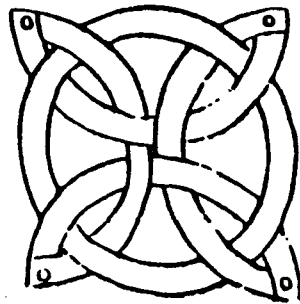


**Bishop  
and community  
in the poetry of  
venantius  
Fortunatus.**

**BRÍAN BRENNAN M.A.**



Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

School of History, Philosophy and Politics,  
Macquarie University.      March, 1983.

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MAPS

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## SUMMARY

This study analyses the portrayal of the bishop and community in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus and evaluates the value of the poems as historical source material. The first chapter presents a reconstruction of Venantius' situation in Gaul and of the milieu in which he worked. It also examines broadly his literary production in terms of genre and poetic convention as part of a discussion of the poems as historical source material. Particular stress is given to the constraints that convention placed upon the poet. The relationship of poet to patrons is examined and Gregory of Tours established as Venantius' principal patron. Thirty-nine bishops, who figure in Venantius' poems, are discussed in Chapter Two, both in terms of individual difference, and in the way in which they are made to conform to an idealised model of episcopal competence and behaviour. Chapters Three and Four focus attention on the bishop in the community. We examine first his role as spiritual leader and then as civic leader. The bishop's role in the civitas community is examined and his relationship to representatives of the secular power assessed. Chapter Five, a culminating chapter, places the figure of Venantius' king beside that of Venantius' bishop and drawing together arguments earlier developed relates Venantius' portrayal of the bishop and his community to the debate about the relative strengths of King and Bishop in sixth century Gaul. It is argued here that the bishop did not enjoy an unchallenged supremacy in the cities of sixth century Gaul or benefit from a supposed translatio imperii. This study stresses Venantius' role as panegyrist of the bishops of Gaul, who, faced with often delicate political situations, sought from Venantius public and poetic affirmations of their piety and of what they saw as their ideal status within the community. Venantius operated most particularly as the satellite of his great patron Gregory of Tours, offering his poetry as a welcome bolster to Gregory's auctoritas. Venantius' poetry formed part of that prelate's diplomatic offensives.

CERTIFICATE

I, Brian Richard Brennan, do hereby certify that this thesis,  
"Bishop and Community in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus", and  
the work embodied in it, has not been submitted for a higher degree  
to any other university or institution.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "B.R. Brennan", is written over a horizontal line.

Brian Brennan. 2. 3. 83.

## *preface*

## Preface

The literary sources available to the historian of sixth century Gaul are few in number and variable in character. Amongst the material that has survived, the works of Gregory of Tours loom large. To a great extent we are forced to see Merovingian Gaul through his eyes. Since Gregory provides us with the sole narrative history for much of this century, and since he emerges from his own works as an intriguing and engaging individual, it is not surprising that so much scholarly activity has been devoted to a study of his literary output. The result of this has been that other types of source material have inevitably been viewed as supplementary and not accorded the same degree of attention. However, in a period with such meagre documentation, every piece of evidence must be fully exploited, and its potential contribution to our body of information about the age assessed.

The inclusion of the complete works of the poet Venantius Fortunatus in the Auctores Antiquissimi section of the Monumenta Germaniae Historica sprang from Mommsen's assumption that these poems contained material that would be of use to future historians of the age. Mommsen chose works that had an historical significance and that were in need of new critical editions. Despite opposition he included the complete works of the poets Ausonius, Claudianus and Venantius Fortunatus. While admitting that only some few sections of the poets would be of direct use to the historian, Mommsen believed that a decision about relevance could only be made once one knew and could judge the whole of a poet's work. (1) The complete texts of the poets were to be made available and F. Leo edited the text of Venantius. This source has been utilised by historians in a piecemeal fashion, but in comparison with the attention lavished

on Gregory's works, the poems remain somewhat neglected. There is no English translation of the whole of Venantius' poems and there has been no full scale historical treatment of the poet and his milieu since that of the Abbé Tardi in 1927.<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, many of the details in that author's account of Venantius himself and of his situation in Gaul require emendation.

It can be a singularly difficult task to attempt to use poetry as an historical source. Immediately one is faced with the towering problems of poetic exaggeration on the one hand, and of literary convention on the other. Any attempt to establish a close correspondence between the portrayal of individuals and events depicted in the poetry and historical events is often frustrated by a lack of corroborative material in other sources, while Venantius, in particular, often wrote with an idealising purpose in genres the conventions of which often demanded no correspondence with everyday reality. We are, as well, dealing with many, often small, occasional poems. There will be many gaps in what they can reveal about sixth century life.

The aim of this historical study is to examine the portrayal of the bishop and his community in Venantius' poetry and to assess its use to the historian. The starting point of this work is the acknowledgement that we are here dealing with a literary construct, but that the nature of this construct can, in itself, tell us much about Merovingian society and the way that it operated. Venantius' poems were part of the sixth century world - they were read **at the great** occasions of church and state, they were inscribed on walls and tombstones. In effect they catalogue the ideals and aspirations of the upper classes of Merovingian society for whom they were written. They also shed particular light upon the ideals of the Gallic episcopacy, since Venantius moved largely in episcopal circles, had episcopal patrons and eventually became a bishop himself.

It must be stressed that I do not here attempt a literary study. Venantius' debt to earlier poets has been established by the labours of Max Manitius and Sven Blomgren(3) and more recently Barbara Rogers has completed a literary study(4). The research currently being undertaken by Judith George in the Classics Department of the University of Edinburgh will hopefully further illuminate tradition and originality in Venantius' poetry. Here I am concerned with the use of Venantius' poetry as historical source material for the sixth century Gallic episcopacy.

In recent years the Gallic episcopacy, as an institution, has been the subject of a number of important studies. For many years the regional study of pastoral care in South-Eastern France, published by Beck in 1950 was the most comprehensive study of Gallic bishops in their historical context(5), but this is now supplemented by new work by Mathisen, Heinzelmann, Harries and Prinz. Mathisen has provided a detailed prosopographical analysis of family structure among the ecclesiastical aristocracy of fifth century Gaul, by region.(6) Martin Heinzelmann offers a thematic treatment of Roman continuity among Gallic bishops from the fourth to the seventh century. He bases his study, in large measure, on epigraphic evidence. (7) Jill Harries has recently furnished us with a broader interpretation of the role of bishops and aristocrats in the fifth century(8), while Friedrich Prinz has attempted a bold synthesis of material to produce an overview of growing episcopal power from the fifth to the seventh century. (9)

Here we will view the Gallic episcopacy over approximately thirty years and from the vantage point of the Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus. At times the evidence of the carmina will be meagre and it will be necessary for us to utilise the writings of Gregory of Tours or the canons of the sixth century Gallic councils to supplement Venantius or to bring out the import of certain lines.



Yet while we may do this, our primary interest is in maintaining Venantius' sightlines and in bringing his view of the episcopacy into sharper focus. A general study of Merovingian society or of the Gallic episcopacy, as such, is not this study's aim.

The Latin text that has been used is that edited by F. Leo in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi. IV. I. (Berlin, 1881). I have also consulted with profit the textural studies of Fortunatus' poems undertaken by Sven Blomgren(10) and the French translation of the poet's works by Charles Nisard and Eugene Rittier. (11).

I must express my gratitude to Prof. G.W. Clarke, who, when Professor of Classics in the University of Melbourne, first interested me in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus. He kindly read a draft of this work. My thanks also to Dr. Alanna Emmett, who supervised the writing of this thesis, and to Dr. Brian Croke. Each will know how much I owe to them. My wife, Adrienne McClymont, deserves special mention. She made Venantius Fortunatus a welcome guest in our home and showed great patience when he monopolised my time.

March, 1983.

Brian Brennan.

Notes - Preface

- (1) See T. Mommsen, "Schlussbericht über die Herausgabe der Auctores antiquissimi" (1898) in Gesammelte Schriften Vol. VII. (Berlin, 1909) pp. 691-694. Mommsen's role is evaluated in O. Redlich, "Mommsen und die Monumenta Germaniae", Zeitschrift, f.d.österr.Gymn, 12 (1916), pp. 865-875.
  
- (2) D. Tàrdi, Fortunat. Étude sur un dernier représentant de la poésie latine dans la Gaule mérovingienne. (Paris, 1927).
  
- (3) See M. Manitius, Index III. Poetarum Priorum Loci Expressi a Fortunato, (MGH AA 4.2. pp.132-137), and S. Blomgren, "De P. Papinii Statli apud Venantium Fortunatum vestigiis", Eranos, 48 (1950) pp.57-65; "De Venantio Fortunato Lucani Claudianique imitatore", Eranos, 48 (1950), pp.150-156.
  
- (4) Barbara J. Rogers, The Poems of Venantius Fortunatus: A Translation and Commentary. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Rutgers University, 1969, pp.1-50. This study includes a translation and textual notes on thirty-four poems. The criteria for selection remain obscure.
  
- (5) H. G. J. Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France during the Sixth Century. (Rome, 1950).  
Analecta Gregoriana, 51.
  
- (6) R. Mathisen, The Ecclesiastical Aristocracy of Fifth Century Gaul : A Regional analysis of family structure. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979.

- (7) M. Heinzelmann, Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien. Zur Kontinuität  
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- (8) J. Harries, Bishops, Senators and their Cities in Southern and Central  
Gaul, 407-476. Unpublished D.Phil. Diss. Oxford University, 1981.
- (9) F. Prinz, "Die bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5.  
bis 7. Jahrhundert", Historische Zeitschrift 217 (1973), pp. 1-35.
- (10) S. Blomgren, "In Venantii Fortunati carmina adnotationes novae",  
Eranos 69 (1971), pp. 104-150. and Studia Fortunatiana, (Uppsala, 1933).
- (11) Ch. Nisard and E. Rittier, Venance Fortunat, Poésies Mêlées. French  
Translation. (Paris, 1887).

### ABBREVIATIONS

For the sake of convenience the poems of Venantius Fortunatus are cited in the body of the text by book number, poem number and line number in the edition of F. Leo, MGH AA IV.1. (Berlin, 1881), e.g. (V.6.32.) The titles of journals are abbreviated following the style used in L'Année Philologique. Ancient sources and collections are cited by the abbreviations used in the Oxford Classical Dictionary 2nd Edition, 1970. In addition, the following abbreviations are used -

#### Primary Sources

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Baud, <u>VR</u>       | <u>Baudoniviae Vita Radegundis</u> , ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1888. ( <u>MGH SRM</u> 2 pp. 377-395).                                |
| <u>CG</u> I           | <u>Concilia Galliae</u> A. 314-506, ed. C. Munier, Turnhout, 1963. ( <u>Corpus christianorum</u> , <u>Series Latina</u> 148).     |
| <u>CG</u> II          | <u>Concilia Galliae</u> A. 511-695, ed. C. DeClercq, Turnhout, 1963. ( <u>Corpus christianorum</u> , <u>Series Latina</u> 148 A). |
| Fort, <u>VA</u>       | <u>Venantii Honorii Clementiani Fortunati Vita S. Albini</u> , ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1885. ( <u>MGH AA</u> IV.2. pp.27-33).      |
| Fort, <u>VG</u>       | <u>Vita S. Germani Parisiensis</u> , ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1885. ( <u>MGH AA</u> IV.2. pp.11-27).                                |
| Fort, <u>VH</u>       | <u>Vita S. Hilarii</u> , ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1885. ( <u>MGH AA</u> IV.2. pp.1-7).  |
| Fort, <u>VM</u>       | <u>Vita Martini</u> , ed. F. Leo, Berlin, 1881. ( <u>MGH AA</u> IV.1.294 ff).   |
| Fort, <u>VR</u>       | <u>Vita Radegundis</u> , ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1885. ( <u>MGH AA</u> IV.2. pp.38-49).  |
| Greg Turon, <u>GC</u> | <u>Gregorii episcopi Turonensis liber in gloria confessorum</u> , ed. B. Krusch, Hannover, 1885. ( <u>MGH SRM</u> 1/2, 744ff.)    |

- Greg Turon, GM     Liber in gloria martyrum, ed. B. Krusch, Hannover, 1885.  
(MGH SRM 1/2, 484 ff.)
- Greg Turon, HF     Libri Historiarum X, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison,  
Hannover, 1951. (MGH SRM 1/1).
- Greg Turon, VP     Liber vitae patrum, ed. B. Krusch, Hannover, 1885.  
(MGH SRM 1/2, 661 ff.)
- Greg Turon, VSJ     Liber de passione et virtutibus sancti Juliani martyris,  
ed. B. Krusch, Hannover, 1885. (MGH SRM 1/2, 562 ff.)
- Greg Turon, VSM     Libri I-IV de virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi, ed. B. Krusch,  
Hannover, 1885. (MGH SRM 1/2, 584 ff.)
- Le Blant             Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures au VIII<sup>e</sup>  
Siècle, ed. E. Le Blant, Paris, 1856/65. (Collection de  
documents inédits sur l'histoire de France).
- MGH                 Monumenta Germaniae Historica.
- MGH AA             - Auctores Antiquissimi, 15 Vols, Berlin, 1877/1919.
- MGH Epp            - Epistolae, Berlin, 1887.
- MGH Cap            - Leges, Legum Sectio II : Capitularia regum Francorum,  
Vol. I, ed. A. Boretius, 1883.
- MGH SRM           - Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 7 Vols,  
Hannover, 1884/1920.
- Nisard,  
Traduction         Ch. Nisard & E. Rittier, Venance Fortunat, Poésies Mêlées  
traduites en Français, (Paris, 1887).

#### Secondary Material

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Ser. III, 10 (1883) pp. 225-303.
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- Stroheker, (+ number) Prosopography in Stroheker, Adel, pp.141-227. (Numbers 1-411).
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- Vieillard - Troiekouroff M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours. (Paris, 1976).

## chapter 1

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an italian poet  
in gaul



In the Spring of 566, the Italian poet, Venantius Fortunatus, after crossing the Carnic Alps and traversing the lands of many fierce barbarian peoples, arrived at the Austrasian court at Metz in time for the wedding of the Frankish King Sigibert to the Visigothic princess, Brunhild, daughter of Athanagild. There before the notables of the court, the poet sang the epithalamium (VI. 1), a sparkling showpiece in which Sigibert and Brunhild are inevitably brought together by the designs of Cupid and Venus. This poem was to bring Venantius to the attention of the upper classes of Merovingian society, both Frankish and Gallo-Roman, and laid part of the groundwork for the poet's subsequent reputation in Gaul.

An outline of the various stages of Venantius' career, both before his arrival in Gaul and during the many years of his residence in his adopted country, may be pieced together with the aid of the scattered evidence contained in his poems. The aim of this chapter is not to provide a full biography of the poet, since the evidence does not allow this, but rather to set forth what may be established on the basis of chance elements of unwitting autobiography in the poems themselves. This is done as an essential part of a discussion of the milieu in which he wrote, and of the nature of his literary production. Before we can utilize his poems as historical evidence we need to understand more fully Venantius' situation in Merovingian Gaul and his relationship to the bishops of Gaul and to other important members of the society in which he lived for the rest of his life. As we shall see, minor indications in his poems often have an immediate relevance to important issues such as the relationship between poet and patron or reveal the extent of Venantius' travel within Gaul.

Our first task must be to attempt to understand the conditions that gave rise to the creation of Venantius' poetry. We must then examine this poetic production in terms of the constraints imposed by the genres the poet employs. In essence we must seek to understand the nature of our source material before we attempt to make use of it. A biographical sketch will, even if from necessity confined to a few bold outlines, provide us with a frame-work in which to place this discussion.

(1). Family Background and Early Career

Of Fortunatus' background and family history we know nothing more than can be gleaned from what the poet reveals about himself in the course of his writings. Indeed, the brief chapter on Fortunatus in Paul the Deacon's History of the Lombards(1) is based on the same source - Venantius' poetry. The medieval manuscripts give the poet's full name as Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, but this does not take us far since the poet does not offer us precise details of his family connections. The poet briefly mentions having a brother, a sister and nephews. (2) We only learn quite obliquely that Venantius' sister was called Titania. (XI. 6. 8.) The poet's own names do not tell us anything of consequence. There are a number of Venantii known to us from late antiquity and they held distinguished office. One Venantius, consul in 507, was related to Ennodius. (3) Another was Corrector Lucaniae et Bruttiorum under the Goths. (4) We also read in Cassiodorus' Variae of the Venantius who was guardian to one Plutianus. (5) It is impossible however to make any connection between these men and our poet's family. The cognomina are every bit as problematical. The only Honorii known to us from late antiquity are those who were members of the imperial family of Theodosius and

all we may observe is the fact that our poet never alluded to such a glorious if distant connection. Clementianus is an even more obscure name – the only Clementianus known to us is a Roman senator of the late fourth and early fifth century, possibly the father of Appius Nicomachus Dexter. (6) Finally, the signum Fortunatus was given in honour of the martyr saint of Aquileia, the only saint of that name mentioned by the poet. (7) It was by this name that the poet styled himself.

Venantius tells us that he was born at Duplavis, near Tarvisium (Treviso) in Venetia(8) and most scholars suggest a birthdate circa 530. There is, however, no reason why Venantius could not have been born as late as 540. (9) No matter which date is accepted then Venantius' childhood would have coincided with the war waged against the Ostrogoths by Belisarius, on behalf of the Emperor Justinian to regain Italy for the Roman empire. Duplavis, Venantius' birthplace, may have been either a village or an estate. Tardi suggests that the poet's family may have been middle class landowners at Duplavis. Having painted a generalised picture of Venetia subject to the disturbances of the Gothic wars, Tardi claims that because of the general state of insecurity in the area, the poet's family was forced to seek refuge in Aquileia. (10) This must be questioned. The one great battle that we know was fought near Treviso during this period involved the forces of the Gothic King Ildibad and Vitalius, the Byzantine officer, who clashed there in 540, (11) but Tardi does not link this to his theory of emigration to Aquileia. Instead his chronology is very vague – he pictures the family spending the last peaceful years of the reign of Theodoric at Duplavis. After 526 they supposedly found their position threatened and fled to Aquileia. Since Venantius was born, according to Tardi, in 530, (but perhaps as late as 540), it is difficult to fit a childhood at Duplavis into such a framework.

The 530's were certainly a period of great suffering and turmoil in northern Italy. The fighting between Roman and Goth was further complicated by the entry of the Franks into the affairs of the Italian North. Although a Germanic people, the Franks were Orthodox Christians and this, it would appear, was a major factor in convincing Justinian that he could enlist their aid against the Arian Ostrogoths. Besides this, until 537 when they agreed to the cession of Provence, the Ostrogoths were standing in the way of Frankish expansion south from Burgundy. Procopius reproduces a letter of Justinian (sent with money) to the Frankish King Theudebert which lays great stress on a common Orthodox faith and a shared enmity towards the Goths. (12) Of course the Ostrogoths, fearing enemies on two fronts, gave the Franks Provence hoping thus to win the Franks to their side. Agathias accords the Franks a surprisingly eulogistic treatment, stressing the Romanised institutions that they had and their orthodoxy in religious matters. (13)

The entry of the Franks into North Italy had disastrous consequences for Goth and Roman alike. Theudebert had entered into a treaty with Justinian promising that his Franks would aid the Imperial cause and not the Goths, but in 539 he sought to exploit the situation in Italy for himself. He either ordered or allowed 10,000 of his Burgundian subjects, but not Franks, to cross the Alps in order to link up with the Gothic forces of Uraias, for an attack on the Byzantine city of Milan. In this way Theudebert broke the spirit if not the letter of his treaty with Justinian. The massacre of the citizens of Milan in 539 and the barbaric treatment of the Praetorian Prefect Reparatus remained long in the memory of the Romans as an example of Frankish duplicity. In 539 Theudebert led his forces into Italy where they plundered both Goth and Roman alike.

