

## Chapter Two

### The Transformation of Fulgentius of Ruspe in the Carolingian Age

Francis X. Gumerlock

This essay explains how Fulgentius, the bishop of Ruspe in North Africa (d. 533), underwent a transformation in the writing of a certain Carolingian author, Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861). This happened when Prudentius attributed to Fulgentius the bishop literary works of another author by the same name, "Fulgentius the Mythographer." After clearly distinguishing the two Fulgentii, this essay will analyze how and why Prudentius in the ninth century conflated the two authors. It will also discuss the result of that conflation, namely, a transfiguration of Fulgentius the bishop into Fulgentius the bishop-mythographer.

#### The Two Fulgentii

Most scholars today make a distinction between Fulgentius the bishop and Fulgentius the Mythographer. This section highlights those differences and presents the rationale for viewing them as two separate authors.

#### *Fulgentius the Bishop*

Claudius Gordianus Fulgentius, also known as Fulgentius of Ruspe, was arguably the most important figure in North African Christianity in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Born in 468 to a noble family in Roman North

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<sup>1</sup> Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, eds., *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 2:472, call Fulgentius "the most authoritative and important figure of African Christianity in the late fifth and early sixth centuries." Thomas S. Ferguson, "Fulgentius of Ruspe," in



Africa, Fulgentius was educated in Greek and Latin literature and as a young man became fiscal procurator of the North African province of Byzacena. In his mid-twenties, around 493, Fulgentius resigned from that position and joined a monastery in the desert area near his hometown. Over the next ten or fifteen years, he served as abbot of several monasteries in Mauritania, traveled to Sicily and Rome, and for a time lived on the island of Junca off the coast of modern Tunisia. In 507 he was consecrated bishop of Ruspe (modern Kudiat Rosfa in Tunisia). Shortly thereafter he was exiled to Sardinia by the Vandal king, Thrasamund, and lived there for over a decade, until 523. In that year the king died, and Fulgentius was recalled to his see, where he served another ten years before his death on January 1, 533.<sup>2</sup>

Fulgentius' literary output was quite remarkable. He wrote several treatises on the Trinity against the Arians and on the subjects of grace and predestination against a work of Faustus of Riez and other so-called "Semi-Pelagians," opponents of Augustine on those issues. Ten sermons and

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*Biographical Dictionary of Christian Theologians*, ed. Patrick W. Carey and Joseph T. Lienhard (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 203, calls Fulgentius "the foremost North African theologian of his day."

<sup>2</sup> The main source for the events of Fulgentius' life is the *Vita Fulgentii*, often attributed to Ferrandus, a monk who lived in a monastery with Fulgentius in Sardinia. Ferrandus wrote it shortly after Fulgentius' death. Robert B. Eno, *Fulgentius: Selected Works*, FC 95 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 1–56. Latin editions in Gabriel G. Lapeyre, ed., *Vie de s. Fulgence par Ferrand* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929) and PL 65.117–50. For a more detailed summary of his life and literary activity, see Francis X. Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God: The Development of a Sixth-Century African Bishop's Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:4 During the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2009), 16–22.



nineteen letters of Fulgentius of Ruspe are also extant.<sup>3</sup> A critical edition of the Bishop Fulgentius' extant writings was published in 1968 in the Corpus Christianorum series. In 1997 English translations of about half of Fulgentius' works were published in Volume 95 of the *Fathers of the Church* series.<sup>4</sup>

His writings influenced a portion of the *Benedictine Rule*. In the seventh century, Isidore of Seville granted a sizable entry in his *On Illustrious Men* to Fulgentius, calling the bishop of Ruspe "very learned in the divine scriptures." Isidore also remarked that tracts of this bishop were being used by priests in the churches of his day.<sup>5</sup> Alcuin (d. 704) used Fulgentius' writings as source material for his own treatise on the Trinity, and mentioned that Fulgentius' works could be found in the library at York.<sup>6</sup> Fulgentius was regarded so highly in Rome in

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<sup>3</sup> Lists of the titles of the writings of Fulgentius the bishop are in Eligius Dekkers and Emil Garr, eds., *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, 3rd ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 274–81; Thomas A. Smith, "Fulgentius of Ruspe," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 373–74; Lynda Leigh Coon, "Fulgentius of Ruspe: Monk-Aristocrat" (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1986), 122–3; J. Fraipont, ed., *Sancti Fulgentii Episcopi Ruspensis Opera*, CCSL 91 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), vi–vii; Francesco Di Sciascio, *Fulgenzio di Ruspe* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1941), 18–21; and G. G. Lapeyre, *Saint Fulgence de Ruspe* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929), 328–30.

