–12), the link between Caesarius and Pomerius is much stronger than is described in *Vita Caesarii* and cannot be explained entirely by their shared cultural milieu: several analogies can be found between the doctrine of Caesarius and Pomerius, including their doctrine of grace, their admiration for Augustine of Hippo, the clergy reform in Southern Gaul (Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 75–82) and the theorising of *sermo humilis*. On this last point, there appear to be some strong links between Caesarius' *Sermo 1* and Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa*. The riddle of why Caesarius' hagiographers tried to hide this connection between the bishop of Arles and Pomerius, presenting the latter solely as a *rhetor*, can be partially explained by an effort to highlight the refusal of rhetoric by Caesarius, depicting him in opposition to Pomerius, or due to some frictions between the two of them.

possible to infer Pomerius' ideas and teachings from his literary production, and in particular from his only fully surviving work, the *De vita contemplativa*,¹⁵ which was probably composed towards the end of his life, seemingly in the first decade of the sixth century.¹⁶

This text, a collection of three books, is a treatise in the form of philosophical dialogue between Pomerius and an unidentified Bishop Julianus:¹⁷ these books deal respectively with the contemplative life (*vita*

¹⁵ The manuscript tradition of Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa* was reviewed and discussed by M. L. W. Laistner: 'The influence during the Middle Ages of the treatise *De vita contemplativa* and its surviving manuscripts', in C. G. Starr (ed.), *The intellectual heritage of the early Middle Ages: selected essays by M. L. W. Laistner*, New York 1966, 45. More recently, Nicolas De Maeyer provided 'an overview of the manuscripts containing the complete or partial text of *De vita contemplativa*', while a subsequent article dedicated to excerpts is in the works: 'The transmission of Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa*, I: Descriptive catalogue of the complete and partial manuscript witnesses', *Revue d'histoire des textes* xviii (2023), 149–223. For Pomerius' Carolingian reception see J. Timmerman, 'Sharers in the contemplative virtue: Julianus Pomerius's Carolingian audience', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* xlv (2014), 1–44.

¹⁶ The work, at least in its present shape, was unknown to Pseudo-Gennadius, a contemporary of Pomerius who wrote towards the end of the fifth century. It is only mentioned by Isidore of Seville, who wrote several decades after Pomerius' death. Given that some of his contemporaries were unaware of such work, it is likely that he composed the *De vita contemplativa* towards the end of his life.

¹⁷ The figure of the dedicatee of this treatise, Bishop Julianus, remains hard to identify. Leyser even suggests that he might have not existed at all (*Authority and asceticism*, 66 n. 4), while Markus hints that he might be an *alter ego* for Pomerius himself: *The end of ancient Christianity*, Cambridge 1990, 189. Assuming that Bishop Julianus did exist, a few hypotheses for his identification have been suggested: several scholars point towards Julianus of Carpentras, reported at Epaon in 517 for the council hosted there (see Magneant, *Admonitio*, PL lix, 414A–B; A. Solignac, 'Les Fragments du De natura animae de Pomère', *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* lxxv [1974], 42; Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius*, 8; Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, 66, n. 4); other suggestions include a Julianus of Vienne, identified as the successor of Avitus in 518: C. F. Arnold, *Caesarius Von Arelate*, Leipzig 1894, 210 n. 66; Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, 66 n. 4, and a little known Julianus, bishop of *Forum Julii* (see Mangeant, *Admonitio*, PL lix, 414 B–D). Considering that the *De vita contemplativa* was composed towards the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, Julianus of Carpentras might seem to be a better fit as Julianus of Vienne would become bishop too late to be a plausible dedicatee for the treatise and too little is known about Julianus of *Forum Julii* to make him a reliable option. However, no definitive proof can be offered at the moment to identify the dedicatee of the *De vita contemplativa*, if he even existed. It is important to highlight that Pseudo-Gennadius notes in his *notitia* on Pomerius that he wrote another work, the *De natura animae*. Although this text is now almost entirely lost, Pseudo-Gennadius reports that it was dedicated to a Bishop Julianus and a presbyter Verus: Gennadius Massiliensis, *De viris illustribus*, notitia 98. While it is possible that both works are addressed to the same Julianus, there is no definitive indication of that. Similarly, the name Verus was so common at the time that his identification is not any easier than the one of bishop Julianus: Mangeant, *Admonitio*, PL lix. 414D–416A.

contemplativa), which focuses on the contemplation of God in the world to come, the active life (*vita activa*), which describes how to behave towards sinners and how to manage a Christian community, and the vices and virtues (*de vitiis et virtutibus*), which deals with the notion of sin and righteousness.¹⁸ Pomerius' core message is that the true contemplative life is the one in the afterlife, where the just can reach the vision of God: no matter how many efforts people devote to achieve contemplation in this world, there is no comparison between earthly and heavenly joy.¹⁹ It is therefore clear that Christians should focus themselves entirely on the word of God, in order to obtain salvation at the end of times. This is a possibility open surely to ascetics but also to those drawn towards a so-called 'active life', like bishops.²⁰ It is therefore their duty to act properly and preach the word of God,²¹ to manage diligently the Church and their followers²² and to live a life of virtues and away from sin.²³ Following an analysis of these topics as covered by Pomerius, William Klingshirn notes how the *De vita contemplativa* lays out a programme of church reform which was readily available for Caesarius and the Gallic Church: while influencing the thoughts of the future bishop of Arles, it also offered a well-structured manual that he could use to support and promote his own reforms.²⁴

The thematic similarities between Gregory's works and those of Pomerius have not been ignored by scholars. Robert Markus notes that

¹⁸ It is very likely that the *De vita contemplativa* was not originally conceived in the way we currently read it. Pseudo-Gennadius does not mention it. He reports instead an otherwise unknown treatise named *De vitiis et virtutibus*. Gennadius Massiliensis, *De viris illustribus*, notitia 98. Commenting on Pseudo-Gennadius' notitia regarding Pomerius, Spinelli notes that either Pseudo-Gennadius did not know the *De vita contemplativa* or that he was referring to it with the name of *De vitiis et virtutibus*: Pomerio, *La vita contemplativa* (Spinelli edn), p. 18n. There is a possibility that both these suggestions are inaccurate. While the *De vita contemplativa* can currently be read as a standalone treatise, it seems plausible to suggest that it was derived from some independent works, later edited by Pomerius into a unitary text. For example, the third book of the *De vita contemplativa* might be traced back to the aforementioned treatise *De vitiis et virtutibus*. This was known by Pseudo-Gennadius, who was a contemporary of Pomerius, while Isidore of Seville, almost a century later, was only aware of the *De vita contemplativa* as a whole: *De viris illustribus*, ed. C. C. Merino, Salamanca 1964, 25, 31. Pseudo-Gennadius might therefore be testifying to a stage in the development of the work, while the later Isidore was able to read the treatise in its final version. It might also be worth noting that the *De vitiis et virtutibus* could have been framed for a broader audience, including both clerics and laity, while the *De vita contemplativa* in its present shape is clearly conceived as a guide for bishops and priests. Proof supporting this hypothesis might be found in the manuscript tradition, should any codex report the third book or extracts of it independently from the rest of the work. Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify any manuscript yet with such features, probably attesting that the text was revised in its final shape shortly after its original composition. This might explain why the different treatises did not circulate independently for long.