The Franks massacred a force of Goths at Ticinum and then went on to clash with the Romans. It was only when disease decimated his army that Theudebert retreated beyond the Alps once more. (14) The city of Ravenna fell to Belisarius in 540 but hostilities continued in northern Italy for some considerable time yet. It would be most tempting to suggest that Venantius' family fled Treviso in 540 when we know of hostilities in the area, but we must note that Venantius himself mentions no flight from Treviso and nothing about his family taking refuge at Aquileia. Venantius did however have a contact in the city, Bishop Paul (15), and it was Paul who first suggested the religious life to Venantius. (16) The name Fortunatus also shows a link with the cult of the saint of Aquileia, but this does not prove that Venantius' family lived there. At most we can say that Venantius may have visited the city. (17)

What speaks most strongly against a flight from Duplavis is the evidence provided by Fortunatus himself. Writing between 573 and 576 Venantius' description of his home, by now under Lombard domination, suggests that his family still lived there. Felix, a friend to Fortunatus from youth, is back at Treviso after his studies at Ravenna. The traveller is exhorted to greet the poet's family and friends. (18)

We are forced to conclude that a theory of flight to Aquileia is not justified by the evidence which, if anything, speaks for continuity of the family near Treviso. If the family did earlier leave for a period, Venantius does not record it. Venantius' friend Felix, now Bishop of Treviso, stayed on even in the face of the later Lombard invasion and Paul the Deacon reports how Felix protected his church and gained from King Alboin a diploma guaranteeing royal protection. (19)

## (2) Studies at Ravenna

The only city mentioned by Venantius, in his account of his studies, is Ravenna. There is no evidence that Venantius began his studies in Aquileia or that it was the start of the schism of the Three Chapters that occasioned a move from there to Ravenna. (20) Venantius tells us that he studied Grammar, Rhetoric, Metrics and Law. Although Venantius in the first book of the Vita Martini professes to be inadequate to the task of writing about the saint, it is clear nevertheless that his education provided him with the background necessary for a career in either the law or letters. (21) Venantius gives every indication of having prepared for the career of a professional poet. His collected works reveal him as the master of such varied poetic forms as the Consolatio, the Epithalamium and the Panegyric. Fortunatus' familiarity with the major Latin poets has been highlighted first by the labours of Max Manitius, and more recently by the Swedish scholar Sven Blomgren, who has pointed to echoes of earlier poets in Venantius' works. Manitius provided the index to the MGH edition of Fortunatus' poetry. Traces of the influence of Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, Statius and Martial, amongst others, are to be found in Venantius' poems. (22) Claudian was also a powerful influence on the poet, as a number of reminiscences of his lines illustrate. (23) Fortunatus was also familiar with Arator's metrical Acts of the Apostles, and with the works of other Christian poets such as Paulinus of Périgueux, Prudentius and Sedulius. (24) A few words of Greek in Venantius' Vita Martini suggest that the poet gained an elementary knowledge of that language while at Ravenna. (25) He also displays a superficial knowledge of Greek philosophers and poets, but there is no reason to believe that this was gained from actually reading their works. (26)

The Ravenna that Venantius knew was the Ravenna of the Byzantine reconquest. The image of the Emperor Justinian would have looked down on him from the wall of the church of St. Vitale. The great churches of St. Martin, Sts John and Paul and St. Apollinare in Classe would have been part of his world. (27) Two early poems (I. 2;3) reflect the beginnings of a career as a poet but present us with considerable difficulties if we try to place them in historical context. The first poem is addressed to a Bishop Vitalis, while the second commemorates his construction of a church in honour of St. Andrew. Now, although the manuscripts contain the superscription that makes him Bishop of Ravenna, this Vitalis is not to be found in the episcopal lists of the city. The episcopate of the great Maximianus stretched from 546 to 556 and his successor Agnellus held the See from 557 to 570. On the evidence available to us Vitalis cannot be placed in Ravenna itself. In recent times Giuseppe Cuscito has argued that Vitalis may be an Orthodox bishop of Istria living in Pola. (28) This theory must be rejected as it is not based on any substantial evidence either for the episcopate of the bishop or for the exact foundation of the church of St. Andrew. A much more probable theory was put forward by Koebner as early as 1915. Koebner drew attention to Bishop Vitalis of Altinum, a small city between Treviso and the sea. According to Paul the Deacon, Vitalis held the See until about the time of Justinian's death and the accession of Justin II. (29)

Vitalis of Altinum may have been Venantius' first patron. Venantius thought highly enough of the poems written for the dedication of the church of St. Andrew to keep them and include them as the first offerings in his collected works. The first poem was, it seems, delivered before a distinguished audience at the consecration of the church. (I. 1.19-22.) The second was inscribed on the wall as



a memorial to the donor. (I. 2. 1-5.) Like many an aspiring poet Venantius began his career by writing a poem in honour of a local worthy and by delivering it before a distinguished audience. Perhaps the poems commemorating the churches of St. Stephen (I. 3.) and St. Martin (I. 4.) may also date to this period. We lose sight of any further indications of a career in Italy before Venantius left Ravenna and Italy behind and journeyed to Gaul.

### (3) The Trip to Gaul

The appearance of Fortunatus in Gaul in 566 provides us with the first firm date in Venantius' career. It also raises a question of fundamental importance - what brought the poet to Gaul? The matter is complicated by the fact that Venantius provides us with not one but two versions of his journey - as we shall see each reveals a different motivation. In the letter to Gregory of Tours that forms the preface to the first collection of his poems (Books I - VII) Venantius portrays himself as the new Orpheus traversing the Alps and crossing the lands of strange peoples. Here his only motivation is that of the wandering bard, his journey the first of a series of adventures, that once he had entered northern Gaul, eventually took him further afield.

At the very end of the fourth book of his Vita Martini, Venantius ends his metrical adaptation of Sulpicius Severus' Life of St. Martin, the wonder-working fourth century monk-bishop of Tours, with a section which parallels the extension of Martin's fame to all the world. The poet provides a description (in reverse) of his own journey from Italy, where in the Church of Sts John and Paul at Ravenna, he had been cured of blindness by the power and intercession of St. Martin. Venantius' crossing of the Alps is here presented as a peregrinatio religiosa, the road marked out not by mansiones but by the shrines of saints.

Venantius' itinerary (Fort, VM., IV, 640-679) may, in outline, be traced as follows: he crossed the rivers Padus, Retenonus and Britana, passed Patavium (Padua), Concordia, along the Via Claudia Augusta, and Aquileia, the city of his patron saint, the martyr Fortunatus. Crossing the Teliamentus (the Tagliamento), he headed north to Julium Carnicum and crossed the Carnic Alps via the Plöchen Pass. (30) (See Map I - Venantius' Route to Gaul.) His report makes it clear that he passed by Aguntum, not the former town in the Linz basin, but the fifth century Flieburg, perched on the hill, (31) and then along the valley of the Drau, its sides dotted with castella built in the fifth century by the inhabitants of Noricum to protect themselves from barbarian attack. (32) Leaving Noricum he crossed the Alpes Raeticae via the Vallis Vipitena to the river Aenus (Inn) near Veldidena (Innsbruck). Entering Bavaria, and avoiding the fierce Breuni, the poet reached Augsburg on the river Licus (Lech), the town where St. Afra was venerated. (33) From Augsburg Venantius headed west and crossed the Hister (Danube) before reaching the Rhineland and Gaul beyond. It is most likely that he followed the road Mainz-Bingen-Trier and then up along the Mosel to Metz. Writing in the eighth century, Paul the Deacon described Venantius' journey to Gaul in terms directly borrowed from the metrical Vita Martini and recorded that Venantius' motivation was a desire to make a pilgrimage of thanks to St. Martin's shrine.

While some scholars have accepted this pious motivation for Venantius' trip to Gaul (34), Koebner and Tardi have been more critical, suggesting that the visit to St. Martin's tomb may be little more than a pious pretext. (35) A number of considerations would speak against uncritical acceptance of the pious motives implied in the Vita Martini. Firstly, we must see the account

of Venantius' journey in the context in which it was written. Here is a highly personalised ending to the adaptation of the Vita written by Sulpicius Severus, one that alters the emphasis of the work to make Venantius' own journey and his miracle the emotional coda to a work which, like Arator's Historia Apostolorum, would have enjoyed public recitation. (36) As we shall see later in this chapter, Venantius was eager to be known in episcopal circles in Gaul and he sought episcopal patronage. In an age ever ready for miracle stories, what better way would a poet have of gaining the attention of bishops and clergy and the interest of the Bishop of Tours, one of the most important Metropolitans, than through promotion of and association with Martin, the most popular of Gallic saints and patron of Tours?

The account in the Vita Martini was most probably written during the first years of Gregory's rule as bishop of Tours, that is during 573-574, and certainly before 576(37), while the Preface to the first collection of poems was written some time after 576. (38) A comparison of the two makes it clear that Venantius could, deliberately, produce at about the same time, two quite different versions of the trip, replete either with martyrs' tombs or precious classical allusions, as it suited him.

A third consideration is the itinerary itself. If Venantius' trip to Gaul were planned as a pilgrimage of thanks to the shrine of St. Martin at Tours, then it is odd that he should enter Gaul by this northern route, spending at least a year in the north before visiting the saint's tomb. (39) A more likely route would have led through the Cottian or Graian Alps and then up the Rhône valley to Lyons, and from there, via the Auvergne to the Loire. (40) In Book IV of the Vita Martini, Fortunatus suggests that on entering Gaul he followed a route that led from the shrine of St. Médard at Soissons to that of St. Remigius at Reims,

and then on to Paris where St. Denis was venerated. It would seem however that when Venantius entered Gaul his destination was Metz, for it was the opportunity offered to the poet by the royal wedding that had first attracted him to Gaul.

An able poet anxious to make a reputation may well have felt that opportunities were greater at the court of a barbarian dynasty anxious to adopt a veneer of Roman ways, than in Ravenna. The decision to go to Metz was governed more by the thought of opportunities available there than by general disturbance in Ravenna forcing the poet to abandon an endangered city. The death of Justinian on November 14, 565 (something hardly unexpected at his advanced age) and perhaps not known in Ravenna until early 566, must be ruled out as a factor influencing Venantius' decision to travel to Gaul. (41) To suggest, as does Caron, that Venantius was "un homme prévoyant" who saw the coming of the Lombards (42), makes little sense since the first part of the poet's journey took him in the general direction from which the Lombards later invaded. Such a knowledge of the Lombard threat must have been coupled with a rather precise sense of timing.

There still is the important question as to how Venantius came to know of the Austrasian court. Contact between Venantius and the invading Frankish armies in North Italy is unthinkable. The campaign of 539 was too early and the goal of the Frankish-Alamannic invasion of 533-54 was further south. These Franks show no desire to make friends!

One possibility that still has not been fully explored is that Venantius may have heard about the nature of the Austrasian court, or even of the marriage plans, in episcopal circles. The poet had episcopal contacts in Italy and his early contacts in Gaul are with bishops - Sidonius at Mainz, Nicetius at Trier

and Vilicus at Metz. Is there some point of contact between any of these bishops and their Italian counterparts? Might one of these have acted as a channel of communication? Were any of these Gallic bishops known in Italy?

The only Gallic bishop who both figures in Venantius' early poetry and who had a considerable trans-alpine reputation in this period is Nicetius of Trier whom Venantius describes as totius orbis amor (III. 11. 2.). This is, of course, conventional flattery, but it does appear apposite given the extensive reputation enjoyed by Nicetius south of the Alps. This reputation is illustrated by the Epistolae Austrasicae. This collection contains two letters to Nicetius from Florianus, Abbot of the Monasterium Romerum in the diocese of Milan and a former pupil of Caesarius of Arles. Letter 5, (c. 551-555) is a conventional letter of greeting from the Abbot and written on behalf of Datius, Bishop of Milan. (43) Letter 6, (c. 550) is more revealing. (44) Here Florianus seeks Nicetius' aid in urging King Theudebald (548-555), Theuderic's successor, to keep his word and grant protection to the monks of the Larienis, the Isola Comacina, in the western branch of Lake Como. The Frankish kings, for the good reasons outlined earlier, had a reputation for going back on their word (45) and it is significant that even at this distance the Abbot Florianus felt that the person who could put pressure on the king was Nicetius. The letter may open with a rather conventional greeting - Egregiam vestrae sanctitatis famam audivimus, quae ubique celeberrimo sermone vulgatur (46), yet the body of the letter makes it clear that Florianus is well informed about Nicetius' activities. He knows of the prelate who consecrated Nicetius and of Nicetius' efforts in redeeming captives. He is aware of Nicetius' friendship with the pious women Maximiana and Pauliniana.

Letter 21 (c. 550) reveals further contact with Italy for here we see that Bishop Rufus of Turin sent Italian workmen to Trier to help in Nicetius' building projects. (47) In all, the Epistolae Austrasicae suggest that Nicetius made his presence felt far afield. Letter 7, (before 565), reveals the Bishop of Trier writing to the Emperor Justinian warning against the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. (48) Even after the Lombard invasion of Italy we see Nicetius writing, before 568, to Chlodosuinda, the Frankish wife of Alboin, urging her to take Clotild as her example and to set about the conversion of her husband from Arianism. (49) Nicetius' Italian contacts suggest that Venantius may have set off for Gaul armed with a letter of recommendation from a local bishop addressed to Nicetius. Venantius' poems make constant reference to hospitalitas as an episcopal virtue, and Venantius was later to provide other Italians with his own letters of recommendation addressed to bishops along the travellers' path. Venantius appears to have enjoyed a similar hospitality from bishops and his poems show that he visited Nicetius of Trier at his castle at Neumagen (II. 12) and Vilicus at Metz (II. 13), most probably visiting Nicetius at Trier first, then going on to Vilicus at Metz with his recommendation.

The most likely local bishop to have had contact with the Frankish episcopacy and perhaps with Nicetius himself is Bishop Vitalis of Altinum. Paul the Deacon tells us that this prelate ante annos plurimos ad Francorum regnum confugerat, hoc est ad Agonthiensem civitatem (Auguntum) (50), and if, as Koebner suggests, he is to be identified with Venantius' patron, he may have been instrumental in heading Venantius in the direction of Auguntum and the Franks. Koebner highlights the ruin and exile of this Vitalis by Narses – it exactly coincides in time with Venantius' departure from Italy. He suggests that

perhaps the poet left Italy in order not to get dragged into the fall of his patron. (51) Even if Venantius were not endangered by his patron's fall, it may have been through Vitalis that the poet came to hear of the territory of the Franks and perhaps of the famous Nicetius of Trier. News of the imminent wedding at the Austrasian court may also have reached Italy via episcopal communication and sparked Venantius' decision to travel. The dispatch of Gogo to Spain, no doubt laden with presents, would have created considerable attention, (52) while the trip to Spain, the negotiations at Toledo and the return journey of the entire entourage from Spain would have taken many months. Just enough time for a poet trained in the rhetorical schools of Ravenna to write the epithalamium and hasten towards Metz.

#### (4) Venantius in Gaul

When Venantius entered Gaul in 566, the Regnum Francorum was divided among the four feuding grandsons of the great Frankish king, Clovis, who had carved out territory for himself and his descendants in the Gallic lands of the former Roman Empire. The Franks had first come to the attention of the Romans in the third century A.D. when, based at some point on the middle or lower Rhine they began to cause havoc in Gaul. The fourth century saw the employment of Frankish auxiliaries in the Roman Army. Some Romanised Franks rose to positions of great responsibility under Constantine and Constantius II. Outstanding Franks, men like Merobaudes, Richomer and Bauto even gained the consulship in the 380's and behind the usurper Eugenius (392-4) who was eventually defeated by Theodosius, we see the power of the Frankish magister militum Arbogast.

The beginnings of the Franks are obscure although it seems most likely that their ultimate origins lay in Scandinavia, and that they moved south over a



great period of time. By the fifth century one group of Franks, the Salians, appear to have gained a position of pre-eminence over the other tribal groups within the Frankish race and it was from the Salian group that Clovis was descended. The genealogy of the great king, Clovis, was in large part invented after that king's rise to dominion. While Merovech is the eponymous founder of the Merovingian dynasty, he would appear to belong more to myth than to history. (53)

Childeric, Clovis' father, belongs however to history and served in the 450's and 460's as the commander of auxiliaries under the magister militum Aegidius in campaigns against the Visigoths. His tomb, found in Tournai, reveals the wealth of this Frankish war leader who came into close contact with Roman culture. (54) In the course of the fifth century the Franks had, as a group, expanded into Northern Gaul and the Roman presence had shrunk to those cities that were under the control of the magister militum Aegidius. As Musset points out, it is most likely that the Franks penetrated in a piecemeal way as far south as the Loire over some considerable time. All they finally had to do was to take important Roman centres like Soissons and Paris to win rule. (55) They were not compelled to undertake a systematic conquest of territory in northern Gaul.

The defeat of Syagrius, the son of the magister militum Aegidius, at the hands of Clovis in 486 and the capture of his capital Soissons saw the final collapse of the last "Roman" government in Gaul. Gregory of Tours tells us that Syagrius styled himself "rex Romanorum", (56) and with his demise a power vacuum was left in Northern Gaul. Clovis consolidated his position and set about filling the vacuum left by Syagrius. He extended his rule as far south as the Loire where the Visigothic presence prevented a further advance.

Under the influence of his Burgundian Catholic wife, Clotild, and under the tutelage of Bishop Remigius of Reims, who early saw in Clovis the possibility of a Christian monarch and Orthodox champion, the Frankish war leader was guided towards the baptismal font at Reims, most probably on Christmas Day, 498. Significantly he had made the transition direct from paganism to Catholicism, unlike other Germanic peoples such as the Visigoths who had been converted to Arianism. The bishops of Gaul, particularly those living south of the Loire under the rule of the Arian Visigoths, hailed him as their champion, and from this point on Frankish expansion towards the south had about it something of a religious crusade. In 507 in the Battle of Vouillé near Poitiers, the Visigoths were defeated and their king, Alaric II, was slain. Gregory of Tours tells us that the victory was gained with the aid of St. Hilary, who like Clovis had "done battle" with the heretic foe. (57) The defeat of the Visigoths was seen as a sign - the victory of Orthodoxy over Arianism - and the Frankish kingdom was extended to encompass the important city of Bordeaux and the Visigothic capital of Toulouse, high up the Garonne.

Clovis became the legitimate ruler of Gaul (in some sense) when, in the Basilica of St. Martin at Tours, he crowned himself with a diadem and presented himself to the people dressed in a purple tunic, having first received from the Emperor Anastasius letters conferring the consulate upon him. From that day on he styled himself consul and Augustus, and in true Roman fashion symbolised his changed status by lavishing gold and silver coins on the people of Tours as he rode from St. Martin's church to the cathedral of Tours. He then established his seat of government at Paris.

Following the death of Clovis in 511, the territory that he had conquered was, according to the Frankish law of inheritance, divided between his sons. Since

Clovis, following his defeat of Alaric II, had extended his realm almost to the Pyrénées, the division of territory at his death saw the parceling out of these lands as well as parts of the northern territory. No thought was given to the geographical unity of the small kingdoms created as a result of this division. Theuderic I, for example, gained territory centred on lands between the Oise and the Meuse, the important cities of Tournai and Soissons and a piece of territory in Aquitania with Bordeaux and Toulouse, the former Visigothic capital. The difficulties of administering territories such as these must have been immense, especially since kings often had to traverse their brothers' kingdoms in order to gain access to parts of their own realms.

