
Distinguished for his skilful administration of the papal office and for his learned theological works (principally the *Moralia on Job*), in no small measure over the centuries, Gregory the Great has also owed his fame to his authorship of the *Dialogues*, a collection of miracle stories that purports to record the wonders of modern, sixth-century saints. This study takes as its point of departure a close reading of the *Dialogues*, its primary object being to determine whether Gregory really believed the miracle stories he relates. But a number of other, related issues are also pursued, among them Gregory’s conception of the history of miracles in the Christian church, of their purpose in the New Testament and in his own times, and of their connection with Christian sanctity and doctrine.

Without being guilty of the naive credulity of which he has often been accused, Gregory did believe in the miracles of contemporary saints. Miracles function primarily as *ostensio sanctitatis*, a visible representation of the inner life of sanctity to which we are all called. In developing a fuller description of Gregory’s views, this work seeks to analyze the interrelationship of ideas about miracles implicit in the stories of the *Dialogues* and explicit in the more strictly theological works, and to consider both within the context established by late antique/early medieval theological, philosophical, historiographical, and hagiographical traditions.

*Signs of Sanctity* critically engages a large body of recent scholarship on these questions, drawing on a careful reading of sources that would have been available to Gregory himself, in particular the influential texts of Augustine. The portrait of Gregory that emerges is intended as a contribution to the continuing reappraisal of a major figure in the intellectual history of late antiquity, and a significant influence on the cultural life of the middle ages.

There is no denying that for some modern scholars the *Dialogues* has presented something of an enigma. … To encounter a figure from earlier times whom we respect for his … intelligence, … administrative skills and common sense, … but who nevertheless appears to believe in tales of miraculous happenings that to us are patently incredible, leaves us a bit unnerved. Some have concluded that … Gregory was simply inventing miraculous tales … to convey some spiritual lesson … or … to make some allegorical point … . Such explanations basically aim … to make him share our mental outlook and thus relieve us of the effort of stepping out of our modern-day world to recapture his. McCready goes a long way towards achieving the mind-set of Gregory’s time. … *His* work provides an excellent mise en point and also a useful starting line for further investigations.

PAUL MEYVAERT, in *Speculum*