¹⁹ Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*, 1.1–12.

²⁰ Ibid. 1.13.

²¹ Ibid. 1.14–25.

²² Ibid. 2.

²³ Ibid. 3.

²⁴ Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 74.

'There is so much in Gregory's writing that is reminiscent of Julianus's that it is hard to suppose he had not read it', while also pointing out that 'there is no conclusive evidence that he had'.²⁵ Conrad Leyser clearly notes that, when complaining about the burdens of the office, 'Gregory would have seemed an instantly recognizable participant in the broad tradition represented in the sixth century by Boethius' *The consolations of philosophy* and Pomerius' *On the contemplative life*.'²⁶ However, Carole Straw is more cautious and hints solely at 'traces' of Pomerius present in Gregory's work.²⁷ The topic has been recently picked up again by Josh Timmerman, who broadly follows the lines of Markus' argument, noting that '[s]uggestive, if not quite definitive, points of comparison abound between the *Regula pastoralis* and the *VC* but '[t]he evidence, while intriguing, is admittedly inconclusive.'²⁸

The key issue is that, while Pomerius and Gregory seem to deal with similar topics, it is extremely challenging to identify direct references or quotations. This is mostly due to the way Gregory approaches his sources. He rarely quotes them directly and precise references are scarce. His dependency mostly lies in ideas, which Gregory absorbs and reshapes in a personal way, adapting them to his own purposes and objectives.²⁹ In Markus' words, 'usually he covers his tracks so well as to expunge all identifiable traces of his sources'.³⁰

It is certainly fair to say there is a relevant degree of accuracy in this statement, especially in relation to any dependence. Any explicit tracks linking the *De vita contemplativa* and Gregory's works have been hidden quite well. Recent scholars have indeed lost sight of Pomerius' possible influences on Gregory the Great, either because of Gregory's own style or due to the presence of more illustrious sources. Bruno Judic, for example, in his introduction to the edition of the *Regula pastoralis*, lists Ambrose, Augustine, Cassian, Caesarius and other Fathers of the Church among the possible western influences on Gregory, but fails to mention Pomerius at all.³¹ Similarly, Sofia Boesh Gajano, in her prologue to the conference on Gregory the Great hosted in Florence and concluding the celebrations for the Gregorian year in 2006, states that no work before Gregory showed such attention to psychological and social aspects in the prescriptions related to preaching.³² While the ability of Gregory is certainly unparalleled, and while Augustine and Caesarius are noteworthy sources, it might be

²⁵ Markus, *Ancient Christianity*, 19.

²⁶ Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, 134.

²⁷ C. E. Straw, *Gregory the Great: perfection in imperfection*, Berkeley, CA 1988, 16.

²⁸ Timmerman, 'Sharers in the contemplative virtue', 26.

²⁹ See S. Pricoco, 'Gregorio Magno e la tradizione monastica', in Leonardi, *Gregorio Magno e le origini dell'Europa*, 84; Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 16.

³⁰ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 17.

³¹ Judic, 'Introduction', 35–62.

³² See S. B. Gajano, 'Prolusione', in Leonardi, *Gregorio Magno e le origini dell'Europa*, 13.

helpful not to forget Pomerius' contributions to the development of pastoral care. Judic has none the less highlighted the connections between the pope and the Gallic region, which could have led him to make the acquaintance of Caesarius' works.³³ The same trails might have brought a copy of the *De vita contemplativa* into the papal library. In the following pages, some of the 'tracks' mentioned by Markus will be explored, with the hope of shedding some further light on the literary and cultural sources which made Gregory the Great.

Textual comparison between Gregory and Pomerius

Gregory's literary production is impressively broad and covers a wide range of topics.³⁴ However, the works whose proximity to the *De vita contemplativa* might be highlighted most effectively are the ones where the pope focuses on the role of pastors and their moral authority. This draws our attention to two major works, the *Homilies on Ezekiel*, which are very sensitive to the relationship between contemplative life and pastoral activity, and the *Regula pastoralis*, which is meant to shape the spiritual and moral identity of the shepherd of the Church.³⁵ The latter in particular has been acutely framed by Leyser as the 'a rallying-point for all readers of Gregory ... the only systematic treatise from his pen'.³⁶ It does therefore seem reasonable to try to approach a parallel reading of Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa* and Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*. While I will not establish in this article any direct literary dependencies between the two, I will try to understand how their respective programmes of pastoral reforms could be read and understood in parallel. It is indeed appropriate to wonder whether the answers that Pomerius provided to the renewed issues of moral authority and pastoral care that Gaul was dealing with towards the end of the fifth century could still resonate with Gregory the Great when he had to take up the challenge of managing the Roman Church a century later. However, it is not the intention here to directly contribute to the debate on whether Gregory read Pomerius' works or not. The aim is to show, through a thematic comparison, how Carolingian readers might have appreciated the similarities between these two authors. This might indeed explain why they included both Gregory and Pomerius in their readings on these

³³ Judic, 'Introduction', 57.

³⁴ According to Markus' review, Gregory's works include a *Registrum* of more than 850 letters, a collection of talks that Gregory gave in Constantinople under the name of *Moralia*, the *Liber regulae pastoralis*, the *Dialogi*, two separate sets of homilies on the Gospels and on Ezekiel and a few commentaries on the Song of Songs and on the first book of Kings: Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 14–16.

³⁵ See Gajano, 'Prolusione', 13.

³⁶ Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, 140.

subjects, alongside other late antique Christian writers like Cassian, Caesarius and Augustine.