<sup>4</sup> Eno, *Fulgentius*, 57–565.

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Baxter, "The *Regula S. Benedicti* 2, a reminiscence of S. Fulgentius of Ruspe?" *Revue bénédictine* 62 (1952): 293; Isidore of Seville, *De viris illustribus* 14; Carmen Codoñer Merino, ed., *El "De viris illustribus" de Isidoro de Sevilla* (Salamanca: Instituto "Antonio de Nebrija," 1964), 14; PL 83.1097–8; English: Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 147–8.

<sup>6</sup> John Cavadini, "The Sources and Theology of Alcuin's *De fide sanctae et individuae Trinitatis*," *Traditio* 46 (1991): 123–46; Leslie George Whitbread, trans., *Fulgentius the Mythographer* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1971), 25.



the late eighth century that Pope Hadrian I, when trying to settle a controversy in Spain on predestination, wrote in his letter to the Spanish bishops that the problem with both sides was their ignorance of what Fulgentius had to say on the matter. The pope went on to quote four paragraphs of the bishop's treatise *For Eugippius*.<sup>7</sup> In the ninth century, Fulgentius of Ruspe's writings were in libraries throughout Europe and were being read and quoted, especially by theologians who engaged in a lively debate on predestination in the 850s.<sup>8</sup>

### *Fulgentius the Mythographer*

Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, i.e. "Fulgentius the Mythographer," was the writer of *The Mythologies*, *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil*, *The Explanation of Obsolete Words*, and *On the Ages of the World and of Man*.<sup>9</sup> The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown, but we know he flourished in Vandal North Africa around the year 500. That he lived in Africa is obtained from his mention of "our" Libyan alphabet in *On the Ages* and from his dedication of *The Mythologies* to "Catus, priest of Carthage." Indicators of the dates of the mythographer's career include his heavy leaning on the *Histories* of Paul Orosius, which was completed in 417, and the borrowing of his *The Mythologies* by Boethius in his

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Hadrian I, *Epistola* 95. MGH, *Epistolarum* 3:642; Fraipont, *Opera* (CCSL 91/A.870-3); English: Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, 149-52.

<sup>8</sup> Max L. W. Laistner, "Fulgentius in the Carolingian Age," in *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages: Selected Essays by M. L. W. Laistner*, ed. Chester G. Starr (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 202-15.

<sup>9</sup> *On the Thebaid*, sometimes attributed to Fulgentius the Mythographer, is generally considered pseudo-Fulgentian. Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, 9.



*Consolation of Philosophy*, written in 523/524.<sup>10</sup> In addition, a reference to “lord king” in *The Mythologies* would put the composition of that work after 429, when the Vandals crossed over from Spain into North Africa and ruled there for a little over a century. Furthermore, the mythographer summarizes in his *On the Ages* a passage from Draconius’ *De Laudibus*, which was written during Draconius’ imprisonment by the Vandal king Gunthamund. This places the composition of the Mythographer’s *On the Ages* after 484 when king Gunthamund began to reign. These facts lead scholars to conclude that Fulgentius the Mythographer flourished between the last few decades of the fifth century and first few decades of the sixth century.<sup>11</sup> A very extensive annotated bibliography of research on the question of the mythographer’s date and identity is on the website of Gregory Hays of the University of Virginia.<sup>12</sup>

*The Mythologies* present an allegorical interpretation of fifty of the major Graeco-Roman myths. In *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil*, the spirit of Virgil appears to Fulgentius and shows him the allegorical meaning of his famous poem *The Aeneid*. *The Explanation of Obsolete Words* defines obscure

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<sup>10</sup> On the date of Paul Orosius’ *Historiarum adversum paganos libri I-VII*, Angelo DiBarardino, ed., *Patrology*, vol. 4, *The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1986), 497. On the date of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, Siegmur Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings, eds., *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 105.

