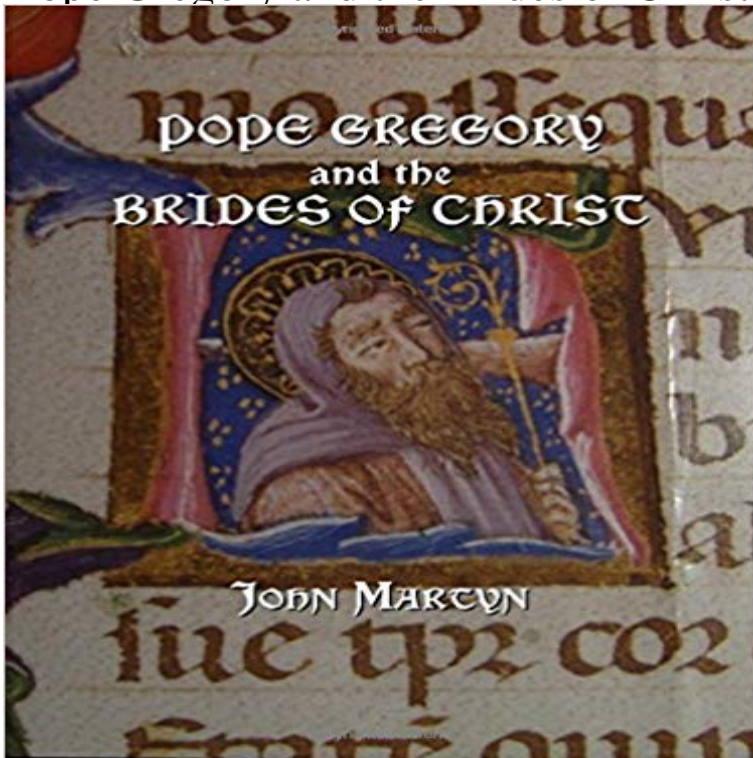


## Pope Gregory and the Brides of Christ



The Letters of Gregory the Great, pope from 590 to 604, have long been viewed as an indispensable resource for scholars of the early medieval period. John Martyn's knowledge of these letters is well nigh unsurpassed. In this book, he turns his attention to a hitherto neglected subject; those letters of Pope Gregory which pertain to nuns and convents. Despite the fact that scholarship on the Middle Ages has in the last thirty years been transformed by feminist contributions, and there has developed, as a result, a heightened awareness of the presence of women in medieval life, both secular and religious, only two of the thirty-six letters identified by Martyn have previously been discussed by scholars. This edition of the letters in both Latin and English is therefore of inestimable value to scholars and will act as a spur for further research. This sizeable collection of letters are analysed in company with other, better-known, writings about nuns from Gregory's dialogi. In the introduction, Martyn argues that his upbringing, dominated by his mother and four devout aunts, might reasonably have inculcated in him a deep and abiding concern for women, the religious in particular. This is evidenced by his friendships with Theoctista and Gordia, the sisters of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice, and with his wife, the pious Constantina, and with a number of abbesses, including Respecta (from Marseilles) and Talasia (from Autun). Gregory's deep interest in the religious life of women, and his concern for their safety and wellbeing, are apparent throughout the letters. Martyn's translations are clarified and enhanced by a commentary.

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