One of Pomerius' main concerns is that preachers might let the sin of pride overcome them while exercising their pastoral functions. He shows how shepherds should not be exalted because of their leadership position and because of the charge they have been awarded. Pomerius highlights this message at the very beginning of his work, in the prologue, where he reminds preachers that all glory belongs solely to God. Every word they are going to say must come from God, and the Lord should take credit for the effective results of their preaching.³⁷ The writer here is driven by Paul's message to the Corinthians where the Apostle says: 'Knowledge swells, love builds up instead' (1 Corinthians viii.1), but Pomerius expounds the sentence introducing *caritas* with a mediating role. The author of the *De vita contemplativa*, unlike Paul, allows a space for the bishop to know and preach, as he states that 'knowledge, without the gift of God that is love, swells'. According to Pomerius therefore, the bishop is allowed to possess some knowledge, but he still underlines that any activity from the preacher must be moderated by the oversight of God and ascribed to him. Pomerius insists on the same message again in the *De vita contemplativa*. In the middle of the first book, while he is describing how the real contemplative life is the one in the world to come, he issues a stark warning to preachers. They should not be proud of being considered leaders of their communities as the only leader, both of priests and followers, is Christ. Their joy should therefore not lie in achieving earthly glory, but in attaining the future life.³⁸ Pomerius reiterates this message at the beginning of his second book, where he is about to give some prescriptions to preachers on how to manage their active life. Before delving into the practical aspects of the sacerdotal mission, he provides a description of what the ideal bishop would look like. Again, the author of the *De vita contemplativa* highlights that the preacher should not feel proud and 'swollen' because of his role, but rather accept it as a burden with which he will have to struggle but that will grant him the reward of the afterlife.³⁹ Pomerius seems to be underlining the same message: the bishop has to be a

³⁷ 'Quandoquidem scientia sicut sine dono Dei, quod est caritas, inflat, ita si ei caritas admisceatur, aedificat. Ac per hoc, qui de Deo loqui voluerit, aut nihil dicit, et nulla eum praecipitat inflatio; aut si aliquid dixerit, et se crediderit a Deo accepisse quod dixit, habet unde Deo gratias agat, non habet quod ingenii sui viribus elatus ascribat': Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.prol.2.

³⁸ 'Proinde non inflantur, quia hic omnium fidelium catholicorum honorantur ut capita; sed laetantur potius, quia ibi Christi, qui est sacerdotum ac fidelium omnium caput, clariora membra futuri sunt': ibid. 1.13.1.

³⁹ 'quos non inflat honor acceptus, sed exercet labor impositus; qui non excellentiam suam cogitant proveci, sed sarcinam': ibid. 2.2.2.

humble servant of God, taking no pride in his mission, but duly serving God's will while waiting for his reward at the end of times.

Gregory seems to allude to the same themes in his prefatory letter at the beginning of his treatise *Regula pastoralis*. While addressing the dedicatee of the work, probably Bishop John of Ravenna,⁴⁰ the author stresses what he deems a very important matter: regardless of how pure they are, priests should always remain humble, 'depressi' in Gregory's own words. Elation and pride are to be feared and kept away during pastoral activity, as priests are not to seek glory in this world but in the one to come.⁴¹ This theme will resurface on several occasions in the pages of the *Regula pastoralis*. In the third chapter of the first book, where he reminds preachers to despise adversity and fear prosperity, Gregory exhorts the readers to follow the example of Christ shown in John vi.15. As Jesus refused to be made king, to avoid earthly glory, so bishops should steer away from the goods of this world. Indeed, wealth and glory are like a swelling, tainting the soul.⁴² The second book of the *Regula pastoralis* is devoted to the life of the priest and the sixth chapter is focused on how the bishop should support the honest faithful and chastise the sinner. Gregory stressed how the action of the preacher should be carried humbly, as a great danger weighs on the guide of the community. Being a leader, people are always ready to please him and execute his orders. Finding anyone who dares to speak up against him is hardly possible, and therefore the bishop risks feeling elated, swollen.⁴³ This reprimand is taken up again by the author

⁴⁰ Barbara Müller has discussed the identification of the *Johannes* mentioned by Gregory in the introductory letter to *Regula pastoralis* (*Grégoire le Grand: Règle Pastorale*, ed. F. Rommel, Paris 1992, SC cclxxxii, *epist. praef.*, p. 124). According to her, it is worth considering whether Gregory addressed the book to John of Constantinople, as originally suggested by E. Caspar (*Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, Tübingen 1930–3, 365–6), rather than to John of Ravenna: 'Aber wer ist dieser Johannes? Zwei Möglichkeiten stehen zur Debatte: Bischof Johannes II von Ravenna (578–595) oder Patriarch Johannes IV von Konstantinopel': B. Müller, 'Führung im Denken und Handeln Gregors des Grossen', *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum* lvii (2009), 120.

⁴¹ 'Ad extremum vero superest ut perfecta quaeque opera consideratio propriae infirmitatis deprimat, ne haec ante occulti arbitrii oculos tumor elationis exstinguat': *Règle pastorale, epist. praef.*, SC cclxxxii.126.

⁴² 'verum etiam per conversationem doceret, exemplum se sequentibus praebens, rex fieri noluisset, ad crucis vero patibulum sponte convenit; oblatam gloriam culminis fugit, poenam probrosae mortis appetiit; ut membra ejus videlicet discerent favores mundi fugere, terrores minime timere, pro veritate adversa diligere, prospera formando declinare, quia et ista saepe per tumorem cor inquinant, et illa per dolorem purgant': *ibid.* 1.3, SC cclxxxii.138.

⁴³ 'Sed plerumque rector eo ipso quo caeteris praeminet, elatione cogitationis intumescit, et dum ad usum cuncta subjacent, dum ad votum velociter jussa complentur, dum omnes subditi, si qua bene gesta sunt, laudibus efferunt, male gestis autem nulla auctoritate contradicunt, dum plerumque laudant etiam quod reprobare

of the *Regula pastoralis* in the fourth and final book, which is entirely devoted to reminding the bishop not to rejoice in his own virtues and success. Gregory appears to be relentless in advising his readers about the importance of humility. Elation is the first step towards eternal damnation and should be prevented at all costs.

It can be inferred that humility has a central role in both Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa* and Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*. However, the Latin lexicon used in each respective passage is slightly different. For example, when referring to the risk of bishops becoming elated and 'swollen', Pomerius usually prefers to employ the word *inflatio*, inspired by 1 Cor. viii.1, while Gregory is more likely to use either *elatio* or *tumor*. However, the message at the core of the two works is the same: both Gregory and Pomerius, even if writing nearly one hundred years apart, are worried that the leaders of the Church could get carried away in the exercise of their functions by their pride and therefore lead their flock astray. Moreover, preserving their humility while exercising the pastoral function might help them retain the moral authority needed as rulers. As pointed out by Leyser, 'this was the importance to Gregory of the virtue of humility: it is everywhere emphasized in his work, not as a generally desirable Christian virtue, but as the quality without which those in power will not be able to survive'.⁴⁴

Deep love for followers should certainly restrain the worldly ambitions of bishops but should also determine their behaviour when preaching. Gregory's careful psychological analysis of the different types of audiences and how better to teach them covers the entirety of his third book and more than half of the *Regula pastoralis*.⁴⁵ Gajano points out that 'no work showed such a social and psychological competence, none had delineated, for pastoral reasons, an overview of the society connecting status, culture and ecclesiastical charges, thus displaying the nexus between social identity, and moral and spiritual status'. Effectively, she highlights how a reflection as broad, detailed and structured as Gregory's is unheard of in ancient Christian literature.⁴⁶ None the less, the first few chapters of the second book of the *De vita contemplativa* dwell on the same idea, as Pomerius states in its first chapter that:

debuerant, seductus ab his quae infra suppetunt, super se animus extollitur': ibid. 1.6, SC cclxxxii. 206.