<sup>11</sup> The information in this paragraph was gathered from Bradford Gregory Hays, “Date and Milieu,” chap. 1 in “Fulgentius the Mythographer” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), esp. 2–7. Cf. Hays, “The Date and Identity of the Mythographer Fulgentius,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 13 (2003): 163–252.

<sup>12</sup> Gregory Hays, “Fulgentius the Mythographer: An Annotated Bibliography,” accessed March 31, 2011, <http://people.virginia.edu/~bgh2n/fulgbib.html>.



words and offers quotations from ancient authors that illustrate those meanings. *On the Ages of the World and Men* presents a history of the world from creation to AD 363.<sup>13</sup> According to Leslie George Whitbread, *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil* strongly suggests that the mythographer's career was that of "a *grammaticus* or *rhetor*, a teacher of grammar and letters."<sup>14</sup>

The latest Latin edition of the mythographer's works was completed by Rudolf Helm in 1898.<sup>15</sup> A new critical edition of *The Mythographies* by N. Tadie-Gilloteaux, to be published in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, Continuatio Mediaevalis*, was advertised as in progress in 1994 but never came to fruition, and is no longer listed among the publications in progress in that series.<sup>16</sup> In 1971 Leslie George Whitbread translated into English all four works of Fulgentius the Mythographer along with the pseudo-Fulgentius *On the Thebaid*. A few other English translations of individual works of Fulgentius the Mythographer are also available.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gregory Hays, "Fabius Planciades Fulgentius," accessed March 31, 2011, <http://people.virginia.edu/~bgh2n/fulgentius.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, 6. Cf. p. 106: "One of the most evident features of the *Content* is its pedagogic character, its resemblance to the attitudes and tones of the school master teaching literature and life through literature."

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Helm, ed., *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii opera* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1898; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> "Corpus Christianorum. Volumes in Progress," (booklet, April 1994), lists it on p. 6. However, it is not currently listed on its website under publications in progress. Accessed March 31, 2011, [http://www.corpuschristianorum.org/series/cccm\\_preparation.html](http://www.corpuschristianorum.org/series/cccm_preparation.html).

<sup>17</sup> Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*. For other translations of individual works of Fulgentius the Mythographer, see Hays, "Fulgentius the Mythographer: An Annotated Bibliography."



The mythographer's works, like those of the bishop, enjoyed considerable circulation in the Middle Ages. Mythographers of the seventh century drew upon *The Mythologies*,<sup>18</sup> which served as a compendium in later centuries and was among the more popular school books of the Carolingian age. In the ninth century, John Scotus Eriugena, Remigius of Auxerre, Sedulius Scotus, and Pashascius Radbertus all had knowledge of it.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Evidence for Two Fulgentii*

Although both Claudius Gordianus Fulgentius and Fabius Planciades Fulgentius shared a name and were educated Catholic Christians who lived in North Africa in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, they are not to be confused. The author of Fulgentius of Ruspe's *Vita*, very shortly after the bishop's death, reviewed his writing career and never alluded to any of the mythological works. In the words of Hays, "It is difficult to believe that he would not have known of them and hard to see why he would have deliberately passed them over."<sup>20</sup> In the century following the Fulgentii, Isidore of Seville reviewed Fulgentius of Ruspe's works and never mentioned any of the four mythological writings. In addition, Fulgentius the Mythographer was married, having mentioned his wife in the prologue of *The Mythologies*. However, in all probability Fulgentius of Ruspe was not married, and certainly not after his conversion to a monastic lifestyle and subsequent elevation to abbot and bishop. Finally, the manuscripts of *The Mythologies*, *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil*, and *The Explanation of*

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<sup>18</sup> Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Laistner, "Fulgentius in the Carolingian Age," 204-7; Hays, "Fabius Planciades Fulgentius," 2.

<sup>20</sup> Hays, "Fulgentius the Mythographer," 272.