Clovis' sons, when not plotting against each other, continued their father's expansionist policies. In 534, for example, Burgundy was annexed by Lothar and Childebert I and thus the Merovingians brought under their control one of the most Romanised parts of Gaul. The Burgundians, like the Franks, probably came from Scandinavia and in a series of migrations eventually came to settle in eastern Gaul. In the fifth century they concluded a foedus with the Romans and were settled near modern day Geneva. (58) After a period of good conduct, during which they served the Romans as soldiers in a series of campaigns, the Burgundians seized part of Lugdunensis I and Viennensis. The Romans under Majorian forced the Burgundians to withdraw for a period, but they came back in force and spread into the Rhône region to the south and as far north as Langres. The Burgundians had been first converted to Arianism but by the time the Franks annexed the kingdom, Catholicism was well established following the conversion of King Sigismund. By 537, the Franks, in a push south, gained Provence from the Ostrogoths. There also they respected the Roman organisation left by the previous rulers, the Ostrogoths, keeping intact the idea of a Provençal patriciate and filling the office of rector provinciae with their own appointees. (59)

Septimania however, still remained in Visigothic hands and cut communications between the Mediterranean coast and the Atlantic seaboard thus blocking one of the great highways of antiquity.

Towards the East the Franks also expanded, following the lead given by Clovis who had fought both the Thuringians and the Alamanni. Thuringia was subjugated by Lothar and Theuderic in 530 and this wild land brought under a form of Frankish overlordship. In this campaign Lothar seized as part of the booty the Thuringian Princess Radegund and took her to wife. Alamannia was conquered by Theudebert after 536 and by the 550's the Franks had begun to encroach to some degree upon the warlike Bavarians. Theudebert's imperialistic aims extended to north Italy and, according to the alarmed Agathias, to the city of Constantinople itself! (60)

Within Gaul, and particularly in the most Romanised parts of their territories, the kings of the Merovingian dynasty established by Clovis were most conscious that they were successors to the Romans. These Frankish kings established their capitals in cities that had been, for strategic reasons, important Roman centres. They used Latin as the language of government and appointed officials with Roman titles such as dux and comes. Merovingian administration was heavily dependant on Gallo-Roman families that had been the backbone of the civil administration of their cities under the Romans. They now provided officials who held positions of trust and authority under the Frankish kings. A Frankish élite also served the kings at court and in the field.

The exact nature and extent of Frankish migration and settlement within Gaul is unclear. Archaeological evidence suggests a partial settlement of Franks on conquered lands in the north of Gaul, the area first visited by Venantius, where

characteristic row-graves and burials with Germanic weapons and accessories show the spread of their settlement. (61) South of the Seine such extensive evidence is lacking, and only a few sites such as the famous cemetery at Herpes (Charente) present finds that suggest Germanic influence. The interpretation of these burial sites is fraught with difficulty for it is virtually impossible to say with any certainty that this group of graves or that belongs to Franks. As James argues in his synthesis and criticism of archaeological investigations of graves and burial sites, many changes in burial custom are due to changes in fashion rather than to great migrations of people. Neatness and order in laying out a cemetery may easily be mistaken for signs of a Frankish Reihengräberzivilisation south of the Loire. (62) Altogether, the archaeological evidence suggests that there was no full scale Frankish expansion across the Seine. In the Touraine, Boussard argued that the conquering military forces of the Franks moved into the countryside and established themselves away from previous Gallo-Roman settlements, but his theory has been shown by Lelong to rest on questionable evidence. (63) Archaeology does not support Boussard's claims. Further south, in the area of the Garonne, Broens, utilizing mainly toponymic data, suggested that the Germanic element in the basin of the Garonne was, in the sixth century, 5 - 10% of the population. (64) Many of these sites have however now been shown to be later settlements, and the picture that emerges overall, on the evidence available, suggests that few Franks settled south of the Loire. The domination of the southern territories must have been achieved by a small élite of warriors. (65)

The third generation of Merovingian kings were ruling in Gaul at the time when Venantius Fortunatus came to the court at Metz. Lothar was the last of Clovis' sons to die and at his death in 561 feuding broke out among the sons he

had left behind - Charibert, Guntram, Sigibert and Chilperic. Chilperic tried to exploit the situation he found on his father's death. He seized the treasury at the royal villa at Berny-Rivière and used the money to buy support among the influential Franks. His next action was to seize Paris. Charibert, Sigibert and Guntram then banded together against him and drove him out. The brothers then forced Chilperic to agree to a fair division of territory. In the division of 561, Charibert as eldest son gained Paris and the surrounding territory, plus the rich lands of Aquitania. His territory was the most easily governed because it alone formed a geographical unit of some size. Tours, Poitiers, Bordeaux and Toulouse were all encompassed in Charibert's kingdom. Guntram held Burgundy and territory down to Provence, Chilperic held Soissons and a small northern kingdom, but Sigibert, who had a northern kingdom in Austrasia with its capital at Metz, also held the Auvergne and part of Provence. Gaul was thus a patch-work of parts of kingdoms.

The physical reminders of the earlier Roman presence stood everywhere in these divided kingdoms - in city walls that had been first built in Roman times, in Roman roads or in the bulk of the Roman amphitheatre, now turned into a quarry, or, as at Tours, incorporated into the city wall as part of the defences. The Frankish kings often ruled from buildings that stood on the spot where Roman administrators had previously worked on the business of government. Their palatia were, however, but dim reflections of the Roman imperial court. From at least the time when Clovis had received the letters from the Emperor Anastasius, the Merovingians had taken seriously their claim to be legatees of the Roman inheritance in Gaul. Procopius saw this happening and reports that the Franks held horse races at Arles and produced gold coins stamped not with the image of the Emperor but the likeness of their king. (66) Theudebert

issued a gold solidus from the mint of Cologne. On the obverse he placed his own name and portrait, fullface with spear and shield, thus usurping the emperor's place. The reverse shows the king holding a palm and a figure of victory, trampling on an enemy. The legend reads - VICTORIA AVCCI. (67)

It is not surprising that Agathias thought that Theudebert had ambitions extending even to Constantinople. Chilperic turned his attention to the restoration of the Roman arenas at Soissons and Paris in order to stage wild beast shows. If a Merovingian king were truly to imitate the Romans, then he would, it seemed to Chilperic, have to provide his cives with the thrills of the arena.

At the Austrasian court of Metz Venantius would have offered to Sigibert and his circle a living link with the cultural heritage to which they aspired. Trained in the rhetorical schools of the imperial city of Ravenna, the poet could create in verse an idealised portrait of a Merovingian king with all the virtues and characteristics of a Roman emperor or turn a Merovingian court official into something resembling a serious Roman magistrate complete with breathtaking cursus honorum. In this lay Venantius' attraction for court circles. As Auerbach has expressed it, Fortunatus was "in any case the best purveyor of a commodity that was in great demand." (68) Fortunatus' early poems in Gaul show that he was <sup>^</sup>fêted and entertained by court officials and by bishops in northern Gaul. Of the court officials, we read of Sigoaldus to whom Sigibert gave the task of looking after the poet when Venantius first arrived in Gaul (X. 16. 1-2) and of Gogo, who was close to the King (VII. 1. 35-36) and whose rich banquets and literary ability were well known to our poet:

Tu refluus Cicero, tu noster Apicius extas:

Hinc satias verbis, pascis et inde cibis.

(VII. 2. 3-4)

Lupus, who was also well trusted by Sigibert (VII. 7. 19-22), befriended the poet (VII. 8. 49-50) as did the amateur poets Dynamius (VI. 10. 35-38) and Jovinus. (VII. 12. 111.) When Dynamius and Jovinus left for posts in Provence, Venantius attempted to keep in touch. Writing from Sigibert's kingdom over a year after the wedding celebration, (69) Venantius tells Dynamius that he bewails their separation and he expresses his eagerness to see his patron. Venantius significantly casts himself in the role of cliens of this powerful official. (VI. 10. 47) While in northern Gaul Venantius also visited Bishop Igidius of Reims, Ageric of Verdun and Carentinus of Cologne and enjoyed their hospitality. (70) Despite his apparent popularity there is no evidence that Venantius was ever rewarded by Sigibert with any official and continuing royal position such as court poet or panegyrist. His literary gifts might well have proved valuable in a royal chancellery, but again there is no evidence to link him to a bureau within Sigibert's administration or to a schola within the palace. (71) A man with literary talents could have been gainfully employed as a nutritor to a young prince, but Sigibert was of course as yet without an heir. After Childebert II was born in 570, it was Venantius' friend, the Frank, Gogo, who was eventually appointed nutritor to the prince and given charge of the palace school. (72) The death of Sigibert in 575 left those in charge of the prince in a strong political position, and Gogo, as nutritor, wielded considerable influence. He was a strong ally of Queen Brunhild. (73)

Venantius may have felt his prospects to be brighter at another court. A move from the court of Sigibert to that of Charibert at Paris is signalled by the verse panegyric, De Chariberctho Rege (VI. 2), which would have been delivered before the king and notables of the court at Paris. The death of Charibert in 567 would have put an abrupt end to any hopes that Venantius may have had for royal preferment at the court at Paris, for the kingdom was seized by Chilperic once more.



Venantius would have found himself in a very delicate position – he had praised in turn Sigibert and Charibert, both of whom were seen by Chilperic as his mortal enemies. For Venantius the time was ripe to move on yet again; pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Martin at Tours took him south.

At Tours the poet would have visited in turn the sacred places associated with the cult of St. Martin; an approach to the tomb of the saint in the Basilica extra muros would have been the climax of the religious experience. Strangely enough Venantius has left us no description of his first visit to Tours although his description of the visit of the nun Radegund years earlier may provide us with some idea of the pilgrim circuit in and near the city. (74) At Tours Venantius made the acquaintance of Bishop Euphronius. It may have been Euphronius who sent the poet south to Poitiers and to the convent founded there by the Thuringian princess Radegund.

Originally captured by Lothar in the wars against the Thuringians, Radegund had been forced to marry the king. Fleeing her husband, she obtained the veil from St. Médard at Noyon, and, after going on pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Martin at Tours, came to Poitiers during the episcopate of Bishop Pientius, about 544. (75) When Fortunatus arrived in the city Radegund's convent was already well established, Pientius dead, and the See now under the control of Pascentius, who, before being raised to the episcopacy had been the abbot of St. Maxentius' monastery. (76) The Life of St. Hilary, patron of Poitiers, was penned by Fortunatus at this time (567/568) and dedicated to Pascentius, Bishop of Hilary's city. (77) Despite this dedication Pascentius does not appear as the recipient of poetry and remains completely colourless to us. The city of Poitiers also became involved in the dispute between Chilperic and Sigibert that broke out following Charibert's death in 567. Venantius would not have escaped these tense

times in Poitiers. Indeed there was in the city a faction led by Basilus and Sigihar that supported Chilperic, and Mummolus comes had to overcome their mob before he could win the city. The citizens of Poitiers were then forced to take an oath of allegiance to Sigibert. (78)

Our poet reached Poitiers at about the same time that the nun Radegund was involved in negotiations to obtain a relic of the True Cross from the Emperor Justin II and the Empress Sophia in Constantinople. He was able to play a major part in the reception of the relic. (79) The request by Radegund for Sigibert's authority to obtain a relic of the True Cross must at the earliest, date to late 567 after the death of Charibert and the commencement of Sigibert's authority over the city of Poitiers. The envoys sent by Radegund to Constantinople most probably left in 568. They were away for about a year, if we take it that they were given the relic without delay. It seems likely that Venantius' famous hymns, Vexilla regis prodeunt and Pange, lingua, written to celebrate the arrival of the relic at Poitiers, and the poem of thanks written to Justin II and Sophiā are to be dated to 569. (80)

The poem of thanks that Venantius wrote to the Emperor Justin II and the Empress Sophia, was no doubt written with the approval of King Sigibert who had given his permission for the initial request to Constantinople for the relic. The whole exchange of relic and poem may be seen as pregnant with political as well as religious significance. As we have earlier seen, Justinian had sought the alliance of the Orthodox Franks. At that time the Franks under Theudebert had shown themselves to be treacherous, but Justin II may have sought to court them anew to use them at a future date, perhaps against the Lombards who had invaded northern Italy. (81) Gaul was, in this period, in contact with the Roman world on a number of levels, and the poem to the Emperor and Empress

must be seen in this context. Radegund, for example, had her own connection with the imperial court through her cousin, Amalafrið, who had served the Romans in their army and who, together with his family, had been in Constantinople since 540. (82)

The poem of thanks provided Venantius with an outstanding opportunity. Taking up the theme of the cross, and significantly devoting equal attention to Empress and Emperor (83), Venantius hails Justin II as a type of Constantine, Sophia, another Helena. (Append., II. 65-68)

Venantius is especially precise when, in the poem, he deals with religious doctrine. The work opens with a prayer to the Trinity which is characterised by its careful treatment of Orthodox belief. Justin II is praised for his correct belief, which is in line with that which is taught by the See of Peter. Because the Emperor follows that which is taught by the Roman See, he is therefore worthy to rule as a Roman emperor. (Append., II. 15-16)

The Emperor is further lauded for his adherence to the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon (Append., II. 23-26) and for the restoration of bishops, some of whom had been in prison, to their rightful Sees. (Append., II. 39-42) It is most striking that the Empress Sophia is pictured by Venantius as sending the relic of the True Cross, not to a nun but to another pious monarch, for Radegund is pictured as a Thuringian Queen (Append., II. 57) and indeed she must have appeared regal in being able to mount such a poetic embassy. Contact with Constantinople at the time of the dispatch of the relic also had its effect on Venantius' own literary production, for it would appear that it was at this time that the poet first came into contact with the poetry of Corippus. It is quite possible that Venantius obtained a copy of Corippus' then recently delivered panegyric, In laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris from Radegund's own envoys.

Averil Cameron has suggested that the Trinitarian section could have been written under the influence of the Trinitarian section of Corippus' poem, (84) while numerous verbal parallels have been adduced between the prayer to the Virgin spoken by Sophia in Corippus' poem and the poem In laudem Mariae, found in the spuria of Leo's edition of Venantius, and perhaps attributable to our poet. (85)

The reception of the relic of the True Cross also had a lasting effect on the life of the church at Poitiers. At the time of its arrival Pascentius was dead and Maroveus, who was hostile to Radegund and her convent, was on the cathedra in the city and he refused to see to the installation of the relic.

It was Bishop Euphronius of Tours, who, at the request of King Sigibert, saw to the ceremonial reception of the relic of the True Cross. This visit of Euphronius of Tours to the city of Poitiers would have brought together bishop and poet if they had not previously met during Venantius' earlier visit to Tours. If they had in fact met at an earlier time then the celebrations in Poitiers would have served to cement good relations between the two. We have two letters and a poem written in honour of Euphronius, while the poet was resident in Poitiers. (86) These may possibly date to the period after the reception of the relic.

Resident in Poitiers in 568, Fortunatus also saw the entourage of the Visigothic princess Galswinth pass through the town en route to Paris (VI. 5. 223-224). Chilperic, perhaps to equal his brother Sigibert, had obtained from King Athanagild the hand of Brunhild's sister the princess Galswinth. Shortly after the marriage however, Galswinth was found murdered in her bed and rumour made Chilperic responsible for the terrible deed. (87) When the news of Galswinth's tragic murder reached him Venantius had the opportunity to place once more his poetic gifts at the service of Queen Brunhild. In his elaborate consolatio, De Gelesuintha,

(VI. 5), Venantius mourns the shocking death of Brunhild's sister. Following the convention of the Christian consolatio he eventually wipes away the piled up grief, with a vision of Galswinth in the midst of celestial bliss (VI. 5. 355-370). The poem was clearly written for Brunhild and perhaps also for her mother, Goiswinth, at Toledo. Venantius makes no direct reference to Chilperic by name, but running through the poem is the ominous theme that the marriage plans made for Galswinth led by fateful steps to her tragic end. The wedding journey from Toledo is anything but happy. Over all hangs a fateful blight that the participants feel, but as yet are unable to comprehend. (VI. 5. 39-44)

The land of the king that Galswinth marries is filled with an icy malevolence. Produced in 569-570, at a time when the tensions between Sigibert and Chilperic were at their most electric, this poem can be seen as a firm statement of allegiance on Venantius' part. This large and ambitious poem may have been well received, but it did not alter Venantius' position - no special preferment came his way as a reward. Fortunatus was, it seems, still without a special patron, and he set out on the road once more.

It may well be that Venantius had earlier intended to visit Bordeaux and that the stay in Poitiers was merely a diversion along the road. In the Preface to the first collection of his poems he outlines an itinerary that led further afield yet - per ... Ligerem et Garonnam, Aquitaniae maxima fluenta, transmittens, Pyrenaeis occurrens Julio mense nivosis..... (I. Praef. 4).

The reference to the Garonne speaks for a visit to Bordeaux and the villas of Bishop Leontius nearby. (I. 18; 19; 20) There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that Venantius actually crossed the Pyrénées into Spain or that he ever visited Bishop Martin of Braga. (88)

One trip that has generally been overlooked in accounts of the poet is his trip into the Haute Garonne. (89) Having visited Leontius' villas in the lower Garonne, Venantius travelled up the Garonne to the river Gers, and depicts himself travelling up this river in the blazing heat of mid-summer (sub tempore cancri. I. 21.29). The river was in places reduced to a trickle and the fish were stranded on the bed. (I. 21.29-34) The poet travelled by horse and his destination would appear to have been Auch, and from there another road would have taken him to Toulouse. Such an itinerary would make sense of a trip alongside the rocky narrow bed of the Gers and explain "Pyrenaeis occurrens Julio mense nivosis" in the Preface. Venantius, as he reached the higher country up the Gers, would have met before him the Pyrénées, snow covered in July. (See Map V, Communications - Bordeaux-Toulouse)

A visit to Toulouse is suggested by two poems, (II. 7;8). The first is a celebration of the martyr saint of Toulouse, St. Saturninus. This poem suggests in its detail a reading of a passion of the saint, but does not appear dependant on the extant passio of the fifth century. (90) The poem was most probably written for the Goth Launebode, the donor of the Church of St. Saturninus at Toulouse. (91) The generosity of Launebode and of his wife Berethrude is celebrated in the poem De Launebode qui aedificavit templum S. Saturnini (II. 8). Launebode was dux under the Merovingians (92) and he and his wife may have shown hospitality to the poet. On the return journey to Poitiers Venantius may have passed through Saintes. The poems on Leontius' churches in Saintes (I. 12;13) may date from this return journey after he had met Leontius in Bordeaux. On the other hand they may have been written in Bordeaux after the poet had already visited the churches on the journey south.