⁴⁴ Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, 160.

⁴⁵ The list of different potential categories of sinners covered by Gregory is impressive, and they are all diligently listed in the first chapter of the third book: *Règle pastorale*, 3.1, SC cclxxxii. 262–6.

⁴⁶ 'Nessun'opera aveva mostrato una simile competenza che potremmo definire sociologica e psicologica: nessuna aveva pensato di delineare, per finalità pastorali, un panorama della società, che ben rifletteva la coincidenza fra status, cultura e cariche ecclesiastiche, e fissava il nesso fra identità sociale e connotazione morale e spirituale': Gajano, 'Prolusione', 13–14.

If they all suffered from the same illness of the spirit, and if they were all affected by the same ailment of the soul, they would be no different one from the other: either it would be necessary to support them all, or to rebuke them all. However actually some of them should be tolerated, others should be chastised, given that for the differences between the sinners there should also be differences in the approach of the teachers.⁴⁷

In this short passage one can observe the same attention to the audience expressed by Gregory. While the author of the *De vita contemplativa* did not detail the same impressive list of potential cases, or at least not as systematically as in the *Regula pastoralis*, he does provide some examples.

For instance, when dealing with the question of how to approach people of different ages, Pomerius states that the preacher should: ‘Discuss with the people of the same age, respectfully address the people of an older age, strongly reproach the younger.’⁴⁸ Interestingly, the first chapter of the third book of the *Regula pastoralis* seems to convey a very similar message: ‘The young should be admonished in a certain way, and the old in another one. Because the harshness of the rebuke directs the former towards progress, while actually a sweet plead persuades the latter towards a better behaviour.’⁴⁹ It is worth noting that the juxtaposition between the young (‘iuvenes’) and the old (‘senes’) is presented homogeneously across these two works.

The age of the audience is not however the only factor guiding the style of preaching. Social status is another key element highlighted by both authors. Pomerius indeed states that his treatise ‘will include how preachers should manage and direct their citizens, both the commoners and the rich and powerful nobles’.⁵⁰ Gregory similarly picks up on the importance of wealth, reminding his readers that: ‘We must rebuke differently the poor and the well-off. To the former indeed we need to offer some respite in front of their troubles, to the latter we need to bring in the fear of pride.’⁵¹ While the wording of the two authors is different, one can trace

⁴⁷ ‘Si una omnes aegritudine mentium laborarent, ac paribus animorum morbis affecti, nihil ab invicem discreparent, aut sustineri omnes necesse esset, aut argui. Nunc vero, propterea alii portandi sunt, alii castigandi, quia pro diversitate peccantium, modus quoque diversus est praeceptorum’: Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 2.1.1.

⁴⁸ ‘Argue coaequales, obsecra seniores, increpa juniores’: *ibid.* 2.5.1. See also 2.4.1.

⁴⁹ ‘Aliter iuvenes, atque senes, quia illos plerumque severitas admonitionis ad profectum dirigit; istos vero ad meliora opera deprecatio blanda componit’: *Règle pastorale*, 3.2, SC ccclxxxii.268.

⁵⁰ ‘Cives quoque suos plebeios et nobiles, divites ac potentes, qualiter tractare et regere debeant sacerdotes, hujus libelli series continebit’: Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 2.prol.2.

⁵¹ ‘Aliter admonendi sunt inopes, atque aliter locupletes; illis namque offerre consolationis solatium contra tribulationem, istis vero inferre metum contra elationem debemus’: *Règle pastorale*, 3.2, SC ccclxxxii.268.

a common sensibility in understanding one of the key distinctions in their community, a feature that preachers should keep in mind to make sure their message is properly delivered.

Gregory then continues with a long list of other potential scenarios of which the pastor needs to be aware, while Pomerius does not explore in detail other dividing lines of his society apart from age and wealth. He simply admonishes his readers by reminding them that: ‘the holy priests know and understand whom they need to reproach with moderate severity and whom they need to support with priestly kindness’.⁵² There is here a certain distance between the sensibility of these authors: while the Roman bishop feels the urge to go into as much detail as possible for the education of his preachers, Pomerius leaves more freedom to the reader.

However, regarding what the preacher should not do, Gregory and Pomerius are in accordance. Indeed, they both warn against the dramatic effects of bad examples, as we can infer from Pomerius’ words:

Fresh out of a banquet, he can’t praise the abstinence that he just despised. Used to greed, he cannot drive away the greedy from their love for money. Stubborn in his hostility, he will not dare to recompose the souls of the quarrellers with a sacerdotal calm. He will blush in preaching to the judges the justice that he himself corrupted in favour of a powerful man. Nor can he defend the oppressed if he praises or rebukes depending on who the addressee is. And every good action that he will not do, or won’t urge to do, and every bad deed that he will do, or won’t prevent from being done, he will lose or reduce that authority that he needs to teach because of the opposition of his actions.⁵³

Pomerius warns the bishop in this passage that a negative example is not solely dangerous by itself, setting the wrong standard for his followers. The concern here is that the authority of the bishop itself is undermined by his unacceptable behaviour, and his ability to lead is thus compromised. As highlighted by Klingshirn, several aristocratic candidates were performing the highest religious duties during Pomerius’ time without the necessary preparation and moral status. There were several occurrences where some laymen from wealthy families attained the episcopal charge and refused to perform even the most basic duties, like preaching and taking

⁵² ‘sciunt sancti sacerdotes atque discernunt, quos debeant temperata severitate corripere, et quos sacerdotali magnanimitate portare’: Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 2.prol.2.

⁵³ ‘Sumptuosus dapibus crudus, non potest suis abinentiam laudare, quam calcat; vitio cupiditatis addictus, cupidus amorem non potest dissuadere pecuniae; inimicitarum tenax, non audebit animos dissidentium sacerdotali tranquillitate componere; justitiam praedicare iudicibus erubescit, quam ipse personae potentis favore corrumpit; nec defendit oppressos, si personas aut honorat, aut despicit; et quidquid boni non facit aut mali committit, nec jubebit fieri, nec vetabit quia necessariam docendi auctoritatem contrarietate suae actionis aut amittit, aut minuit’: ibid. 1.15.2.

care of the poor.⁵⁴ This was noted, for instance by Sulpicius Severus, who despised this phenomenon and noted that episcopacy was desired for unholy motives in his time.⁵⁵

The appalling effects of bad examples are similarly highlighted by Gregory. When, in the first book of his *Regula pastoralis*, he lists the moral requirements that a bishop should exhibit, Gregory points out that whoever is not able to put into practice what they have preached should not aspire to become bishop. The key focus of the *Regula pastoralis* is the power of negative example, ‘as it happens that when the pastor falls from the cliff, the flock follows him into the precipice’.⁵⁶ This is even more dangerous for bishops as no one would dare to challenge the leaders of a religious community, and therefore their bad example would spread unchallenged as sinners receive all the honours linked to their high rank in the Church.⁵⁷