*Obsolete Words* identify their author as “Fabius Planciades Fulgentius.”<sup>21</sup>

Most scholars therefore reject the identification of Fulgentius the Mythographer with the bishop of the same name.<sup>22</sup> Hays explained that the identification of the mythographer with the bishop “never had much to recommend it, and is in fact quite mistaken.”<sup>23</sup> William Rusch calls the position “totally misdirected,” and Berthold Altaner depicts it as “untenable.”<sup>24</sup>

### *Medieval Confusion*

Nevertheless, in the twelfth century, Sigebert of Gembloux regarded the mythographer and the bishop as the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 270. Despite this evidence, several scholars in the last century or so argued that the mythographer and bishop were one person. These included Rudolph Helm, “Der Bischof Fulgentius und der Mythograph,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 54 (1899): 111–34; Otto Friebel, *Fulgentius, der Mythograph und Bischof: Mit Beiträgen zur Syntax des Spätlateins*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 5.1–2 (Paderborn: Druck und Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, 1911); Pierre Langlois, “Les oeuvres de Fulgence le Mythographe et le problème des deux Fulgence,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 7 (1964): 94–105. Susan T. Stevens, “The Circle of Bishop Fulgentius,” *Traditio* 38 (1982): 327–41, also accepted that opinion.

<sup>22</sup> Eno, *Fulgentius*, xviii: “There was another North African author of the same name whom some scholars identify with the bishop. This is Fulgentius the ‘mythographer’. The majority of scholars today, however, reject the identification.”

<sup>23</sup> Hays, “Fulgentius the Mythographer,” 265.

<sup>24</sup> William G. Rusch, *The Later Latin Fathers* (London: Duckworth, 1977), 193; Berthold Altaner, *Patrology* (Saint Louis: Herder and Herder, 1960), 588. Also rejecting the conflating of the mythographer and bishop into one person is Smith, “Fulgentius of Ruspe,” 374; Dekkers and Gaar, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, 282; Laistner, “Fulgentius in the Carolingian Age,” 203; John J. Gavigan, “Fulgentius of Ruspe on Baptism,” *Traditio* 4 (1947): 313–22 at 313; and Pierre C. de Labriolle, *History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), 496.



same man, and two thirteenth-century manuscripts of *The Ages of the World and of Man* attribute the work to “Fabius Claudius Gordianus Fulgentius,” adding the praenomen of the mythographer to the name of the bishop.<sup>25</sup> But the earliest known confusion of the mythographer with the bishop occurred in a work of the ninth-century bishop Prudentius of Troyes.

### **Prudentius of Troyes and His Polemical Context**

How did this early fusion of the bishop with the mythographer take place some three hundred years after the lifetimes of both Fulgentii? It happened in the year 852, and the occasion surrounded the controversy over predestination sparked by the beating and imprisonment of a monk-priest named Gottschalk of Orbais.

### ***The Predestination Controversy***

In the 830s and 840s, Gottschalk, a Saxon cleric, was wandering around Europe teaching a doctrine of double predestination, that is, that God predestined the elect to eternal life and also the reprobate to eternal damnation. When his views were rebutted by Rabanus Maurus, his former abbot and then bishop of Mainz, Gottschalk presented his views to a council at Mainz in October of 848. At that council Gottschalk’s teaching on predestination was condemned, and he was sent under guard to Hincmar, the bishop of Reims, in whose diocese Gottschalk had been hastily ordained as a priest in the late 830s when Rigobald was interim bishop. Early in 849 Gottschalk appeared before a council at Quierzy, presided by Hincmar. Hincmar, like Rabanus, believed in single predestination, that is, only the predestination of the elect to eternal life. The final punishment

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<sup>25</sup> Hays, “Fulgentius the Mythographer,” 269–70.



of the reprobate was foreknown, they taught, but not predestined. At the council Gottschalk explained his doctrine of twofold predestination, and refused to receive correction by Hincmar and the others at the council. Consequently, he was defrocked, whipped nearly to death, forced to burn his writings, and imprisoned in the monastery at Hautvillers.