Once back in Poitiers, Venantius maintained and developed his connection with Radegund and the Abbess Agnes at the Monastery of the Holy Cross, but did not refrain from further travels. A number of indications in the poems suggest journeys. A trip to Bishop Germanus of Paris prior to 576, the year of that bishop's death, is alluded to in VIII.2. The poem shows that Venantius, who at this time was closely associated with Radegund's convent at Poitiers, was still able to make the journey to Paris.(VIII.2.16-18) A trip to the palace "aula" (Villa?) of Cariac (site unknown) with visits to the monastery at Tincillac and to Angers to celebrate with Bishop Domitianus the festival of St. Albinus is mentioned in XI.25. Domitianus, for whom Fortunatus wrote the Vita Albini (93), attended the Council of Tours (567-570) and the Council of Paris (556-73), but beyond these dates we know nothing that can help us fix Venantius' journey. St. Albinus was a monk-bishop who died in 550. He had entered the monastery of Tincillac, was elected Abbot in 504 and was Bishop of Angers from 529 onwards. Venantius aided Domitianus in the development of the cult, and it would seem most likely that Venantius made the journey to Angers in the 570's. Bishop Felix of Nantes was visited by Venantius before 573, during the episcopacy of Euphronius at Tours for Venantius was present at the dedication of his church and able to describe the participating bishops, who included Domitianus of Angers (III.6.19-28) and details of the building itself.(III.7.27-42) In V.7 we see an invitation has come from Bishop Felix of Nantes to the poet asking him to visit Cariacum, an estate by the Loire, in all probability the same place mentioned by the poet in XI.25, as part of an itinerary that took him to Angers. The poet also visited Nevers for he tells Bishop Agricola that he remembers his father's kindness to him. (III.19.5-10). Given that Agricola's father was Aeoladius, then we may suggest a visit to Nevers in the early 570's. (94)

The unspecified winter journey of III. 26 and the visit to Brittany (III. 26. 3-6) might also be placed before 576/7. (95) In V.11 we find the poet back in Poitiers after a visit to Tours, at an unknown date.

The poet's situation in Poitiers requires some investigation. The medieval manuscripts style Fortunatus presbyter italicus. However, the date of his ordination remains problematical. In his later and highly compressed account of Venantius' life, Paul the Deacon speaks of Venantius, newly arrived in Poitiers, as being first ordained a priest and later made a bishop. (96) Writing before 593, Gregory of Tours speaks of the Vita Martini written by the "priest Fortunatus". (97) In the Vita Martini, written before 576, Venantius does not say he is a priest, but it is perhaps implied. In the first book Venantius says that he did not wear the toga or the philosopher's cape. (98) This may imply renunciation when coupled with the statement at the end of the poem that Bishop Paul first suggested the religious life to the poet. (99) Why, in a work of hagiography, would one mention that one was counselled to embrace the religious life if one had in fact spurned this advice? These indications suggest that Venantius was in orders by 576. (100)

The problem of the identity of the bishop who ordained the poet remains. We know that Venantius was on good terms with Pascentius, the sixth bishop of Poitiers to whom he dedicated his Vita Hilarii, and he seems the most likely person to have ordained the poet. By 568 Pascentius was dead and Maroveus, who was extremely hostile to Radegund and her convent, then came to the See. It is highly unlikely that he would have ordained one such as Venantius so intimately associated with Radegund's circle. The outside chance still remains that Venantius was ordained in another diocese, or perhaps even in another ecclesiastical province.



Close connections with the Monastery of the Holy Cross are illustrated by the great number of poems written for Radegund and Agnes. (101) These two ladies were both patrons to the poet and a constant source of inspiration, as the carmina testify. Fortunatus' poetry gives us access to a very intimate world where the poet sends greetings to the Abbess on her "birthday" (XI. 3;5), that is the anniversary of her installation as Abbess, or to Radegund when she goes on Lenten retreat (VIII. 9) and again on her return.(VIII. 10) The poet sends violets to the royal nun, since purple is appropriate to her royal station. (VIII. 6) On another occasion he urges her to temper her asceticism with some wine. (XI. 4) It becomes clear from the poems that Venantius received substantial gifts of food from the convent. These are more than mere elogiae of a token kind - the poet is sent mountains of food - meat and vegetables (XI. 9) and a milk delicacy that Agnes has prepared for him with her own hands.(XI. 14;15) Meat and vegetables arrive on silver plate and marble dishes and chicken in a glass salver. (XI. 10. 3-8) Radegund even orders that the poet should eat two eggs each night and sends him the eggs. (XI. 20) The nuns send the poet dinners at which he and his companions nearly swim in wine. (XI. 23)

For his part Venantius attempted to repay the kindness shown him. We see him sending chestnuts to Radegund and Agnes in a basket that he has made with his own hands from twigs. (XI. 13) He sent Radegund prunes which were apparently, at that time, unknown to her, for he explains that they are not a fungus but come from the trees. (XI. 18) The great poem De Virginitate (VIII. 3) was an offering to Agnes and the poem Ad Virgines (VIII. 4) may have been written for the occasion of a religious profession in the convent. (102) The nuns emerge as patrons of the poet, but the close association between poet and patrons may have eventually given rise to malicious comment for in one poem Venantius takes

considerable pains to assure Agnes that he had never regarded her in any other than a spiritual or fraternal way. (XI. 6) Caution may have caused the nuns to exclude Venantius from their company for a period. (XI. 7) (103)

The exact situation of the poet at Poitiers is not clear. He may have lived near to the convent or perhaps outside the city walls, but within easy communication. It is often claimed that Venantius was the "intendant" of the Monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers while Radegund and Agnes were still alive. This theory originates from Augustin Thierry(104) and has been generally accepted, the poet being described as a type of business manager for the convent or as an overseer of convent lands. (105) On what evidence does this claim rest? Surprisingly all rests on one line of a poem in Book Eleven where Fortunatus writes to Radegund in the following terms:

Fortunatus agens, Agnes quoque versibus orant,  
(XI. 4. 3).

Certainly agens, like actor is used in this period to designate one who acts as an overseer of church lands. (106) Yet agens can, in its broadest usage, mean just about anything - agent, representative, public officer. I would suggest however that Venantius chose to use the word not because he was overseer of the monastery lands, but because it was a clever play on the name Agnes. Elsewhere Fortunatus could manipulate agnus and Agnes in a similar way:

Sit modo festa dies, sancto Radegundis honore:  
Agnem hanc vobis agnus in orbe dedit.

(XI. 3. 9-10)

Such word play is a marked feature of the poet's literary style. Venantius had an insatiable appetite for alliteration and paranomasia. (107) One can point to eight other examples where the poet indulges in word play with a personal name. (108)

The keystone of the argument that makes Venantius the "intendant" of the monastery, is its weakest point. The evidence of the word agens must count for nothing in this context. We have no evidence whatsoever that Venantius was put in charge of lands belonging to the convent. Indeed the poems that Fortunatus wrote to Agnes and Radegund show that he is dependent on them for food and that he can only send them small gifts like chestnuts or prunes which come perhaps from trees on his own land.

In 573 a new opportunity for patronage came to the poet in the person of Gregory, who, in that year gained the cathedra at Tours. Gregory was consecrated bishop by Igidius of Reims and came to the city with the approval of Sigibert and Brunhild. He was greeted by a poem delivered in Tours by Fortunatus.(V. 3) This poem brought the greetings of Radegund, the poet's patron, and was the first link in the chain of mutual respect that would bind Gregory to the cause of Radegund's convent in Poitiers. Venantius, it would appear, also set about winning the patronage of the powerful bishop of Tours.

There was a tradition of literary patronage practised by the bishops of Tours. Earlier bishops had given commissions or sought poems particularly in connection with the propagation of the cult of St. Martin. (109) Gregory of Tours also came from the Gallo-Roman senatorial aristocracy who, as a group, regarded the cultivation of letters as part of a noble life-style. All this must have looked promising to one who earlier had moved in episcopal circles.

The size and complexity of the Vita Martini written between 573 and 576 suggests the importance that Venantius placed on the composition that he sent to Gregory. (110) This work attracted the bishop's attention and Venantius, in either late 576 or the next year received an urgent commission from Gregory

for a poem on the subject of the conversion of the Jews of Clermont-Ferrand by Bishop Avitus during 576. (111) It may have been the success of this poem that led Gregory to encourage the poet to collect his poems, for Venantius, after writing the poem on Avitus, arranged his poems into seven books and dedicated the collection to Gregory. (112)

Book I contains early poems written in Italy and Gaul – poems addressed to Bishops and verses describing churches. One significant inclusion in Book I is the poem that Venantius wrote to be inscribed or painted on the wall of the cell where St. Martin had clothed the pauper. (I. 5) This poem was written, according to the superscription, for Bishop Gregory and lines 23-24 give some support to this as well. The poem would appear to date from the period 573-576, close to the time when Venantius penned the Vita Martini which he concludes with some self advertisement. The inscription in St. Martin's cell would also have aided in spreading the poet's name as well as the fame of the saint, for each pilgrim, on visiting the holy place, would see the following lines:

Tu quoque qui caelis habitas, Martine precator,  
Pro Fortunato fer pia verba Deo.

(I. 5. 21-22)

Book II includes the poems written in honour of the Holy Cross. Book III opens with a letter and poem addressed to Euphronius and includes poems written to bishops and clergy. Book IV is filled almost entirely with the epitaphs of bishops, priests and layfolk. Three of the bishops whose epitaphs appear in this book were relatives of Gregory of Tours and no doubt these commemorative verses were commissioned by him. Gregory is also addressed in many of the poems that make up Book V, while Books VI and VII contain poems written for members of the royal family and members of court circles when Venantius first came to Gaul.

The collection of poems was, as a whole, addressed to Gregory of Tours and Venantius prefaced it with a letter in which he makes it clear that Gregory encouraged him to make the compilation. (I. Praef. 4) The patronage offered to the poet by Gregory of Tours led ultimately to the gift of a villa in the most pleasant of locations by the Vienne. (VIII. 19. 3-6) The location of this villa may not be more closely ascertained, but to be near the Vienne it would have to be at least thirty-five kilometres north from Poitiers or twenty-five kilometres east of the town. The villa may have been even further afield: perhaps even half way to Tours. This gift of land came some time after 573 and is recorded in two poems (VIII. 19; 20) found in the second collection of poems addressed ad diversos. (113) The preface to this second collection and the first poems of Book VIII demonstrate that one of its major themes is the promotion of Radegund and her monastic enterprise. In the first poem of the collection Venantius describes himself as living in Poitiers (VIII. 1. 13), and yet it would seem that he had a villa elsewhere. It could be that he divided his time between the country villa and the place in or near Poitiers from which he had earlier sent the nuns chestnuts and prunes. The agricultural cycle on Venantius' own estate by the Vienne would have made demands on the poet's time and in Book IX we glimpse the poet using the harvest as an excuse for not having sent Gregory of Tours some Sapphic verse that he had requested. (IX. 6. 9-12)

Close association with Radegund and the Abbess Agnes was in no way incompatible with the literary patronage offered by Gregory of Tours. Venantius could act as a bridge between the convent and the bishop of Tours. At the same time the hostility of Bishop Maroveus of Poitiers to Radegund and her convent forced her to seek supporters beyond Poitiers itself and, as we shall see in a later chapter, Venantius, acting as her propagandist, forged closer links with Tours.

Do we have any indications of how independent or otherwise Venantius was under the patronage of Gregory of Tours? Our first observation must be that most of Venantius' contacts with other bishops and with royal officials had been made before Gregory ascended the cathedra at Tours. Venantius had sought patronage wherever he thought he could find it - at the courts of Sigibert and Charibert, from notables in the Austrasian court circle such as Gogo, Lupus, Dynamius or Sigoaldus. But right from the beginning of his career as a poet Venantius had sought and received episcopal patronage - Bishop Vitalis being his first bishop-patron. Book IV of his collected poems shows that Venantius received commissions from a good number of different people for epitaphs of relatives or predecessors. Of twenty-eight epitaphs, ten are for bishops and Gregory of Tours must have commissioned the epitaphs of his relations Gregory and Tetricus of Langres and Gallus of Clermont-Ferrand.

When, after 576, Venantius presented Gregory with a collection in seven books of his early poems, the bishop of Tours would have found included poems to men for whom he had no liking. Leontius of Bordeaux, for example, was considered by Gregory to have been arrogant and insulting to King Charibert in the affair of the See of Saintes, (114) yet he is accorded high praise by Venantius. Felix of Nantes, was, as late as 575, in dispute with Gregory over church lands and had accused Gregory's brother Peter of having killed his bishop, Silvester of Langres. (115) Venantius' friendship with Felix appears to date from the episcopate of Euphronius, that is, prior to 573. (116) The inclusion of early poems in honour of Felix in the collection may spring either from an ignorance of Gregory's attitude to Felix, or from an understanding that Gregory was magnanimous enough to overlook such matters since the poems were written before his recent dispute with Felix. The poems to Leontius and to Felix cannot

therefore be adduced in support of any theory of Venantius' independence as a poet. The other recipients of poetry in Books I - VII are all people whom we know, from the Historia Francorum, were well thought of by Gregory - Germanus of Paris, Euphronius, Gregory's relative and predecessor at Tours and Martin of Braga, closely associated with the cult of St. Martin of Tours, and Aredius, a close friend of Gregory's. The court of Sigibert figures largely, but then again Gregory enjoyed good relations with the king and had come to his See with Sigibert's praeceptio.

The death of Sigibert, murdered in 575 by emissaries of Fredegund, the wife of Chilperic, may also have been one more factor that influenced the poet to seek the patronage of the powerful Metropolitan of Tours. Venantius had been closely associated with Sigibert's court. He had written the consolatio on the death of Galswinth and he was linked to Radegund's convent, an enterprise that was able to gain the personal attention of Sigibert. Now with Sigibert's death all hope for advancement at a court would have come to an end and from this point one close and appreciative episcopal patron takes the place of court circles. From 576, Venantius' world shrinks and becomes more centred on Poitiers and Tours and on Gregory's patronage. Even the few forays into royal circles, can, as we shall see, be interpreted as part of diplomatic offensives mounted by Gregory. The poems written on these occasions were designed to aid Gregory and his interests. Venantius, it seems, was also quite free to write poems to men such as Galactorius and Sigoaldus whom he had met during his earlier stay at the Austrasian court, (117) but from this point Gregory certainly became his most important and consistent patron. In Tours, Gregory was forced to come to terms with the grim realities of the political situation following

the assassination of Sigibert. Childebert II, Sigibert's heir was a mere child of five and the kingdom of Austrasia had to be ruled by a regency headed by Gogo, the nutritor, and Queen Brunhild. Chilperic took advantage of the situation and attacked the Touraine. In the winter of 575 we hear that the comes Roccolen came to Tours with a levy from Maine and attacked the city on the orders of Chilperic when Gregory refused to give up the rebel Guntram Boso who had sought sanctuary in St. Martin's church. (118) When Guntram Boso leagued with Merovech, Chilperic's estranged son, and encouraged him too to seek sanctuary in the church, he again brought the wrath of the king down on the city. In 577 Chilperic sent an army against Tours, and the city appears to have been incorporated in Chilperic's kingdom by 579 for we hear of the king raising a levy from the city in that year to fight the Bretons. (119)

Gregory's relations with the king were not good and he also had trouble with the representatives of the king within the city of Tours. Gregory's enemies sought to have him removed and so they spread stories about his "treasonous activities". In 580 the campaign mounted against him reached its height and he was summoned to Chilperic's villa at Berny-Rivière to answer before a Council of Bishops the charge that he had slandered Chilperic's wife Fredegund, by spreading the rumour that she had committed adultery with Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux. (120) Venantius was present at this council and there, before the bishops assembled, delivered a verse panegyric in honour of Chilperic. How is this apparent about-face to be interpreted? Was Fortunatus making a new bid for royal patronage, this time at the court of Chilperic and Fredegund? Nothing has earned Venantius more scathing criticism than this, for some scholars such as Sir Samuel Dill have seen Venantius as an unprincipled opportunist who was ready to abandon and betray his friend and patron Gregory of Tours, for the



sake of royal acclaim. (121)

An alternative to this interpretation is to see Venantius acting in concert with his patron Gregory and the two co-operating subtly to employ the idealised picture of the just ruler, that formed the essential nucleus of panegyric, for its didactic effect on Chilperic or the episcopal audience assembled at Berny. We shall discuss the nature of Venantius' panegyric more fully later in this chapter; suffice to say here that a panegyrist is expected to praise not to criticise. To the good ruler he holds up the ideal of a perfect prince, but the public exposition of such an ideal might have its effect even on a bad ruler. Thus Pliny - boni principes quae facerent recognoscerent, mali quae facere deberent. (122)

It may be assumed that Venantius accompanied Gregory to Berny-Rivière and spoke at the Council with his approval and consent. Indeed the delivery of the panegyric may have been a coolly calculated move on Gregory's part and an element in a larger scheme designed to exert pressure on Chilperic. Inside the Council Venantius would have been praising the king for his justice and enumerating his virtues while outside a noisy crowd had gathered. The crowd may have been encouraged, if not actually organised by Princess Rigunth, the daughter of Chilperic and Fredegund, who, with her entire household, fasted until they heard of Gregory's acquittal. (123) How ironic Venantius' words must have seemed with the cries of the crowd outside ringing in the bishops' ears. Inside the Council Venantius read his lines:

Quid de iustitiae referam moderamine, princeps?  
 Quo male nemo redit, si bene iusta petit,  
 Cuius in ore probo mensurae libra tenetur,  
 Rectaque causarum linea currit iter.

(IX. 1. 85-88)

Outside the council there was pandemonium. While evidence is lacking, it is still tempting to suggest that Gregory carefully orchestrated this situation in which Venantius' suavely modulated theme of the virtues of the king found a raucous counterpoint in the cries of the crowd. Gregory recounts these cries with relish: Cur haec super sacerdotem Dei obiciuntur? Cur talia rex prosequitur? Numquid potuit episcopus talia dicere vel de servo? Heu, heu, domine Deus, largire auxilium servo tuo! (124) On the other hand Venantius' panegyric might, as Koebner suggests, be interpreted as a calculated move by Gregory to soothe Chilperic and Fredegund even despite the enormity of the monarch's crimes. (125) In this case the cries of the crowd outside the Council would have struck a completely unorchestrated sour note. The other poems addressed to the royal pair after the death of their children Chlodobert and Dagobert, and particularly the consolatio (IX.2), might also be interpreted, as Koebner proposes, as a diplomatic move that would have eased the strained relations between Gregory and the king. (126)

The death of the two princes aided the party at the Austrasian court of Childebert II that had sought alliance with Chilperic. This party, headed by Bishop Igidius of Reims, realised that Chilperic, now without an heir, might be willing to settle his legacy upon the young Childebert II, who in 581 was a child of eleven. The death of the nutritor, Gogo, who favoured a Burgundian alliance, would have aided Igidius' party and their plans were well advanced when, in 584, Chilperic was assassinated at Chelles. Following this, King Guntram of Burgundy eventually sought alliance with Childebert II and Brunhild, for he too was without an heir. This policy of rapprochement also had the backing of many bishops and procures in both kingdoms. In 587 the result of this realignment was seen in the Treaty of Andelot under the provisions of which Guntram made Childebert II,

now seventeen, his heir and vice versa. King Guntram also promised to protect Childebert's two sons, Theudebert, born 585, and Theuderic, born 587, in the event of Childebert's death. Similar protection was also promised for Brunhild, Chlodosind, Childebert's sister and for Faileuba, Childebert's queen. The cities of Bordeaux, Limoges and others which comprised the Morgengabe of Galswinth were confirmed as the property of her sister Brunhild, but were to be protected by Guntram during his lifetime. The treaty confirmed that the cities of Tours and Poitiers would be given to Childebert II.