Reflecting on the power of example, Pomerius humbly suggests to bishop Julianus ‘that you could maybe achieve with your deeds what you cannot achieve with your preaching’.⁵⁸ What the author tries to insinuate is that, considering how damaging misbehaviour is for bishops, then perhaps positive conduct could offset some other deficiencies of the pastor, like being reluctant in preaching. But Bishop Julianus is not supportive of this: ‘You were not all happy with my suggestion and you quickly rebuked it if I am not mistaken’.⁵⁹ The whole eighteenth chapter of the first book is then devoted to showing why good deeds are worthless without preaching, the goal of which is to teach followers what must be believed. The juxtaposition between example and pastoral education is similarly emphasised by Gregory, who states that ‘whoever is set to others as an example in life, he should not only behave properly himself, but he should also warn the others as a friend’.⁶⁰ The bishop of Rome, writing his *Regula pastoralis*, shows a deep concern for those who can preach and refuse to do so. Indeed, in the fifth chapter of the first book

⁵⁴ Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 77–8.

⁵⁵ ‘nunc episcopatus pravis ambitionibus appetuntur’: Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II.2, ed. Piergiorgio Parroni, CCSL lxiii, Turnhout 2017.

⁵⁶ ‘Unde fit ut cum Pastor per abrupta graditur, ad praecipitium grex sequitur’: *Règle pastorale*, 1.2, SC ccclxxxi.134.

⁵⁷ ‘Nemo quippe amplius in Ecclesia nocet, quam qui perverse agens, nomen vel ordinem sanctitatis habet. Delinquentem namque hunc redarguere nullus praesumit; et in exemplum culpa vehementer extenditur, quando pro reverentia ordinis peccator honoratur’: *ibid.*

⁵⁸ ‘orando vos dixi posse perficere quod non possetis docendo suggerere’: Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.17.

⁵⁹ ‘vos mea suggestione paululum delectati, hoc protinus, si me non habet oblivio, retulistis’: *ibid.*

⁶⁰ ‘Quisquis enim ad vivendum aliis in exemplo praeponitur, non solum ut ipse vigilet, sed etiam ut amicum suscitet admonetur’: *Règle pastorale* 3.4, SC ccclxxxii.278.

he severely reproaches those pious men who live according to the word of God but refuse to share the Christian message with their fellows: by acting so, says the author, they do not just prevent others from enjoying the heavenly virtues bestowed on them, but they condemn themselves too. Indeed, those gifts had been provided by God for them to share with their respective communities, and therefore not preaching is equivalent to throwing them away, from Gregory's point of view.⁶¹

Considering the insistence by both authors on this theme, it appears that hesitation as regards preaching was an issue they both had to deal with. However, it might be worth considering the possible reasons for this apparent resistance. Gregory seems to be alluding to one of the most common excuses in the twenty-fifth chapter of the third book, where he warns bishops not to use humility as a pretext to avoid their pastoral duties.⁶² The virtue of humility, which was a pillar of Gregory's framework of moral authority was probably appropriated and used by some in order not to engage with their basic duties towards their communities. This reasoning was unacceptable, and the *Regula pastoralis* contains a stern rebuke of this behaviour, 'so that they can realize what sort of crime they are bound to, as they take away the word of preaching from their sinning brothers, they actually hide the cure of life from hearths that are about to die'.⁶³ A similar sense of inadequacy seems to surface from the complaints of preachers noted in the pages of the *De vita contemplativa*. Pomerius warns his readers 'not to try and find excuses because of their limited skills, as they were not able to teach'.⁶⁴ Similarly, his interlocutor, Bishop Julianus, expresses his desire to flee his role, because of his 'inexperience' ('imperitia')⁶⁵ and faint-heartedness ('pusillanimitas').⁶⁶ Through the pages of the respective works of Gregory and Pomerius, a common track

⁶¹ 'Qui nimirum culmen regiminum si vocati suscipere renuunt, ipsa sibi plerumque dona adimunt, quae non pro se tantummodo, sed etiam pro aliis acceperunt': *ibid.* 1.5, SC cclxxxi.144.

⁶² 'Aliter admonendi sunt qui cum praedicare digne valeant, prae nimia humilitate formidant': *ibid.* 3.25, SC cclxxxii.428.

⁶³ 'Quo igitur reatu constringantur aspiciant, qui dum peccantibus fratribus verbum praedicationis subtrahunt, morientibus mentibus vitae remedia abscondunt': *ibid.*

⁶⁴ 'Nec vero se per imperitiam pontifex excusabit, quasi propterea docere non valeat': Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.23.

⁶⁵ Conrad Leyser explored Gregory's employment of the term *peritia* in relation to ascetic training: 'Expertise and authority in Gregory the Great: the social function of *peritia*', in J. C. Cavadini (ed.), *Gregory the Great: a symposium*, Notre Dame, IN 1995, 38–61.

⁶⁶ 'Et hoc est totum propter quod imperitiae meae ac futuri finis recordatus ingemui, et volui, sarcina episcopatus mei deposita, elongare fugiens, et manere in solitudine, et ibi expectare Dominum, qui me salvum faceret a pusillanimitate mea, et ab ipsa intolerabilium mihi sollicitudinum tempestate': Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.21.4.

can be noted. Although they were written a hundred years apart, they deal with very similar issues. Namely, that bishops and preachers were worried by their lack of skills and authority needed to effectively address their audiences. While it is difficult to assess to what extent these concerns were topical or real,⁶⁷ their presence in treatises of pastoral instructions composed at different points in time might reflect real issues faced by different religious communities.

Moving away from preaching, the focus can be directed towards some practical aspects of the activity of a bishop. Pomerius is very careful in detailing how church property should be managed, and he devotes a few chapters in the second book to the matter. His perspective is that the bishop must take an active role in the management of the estate of the Church. When joining the ecclesiastical ranks, the faithful forgo their personal wealth and offer it to the poor, but the same cannot be done with religious properties. These must be managed directly and carefully, not as an owner might but as an administrator. According to Pomerius, these goods belong ultimately to God and have to be used to support and feed the poor; while some bishops might feel an urge to despise earthly goods, in an effort to achieve a higher degree of purity, this is impious behaviour: the head of the religious congregation, in his role of manager of the church estate, must endeavour to increase it so that he can provide more reliable support to the surrounding community. While grafting is certainly a despicable sin, it is similarly not acceptable to distance themselves from wealth altogether.⁶⁸ Gregory's particular interest in this matter is less evident: he devotes only the seventh chapter of the second book of *Regula pastoralis* to determining the right balance between internal ('interna') and external ('exteriora') affairs. Some of his positions are indeed similar to the ones expressed by the author of the *De vita contemplativa*, as he acknowledges for instance the importance for bishops of oversight of the assets of the Church in order to provide support to their communities. However, unlike Pomerius, his main focus is on preventing temporal matters from

⁶⁷ The refusal of bishops to preach because of their limited skills might be ascribed to the *topos* of false modesty: E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Bern 1948, 91–3. However, it is worth noting that this rhetorical device is usually self-referred, to the extent that an author declares a lack of ability to properly develop a piece of work. Here instead both Pomerius and Gregory are reporting the complaints of others, namely bishops refusing to preach. It seems therefore implausible to classify their statement as purely topical, and it is likely that they bring to light some real contemporary complaints.