In the autumn of 849, Hincmar wrote to several bishops to elicit their opinions about predestination. Among those consulted was Prudentius, the bishop of Troyes in the archdiocese of Sens.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, the views of Prudentius, as well as others who weighed in on the issue—Lupus, abbot of Ferrières, and Ratramnus, a monk of Corbie—seemed to agree with Gottschalk and were somewhat critical of Hincmar's treatment of Gottschalk. At this point Pardulus of Laon, who agreed with Hincmar, invited John Scotus Eriugena, a scholar and instructor in the palace school of Charles the Bald, to enter the debate.<sup>27</sup> Eriugena, recognized as one of the most learned

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<sup>26</sup> On Prudentius' life and writings, Francis X. Gumerlock, "The *Tractoria* of Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861)," *Kerux* 25, no. 1 (May 2010): 11–23; A. H. Tegels, "Prudentius of Troyes, St.," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 11 (New York: Gale, 2003), 793; Michael Walsh, "Prudentius Galindo," in his *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 988; E. A. Livingston and F. L. Cross, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1342.

<sup>27</sup> The history of the ninth-century predestination controversy is reviewed in the introduction of Victor Genke and Francis X. Gumerlock, *Gottschalk & a Medieval Predestination Controversy: Texts Translated from the Latin* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2010); Matthew Bryan Gillis, "Gottschalk of Orbais: A Study of Power and Spirituality in a Ninth-Century Life," (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2009), esp. chaps. 4 & 5; Gumerlock, "Gottschalk of Orbais: A Medieval Predestinarian," *Kerux* 22, no. 3 (2007): 17–34; and David Ganz, "The Debate on Predestination," in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, 2nd ed., ed. Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1990), 283–302.



persons of his time and the best Greek scholar in Carolingia, accepted the invitation.<sup>28</sup>

In 850 or 851, Eriugena released his *On Divine Predestination*.<sup>29</sup> In the first chapter of that work, the Scot said that he would attempt to answer the question of whether predestination is single or double through the various divisions of philosophy which he learned from the Greeks. Then in nineteen chapters he argued that predestination is single. In his arguments, Eriugena employed the writings of Saint Augustine and often used Greek words, explaining them for his Latin, non-Greek speaking readership.<sup>30</sup> At one point, in Chapter 18, Eriugena wrote:

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<sup>28</sup> John Marenbon, "John Scottus and Carolingian Theology: From the *De Praedestinatione*, its Background and its Critics, to the *Periphyseon*," in Gibson and Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 303–25: "John Scottus ('Eriugena') is usually regarded by historians as the most brilliant thinker of Charles the Bald's reign..." (p. 303). Eriugena, after the Gottschalk controversy, translated into Latin the Greek works of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and Epiphanius of Salamis. See Jeremiah Hackett, ed., *Medieval Philosophers* (Detroit: Gale, 1992), 168; and I. P. Sheldon Williams, "A Bibliography of the Works of Johannes Scottus Eriugena," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 10 (1959): 198–224.

<sup>29</sup> John Scottus Eriugena, *Treatise on Divine Predestination*, trans. Mary Brennan, Texts in Medieval Culture 5 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). Secondary literature on the treatise includes Robert Crouse, "Predestination, Human Freedom and the Augustinian Theology of History in Eriugena's *De Divina Praedestinatione*," chap. 15 in *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and His Time*, ed. James McEnvoy and Michael Dunne (Leuven: University Press, 2002), 303–11; Jean-Paul Bouhot, "Le 'De divina praedestinatione' de Jean Scot," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 25 (1979): 256–63; Goulven Madec, "L'Augustinisme de Jean Scot dans le 'De praedestinatione'," and Marta Cristiani, "La notion de loi dans le 'De praedestinatione' de Jean Scot," both in *Jean Scot Érigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, ed. R. Roques (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977), 183–90, 277–88.

<sup>30</sup> Eriugena, *Treatise on Divine Predestination*, trans. Brennan, 8, 61, 65, 97, 118, 119.