In 588, the year after the signing of the treaty of Andelot, Gregory of Tours went to Metz to visit Childebert II and Brunhild and Venantius accompanied the bishop. Thus the poet renewed contact with Queen Brunhild, whose marriage he had attended twenty-two years earlier and whose sister he had mourned in that early consolatio. Gregory tells us that he himself went from Metz to King Guntram at Chalon-sur-Saône with a commission from Childebert, and Guntram promised again to abide by the treaty. It does not appear that Venantius went on to the Court of King Guntram. There are no poems in honour of Guntram and nothing that suggests contact with his court. Five of Venantius' poems do however date from the visit of Gregory and the poet to Metz in 588. (127) The first is a salutation to Childebert and Brunhild on St. Martin's Day (X. 7), the second a small panegyric poem (X. 8) and the third a poem commemorating a voyage taken by the poet with the royal family down the Mosel to Coblenz and then down the Rhine to Andenach. (X. 9) At lines 70-75 we are treated to a delightful glimpse of a young king, most probably Theudebert, counting the salmon as they are caught and applauding the taking of a big fish. Poems Four and Five, to Childebert II and Brunhild, are to be found in the appendix (Append. 5;6).

The next year, 589, Venantius was in Tours when Childebert's tax gatherers came to the city and on Gregory's behalf he greeted them as they sat at dinner at the bishop's mensa. (X. 11)

The relationship between Gregory and Fortunatus endured through to the 590's and Gregory became established as Venantius' principal patron. We have seen how the bishop rewarded the poet with a gift of land, but other small gifts such as skins suitable for making shoes (VIII. 21) and cuttings for his garden (V. 13) indicate that the bishop may have aided the poet in a variety of ways. In the face of such beneficence Fortunatus adopts a most deferential tone and speaks of himself as the famulus of his patron. (VIII. 18. 7)

We know little of Venantius in the early 590's, but the little bit of information that can be gleaned from some late poems speaks for a continued involvement with Gregory of Tours. As we shall see later in this work, Venantius, who had earlier acted as the propagandist of the convent in Poitiers, reacted to the scandals that broke out in the Monastery of the Holy Cross after 589, by appealing to Gregory to intervene. Two poems represent this appeal. (VIII. 12; 13) Another link between Venantius and Gregory may be seen in the consecration of Plato, Gregory's archdeacon, as eighth bishop of Poitiers in 592, an occasion celebrated by the poet. (X. 14) When Plato died some time in the 590's Venantius himself became the ninth bishop of the city. His episcopate remains a closed book to us. Perhaps he gained the episcopacy, like Plato, aided by the ecclesiastical patronage of the bishop of Tours, who could have used his influence with Childebert II to secure the appointment, even though Poitiers lay outside his ecclesiastical province. If this is so Venantius would have been bishop by 594, the year in which Gregory died, and Plato would have had a very short episcopate. Unfortunately we do not have any means for dating

Venantius' elevation and can only conjecture time and circumstance. (128) The wandering Italian poet who sought fame and recognition in Merovingian Gaul, ended life as bishop of St. Hilary's city and was, during the Middle Ages, venerated as a saint. (129)

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### The Poet at Work

In the course of the long career outlined above, Venantius showed that he could employ a dazzling array of established genres - epithalamium, epitaphium, consolatio or panegyric according to the demands of the occasion. An analysis of genre in Venantius' poems would be an enormous task and one far beyond the scope of this study. A detailed analysis of genre is more appropriately left to the student of Latin literature, yet a broad understanding of Venantius' employment of literary genres is necessary if the historian is to appreciate the constrictions that they imposed on the poet. An acknowledgement of these constrictions will, on the one hand, caution the historian not to ask too much of this source material, and on the other hand it will highlight its special value in so far as it reflects the role of the poet and his poetry in Merovingian society. Our interest centres on the poems as social documents and in the following survey we will examine in turn those forms that have a particular relevance to the subject of this study-panegyric, table verse, the poetic letter of recommendation and the use of verse in inscription and epitaph. The aim here is not to give a complete catalogue of Venantius' output, but rather some indication of its variety.

#### (5) Panegyric

Venantius came to Gaul seeking fame as a poet at the court of a Merovingian King. In the absence of continuing royal preferment, he turned to episcopal patrons, eventually finding in Gregory of Tours one who would reward

his labours. It was however in the early years of his sojourn in Gaul, and later, as part of the diplomatic moves orchestrated by Gregory that Fortunatus delivered verse panegyrics in honour of the Merovingian kings. In doing so Venantius employed a literary genre that was a particular legacy from late antiquity and which was based on a number of firm assumptions. In the Later Roman period, the delivery of a panegyric poem before the emperor and his court in an elaborate ceremonial setting was a careful piece of theatre in which the poet delineated the ideal relationships between the ruler and various groups of his subjects. The delivery of the panegyric served as the public acknowledgement of the legitimate nature of the monarch's rule, the very presence of the audience of dignitaries, soldiers and citizens signifying by their presence their consent to be governed. (130) The panegyric was expected to conform, at least in essentials, to a pattern that is traceable back to the treatises on eulogistic speeches, such as that composed by the rhetor Menander, in the late third and early fourth century. The panegyrist might however be selective in what he highlights, but the basic schema remained intact. (131)

The panegyrist was to begin by praising the patria, family, birth and early education of his subject. He was to enumerate great deeds done in war and peace by the person being praised and he was to draw attention to the various virtues practiced by the subject. If any of the above were likely to cause embarrassment they were to be left out. (132) The purpose of a panegyric, whether in prose or in verse, was to praise in the most fulsome terms, certainly not to criticise. Despite this Venantius is often brought to task for not parading a monarch's vices before his eyes, or for not telling the "whole story" about the bloodthirsty Merovingians. (133) Such criticism must be dismissed as not taking into account the demands imposed by the genre.

The function of panegyric at the Merovingian court was to express legitimate rule in the language most easily understood by the Gallo-Roman subjects of the Frankish kings. The Merovingian monarchy was an attempt at a complex weave of threads – Germanic kingship, Orthodox Christianity and Roman government and mores. Venantius, moving at first in court circles at Metz and Paris, clearly came to understand the texture of what had been woven since the time of Clovis, and to this he added his own colours. What he presented in his great show pieces was an image of that to which he believed the Merovingians were aspiring: a vague sense of Roman antiquity to serve as their inheritance in Gaul and an acknowledgement of their particular role as protectors of Orthodox Christians. These elements became the woof and warp of Venantius' finished product.

Venantius' panegyrics show an acute sensitivity to the desire of the Merovingians to appear as legitimate rulers in the Roman mould. This is seen, on one level, in the forms of address used by the poet – Rex (VI. 1a. 35; VI. 2. 14), Princeps (IX. 1. 17; IX. 1. 85) and Rector (IX. 1. 79) and in the range of Roman exempla employed. Significantly the poet only uses the title Augustus in addressing the Emperor Justin II (Append., 2. 27; 44), even though Gregory tells us that Clovis was called Consul or Augustus. Still, imitation in a general sense is encouraged. The pious Trajan, the emperor most celebrated in late antiquity (134), is, for example, held up to King Charibert as the exemplum of the perfect ruler (VI. 2. 81–82). To the Germanic subjects of the Merovingian kings, long hair, prowess in battle and certain sacral qualities stood as indicators of the king's fitness to rule; to the Gallo-Romans, conformity to a Roman model of authority and consent conferred legitimacy on a ruler. The implications of

this bi-focal image of Merovingian monarchy will be examined in detail in Chapter Five of this work.

Claudian would have provided Venantius with models of verse panegyric. (135) Now, while Sidonius had been a slavish imitator of Claudian, Venantius added his own independent elements to the portrayal of the secular ruler. On the one level he discarded all the epic machinery employed by Claudian. (136) On another, he trod new ground by introducing Christianity into the verse portrayal of the ruler. Whereas Claudian and Sidonius had both avoided mention of religion, in the sense of personal belief, Venantius does not draw back from praising Christian piety, charity and Orthodox belief in his portraits of rulers. In this regard he resembles Corippus, but his early poems to Sigibert and Charibert, written before his first known contact with Corippus' poetry show that he is here not writing under the influence of Corippus. (137) Stock Roman exempla are likewise joined by Old Testament figures such as David and Solomon. (138) Here Venantius may be contrasted with Sidonius and Claudian who, in their praises of Christian rulers included nothing that betrays their subjects as Christian. Sidonius says not a word about the pietas of Avitus and Claudian is likewise silent on this quality in both Honorius and Stilicho. It may well be that this avoidance of mentioning Christianity was, in their case, due to stylistic rather than religious considerations. Even a pious Christian such as Sidonius may have felt that within the purely classical atmosphere of the panegyric, Christian elements would have seemed jarringly out of place. Venantius had no such qualms.

Following the conventions of panegyric in both its prose and verse forms, Venantius gives expression to the consensus omnium that demonstrates



legitimate rule. (139) This finds a parallel on a cosmic level in the consensus universorum where all things acknowledge the rule of the king. (140) The cosmic significance of Charibert's rule is, for example, highlighted by the praise coming to him from the four corners of the world and in different tongues. (VI. 2. 5-8)

Following a convention that harks back to Menander and far beyond, Venantius expresses the presence of the king in terms of light imagery and associates him especially with the sun. (141) This device, found in the prose panegyrists of the fourth century (142), was much favoured by Sidonius (143). In Venantius' panegyric of Chilperic, the king's fame is signalled by the way he brings light to the world. (IX. 1. 13-18) Chilperic's fame, following the same route as the sun, has shone on the Pontus, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean - all have heard of his fame. (XI. 1. 19-22) When Charibert was born, light came into the world. (VI. 2. 45-46) Again in a tradition that goes back to Menander and beyond, (144) the king is hailed as a wall that protects his people. Thus Chilperic is portrayed - IX. 1. 79-80. Prosperity and a good harvest come from Charibert. (VI. 2. 41-44)

Praise of deeds and virtues takes pride of place in Venantius' panegyrics of the king. Sigibert's character fits him to be king. (VI. 1a. 19-20) On occasion Venantius included the praise of a Merovingian queen. Praise of an empress and her virtues was not a mandatory topos in the panegyric tradition. (145) Venantius' decision to praise Brunhild (VI. 1a. 29-42) and Fredegund (IX. 1. 115-126) in the context of panegyric was dictated in the first instance by the recent celebration of Sigibert's wedding and his wife's conversion from Arianism, and in the second, if we are to follow Koebner, (146) by a calculated desire to placate the slandered queen by according her special praise. For the most part a concentration on deeds and virtues precludes description of court ceremonial. Venantius did not seek to exploit in his royal panegyrics, the visual setting of the court at which his poems were read.

The only major poem addressed to royalty to include a description of the court is the epithalamium, written for delivery at the court of Metz. (147) In a Praefatio, Venantius employs the late antique method of ekphrasis to point to the different groups that make up the court scene, and those who, by their presence, signal their joy at the marriage. (VI. 1. 18-22)

A major extension of the genre of verse panegyric is to be observed in Venantius' employment of the form in praise of bishops. Fortunatus' episcopal panegyrics would have been delivered on great church occasions such as the dedication of a church building (III. 6) or the adventus of a newly consecrated bishop to his diocese. (V. 3) The ceremonial setting of the urban basilica and the presence of the clergy and people all provided the visual backdrop to the panegyric and Venantius exploits this in the panegyric itself. In the picture of Bishop Germanus and the clergy of Paris, the poet employs the technique of ekphrasis to highlight the processional scene before him. (II. 9. 21-30)

The tableau of the emperor or king surrounded by his soldiers or advisors is now paralleled by the tableau of the bishop surrounded by his clergy. Venantius even exploits the regal overtones of the occasion. Bishop Germanus rules (regit) and his clergy are like his soldiers (ordo ducatum). His control over his clergy is expressed by the steady pace he adopts and the way his movements act as a constant mean between haste and slowness. In the procession his authority is shown by the way that he sets the pace. Likewise, in Venantius' description of the scene at the consecration of the church built by Bishop Felix of Nantes, we see the Metropolitan, Euphronius of Tours, surrounded by his fellow bishops, each picked out in turn by name:

Inter quos medios Martini sede sacerdos  
 Eufronius fulget metropolita sacer;  
 Plaudens in sancta fratrum coeunte corona  
 Et sua membra videns fortior exstat apex:  
 Laetius inde caput, quia sunt sua viscera secum,  
 Ecclesiae iuncto corpore crescit honor.  
 Domitianus, item Victorius, ambo columnae,  
 Spes in utrisque manens pro regionis ope.  
 Domnulus hinc fulget meritis, Romacharius inde,  
 Iure sacerdotii cultor uterque Dei.

(III. 6. 19-28)

The picture is suggestive of an organic unity (148) between the Metropolitan and suffragan bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Tours. Here we see a parallel to the consensus omnium portrayed in secular panegyric. The bishops by their presence recognize the authority of the Metropolitan and the clergy that of the bishops. The crowd assembled on that day had sketched before it the significance of the scene – a didactic picture of ecclesiastical collegiality and of consensus support for Felix, the bishop of the civitas. The very presence of the congregation was taken as a consent to episcopal rule and as a token of loyalty and affection:

Prospera dans populis et gaudia larga per urbem  
 Felix felici cum grege pastor age.  
 Hinc te pontifices circumdant, inde ministri:  
 Cingit te totum hinc honor, inde favor.  
 Clericus ecce choris resonat, plebs inde choraulis:  
 Quisque tuum votum qua valet arte canit.

(III. 6. 43-48).

Thus expected attitudes and emotions are frozen in this tableau arranged by the poet to reflect the scene before him. Venantius even exploits the architectural setting of the ceremony of dedication, by drawing his listeners' attention to the triple vault of the building, an architectural feature so appropriate to echo the sounds of praise made in honour of the Trinity. (III. 6. 51-52)

Other features of secular panegyric are found transferred to praise of the bishop. The bishop's background and family may be treated in a way not very different from that of a secular ruler. (149) His virtues are praised and praise of his episcopal rule and church government takes the place of deeds of war and peace. Again, while a king might be praised in panegyric for having chosen a virtuous wife (VI. 1a. 29-40), it is notable that Venantius similarly highlights the imperial background of Placidina, wife of Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux (I. 15. 93-106), and enumerates her virtues as he might those of Queen Brunhild. (VI. 1a. 37) An unmarried bishop such as Felix of Nantes presented the poet with a special problem, but not one that was insurmountable within the panegyric tradition, as the following lines illustrate:

Ut iam multa deo splendida dona dares,  
Nupsisti ecclesiae, felicia vota iugasti,  
Hanc qui matronam dote potente reple;  
Cuius in amplexu ducis sine crimine vitam,  
Altera nec mulier corde recepta fuit.

(III. 8. 28-32)

Devices used in secular panegyric in praise of the ruler, could with ease be transferred to episcopal panegyric. The device of praising the king as a wall (IX. 1. 79) could be transferred to a bishop (III. 13. 24), while the solar imagery used in praise of kings is employed by Venantius in praise of Bishops Ageric of Verdun (III. 23a. 1-6), Igidius of Reims (III. 15. 9-12) and Felix of Nantes. Just as Chilperic or Charibert are like the sun shining on the land, so also is Felix the bishop:

Ultima quamvis sit regio Armorica in orbe,  
Felicis merito cernitur esse prior.  
Miserunt similes Oriens et Gallia sortes:  
Illa micat radiis solis, et ista tuis;  
Nam splendore novo sua munera quisque ministrat:  
Tu fers Oceano lumen et ille rubro;

(III. 8. 3-8).

Beyond the major royal and episcopal poems that give every indication that they were intended for recitation before an audience in a ceremonial context, there is another body of poems that may best be described as panegyrical in tone. These are poems of fulsome praise sent to individuals in which one finds the recipient treated in an elevated way recalling panegyric. (150)

Exaggeration is only to be expected in panegyric and in poems, which, while not full panegyrics, employ the grand style. Venantius' own comments make it clear that he and his literary amici would have viewed a poetic portrait of an individual in this light. Venantius' contemporaries accepted that panegyrical writing was about exaggeration. Thus Fortunatus writing to the poetizing Bishop Felix of Nantes can make from this assumption the tortured paradox that the style provides precise and accurate praise, as in history writing, only when applied to Radegund, his domina:

Hoc quoque quod delectabiliter adiecistis me domnae meae  
Radegundae muro caritatis inclusum, scio quidem quia non ex  
meis meritis, sed ex illius consuetudine, quam circa cunctos  
novit inpendere, conlegistis et quantum in mea persona panegyricum  
poetice tangitis, tantum in eius laudis historiam retulistis.

(III. 4. (12))

We must therefore keep this normally expected degree of poetic exaggeration in mind when we attempt to use panegyrical poetry as a source for Merovingian history.

#### (6) Verses at Table

Poetry also had a part to play at the aristocratic dinner table and Venantius provided verse for this occasion as well. Some of these verses may well have originally been extempore. (151) The poem Venantius wrote for Bishop Vilicus of Metz ranges over the table appointments - the salver, bread, the tapestry on the wall. Even the fish on the table is used by Venantius to make a humorous

remark on how Vilicus resembled St. Peter. (152) The bishop's anniversary of consecration, a day which had liturgical commemoration, (153) was also celebrated by a banquet at which poetry in praise of the bishop was read (V. 4) while distinguished guests at the bishop's mensa could be saluted in verse. (X. 11) Important secular officials such as Sigoaldus the Defensor, held an Easter banquet and might there be greeted in verse (X. 19) which one of the guests no doubt read at table for the occasion.

#### (7) Letters of Recommendation

A number of poems (V. 15; X. 13; V. 14) take the form of "letters" of recommendation. These mannered missives introduce the bearer and allude to the reason why aid has been sought, but the historian cannot expect to find in them a full explanation of the circumstances of the bearer. The exchange of letters of recommendation was part of an elaborate etiquette, as for that matter was epistolary communication in general. We know from the correspondence of Symmachus and others in late antiquity that the sending of a letter was one of the duties of amicitia; the receipt of the same a reward. (154) The possession of a letter of recommendation signalled one's inclusion in the amicitia that existed between the sender and the addressee. However, the bearer would be expected to expand upon his circumstances by word of mouth. It was often considered superfluous to write down the details, indeed some were of the opinion that detailed business matters were more properly dealt with by word of mouth. (155) Given these constraints, the letter of recommendation can be a frustrating type of source material with which to work. A matter is raised - the needs of a traveller, for instance, or the case of a man whose daughter has been imprisoned - but no circumstantial detail is given. The bearer will

supply this himself. We are left with an imperfect understanding of the matter that has been alluded to, since we are not privy to the ensuing conversation.

#### (8) Consolatio and Epitaph

Forming a distinct sub-section within the carmina as a whole are those poems that were intended to be inscribed on buildings, tombs or objects and which are meant for continual public display. Book IV of the collected poems is, for example, composed almost entirely of epitaphs, many of which were intended to be placed on the tomb itself. Before we examine these we must make a clear distinction between epitaphium and consolatio, for the poem headed Epitaphium Vilithutae, (IV. 26) is more properly classified as a consolatio and has more in common with other consolationes in the collected works of the poet than with epitaphs intended to be placed on the tomb. The consolatio as a literary genre is earliest seen in Latin literature in the late Republic. Cicero wrote a De Consolatione (now lost) to console himself on the death of his daughter Tullia and consolatory subjects figure in the poetry of Horace, Propertius and others, while the Consolatio ad Liviam addressed to Livia on the death of Drusus, represents an exercise in the now established genre, in the style of Ovid. The developed genre was described and dissected by the rhetoricians who posited three main parts, laudatio, lamentatio and consolatio. Praise of the deceased, his virtues and skills, is followed by grief at his death and finally this is summounded by reflexion on consolatory themes such as the inevitability and universality of death, an end to suffering or a blessed oblivion. (156) In Christian hands the emphasis in this final section, the consolatio, was changed - Christ offers salvation and the colours and perfumes of heaven can give comforting promise of a better world beyond the grave. This may be a consolation in itself,

or may be tied to the theme of death as part of the human condition. Three of Venantius' poems may be classified as consolationes - the Epitaphium Vilithutae, IV. 26; De Geleswintha, VI. 5; Ad Chilpericum et Fredegundem reginam, IX.2, but do not all rigidly adhere to the strict form laid down by the rhetoricians. Of the three, the Epitaphium Vilithutae, written for her husband Dagulf (line 7), most closely adheres to the structure of laudatio, lamentatio and consolatio. The laudatio (lines 7 - 46) praises the young girl's nobility, her learning, her beauty and her love for her husband during the three years of her marriage. The lamentatio begins with the entry of mors invida (line 47) and continues to line 68. The causes for grief are elaborated - death of a young person and death in childbirth. While trying to give life - spem peperit luci, luce negante sibi. (line 50) Dagulf loses his child with his wife and becomes at once a grieving husband and father (lines 63 - 64). Consolation comes from the assurance that Vilithuta's almsgiving will earn her a reward in the next world (line 76) and that Christ offers a better place in Paradise (lines 137-138). Finally there comes the classical consolatory theme - all men must die.