⁶⁸ For the importance of administering the church estate from his perspective see Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.9–16 at 1.9. For an economic history of the development of the Church and its dependence on landed properties to support clergy see I. Wood, *Christian economy of the early medieval West: towards a temple society*, Binghampton, NY 2022, esp. pp. 79–106.

overshadowing religious ones.⁶⁹ According to Gregory, for instance, it is very important that bishops know how to delegate mundane tasks to clerics and ‘lower ranks’ so that they can focus entirely on pastoral care.⁷⁰ In summary, the key message of the *Regula pastoralis* is that ‘worldly matters can be tolerated for compassion’s sake, but never sought with passion’.⁷¹ It is interesting to note how, when faced with similar issues, Pomerius and Gregory eventually come to conclusions that, if not entirely different, still expose some divergences in their schools of thought.

Several common concerns regarding pastoral activity can therefore be highlighted: both Pomerius and Gregory are worried that bishops might struggle to control their pride, or that they could provide some negative examples to their flock while no one is there to balance their power. Similarly, they both provide some advice on how best to address an audience, and comfort hesitant preachers struggling with their confidence in the face of their communities. Moreover, Pomerius and Gregory give directions on how to manage the estates of the Church. In some passages their advice develops along different paths. None the less, showing to what extent they were engaging with similar themes might clarify how communities living hundreds of years apart might have experienced closely related difficulties.

Many of the themes so far examined were certainly long debated by several ancient Christian authors besides Pomerius and Gregory.⁷² While the aim here is not to suggest a direct dependency between the two of them, it is none the less worth showing how these two authors responded to similar concerns, and how their literary audience received their works. It is therefore helpful to continue this analysis, to try and understand whether and to what extent their medieval copyists perceived that they could be read and acknowledged together.

⁶⁹ ‘Sit rector interiorum curam in exteriorum occupatione non minuens, exteriorum providentiam in interiorum sollicitudine non relinquens’: *Règle pastorale*, 2.7, SC cclxxxi.218.

⁷⁰ ‘A subditis ergo inferiora gerenda sunt, a rectoribus summa cogitanda’: *ibid.* 222.

⁷¹ ‘Saecularia itaque negotia aliquando ex compassione toleranda sunt, nunquam vero ex amore requirenda’: *ibid.* 226.

⁷² Several Christian authors had a profound influence on both Pomerius and Gregory the Great, and this might explain the resonance of common themes and concerns across these two authors. This is particularly relevant for Augustine, whose influence on Pomerius was declared by the author himself (Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*, 1.6), while Judic evidenced Gregory’s indebtedness to the bishop of Hippo: ‘Introduction’, 39–56. The same is true for other Christian writers, like Cassian (for Pomerius see Leyser, *Authority and asceticism*, 68–70; for Gregory see Judic, ‘Introduction’, 61) and Caesarius of Arles (for Pomerius see n. 14 above; for Gregory see Judic, ‘Introduction’, 56–62).

The Glossa

The *Homilies of Ezekiel* are, alongside the *Regula pastoralis*,⁷³ focused on the ‘relation between contemplation and pastoral activity’⁷⁴ and it should not be surprising therefore that a certain proximity between this work and Pomerius’ *De vita contemplativa* can be detected. It might therefore be worth discussing an interesting feature of the manuscript tradition of Pomerius’ treatise, which provides some further insights on the reception of these authors in the medieval *scriptoria*.

In the sixteenth chapter of the first book of the *De vita contemplativa*, Pomerius describes the struggles of his interlocutor, Bishop Julianus, who deems himself unworthy of holding the episcopal charge and regrets his decision to accept it. He would like to flee the church he was holding, and then find peace in a solitary place, leaving behind the challenges of his pastoral mission. However, Julianus is scared as well by a ‘greater danger’, namely eternal damnation, and eventually decides to remain in his office and ‘steer the ship’:

And then you wanted to flee the church entrusted to you, as if you were unable to direct it, and you wanted to escape to a solitary place, not only for the desire of peace but rather because of the fear of your own office. Nothing else drove you to change your decision for the better, but the fact that you were scared to meet a greater danger: as, if it is dangerous not steering the ship cautiously through the sea currents, how much more dangerous is it to abandon it during a storm, when it is shaken by strong waves?⁷⁵

It is interesting to note that after the word ‘escape’ (‘secedere’) a few manuscripts contain an additional portion of text, a *glossa*, reporting the words: ‘Pastor qui animas ad regendum receperit loca mutare minime audebit’ (‘The shepherd who will have received some souls to be directed will not dare to move somewhere else’).

This *glossa* entered in the text seems to be taken from a passage of Gregory’s *Homilies on Ezekiel*, where Gregory is commenting on Daniel vii.9. The biblical passage discussed reads ‘His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze’ and the exegesis goes on:

⁷³ It is worth noting that Gregory’s *Moralia in Job*, while not debated at length in this article, often overlaps with the contents of the *Regula pastoralis*. As Leyser noted, ‘in the closing books of the *Moralia*, we can see the text of the Rule taking shape in Gregory’s mind’: *Authority and asceticism*, 140.

⁷⁴ Gajano, ‘Prolusione’, 13.

⁷⁵ ‘Denique volentes Ecclesiam vobis creditam, velut impares ei regendae dimittere, atque in aliquam solitudinem non tam studio quietis quam ipsius officii vestri desperatione secedere, nulla res alia vobis exegit in melius mutare consilium, nisi quod veriti estis periculum majus incurrere: quoniam si periculosum est navim inter fluctus caute non regere, quanto periculosius est eam undis intumescens fluctuantem in tempestate relinquere?’: Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.16.

Those indeed who are protectors of souls, and took over the responsibility to feed the herd, should not be allowed to move somewhere else. But, given that they were placed in a specific location, they bring the presence of the divine through themselves and they burn, and the flare of their fire is called the throne of God. Those instead, who move about in preaching for the love of God, are the burning fire of his wheels, because when they travel through different places for their desire of God, then they both burn themselves and light up the others.⁷⁶

Gregory seems to be drawing here a distinction between two different types of servants of God: on the one hand ‘the throne’, those who are entrusted with a herd and therefore are not allowed to move, namely the bishops and their pastoral activity; on the other ‘the wheels’, whose main role is constantly travelling around to spread the word of God, possibly a hint at the missionary activity that Gregory was promoting during his papacy.⁷⁷

The hypothesis that the *glossa* present in some manuscripts of *De vita contemplativa* was taken from this text of the *Homilies on Ezekiel* can be supported by a few elements: first, the *glossa* reports the same Latin textual pericope ‘minime loca mutare’ (‘do not change place’) present in the Gregorian work; moreover, ‘the shepherd who will have received some souls to be directed’ of the *glossa* seems very close to those who ‘took over the responsibility to feed the herd’ from the same passage, as can be noticed by the parallel use of the metaphor of the shepherd and his herd.