I would think, therefore, that the gravest error of those who confusedly, and hence fatally, reduce to their own distorted meaning the opinions of the venerable fathers, and for the most part Saint Augustine, had its beginnings from an ignorance of the useful arts which wisdom itself wanted to be its own companions and investigators, and on top of that, ignorance also of Greek writings in which the interpretation of predestination generates no mist of ambiguity.<sup>31</sup>

Eriugena went on to say that in Greek, there is just one verb that can be translated into Latin in three different ways, either as “see,” “define,” or “destine.” Therefore, when the apostle Paul used a composite of that word in Rom 1:4 and Eph 1:5, the translator rendered it “predestined.” But the translator could have used “foresaw” or “predefined” as well. Eriugena continued that when Augustine said in the *Enchiridion* that God justly predestined the ungodly to punishment, “he meant nothing else by the word ‘predestination’ than what he meant by the word ‘foresight.’ ”<sup>32</sup>

In other words, if they were aware of the nuances of the Greek language, those who believed that Augustine taught predestination of the ungodly to punishment, i.e. Gottschalk and his supporters, would have *really* understood what Augustine meant. Had they known Greek, they would have realized that when the bishop of Hippo said that the reprobate were predestined to punishment, he merely meant that God *foresaw* their punishment. The reason some have misunderstood

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<sup>31</sup> Eriugena, *Treatise on Divine Predestination* 18.1, trans. Brennan, 117.

<sup>32</sup> Eriugena, *Treatise on Divine Predestination* 18.2–3, trans. Brennan, 118–9; Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* 26.



Augustine is because of their ignorance of the liberal arts and of Greek.

### *Prudentius' Conflation of the Two Fulgentii*

Soon after Eriugena wrote his treatise *On Predestination*, Wenilo, the bishop of Sens, sent excerpts from it to Prudentius for refutation. In 852 Prudentius published *On Predestination against John the Scot*.<sup>33</sup> Responding to a quotation in Chapter 18 of Eriugena's work, Prudentius quoted Fulgentius of Ruspe's *For Monimus*, 1.23, which for him supported predestination of the reprobate: "And so God foreknew the ungodly persons who end this life in sin, [and] predestined that they should be punished with unending punishment."<sup>34</sup> He then wrote about Fulgentius with these words:

That doctor and bishop, without doubt a very faithful and very learned person, had known the Greek language very well. He had known the manner in which the word "predestination" of the ungodly had been used by blessed Augustine. And therefore it should not be understood as "foresight," but as preparation and arrangement by His bringing it about.

If you either are unaware of or deny that he had knowledge of the Greek language, read his books which are entitled *Of Mythologies* or *Of the Content of Virgil*, and you will find present in it the greatest expertise in that language, by which he was able to know very easily

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<sup>33</sup> Prudentius of Troyes, *De praedestinatione contra J. Scotum* (PL 115.1009–1366).

<sup>34</sup> Prudentius, *De Praedestinatione* (PL 115.1309): *Iniquos itaque quos praescivit Deus hanc vitam in peccato terminaturos, praedestinavit supplicio interminabili puniendos*. My translation.



what ought to be understood by the expression of this word.<sup>35</sup>

Here Prudentius attributed *The Mythologies* and *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil* of Fulgentius the Mythographer to Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspe.

### **The Transformation of Fulgentius of Ruspe**

This case of the conflation of the works of Fulgentius of Ruspe with Fulgentius the Mythographer by Prudentius wonderfully illustrates how the transmission and attribution of texts can affect the interpretation of those texts. Prudentius' attribution of the mythological works to the bishop in that section of his treatise on predestination against Eriugena, polemical in nature, made Fulgentius of Ruspe a better interpreter of Augustine than Eriugena. For him, Fulgentius, author of both the treatises on predestination and the mythological works, was very learned in liberal arts such as grammar and had known the Greek language extremely well. In fact, Fulgentius, he said, possessed the "greatest expertise" (*maximam peritiam*) in Greek. Therefore, he surely understood what Augustine meant by 'predestination' of the ungodly (notwithstanding Augustine did not write in Greek but in Latin); namely, that it meant the divine preparation and arrangement of deserved punishment, not merely divine foresight of it.

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<sup>35</sup> Prudentius, *De Praedestinatione* (PL 115.1309–10): *Iste doctor et antistes, absque refragatione fidelissimus atque eruditissimus, noverat Graecam apprime locutionem, noverat qualiter a beato Augustino sermo praedestinationis impiorum positus fuerat; ideoque non praevisionem, sed praeparationem et dispositionem ejus prolatione intelligendam; quem si Atticae linguae scientiam habuisse aut ignores, aut negas, lege libros illius, qui Mythologiarum seu Virgilianae continentiae inscribuntur, et invenies ei maximam illius linguae affuisse peritiam, qua facillime nosse poterat quid sub hujus vocabuli enuntiatione accipi debuisset.* My translation.