In the consolatio sent to Brunhild on the death of Galswinth the balance is quite different. Here the weighting is in favour of the lamentatio. There is no laudatio involving discussion of skills and accomplishments and there is only a brief consolatio section. As G. Davis has shown in his discussion of the architectonics of this poem, the unusual ratio of lament to consolation is an indication of the poet's spirited reaction to the "gross and un-natural" deed that is Galswinth's murder. (157) A different emphasis again is seen in the poet's reaction to the death of the children of Chilperic and Fredegund in 580. In this consolatio (IX. 2), the young princes, Chlodobert and Dagobert, for whom Venantius wrote epitaphs (IX. 4; IX. 5), are not mentioned by name. There is no



laudatio and no lamentatio. Instead the emphasis is from the first line on consolation. This may well be because Fredegund came to believe that her husband's harsh treatment of the poor had brought this punishment down on her children. (158) The classical theme that death must come to all is amplified through the employment of Old Testament examples - David and Solomon (despite their royal background), and the great prophets all had to die, as did the apostles, but Christ offers salvation - Una ex Adam est mors, Christus et una salus. (Line 50) Reacting to the circumstances of 580 that left Chilperic without an heir, Venantius suggests that God will send Chilperic and Fredegund another child (lines 135 - 140). From these three examples of consolationes it is clear that Venantius reacts to circumstance and is selective in utilizing elements from a repertoire of consolatory themes and does not follow a rigid pattern. These works were intended for private consumption and in this way differ from the public epitaph which was inscribed on the tomb.

It was the great French epigraphist, Edmond Le Blant who first drew attention to the rich inscriptional material to be found in Venantius' collected poems. While lacking the material remains of the stones themselves, Le Blant excerpted epigraphical poems from Venantius' collection for inclusion in his Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule. Besides the epitaphs, Le Blant suggested the inclusion of many other verses that show indications that they were intended for inscription on the walls of churches or on particular objects. (159)

The epitaphs of Book IV provide the historian of the sixth century with a cross section of the upper classes of Merovingian society. In what is virtually a walk through a Gallic graveyard one comes across the tragic tomb of the infants Johannes and Patricius (IV. 22), the monument raised by the priest John to the memory of his father Julian who was once a trader but who ended life in Holy

Orders (IV. 23) and the tomb of Theudechilda. (IV. 25). Ten epitaphs commemorate bishops and in four instances the formulae employed make it clear that these poems were placed directly on the tomb itself. (160) The historical value of these epitaph poems becomes immediately obvious especially when one considers the paucity of other epigraphic evidence from the sixth century relating to the commemoration of bishops of northern and central Gallic Sees. (161)

The conventional language employed in Fortunatus' epitaphs reflects at many turns that mingling of classical and Christian elements common to the literature of commemoration by the fifth century. Venantius' poems are sprinkled with the literary commonplaces of the tombstone. (162) Yet for all this there is a wealth of personal detail to be gleaned about such matters as the background, learning and marital status of bishops and about the virtues that were expected in an episcopus. Here in these poems we are dealing with the literature of public commemoration and while an idealizing purpose must be acknowledged, it is the very nature and composition of the ideal that may shed light on the bishop's role in the community.

There is much in the epitaphs that is monotonous, but it would be a mistake to dismiss them as sterile copy-book transcriptions of classical and Christian formulae. The epitaph had a role to play in the public life of the community and must be viewed not in isolation but in the context for which it was written and in which it operated. As in classical times commemoration of the dead was a family duty since the deeds of one's ancestors should not be forgotten. Thus we see Sidonius protecting the grave of his ancestor Apollinaris and providing it with a suitable verse epitaph. (163) The epitaph served to honour and advertise the family as a whole, while the provision of this office for the dead allowed one to display one's pietas in the classical sense of that word. Commemoration of

the dead was also a Christian responsibility. An epitaph had a new role to play in the sanctorum communio for it reminded the Christian to include the dead in his prayers and it encouraged him to seek the intercessio of those who might already be among the heavenly elect.

During the Gallican Mass the names of the faithful departed were read after the consecration and a special missa pro defuncti commemoratione was offered on the day of burial, (164) and, following the custom of the "month's mind", at the tomb itself. (165) The family's duty to the dead was taken very seriously indeed. Gregory of Tours mentions one widow at Lyons who had a daily Mass offered for the repose of her late husband's soul. (166) Others would have followed the custom of having Mass said on the actual anniversary of a relative's death. The dead, as part of the sanctorum communio, if already among the elect, might intercede for those still on earth and in Venantius' poems we sometimes see him asking for benefits through such intercession. (167)

Just as it was a family duty to bury one's relatives fittingly, so also was it the duty of a bishop to bury his episcopal colleagues. (168) To the successor would fall the duty of commemoration in the Mass on the anniversary of death, perhaps also the provision of a fitting tomb and commemorative inscription. (169) Indeed the bishop's tomb might itself become the object of popular devotion. Gregory mentions miracles wrought at episcopal tombs (170) and the tombstone could advertise a wonderworking bishop. Thus Venantius' epitaph for Gregory of Langres:

Si quaeras meritum, produnt miracula rerum,  
per quem debilibus fertur amica salus.

(IV. 2. 11-12)

Our poet supplied epitaphs at the request of bereaving relatives or episcopal successors. Behind some of the epitaphs we see the relative who commissioned

the poem and raised the monument to the departed. Orientius' tomb was raised by his widow Nicasia. (IV. 24. 12-13) Frigia honoured her husband Brumachius (IV. 20. 5-6), while Evantia remembers her son-in-law Hilary. (IV. 12. 17-18) These and other individuals are pictured displaying their pietas in the provision of the officium funeris. Three of the episcopal epitaphs stem from Gregory's patronage of the poet and testify to his concern to commemorate members of his family and the episcopal honours they held. Thus we find the epitaphs of Gregory of Langres, bishop 506/7 to 539/40, Tetricius of Langres, the son and successor of the above and bishop from 539/40 to 572/73 and Gallus, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand 525-551. The first two bishops were related to Gregory on his mother's side: Gregory of Langres was his great-grandfather, Tetricius his grand-uncle. Gallus of Clermont was uncle to Gregory of Tours, on his father's side.

Episcopal commemoration could also have a somewhat political point to it, for the successor, acting as the donor of the epitaph, could also affirm the legitimacy of his succession and the continuity of episcopal government. As we shall see later in this work, Gallic bishops, and particularly those from the senatorial aristocracy, were given to self-advertisement and Venantius was quick to respond to their desire for family commemoration. We note, for example, the epitaph of Eumerius, Bishop of Nantes, where Venantius uses the opportunity afforded him by the epitaph to stress the episcopal succession from Eumerius to Felix, in this case from father to son. The poet goes so far as to suggest a direct inheritance of virtue as well as of office. This must indeed have been pleasing to Felix:

Felix ille abiit, Felicem in sede reliquit,  
Heredis meritis vivit in orbe pater.

(IV. 1. 31-32)

### (9) Other Inscriptions of Poetry

Benefactions to churches and oratories were also recorded in inscriptions (or perhaps painted notices) placed on walls. Fourteen of Venantius' poems relating to churches in Gaul were written with this purpose in mind. (171) Indications of the inscriptional nature of the poems are such things as direct address to the viator, directional indications to the location of relics within an oratory - (haec ... hic ... Pars dextra ... laeva est ...), or the rhetorical flourish of the imperative used to arrest the attention of the casual reader. This evidence is of immense historical significance, for not only does it provide evidence of royal and episcopal benefactions, or in one case co-operation in benefaction, but it also allows us to see how this action was presented to a sixth century audience. Thus we read of the aid given to Sidonius, Bishop of Mainz by Princess Berthoara, in the building of a baptistery (II. 11. 9-10) and of the relics contained in the oratory built by Gregory of Tours at Artanne. (X. 10)

Inscribed, or perhaps painted, verse could form part of the decorative scheme of a church. The tradition of placing verse on church walls was strong in Gaul and is illustrated by the provision of verses written by Sidonius Apollinaris and Martin of Braga for the walls of St. Martin's basilica at Tours. (172) Fanciful calligraphy and the careful arrangement of verse on the wall as on a manuscript page to achieve a particular decorative effect is perhaps suggested by the intricate "cross-word" poems written by Venantius (II. 4; II. 5; V. 6), which have come down to us still in this form.

In at least one case there is the strong probability that Venantius' verses may have been placed on a wall to provide a literary key to a pictorial programme. In the poem on the Church of Tours, renovated by Gregory (X. 6), we are provided with a series of titles and brief verses describing seven episodes of St. Martin's

life that had been newly painted on the wall. The stories come from Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini. It is probable that Venantius' seven small verses were actually placed on the wall as neat captions to each episode depicted. The long first section of the poem would have provided the text for the main inscription commemorating Gregory's renovation of the church. (173)

Finally, plate might also bear a verse inscription; we know, for instance, that Sidonius wrote poetry for this purpose. (174) Venantius provided verse that was engraved on plates (VII. 24), on a chalice for use in the Mass (I. 14) or on a vessel (175) designed for the reservation of the Eucharist. (III. 20) In the case of the last two objects, episcopal donors are commemorated.

It is the rich variety of the material that is contained within the carmina that makes Venantius' poetry so valuable an historical source. At the same time it is this variety that makes the utilisation of the material so difficult. At times we are dealing with entertaining verses read at table, on another occasion with full-scale panegyrics written for ceremonial occasions at court or in the bishop's basilica. The varied dossier of epigraphic evidence may be utilised or poetic letters of recommendation used as pointers to real life situations, but problems of genre, of poetic and indeed political purpose will continually reassert themselves. As we proceed a conscious attempt must be made to remain aware of the special nature of our evidence. Venantius was a poet who moved in royal, aristocratic and episcopal circles and his poems have little to tell us about the lives of those on the lower rungs of the social order. As a poet he flattered and praised and we must always remember that he loved playing with words and exploiting their connotations.

NOTES - CHAPTER ONE

- (1) Historia Langobardorum. , II. 13. (MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum. pp. 79-81).
- (2) Fort, VM. , IV. 670-671.
- (3) Venantius 2: PLRE II. , p. 1153.
- (4) Venantius 3: PLRE II. , p. 1153.
- (5) Venantius 4: PLRE II. , p. 1153.
- (6) Clementianus PLRE II. , p. 303.
- (7) Fort, VM. , IV. 658-660.
- (8) Fort, VM. , IV. 668-669.
- (9) The dates suggested for Venantius' birth vary greatly - Tardi, p. 24 and Caron, p. 227 suggest 530, while Koebner, p. 11 suggests that we cannot go wrong if we accept the date of 540 since Venantius' poetic temperament at the time of the trip to Gaul speaks for one who was, in 566, still in early maturity! The date cannot be fixed with any degree of accuracy and J. Szövérfy, Weltliche Dichtungen des lateinischen Mittelalters, (Berlin, 1970) p. 223 more cautiously suggests a date somewhere between 535 and 540.
- (10) Tardi, pp. 27-28.
- (11) Procop, Wars., VII. 1. 35.
- (12) Procop, Wars. , V. 5. 8-10.
- (13) Agathias, Hist. , I. 2. 1-8.
- (14) The massacre at Ticinum : Procop, Wars. , VI. 25. 8-15; Illness in the Frankish army forcing a retreat: Procop, Wars. , VI. 25. 24 and Greg Turon, HF. , III. 32. p. 128.
- (15) This Bishop Paul is impossible to find in our sources. Paul the Deacon, Hist Lang. , II. 10. (MGH Script. rer. Lang. p. 78) mentions the Patriarch Paul who presided over the church of Aquileia and who fled from the Lombards to the island of Grado. See E. Stein, "Chronologie des Métropolitains schismatiques de Milan et d'Aquilée - Grado," Revue d'Hist. Eccles. Suisse 39. (1945) pp. 126-136 Reprinted in Opera Minora Selecta, (Amsterdam, 1968) pp. 402-12.
- (16) Fort, VM. , IV. 658-662.

- (17) There is no real evidence for the influence of "Aquileian" spirituality as outlined by Tardi, pp. 35-37.
- (18) Fort, VM., IV. 665-671.
- (19) Hist Lang., II. 12. (MGH Script. rer. Lang. p. 79)
- (20) Tardi, pp. 38-39.
- (21) Fort, VM., I. 34-39.
- (22) See M. Manitius, Index III. Poetarum Priorum Loci Expressi a Fortunato, (MGH AA. 4. 2. pp. 132-137).
- (23) Beyond the index assembled by Manitius see also S. Blomgren, "De Venantio Fortunato Lucani Claudianique imitatore", Eranos, 48 (1950), pp. 150-156.
- (24) Fortunatus wrote the Vita Martini conscious that he was writing in an established tradition of Christian poetry: VM., I. 16-25.
- (25) Fort, VM., Epistula ad Gregorium, p. 294.
- (26) Fort, Carm., V. 1; VI. 1a. 5; VII. 8. 25; VII. 11. 4; VII. 12; VIII. 1. 1-3; IX. 6. 9-10; IX. 7. 5-12. See also discussion of latinized Greek words - A. Meneghetti, "La Latinità di Venanzio Fortunato", Didaskaleion 5 (1916), pp. 204-205 and also pp. 275-278.
- (27) Venantius was familiar with the Church of Sts. John and Paul. It was there that he was cured of blindness by St. Martin - VM., IV. 689-701. On the church itself see M. Mazzotti, "La basilica dei Ss. Giovanni e Paolo in Ravenna", Corsi di culture sull'arte Ravennate e Bizantina, 18, (1971), pp. 353-368. The Church of St. Apollinare Nuovo was dedicated to St. Martin till the ninth century. In the nave mosaic of this church St. Martin leads the procession of male saints to the throne of Christ who is flanked by four angels.
- (28) G. Cuscito, "Venanzio Fortunato e le Chiese istriane", Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologie e Storia Patria n. s. 26(78)(1978), pp. 209-225.
- (29) Paul the Deacon, Hist Lang., II. 4. (MGH Script. rer. Lang. p. 74. 27ff.) "His quoque temporibus Narses patricius, cuius ad omnia studium vigilabat, Vitalem episcopum Altinae civitatis, qui ante annos plurimos ad Francorum regnum confugerat, hoc est ad Agonthisensem civitatem, tandem comprehensum aput Siciliam exilio damnavit." See Koebner, pp. 120-125. "Exkurse I. Bischof Vitalis."
- (30) On Venantius' journey see K. Staudacher, "Das Reisegedicht des Venantius Fortunatus", Schlern, 15 (1934), pp. 274-82, and W. Hopfner, "Zur Reise des Venantius Fortunatus durch die Alpen", Deutsche Gaue, 37 (1936), pp. 21-25. The excellent detailed maps in W. Cartellieri, "Die römischen Alpenstrassen über der Brenner, Reschen-Scheideck und Plöckenpass", Philologus, Supplementband 18, Heft I. (Leipzig, 1926) allow us to follow Venantius' path.



- (31) Fort, VM., IV.650. "Hic montana sedens in colle superbit Aguontus". On the site of the Fliehbürg at Lavant-Kirchbichl, near Aguntum see G. Alföldy, Noricum, Trans. A. Birley. (London, 1974) p. 217. Excavations at Lavant have exposed a fortified area of 2.7 hectares on an almost inaccessible eminence centred on an episcopal church 40 metres long. Site: Alföldy, op.cit., Fig. 38 and Plate 57; Fig. 40 - Plan of church.
- (32) Fort, VM., IV.649. "Per Dravum itur iter: qua se castella supinant." See Alföldy, op.cit., pp. 216-217.
- (33) St. Afra was martyred at Augsburg during the persecutions under Diocletian. There is an extant Carolingian Conversio et Passio Aefrae, MGH SRM III (ed. B. Krusch) pp. 55-64.
- (34) F. Leo, "Venantius Fortunatus der letzte römische Dichter", Deutsche Rundschau, XXXII (1882), p. 415, accepts a pious motivation. A. Ebert, Histoire Général de la Littérature du Moyen Age en Occident, trans. E. Leroux, (Paris, 1883), Vol. I. p. 553, sees a desire to make a pilgrimage, but perhaps not a formal vow. A. H. Skeabek, "Fortunatus" New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 5, 1034, accepts a "pilgrimage of gratitude".
- (35) See Koebner, p. 14 who points out that Venantius' route is inconsistent with a pilgrimage to Tours. A pious motive is highly doubtful. See also ibid., p. 125, where Koebner raises the possibility of Venantius' implication in the fall of Vitalis as a motive for the poet's departure. Also see Tardi, p. 62. Caron, p. 228 is also sceptical and suggests that another reason may also have obliged Venantius to leave his country. He suggests unrest in Italy and the need for the quiet leisure necessary for a literary existence. R. Bezzola, Les Origines et la Formation de la Littérature Courtoise en Occident (500-1200) Vol. I. (Paris, 1958), p. 42 has Venantius setting out on pilgrimage, but suggests a secondary motive to make a career at a time when Italy was threatened by the Lombards. Also sceptical is P. G. Walsh, "Venantius Fortunatus", The Month 120 (1960), pp. 292-302.
- (36) We know that Arator's Historia Apostolorum was read before a distinguished audience of clerics and laymen in the Church of St. Peter ad vincula, at Rome in 544, over four sessions because the audience called for repeats. See Prolegomena to Arator, De Actibus Apostolorum (PL 68. 55).
- (37) At line 637 of Book IV of the Vita Martini, Venantius indicates Bishop Germanus of Paris is still alive - "Quam modo Germanus regit et Dionysius olim". Germanus died in 576; the VM must have been written by this date.