It appears evident that the copyist who sourced the text from the *Homilies on Ezekiel* adapted the text to the passage of the *De vita contemplativa* where it was added. It is possible that this *glossa* originally appeared in the margins as an intertextual reference, as effectively the two passages of Gregory and Pomerius deal with a similar topic, and only at a second stage was it adapted and merged into the text.

It might be reasonable to ask why some medieval copyists decided to add this pericope in the margins of the *De vita contemplativa*. They could have clearly perceived a thematic assonance between the two texts: both Pomerius and Gregory indeed insist on the importance for bishops to remain in their sees, guiding their flocks and avoiding fleeing their duties. However, noting the opposition in Gregory between those who ‘should not be allowed to move somewhere else’ and those ‘who travel

⁷⁶ ‘Hi enim qui animarum custodes sunt, et pascendi gregis onera susceperunt, mutare loca minime permittuntur. Sed quia uno in loco positi, divinitatis in se praesentiam portant et ardent, thronus Dei flamma ignis dicitur. Hi autem qui amore Domini in praedicatione discurrunt, rotae ejus ignis ardens sunt, quia cum ex ejus desiderio per varia loca discurrunt, unde ipsi ardent et alios accendunt’: Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Ezechielem*, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL cxlii, Turnhout 1971, 1.5.

⁷⁷ For the missionary activity promoted by Gregory see R. A. Markus, ‘Gregory the Great and a papal missionary strategy’, in G. J. Cuming (ed.), *The mission of the Church and the propagation of the faith* (Studies in Church History vi, 1970), 29–38.

preaching', someone might interpret this text as a criticism of episcopal careerism. This was a severe issue during the Carolingian period as bishops tried to improve their social status by setting their sights at more prestigious dioceses; Gregory's authority was often invoked to legitimise or contain these ambitions.⁷⁸ While intriguing, this interpretation would probably not fit within the context of the *De vita contemplativa*, and it is therefore more likely that the *glossa* was introduced in relation to the importance of bishops actively performing their duties rather than as a warning against careerism.

An analysis of the manuscript tradition and the transmission of the *glossa* might shed some light on the parallel reception of Gregory and Pomerius. While no manuscript earlier than the ninth century seems to report this *glossa*, the three earliest manuscripts wherein I was able to trace it are BNF, NAL, MS 1065; Bibliothèque municipale Suzanne-Martinet, Laon, MS 405; and Médiathèque municipale, Cambrai, MS 204 (199).⁷⁹

BNF, NAL 1065 was copied in the north of France during the first half of the ninth century according to Bernhard Bischoff,⁸⁰ broadly in line with the indication of Henri Omont who dates the composition in the ninth or tenth century.⁸¹ David Ganz, in his study of BNF, NAL 1065, noted how several manuscripts that were preserved at Beauvais's ancient church library were originally copied at Corbie. Given that BNF, NAL 1065 reports a twelfth-century Beauvais ownership inscription, its origin might be possibly traced to the Corbie *scriptorium*, although there is no

⁷⁸ C. Leyser, 'The memory of Gregory the Great and the making of Latin Europe, 600–1000', in K. Cooper and C. Leyser (eds), *Making early medieval societies: conflict and belonging in the Latin West, 300–1200*, Cambridge 1995, 194–6.

⁷⁹ I was able to identify the presence of this *glossa*, sometimes with minor variations, in the following manuscripts as well, which are presented in chronological order. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and a more detailed analysis of the diffusion of this *glossa* might yield interesting insights: Trinity College Library, Cambridge, MS B 1 26 (eleventh century); Bodl. Lib., MS Bodley 126 (eleventh–twelfth century); BNF, MS Latin 2154 (eleventh–twelfth century); BL, MS Royal 5 E X (twelfth century); BL, MS Royal 5 F (eleventh, twelfth century); BL, MS Add 18327 (twelfth century); Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, Troyes, MS 5 (twelfth century); Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, Troyes, MS 1921 (twelfth century); Bodl. Lib. MS Laud Misc. 577 (twelfth century); Bodl. Lib., MS Lat. th. c. 26 (mid-twelfth century); St John's College, Oxford, MS 199 (third quarter of the twelfth century); BL, MS Royal 6 D V (late twelfth century); BL, MS Royal 5 E IX (early thirteenth century); Bodl. Lib., MS Laud Lat. 31 (thirteenth century); BNF, MS Latin 2038 (thirteenth century); Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon MS Alc. 356 (thirteenth century); BL, MS Royal 5 C VI (fourteenth century).

⁸⁰ B. Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*, I: *Aachen-Lambach*, iii, Weisbaden 1998, 236, no. 5077.

⁸¹ H. Omont, 'Lettre à l'empereur Adrien sur les merveilles de l'Asie', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* lxxiv (1913), 507–15.

definitive proof in support of this theory.⁸² The works reported in this manuscript are Julian of Toledo, *Prognosticum*; Idalius of Barcelona, *Epistula* i, ii, CPL 1258; Quiricus of Barcelona, *Epistula* i, CPL 1272; Ildefonsus of Toledo, *Epistula* ii, CPL 1250.2; Quiricus, *Epistula* ii, CPL 1272; Ildefonsus, *Epistula* iv, CPL 1250.4; and Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*.

Laon 405 was copied somewhere in the north-east of France according to Bischoff,⁸³ while Félix Ravaisson had previously suggested a precise origin in the Abbey of St Vincent in Laon.⁸⁴ According to Bischoff, the script can be dated towards the end of ninth century,⁸⁵ while Ravaisson had indicated a broader eighth- to ninth-century timeframe.⁸⁶ The pages measure 230mm x 170mm, with the text disposed in two columns of thirty-two lines each. The script is a Carolingian minuscule, entirely in one hand.⁸⁷ The manuscript includes only two works: Isidore, *De fide catholica*, and Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*.

Cambrai 204, according to the nineteenth-century catalogue from Molinier, is a parchment manuscript containing 113 leaves; it is made of two parts, the first one, fos 1–68, dated to the ninth century, and the second, fos 69–113, copied during the tenth century, which were originally numbered before being joined.⁸⁸ Bischoff, who reviewed the manuscript more recently, argues that both parts were copied towards the end of the ninth century or between the ninth and the tenth century and that they were bound together in the tenth century, broadly in line with the opinions expressed by Auguste Molinier.⁸⁹ The pages measure 312–13mm x 247–50mm, while the writing area is smaller (225mm x 180mm) and there the text is disposed in two columns of thirty-four lines each. The script is a Carolingian minuscule, while the headings in red uncial are sometimes decorated.⁹⁰ According to Molinier's catalogue, the first part of the manuscript (fos 1–68) reports a collection of theological works, mostly attributed to patristic writers, while the second part (fos 69–113) contains Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa*.⁹¹

⁸² D. Ganz, 'A Merovingian New Testament manuscript and its liturgical notes: Paris, BNF, Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1063', *Revue bénédictine* cxxvi 1 (2016), 122–37, esp. p. 128 n. 19.