In 1988 Barry Baldwin of the University of Calgary published his research on the sources used by Fulgentius the Mythographer. Among the Greek-speaking authors that the mythographer used were Anacreon, Anaximander, Aristotle, Carneades, Demosthenes, Euripides, Hesiod, Homer, Menander, Plato, Thales, and Zenophanes.<sup>36</sup> By conflating Fulgentius the Mythographer with Fulgentius the bishop in this ninth-century polemical context, Prudentius in effect transformed the bishop into a Renaissance man, one who possessed a very broad and comprehensive knowledge of many subjects and whose expertise spanned a number of different subject areas—in this case, classical literature, rhetoric, dialectic,<sup>37</sup> grammar, philosophy, and Greek. As such, the composite Fulgentius became a capable rival for Eriugena, one of the most brilliant minds of the Carolingian era.

Fulgentius, the bishop of Ruspe, read Homer and Menander, as the author of his *Vita* says.<sup>38</sup> But almost every educated person in late fifth-century North Africa who studied any Greek did.<sup>39</sup> Prudentius' new and improved Fulgentius was a Greek expert and a grammarian, hence able to discover the often obscure meanings not only in the pagan classics but also in the writings of the apostles and the fathers. This Fulgentius was a formidable match for the greatest product of the

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<sup>36</sup> Barry Baldwin, "Fulgentius and His Sources," *Traditio* 44 (1988): 37–57. Unlike Prudentius, modern scholarship does not consider Fulgentius the Mythographer an expert in Greek, but merely acknowledges that he knew some Greek.

<sup>37</sup> Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, 109: "What Fulgentius [the Mythographer] does know at first hand includes the techniques of traditional rhetoric and dialectic."

<sup>38</sup> Eno, *Fulgentius*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Henri I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1948), 52.



Carolingian renaissance, John Scottus Eriugena. For he too was equally equipped to plunge the depth of the divine mystery of predestination.

According to Hays, Prudentius of Troyes' attribution of the mythological works to the bishop "gained ground, so that in the 12th century we find Sigebert taking it for granted."<sup>40</sup> But Prudentius' conflation of the two Fulgentii into one Fulgentius who was both bishop and mythographer may not have been an isolated case. Gottschalk himself was nicknamed "Fulgentius" by his friend Wilafriid Strabo (d. 849). Some scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have thought that Strabo called Gottschalk "Fulgentius" because of the similarity of their views on predestination.<sup>41</sup> More recently others scholars explained that Strabo called Gottschalk "Fulgentius" because of the condemned monk's love for the writings of Fulgentius the Mythographer.<sup>42</sup> If the conflation of the two Fulgentii by Prudentius in the ninth century did not occur in a vacuum, I offer as a suggestion and nothing more: the possibility that Gottschalk and/or Strabo regarded the writings of the two Fulgentii as having derived from the same person. If that were the case, it may have been that in Strabo's mind, Gottschalk, whose extant writings show a fondness for grammar and

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<sup>40</sup> Hays, "Fulgentius the Mythographer," 273.

<sup>41</sup> Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. 3., trans. Joseph Torrey (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1872), 473–4; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1910), 525. Cf. Francis X. Gumerlock, "Predestination in the Century before Gottschalk, Part II," *Evangelical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2009): 319–37 at 335.

<sup>42</sup> Laistner, "Fulgentius in the Carolingian Age," 215; Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, 25.



mythology<sup>43</sup> as well as theology, was a spitting image not of Fulgentius of Ruspe nor of Fulgentius the Mythographer, but of Fulgentius, the transformed bishop-mythographer of the Carolingian age.

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<sup>43</sup> Gottschalk, *Opusculus de rebus grammaticis*, which occupies almost 150 pages in the Latin edition of Cyrille Lambot, ed., *Oeuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais* (Louvain: "Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense" Bureaux, 1945), 351–496; Gottschalk, "Si sibillae et ceteri vates paganorum spiritum sanctum umquam meruerint mereri vel habere," in Lambot, *Oeuvres théologiques et grammaticales*, 162–171.



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