- (38) Meyer, p. 26, argues that Books I - VIII form the first collection of Venantius' poems. Tardi, p. 92, rightly points out that the first collection would more likely have comprised Books I - VII. He draws attention to the fact that Book VIII begins with a new Preface addressed ad diversos, the obvious prologue to a new publication. According to Tardi, p. 93, Books I - VII contain poems down to about 574, but he overlooks the inclusion of the poem written on the subject of the conversion of the Jews by Bishop Avitus of Clermont-Ferrand. (V. 5) This conversion took place at Pentecost 576 according to Gregory, HF, V. 11, pp. 205-206. The poem Venantius wrote about this event dates the first collection of his poems to at least late 576, and most probably to 577. It could well be that Gregory commissioned the poem on Avitus for use at Pentecost 577, the anniversary of the events in Clermont, as Venantius makes much of Pentecostal imagery in the poem - see V. 5, 1-10; 105-122.
- (39) On the year spent in the north, see Koebner, pp. 18-28.
- (40) The Itinerarium Burdigalense (CC s.1.CLXXV) pp. 1-4, shows a route that led Bordeaux-Carcassonne-Narbonne-Arles-Cottian Alps-Milan-Concordia. This route would have been impossible for Venantius in the mid-sixth century because of the Visigothic hold on Septimania which would have made travel via Narbonne impossible. The route had earlier been very popular. See F. Delaruelle, "Toulouse et la route des deux mers", AM 62 (1950), fasc. 3. pp. 215-228.
- (41) Tardi, p. 59, sees this as a factor.
- (42) Caron, p. 228.
- (43) Epistolae Austrasicae, 5. (MGH Epp III. pp. 116-117).
- (44) Epistolae Austrasicae, 6 (MGH Epp III. pp. 117-118).
- (45) Procop, Wars., VI. 22. 10.
- (46) Epistolae Austrasicae, 6. (MGH Epp III. p. 117).
- (47) Epistolae Austrasicae, 21. (MGH Epp III. pp. 133-134).
- (48) Epistolae Austrasicae, 7. (MGH Epp III. pp. 118-119).
- (49) Epistolae Austrasicae, 8. (MGH Epp III. pp. 119-122).
- (50) Paul the Deacon, Hist. Lang., II. 4. (MGH Script. rer. Lang. p. 74, 27ff).
- (51) Koebner, p. 125.

- (52) Gogo's part in the marriage negotiations is alluded to by Fortunatus, Carm., VII. 1. 41-42:
- Nuper ab Hispanis per multa pericula terris  
Egregio regi gaudia summa vehis.
- While we have no description of the entourage sent to Spain on this occasion, Gregory's description, HF., VI. 45, pp. 318-319, of the wedding entourage of Chilperic's daughter Rigulth that set out for Spain in 584, gives us some idea of the size of a bride's entourage.
- (53) The best standard work on the Merovingian kingdoms in English is still the highly individual Sir Samuel Dill's Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age, (London, 1926). Augustin Thierry, Récits des Temps Mérovingiens, (Paris, 1858) also provides an overview. There is much of interest in Christian Pfister, "La Période mérovingienne" in Histoire de France, Vol. 2, pt. I, Chapters 1-4, pp. 117-215. Gen. Ed. E. Lavissee (Paris, 1903) and in F. Lot, Naissance de la France, revised by J. Boussard (Paris, 1970). A more recent general account - R. Latouche, Caesar to Charlemagne, trans. J. Nicholson, (London, 1965) and from the point of view of art history - Peter Lasko, The Kingdom of the Franks, North-West Europe before Charlemagne, (London, 1971); the Frankish monarchy - J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, The Long-Haired Kings, (London, 1962).
- (54) See P. Lasko, op. cit., pp. 25-32.
- (55) L. Musset, The Germanic Invasions, Trans. E. and C. James, (London, 1975) p. 75.
- (56) Greg Turon, HF., II. 27, p. 71.
- (57) Greg Turon, HF., II. 37, p. 86.
- (58) We are now fortunate to have a new and detailed study of the system of hospitalitas under which the Burgundians and Visigoths were settled in Gaul - W. Goffart, Barbarians and Romans A.D. 418-584. The Techniques of Accommodation, (Princeton, N.J., 1980), esp. pp. 103-175.
- (59) R. Buchner, Die Provence in merowingischer Zeit, (Stuttgart, 1933), Ch. I. "Die Verwaltung der Provence unter den Merowingern", pp. 6-29.
- (60) Agathias, Hist., I. 4. 1-4.
- (61) Salin, Vol. I, pp. 319 ff. "Aperçu du peuplement en Gaule Mérovingienne".
- (62) E. James, The Merovingian Archeology of South West Gaul, (Oxford, 1977), B.A.R. Supp. Ser. 25 (i) p. 185.
- (63) J. Boussard, "Essai sur le peuplement de la Touraine", Moyen Age, 60, (1954), pp. 261-91; C. Lelong, "La question du peuplement franc en Touraine," Bull. trim. soc. arch. Touraine, Vol. 34, (1964), pp. 79-85.

- (64) M. Broëns, "Le peuplement germanique de la Gaule entre la Méditerranée et l'océan," Annales du Midi, Vol. 68, fasc. 1, (1956), pp. 17-37.
- (65) See the criticisms of Broëns by E. James, op.cit., pp. 204-207.
- (66) Procop, Wars., VII. 33.5-6.
- (67) See M. Prou, Les Monnaies Mérovingiennes : Catalogue des Monnaies Françaises de la Bibliothèque Nationale, (Paris, 1892), No. 56, p. 15 and Plate 1 No. 22. Also A. Blanchet and A. Dieudonné, Manuel de Numismatique Française, Vol. I., (Paris, 1912), Fig. 173, p. 198.
- (68) E. Auerbach, Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, Trans. R. Manheim, (New York, 1965), p. 261.
- (69) See Koebner, pp. 17-18.
- (70) Meyer, pp. 14-15.
- (71) Koebner, p. 28, suggests the possibility of some occasional involvement in the chancellery at the Austrasian court and sees this experience as an important influence on Venantius' own epistolary style.
- (72) Gogo's role in running a palace school is alluded to by Fortunatus in a poem addressed to his friend: VII. 4. 25-26.
- (73) Gogo's position as nutritor clearly made him a man of importance who could offer patronage. See Greg Turon, HF., V. 46. p. 256. W. Goffart, "Byzantine Policy in the West under Tiberius and Maurice: The pretenders Hermenegild and Gundovald (579-585)", Traditio 13 (1957), p. 84, sees Gogo and Brunhild as giving "a continuity of rule" to the Austrasian kingdom and as the force behind the Burgundian alliance.
- (74) Fort, VR., 14. p. 42.
- (75) On the episcopate of Pientius: Duchesne, II. p. 83. The standard biography of Radegund: R. Aigrain, Sainte Radegonde, 3rd Edition, (Paris, 1924). See also F. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum in Frankenreich, (Munich, 1965) pp. 157 ff; E. Delaruelle, "Sainte Radegonde son type de sainteté et la chrétienté de son temps", Étud. Mérov., pp. 65-74; G. Marié, "Sainte Radegonde et le milieu monastique contemporain", Étud. Mérov., pp. 219-225.
- (76) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 18. p. 151.
- (77) Fort, VH., I. p. 1.
- (78) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 45. p. 180.

- (79) Apart from the religious considerations, the relic of the True Cross was most probably sent by Justin II and Sophia in order to cultivate the Franks as potential political allies for Byzantium. See Averil Cameron, "The Early religious policies of Justin II", Studies in Church History 13 (1976), pp. 59-60.
- (80) The evidence for dating is well set out by Averil Cameron, ibid., p. 59.
- (81) Ibid., p. 60.
- (82) Procop, Wars., VIII. 25. 11-12. See also Fort, Carm., VIII. 1. 24. and Append., I. De excidio Thoringiae, 47-50.
- (83) Sophia was a powerful Empress and her importance, in her own right, has been noted in the poems of Corippus and Venantius, on coinage and on the cross now in the Vatican, by Averil Cameron, "The Empress Sophia", Byzantion 45, (1975), pp. 5-21.
- (84) Averil Cameron, "Early Religious Policies", p. 61.
- (85) Corippus, In Laudem Iustini Augusti minoris, ed. and trans. Averil Cameron, (London, 1976). Notes to the "Hymn to the Virgin", Bk II, 52-69, p. 153. On Venantius' possible authorship of the poem In Laudem Mariae see Koebner, pp. 143-148; Tardi, p. 167; and S. Blomgren, Studia Fortunatiana 2, De carmine in laudem Sanctae Mariae composito Venantio Fortunato recte attribuendo, (Uppsala, 1934), 2.
- (86) Fort, Carm., III. 1; 2; 3.
- (87) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 28. p. 161.
- (88) Tardi, p. 76 posits a visit to Spain on the basis of V. 132. This is impossible since in V. 1. Fortunatus speaks of Martin's portitor Bonosus, who will take the poet's letter back to Braga. Martin of Braga had earlier visited Tours and had written verse for the church of St. Martin, (Greg Turon, HF., V. 37. p. 243). Venantius would have been brought into contact with Martin via correspondence emanating from Turonian circles during the episcopate of Gregory. Communication with Galicia was normally by sea and not by the long and hazardous land route. Venantius speaks of his correspondence with Martin as being conducted over the waves. The sea route was most usual : HF., VIII. 35. p. 404. On commerce and communication between Gaul and Galicia see A. Lewis, "Le commerce maritime et les navires de la Gaule occidentale 550-750," Étud. Mérov. p. 192.
- (89) Neither Meyer, Koebner nor Tardi mention this trip. Meyer, p. 55 and p. 76 provides a most unsatisfactory explanation of Carm., II. 8. On the Church of St. Saturninus built by Launebode at Toulouse, Meyer, p. 76, identifies Launebode's wife Berethrude with the Beretrude mentioned by Gregory, HF., IX. 35, who had an estate near Poitiers and could have been known to Fortunatus. Meyer makes Launebode her husband and has

him in Toulouse in the service of Sigibert the master of Poitiers. According to Meyer, pp.54-55, Carm., 7; 8 were written for celebrations in a church at Poitiers to mark the building of the church of St. Saturninus at Toulouse by the absent Launebode. The first objection to this theory is that there is no evidence whatsoever that the Beretrude of HF., IX. 35 is the wife of Launebode. The second objection centres on the tortuous lengths to which Meyer must go in order to make the evidence fit his theory - ceremonies in Poitiers to celebrate events in Toulouse; an absent friend in Toulouse and his wife in Poitiers. It is more logical that Venantius, who visited Bordeaux and travelled up the Garonne and Gers, visited Toulouse. Meyer, p.71, misses the point that the Egircius (the Gers) flows into the Garonne approx. 135 km up from Bordeaux, near Agen, and half way to Toulouse.

- (90) The passio is found in T. Ruinart, ed. Acta Primorum Martyrum Sincera et Selecta, 2nd Edition, (Amsterdam, 1713) pp.129-133. Venantius, Carm., II.7.17-22, develops the image of the saint as a doctor to the "poisoned" citizens of Toulouse. This is not found in the passio. The poem pictures the bishop tied to a bull and the bull goaded to fury, (II.7.23-32), while the passio p.131 explains that the bull was being prepared by the pagans as a sacrificial victim. The passio, p.131 speaks of two women seeing to the body of the saint after his martyrdom while Venantius, perhaps drawing on another source, makes these two a woman and her servant.(II.7.33-34) The passio has been dated to the fifth century. See M-O. Garrigues, "Saturnino di Tolosa", Bibliotheca Sanctorum, ed. Mons. F. Caraffa et al., Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontifica Università Lateranense, (Rome, 1968) Vol. XI, col. 673.
- (91) On the problem of the site of Launebode's church - see E. Griffe, "Toulouse romaine et chrétienne, controverses et incertitudes", BLE LX (1959), pp.133-134.
- (92) Toulouse at this time was under Merovingian control. A. Longnon, Géographie de la Gaule au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, (Paris, 1878), Pl. V. and Pl. VI. assigns Toulouse to Chilperic's kingdom.
- (93) Fort, VA., I. p.27.
- (94) Aeoladius was present at the Council of Lyons 567-570 while Agricola was present at the Council of Maçon 581-583. (CG II. p.203; CG II. p.229).
- (95) The date of the first collection of poems, see note 38, this chapter.
- (96) Hist. Lang., II.13 (MGH Script. rer. Lang., p.80).
- (97) Greg Turon, VSM., I.2. p.139. The latest entry in this book is July 4, 593 - VSM., IV. 45. p.210-211.

- (98) Fort, VM., I. 34-35.
- (99) Fort, VM., IV. 661-662.
- (100) Tardi, pp. 86-87, would have Fortunatus writing his poems (Book VIII) in his leisure, before he was ordained a priest in 576. This seems to be based more on Tardi's desire for Venantius to later display a sacerdotal sensibility that is not brought into question by "poèmes de mauvais gout" than on any substantial evidence for the date of his ordination.
- (101) On the relationship between Fortunatus and the nuns see Tardi, pp. 169-180; Caron, pp. 248-258; Koebner, pp. 39-49; R. Bezzola, Les Origines et la Formation de la Littérature Courtoise en Occident (500-1200). (Paris, 1958), Vol. I. pp. 55-72. Dill, op. cit., p. 384 passes a stern judgement on the relationship.
- (102) Meyer, p. 112 suggests that the poem may have been intended as a type of poetic circular which invited girls to enter the convent.
- (103) On the collection of the poems of Book XI see Meyer, pp. 26-27.
- (104) A. Thierry, op. cit., pp. 381-382. Based on Lucchi, Vita Fortunati, 61. (PL 88. 39).
- (105) Caron, p. 249; R. Aigrain, op. cit., p. 82 who also acknowledges word play on the name Agnes; Tardi, p. 85; P. G. Walsh, "Fortunatus", The Month 120, (1960) p. 292.
- (106) See "agens" in J. F. Niermeyer, Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus, (Leiden, 1976), p. 30. cf. "actor", ibid. p. 14.
- (107) On Fortunatus see A. F. Memoli, "Rima, Allitterazione e Paronomasia: Elementi di variato ritmica 'nella prosa numerosa latina'", Aevum, XL (1966), pp. 428-444.
- (108) Word play on personal names: Carm., III. 7. 55-56; III. 14. 1-2; III. 19. 1-2; III. 25. 1-2; IV. 1. 31-32; V. 1. (11); V. 3. 10; Append., XXXIV. 5-7.
- (109) Bishop Perpetuus of Tours requested verse from Sidonius for St. Martin's church - Sid. Apoll., Epist., IV. 18. 4. Martin of Braga had also written verse for the walls of the church - Greg Turon, HF., V. 37. p. 243. Paulinus of Périgueux wrote a metrical version of the Vita Martini for Perpetuus. (PL 61) On the genesis and construction of this work see A. H. Chase, "The metrical Lives of St. Martin of Tours by Paulinus and Fortunatus and the prose Life by Sulpicius Severus." HSPH 43, (1932), pp. 51-76.
- (110) Koebner, pp. 86-91.
- (111) Fort, Carm., V. 5. Praef.

- (112) See note 38, this chapter.
- (113) Tardi, p. 93. The collection was made for Gallic bishops.
- (114) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 26. pp. 157-158.
- (115) Greg Turon, HF., V. 5. p. 200.
- (116) The letter to Euphronius III. 2. asks that bishop to remember him to Felix if he were to visit. Carm., III. 6; III. 7 concern the dedication of Felix's church at which Euphronius was present - Carm., III. 6. 20.
- (117) Sigoaldus showed kindness to Venantius when the poet first came to Gaul - Carm., X. 16. 1-4. He was later made comes by Childebert II - Carm., X. 16. 11-12. In Carm., X. 17 we see the distribution of food to the poor by Sigoaldus on behalf of Childebert II and in Carm., X. 18 as defensor. Galactorius also rose to the position of defensor after a long career - Carm., X. 19.
- (118) Greg Turon, HF., V. 4. p. 198-199.
- (119) Greg Turon, HF., V. 26. p. 232. The levy from Tours: HF., V. 14, pp. 207-209.
- (120) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. p. 259; p. 260.
- (121) Dill's spirited denunciation is the classic - op. cit., pp. 333-334.
- (122) Pliny, Pan., 4. 1.
- (123) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. p. 261.
- (124) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. pp. 260-261.
- (125) Koebner, pp. 95-105 - Der Panegyricus auf Chilperich. Die Dichtung des Fortunatus im Dienste der Vermittlung zwischen König und Episkopat. See especially the argument p. 102 that praise of Fredegund must be seen in the context of the recent slanders circulating at that time.
- (126) Koebner, p. 105. Perhaps there was a second visit by the poet in 581 as Meyer, p. 21, and Koebner, p. 105, suggest.
- (127) Meyer, p. 22, and for Poems in Appendix - p. 137. Koebner, pp. 108-109.
- (128) Duchesne, Vol. II, p. 83.
- (129) The poet as saint: B. de Gaiffier, "S. Venance Fortunat, évêque de Poitiers. Les témoignages de son culte," AB 70 (1952), pp. 262-284.



- (130) The purpose of panegyric: S. MacCormack, Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity, (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 8-9.
- (131) ibid., p. 5.
- (132) Note Menander Rhetor, Treatise II - Basilikos Logos 370.28 - 371.2. (ed. Russell and Wilson, p. 80).
- (133) Note A.H. Skeabeck, "Fortunatus", New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1035. "A Christian gentleman of refinement, even of fastidiousness, Fortunatus has been accused of indulgence in flattery and of a euphemistic characterization of contemporaries."
- (134) Trajan is praised by Sidonius for his pietas - Sid. Apoll., Carm., VII. Panegyric on Avitus, 114-118, cf. Claud., De IV. cons. Hon. 18ff; ~~315ff~~; De I cons. Stil. 193; De VI cons. Hon. 335 ff. On Trajan's popularity see R. Syme, "The Fame of Trajan", in Emperors and Biography, (Oxford, 1971), pp. 89-112.
- (135) The index compiled by Max Manitius, MGH AA 4.2. pp. 132-137 and the work of S. Blomgren, Eranos 48 (1950), pp. 150-156, shows that Venantius was familiar with the panegyrics of Claudian. Borrowing from Sidonius is meagre, but this does not mean that Venantius was unfamiliar with that poet's works. In a very general way he most resembles Sidonius in his use of sun/light imagery.
- (136) The personifications of Cupid and Venus in the epithalamium (VI. 1) show the influence of Claudian and are the only real examples of epic machinery. A few feeble personifications surface elsewhere - VI. 5.13. - Toledo; VII. 1.4. - Orpheus.
- (137) Brunhild: VI. 1a. 29-34; Theodechilde: VI. 3. 19-35; Chilperic: IX. 1. 144. Venantius came to know of Corippus, it would seem, at the time the relic of the True Cross was received. The influence of Corippus has been detected in Venantius' poem Ad Justinum et Sophiam Augustos, Append., 2, and in the poem, In laudem sanctae Mariae, Carminum Spuriorum Appendix, 1. See A. Cameron, "The early religious policies of Justin II", Studies in Church History, 13 (1976), p. 61.
- (138) Fort, Carm., VI. 2. 77-80.
- (139) See MacCormack, op. cit., p. 21. The most extensive survey of this theme is by K. Oehler, "Der Consensus omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophie und der Patristik", A&A, 10 (1961), pp. 103-129, who traces it from the early Greeks through to episcopal elections and its place in early Christian thought.
- (140) Cf. Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris., I. 345-367.