⁸³ Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*, I: Aachen-Lambach, ii. 133, no. 2111.

⁸⁴ F. Ravaisson, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements*, I: Laon, Paris 1849, 208.

⁸⁵ Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften*, I: Aachen-Lambach, ii. 133, no. 2111.

⁸⁶ Ravaisson, *Catalogue général*, i. 208.

⁸⁷ S. A. Keefe, *A catalogue of works pertaining to the explanation of the creed in Carolingian manuscripts*, Turnhout 2012, 253.

⁸⁸ A. Molinier, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France: Départements*, XVII: Cambrai, Paris 1891, 61–3.

⁸⁹ Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften*, I: Aachen-Lambach, i. 170, no. 776.

⁹⁰ See L. Potratzki, BStK.–Nr. 86, at <<https://glossen.germ-ling.uni-bamberg.de/bstk/86>>.

⁹¹ Molinier, *Catalogue général des manuscrits*, xvii. 61–3.

Bischoff locates the origin of the manuscript in the Franco-Saxon area.⁹² This comment broadly agrees with the BStK entry dedicated to the codex, which suggests that it could have come to Cambrai from Cologne *via* the Benedictine Abbey of St Bertin in Saint-Omer or may have originated directly in northern France.⁹³ Susan Keefe, in her analysis of religious works in Carolingian manuscripts, notes that this manuscript was ‘perhaps a clerical manual for teaching and preaching’.⁹⁴

While Cambrai 204 does not contain any extract from Gregory’s literary production, the influence of his works on this manuscript transpires from a few elements. Indeed, in addition to the Gregorian *glossa* absorbed in Pomerius’ *De vita contemplativa*, it is relevant to highlight that at fo. 68v there is a list of virtues translated in Old High German sourced from the *Moralia in Job*.⁹⁵ However, there is no proof that these two Gregorian references are at the same level in the manuscript transmission. Therefore, until further studies are conducted on Cambrai 204 and its ancestors, no further suggestions can be made on the relation between these two Gregorian references and their origin.

To conclude, it might be interesting to further explore the origin of the Gregorian *glossa*. The three oldest manuscripts where I was able to detect it were copied broadly in the same geographic area: northern France for BNF, NAL 1065, north-east of France for Laon 405, and north-western Germany or north-eastern France for Cambrai 204. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the northern part of the Carolingian empire was where Gregory’s text was inserted into the *De vita contemplativa*, probably at the onset of the ninth century. Indeed, the diffusion of the works of the Roman bishop in this area has been repeatedly shown, and Judic provided examples of the presence of Gregorian works in the eighth and ninth centuries both at Corbie and Cambrai.⁹⁶ Similarly, the broad Carolingian reception of Pomerius was recently reviewed by Timmerman.⁹⁷

Moreover, tracking the *glossa*’s diffusion across the manuscript tradition of the *De vita contemplativa* might provide some interesting insights into the circulation and influence of texts across medieval Europe. In particular, as far as the circulation of this text in the British Isles is concerned, the three oldest surviving manuscripts copied in England, dated to the eleventh

⁹² Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften*), I: Aachen–Lambach, i. 170, no. 776. ⁹³ See Potratzki, BStK.–Nr. 86, at <<https://glossen.germ-ling.uni-bamberg.de/bstk/86>>.

⁹⁴ Keefe, *A catalogue of works*, 224.
⁹⁵ See G. Hiltensberger, ‘Die althochdeutsche Glossierung der “vitia cardinalia” Gregors des Großen’, *Germanistische Bibliothek* xxxi, Heidelberg 2008, 43; Potratzki, BStK.–Nr. 86: <<https://glossen.germ-ling.uni-bamberg.de/bstk/86>>.

⁹⁶ Judic, ‘Introduction’, 569–71.

⁹⁷ Timmerman, ‘Sharers in the contemplative virtue’, 1–44.

century, all report this *glossa*.⁹⁸ It is therefore worth highlighting how this, as well as other conjunctive errors between the texts, help identify a common source for all these codices. Indeed, they appear to derive from the same manuscript family of Cambrai 204, Laon 405 and BNF, NAL 1065 and thus show how profound the influence of northern French *scriptoria* was on the surviving manuscripts of the *De vita contemplativa* copied in England. More generally, this offers an interesting glimpse of the medieval manuscript network.

This *glossa* represents a noteworthy conjunctive error that can be used to show the relationship between different witnesses of the *De vita contemplativa*. However, its absence should not be used to assert the absence of any link between manuscripts, as copyists could have easily detected the Gregorian quotation reported in the text and decided to remove it independently one from another. Moreover, the broad circulation of the text during the Middle Ages could have led copyists to gain access to multiple manuscripts reporting the text, some glossed and some not, and in this case the *glossa* would have been easily noted and deleted.

It is worth observing that there is tangible proof of this expunction in the manuscript tradition. MS Arsenal 175 (BNF, twelfth century) at folio 113v reported in text the *glossa* 'Pastor qui animas ad regendum receperit loca mutare minime audebit'. This sentence has been struck through and marked with a series of underlying dots, suggesting that these words should be removed. It is hard to assess if these expunction marks belong to the copyist or to a later reviser, nor it can be determined if both corrections should be ascribed to the same hand. None the less, it is interesting to note how this *glossa* was later detected and consequently expunged.

This paper discussed the similar challenges faced by the Roman Church headed by Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century and the Gallic one a century earlier. On the one hand, to address these issues Gregory produced some prescriptive pastoral care instructions, like the ones reported in the *Regula pastoralis*. On the other hand, Pomerius offered to the Gallic Church a treatise composed for this purpose, the *De vita contemplativa*.

A careful analysis of Gregory's literary production alongside Pomerius' highlights several similarities, like their views on the struggles to tame the pride of bishops, the nefarious results of negative examples offered to their flock and the hesitation of preachers to speak in front of their followers.

It has also been shown how the proximity of Pomerius and Gregory was already perceived by their medieval readers. In particular, the presence of a

⁹⁸ Trinity College Library, Cambridge, MS B. 1. 26; BL, MS Royal 5.E.X; Bodl. Lib., MS Bodley 126.

Gregorian *glossa* in some manuscripts reporting the text of Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa* offers a tangible example of the parallel reception of these two writers during the Middle Ages. Moreover, the analysis of the diffusion of this *glossa* in north-eastern France and southern England provides an interesting example of the development of medieval manuscript networks.