- (141) The image of the sun and of the sun god was used in late antiquity both in art and panegyric, in connection with the Emperor. See the important study by E. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti-Lever du Roi", DOP, 17 (1963), pp.135-149.
- (142) Cf. Pan.Lat., III.6. (ed. Galletier, Vol. I, p.56); Pan.Lat., III.10. (ed. Galletier, Vol. I, p.60); Pan.Lat., IV.2.(ed. Galletier, Vol. I, pp.83-84); Pan.Lat., VI.14.(ed. Galletier, Vol. II, p.28).
- (143) Sidonius exploited the fact that the Emperor Anthemius, like the sun, came from the east. Note Carm., II., Panegyric on Anthemius, 8-12.  
In Sidonius' Panegyric on Avitus, Carm., VII.1-3, the emperor is the counterpart to Phoebus. Venantius was familiar with Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris where at II.148-151, Justin II, raised on a shield, looks like the sun. On that day two suns rise. Cf. I.149 and II.156. On Venantius' knowledge of Corippus see M. Manitius, "Zu spätlateinischen Dichtern," ZOG, (1886), pp.250 ff. Also see Averil Cameron, "The Early Religious Policies of Justin II", Studies in Church History, 13 (1976), p.59.
- (144) Menander, Treatise II (Epibatērios)., 381.11. (ed. Russell and Wilson, p.100).
- (145) Menander, Treatise II Epibatērios, 376.9-13 (ed. Russell and Wilson p.90 makes mention of an empress an optional topos if convenient and the worth and honour of the Empress is great. The topos does not appear in any of the latin panegyrics of emperors that have survived save in Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris where Sophia is given special treatment. Claudian, in his Laus Serenae shows how one might praise a female member of the imperial house, but it is Julian, Or. 3 who provides us with a full scale Greek panegyric of Eusebia, first wife of Constantius. In the 6th century Sophia, like earlier Theodosian empresses, was an important figure in her own right. See Averil Cameron, "The Empress Sophia", Byzantion 45 (1975), pp.5-21. In Venantius' poem Ad Iustinum et Sophiam Augustos (Append. 2), Sophia is accorded a position equal to Justin and special praise.
- (146) Koebner, p.102.
- (147) The epithalamium - Meyer, pp.12-13; Tardi, pp.72-74. Venantius wrote in a tradition dominated by the influence of Statius - the tradition is sketched by Z. Pavlovskis, "Statius and the late Latin Epithalamia", Classical Philology, 60 (1965), pp.164-177.
- (148) Compare Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris., Book II, 178-274: The Emperor as head, the empire as body and the treasury as stomach and Venantius Carm., III.7.21-22: Organic Church.
- (149) Fort, Carm., III.8.11-14.

- (150) Some examples: Carm., VI.10; VII.1; VII.5; VII.7; VII.8.
- (151) Note Sid.Apoll. Epist., I.11.14-15.
- (152) Fort, Carm., III.13a-d. Note 13d:  
 Retia vestra, pater, oneroso pisce redundant:  
 Apparet Petri vos meruisse vices.
- (153) The natalicium was the anniversary of a bishop's consecration. Note the feast held by Victor, Bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux to celebrate the anniversary of his consecration - Greg Turon, HF., V.20. p.227. Liturgical commemoration of a bishop's natalicium is attested by the 5/6th cent. Gallican lectionary from the palimpsest Codex Weissenburgensis 76 which lists the following readings under the heading In Natale Episcopi: Ezech 34, 11-31 and Jer 3, 14-15; II Cor 5, 11-20 and Phil 4, 19-20; Mt 18, 18-22 and Lc 10, 1-20. See A. Dold, Das älteste Liturgiebuch der lateinische Kirche. Ein altgallikanisches Lektionar des 5/6 Jhs aus dem Wolfenbütteler Palimpsest Codex Weissenburgensis 76. (Beuron, 1936), p.66. The seventh century lectionary of Luxeuil from MS 9427 Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, has two entries - LXX: In Natale Episcopi which lists Hebr 12, 28-13, 21 and Jo 10, 1-16 and LXXI In Natale Episcoporum which lists Ezech, 34, 1-31; I Pet 1, 3-20; 5, 1-15; Mt 5, 13-19. See P. Salmon, Le Lectionnaire de Luxeuil, (Collectanea Biblica Latina, IX)(Rome, 1953) p.CXVIII - Column I.
- (154) Thus Symmachus, Epist., I.47.2 (ed. J. P. Callu, p.110). "Sed dum tibi legis, tibi scribis et urbanarum rerum fessus ingentem animum solitudine domas amicitiarum munia nullus exequeris." Even a short letter is enough to reward friendship - Symmachus, Epist., I.57. (ed. J. P. Callu, p.117). The value and limitations of such letters - J. Matthews, "The Letters of Symmachus" in J. W. Binns (ed.), Latin Literature in the Fourth Century, (London, 1974) pp.58-99.
- (155) Symmachus, Epist., III.30.
- (156) The genre: R. Kassel, Untersuchungen zur griechischen und römischen Konsolationsliteratur, (Munich, 1958), to the time of Cicero. Also, more immediately: Ch. Favez, La Consolation latine chrétienne, (Paris, 1937), and R. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Roman Epitaphs, (Urbana, 1962), Ch. VII, 'Alleviations of Death', pp.215-265.
- (157) On the architectonics of the poem see G. Davis, "Ad Sidera Notus: Strategies of Lament and Consolation in Fortunatus' De Gelesuintha," Agon 1 (1967), pp.118-134.
- (158) Greg Turon, HF., V.34. p.240.
- (159) Le Blant suggested the following: Carm., IV. 1;2;3;4;5;6;7;8;9;10;12; 13;14;15;16;17;18;19;20;21;22;23;24;25;28; I. 3;4;5;6;7;8;9;10;11;12; 13;14; II. 10;11;12;13; III. 7;20; V. 6; VII.24; IX.5; X.5;6;10.

- (160) Fort, Carm., IV.1.5. "Hoc igitur tumulo requiescit Eumerius almo" - Eumerius of Nantes; IV.7.9. "Ecce sub hoc tumulo pietatis membra quiescunt" - Chalactericus of Chartres; IV.9.3. "Hoc recumbant tumulo venerandi membra Leonti" - Leontius I of Bordeaux; IV.10.5. "Hoc recumbant tumulo venerandi membra Leonti" - Leontius II of Bordeaux.
- (161) Sara MacGonagle, The Poor in Gregory of Tours, (New York, 1936), pp.40-41 puts the epigraphic evidence in perspective.
- (162) See the parallels adduced by Sven Blomgren, "Fortunatus cum elogiis collatus. De cognatione, quae est inter carmina Venantii Fortunati et poesin epigraphicam Christianam," Eranos 71 (1973), pp.95-111.
- (163) Sid. Apoll. Epist., III.12.5.
- (164) Greg Turon, HF., IV.31. p.166 - a possible reference to Requiem Masses in connection with burials.
- (165) Greg Turon, VP., XV. 4.p.274 - "nam trigesimo ab eius obitu die, cum ad eius tumulum missa celebraretur."
- (166) Greg Turon, GC., 64.pp.335-336.
- (167) Fort, Carm., IV.7.25-26. Cf. Carm., IV.27.19-22.
- (168) Conc. Aurelianense. A. 533. can.5. (CG II.p.99).
- (169) Note how the tomb of Gregory of Langres was moved by his son and successor (539-72) - Greg Turon, VP., VII.4. pp.239-240; Quintianus of Rodez tried to move the body of his predecessor, St. Amantius, who protested about it. - VP., IV.1.p.224.
- (170) Miracles at tombs: St. Illidius, VP., II.2. pp.219-220; St. Quintianus, VP., IV.5.p.227; Gallus of Clermont, VP., VI.7. pp.235-36; Gregory of Langres, VP., VII.5.p.240; Nicetius of Lyons, VP., VIII.5.p.245; 6. pp.246-47; 8.p.248.
- (171) Carm., I.5; I.6; I.7; I.8; I.9; I.10; I.11; I.12; I.13; III.7; V.6; X.5; X.6; X.10. It is not clear whether I.3 and I.4 refer to buildings in Gaul.
- (172) Verse by Martin of Braga: Greg Turon, HF., V.37. p.243 - placed over the southern portal of the church of St. Martin. Verse by Sidonius: Sid.Apoll. Epist., I.18., with text of inscription. Sidonius, Constantius and Secundinus all provided verse for the walls of the church built by Bishop Patiens at Lyons - Sid. Apoll, Epist., II.10, which includes Sidonius' verse.

- (173) See the discussion by LeBlant, Vol. I, Nos. 185-192, pp. 247-253.
- (174) Sidonius was asked by Evodius to supply him with verse, twelve lines in all, suitable for inscription on a shell-shaped basin to be presented to Queen Ragnahilda, wife of Euric. See Sid. Apoll, Epist., IV. 8 where Sidonius includes the text of the verse he wrote.
- (175) See A. A. King, Eucharistic Reservation in the Western Church, (London, 1965), pp. 28-29; and esp. pp. 40-42 - "Tower".

chapter 2

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the portrayal of the  
Bishop

In all, thirty-nine members of the sixth century Gallic episcopacy are addressed, described, commemorated, or at the very least mentioned by our poet in the panegyrics, epitaphs and small occasional poems that flowed from his pen. (1) Not all of these prelates were personally known to the poet, but from a line here and a few lines there, one can form a picture of the type of individual who rose to the episcopacy in sixth century Gaul. In often quite small and unimpressive poems are found descriptions of family background, claims to nobility, indications of married or monastic status and some suggestion of the learning of a number of prelates. In this chapter we will examine in some detail these indications of episcopal background before concentrating on an investigation of the nature of the idealised bishop who dominates the carmina, and whose standardised attributes and conduct transcend the differences between individuals.

The idealised nature of the bishop's task is illustrated through the employment by the poet of a range of images and exempla. These illuminate, in a quite telling way, what our poet saw as the spiritual duties of the bishop, the cosmic setting of his labours and the nature of his anticipated reward in the next world. What emerges, then, is an historically significant statement of the bishop's role as spiritual leader, since Fortunatus, in praising correspondents or commemorating their deeds, constructs a cohesive model of apostolic virtue and pastoral care. Taken as a whole, the carmina provide a statement of episcopal ideals, a statement that might well stand beside the canons of the councils and Caesarius' sermon In Ordinatione Episcopi as an indicator of expected episcopal conduct in the sixth century.

### (1) Senatorial Bishops

Occupying a prominent position within the carmina are poems addressed to bishops who belonged to the senatorial aristocracy of Gaul. The senators, despite the collapse of Roman government in Gaul, still maintained a sense of social station and a feeling of coherence as a group. Indeed in the complexity of sixth century Gallic society - a society made up of Gallo-Roman, Frankish, Gothic and Burgundian elements all living under the none-too-stable rule of the Merovingian kings - this group, the Gallo-Roman senatorial aristocracy, provides the historian of this period with what appears to be a tangible link with a more familiar Roman past. These aristocrats saw themselves as heirs to a tradition of service to their local communities and because of this developed both a self-conscious sense of identity and a firm belief in their own importance as a group. Inheriting the Roman tradition of self advertisement, these senators left behind them in poems, inscriptions and letters, ample evidence of the offices that they held. Following the collapse of Roman rule in Gaul, the senators served the Merovingian kings as duces and comites. In the church they rose to the episcopacy, and after having provided themselves with an heir before embarking on a life of celibacy, they were able, in many cases, to designate their sons as episcopal successors. The evidence for these senators as a group has been collected and examined by Karl Stroheker who provides a prosopography of this senatorial class in Gaul from the fourth to the seventh century. (2) More recently Martin Heinzelmann has stressed the continuity of this group in Gallic society and in particular their domination of the episcopacy. (3)

Before we proceed further we should attempt to establish what is meant by the terms senator and nobilis in the sixth century. For the Republican period, a working definition of nobiles would be to say they were the descendants



of all those who at some time had held the consulship. These men were in turn expected to gain this office and so maintain their family's claim to nobilitas. (4) By the fourth century however, nobilitas was acquired by the tenure of other posts as well - that of Praetorian Prefect or Prefect of the city, either at Rome or at Constantinople. (5) At the same time the ranks of the senatorial order at Rome were swelled by the influx of new members, many of whom came from the provinces of the empire. The great families of Rome still held prime position at the summit of the senatorial order, but the order included many who had risen in army or civil service careers in quite recent times. (6)

The senators of sixth century Gaul often had a very dubious claim to the name of senator. In many cases, but not all, these "senators" were probably descended from a local curialis, rather than from a Roman senator in the enlarged senate of late antique Rome. They form a type of provincial nobility that is firmly based on a Roman model. Their imitation of a senatorial life-style makes their position ambiguous and often masks their tenuous claims to senatorial status. We can best proceed by establishing what Gregory of Tours means by the word senator. Gregory uses the word to describe local aristocrats in Gaul who have descended from the "Senators" of earlier times and who have land, wealth and learning, all the things that would be important to a senator at Rome. The "title" senator was in Gaul by the sixth century long disassociated from office-holding. As Stroheker has demonstrated, "the word senator was in the eyes of Gregory of Tours an honorary title". (7) Most likely the senator had descended from a local curialis. Recently F.W. Gilliard has suggested that Gregory of Tours used the "title" senator as a qualification of economic class and not just as a title of "socio-political honour" (8),

yet nowhere in Gregory's works can I find any justification for saying that it was great wealth that made one a senator. It is not surprising that Gregory should mention wealth in connection with senators since the possession of wealth was one of the characteristics of the senatorial class at Rome and would have found imitation among a provincial aristocracy. Sidonius, for example, mentions that there were many in the senate at Rome who were "opibus culti genere sublimes, aetate graves consilio utiles" (9), while Gregory of Tours shows that he knows of wealthy men in Gaul who would not have been considered senators. (10)

Nobilis and senator are used interchangeably by Gregory of Tours as indicators of those who in Gaul were the descendants of the "senators" of earlier times. These "senators", in many cases, may merely have been curiales, yet there is no evidence that nobilis in Gregory's usage merely denoted a wealthy man. Likewise we should not confuse Gregory's own view of nobilitas with the views of others reported in the Historia. When Fredegund is reported as offering assassins the reward of nobility for their family if they themselves should be killed (11), this does not mean that Gregory would have held such a view of nobilitas. Further, the use of the concept of nobilitas in figurative language does not essentially alter Gregory's view of what constituted a senator. (12)

For Gregory Gallic senators were nobiles. There was no other way that one could attain this distinction than by birth. Stroheker found Gregory's designation of an individual as nobilis a helpful guide in selecting some of the individuals for his prosopography of the senatorial nobility. Stroheker's method is cautious and he shows great discernment in dealing with the multifarious source material on which he bases his prosopography. Since he is dealing with a variety of sources ranging from contemporary letters to unreliable hagiography

of the Carolingian period, Stroheker stresses that the characterization of a man as nobilis or senator does not mean the same thing from source to source. (13) Of more than four hundred persons who are listed, Stroheker believes only 258 are to be considered definite members of the senatorial aristocracy. While he calls these certi senatores, he does not distinguish them in the prosopography itself. Stroheker acknowledges that a question mark must be placed beside the names of one hundred and fifty individuals. (14)

In dealing with the evidence of Gregory of Tours, he seems to have assessed the material in terms of the opinion he formed of Gregory himself. Gregory was a proud member of this provincial aristocracy and Stroheker trusts him to know a senator when he sees one. F.D. Gilliard has rightly cautioned us about the possibility of parvenus, who, having gained wealth and land, may have wheedled their way into this élite group and sought to pass undetected. (15) This is quite likely, but we should not forget that the possibility of social mobility to positions of power and prestige under the Merovingian kings, but outside the senatorial nobility, may have removed some of the pressure on individuals to break into the ranks of the senatorial aristocracy. (16) If some parvenus did fool a class-conscious individual like Gregory of Tours (17) they will not perhaps be detected at this distance.

Fortunatus, unlike Gregory of Tours, did not have a vested interest in maintaining a restricted meaning of nobilitas. In the carmina, the poet, eager to please those for whom he writes, is much freer in ascribing nobilitas to individuals including Franks. Firstly, Venantius can describe as nobilis men whom we know from other sources to have been members of the senatorial aristocracy. Secondly, members of the Frankish royal house are described as having nobilitas. (18) Barbarian worthies, whether Frankish or Gothic, are depicted as having nobilitas. In the epitaph written for Vilithuta (IV.26.13-16) we read that this woman, born at Paris of barbarian stock is described as

having noble blood. This lady's great accomplishment was to conquer nature by acquiring Roman ways. (19) The dux Launebode is described by the poet as a vir barbarica prole (II. 8. 24) and this does not stop Venantius speaking of his nobilitas. (II. 8. 37-40)

A nobility of office holding is also suggested by the way Venantius, on occasion, speaks of nobilitas. Both Gallo-Romans and Franks who rose through royal service are described as nobilis. (20) This is most noticeable in the poet's treatment of the Frankish domesticus Condan, who, in terms reminiscent of Republican nobles at Rome, is depicted setting out on a cursus honorum. (VII. 6. 9-12)

Part of Venantius' success as a poet sprang from his ability to sense what those for whom he wrote wanted. He gave to them a poetic image of themselves that would flatter and please. A distinguished Frank or Goth might be described as nobilis and praised in a manner that owed much to the traditions of the senatorial aristocracy, but they would not be termed senators. In Venantius' usage nobilis and senator are not synonymous. For the senatorial bishops Venantius often wrote, conscious of their propensity for self advertisement and their desire to leave behind memorials of both self and family. He underlined in his choice of words that sense of continuity with the Roman past that they so cherished.

Sidonius Apollinaris offers us the most complete exposition of the ideals of this senatorial aristocracy. Sidonius' own career had led him to Rome as panegyrist at the court of the Emperor Avitus. He married Papianilla, the emperor's daughter and managed to survive the emperor's fall. Panegyrist to the Emperors Majorian and Anthemius, Sidonius held the office of praefectus urbi in 468 and so gained nobilitas. On his return to Gaul he became Bishop of

Clermont-Ferrand. (21) Like the Emperor Avitus and other Gallic aristocrats, Sidonius was able successfully to make the transition from a secular to an ecclesiastical career. Sidonius felt that his aristocratic background had prepared him for the demands of public office and that it was his duty to seek it. (22) Likewise, a distinguished family record of public service was useful to a candidate for the episcopacy. Indeed in the breakdown of Roman government and municipal life, the episcopacy became more attractive as an alternative to a secular career and was no doubt a lot safer. For Sidonius, aristocratic background is a major factor to be taken into consideration in the selection of a bishop. This is most strikingly illustrated in Sidonius' support for Simplicius in the episcopal election at Bourges: parentes ipsius aut cathedris aut tribunalibus praesederunt, inlustris in utraque conversatione prosapia aut episcopis floruit aut praefectis : ita semper huiusce maioribus aut humanum aut divinum dictare ius usui fuit. (23)

The aristocrat's education in rhetoric and letters would have proved useful to a bishop charged with preaching. Traditional noble patronage over dependent groups could also be translated into the ecclesiastical sphere; as bishop, one's clientes were now the widows, orphans and poor of the civitas. Family landholdings and personal wealth provided many a bishop with the means by which he could lavish benefactions on the church of his community, and as a consequence increase the prestige of his family. Above all the senatorial bishop had the self confidence that grew from family experience in public service. A nobilis who had undertaken embassies on behalf of his city and stood before "skin-covered monarchs" and "purple-clad princes", could, as bishop, more effectively guard the interests of those who sought his aid or protection. (24)

In the sixth century, Gregory of Tours exudes this self confidence, and reflects the same senatorial interests and attitudes. Gregory came from one of the great senatorial families of the Auvergne, but the origins of the family are obscure. The earliest member of his family whom he mentions is the martyr Vettius Epagatus who was martyred at Lyons c. 177. He also talks of another early member of his family, Leocadius, described as the leading senator in Gaul. (25) Leocadius was most probably a curialis at Bourges.

Gregory's great-grandfather, Gregory of Langres, had, like Sidonius Apollinaris, successfully made the transition from secular to ecclesiastical service. After serving for forty years as comes under the Burgundian kings, Gregory was elected Bishop of Langres. He held the See from 503 to 539 and was succeeded by his son Tetricus, who was bishop of Langres from 539 to 552. Tetricus' nephew Euphronius was Bishop of Tours from 556 to 573 and was succeeded by Gregory. On his mother's side, Gregory was related to Nicetius, Bishop of Lyons 552-73, while his paternal uncle was Gallus, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, 525-51. In his Historia, Gregory pictures King Lothar saying of Bishop Euphronius that he came from "one of the most distinguished families in the land." (26) Likewise, when himself faced with an upstart priest, one Riculf, "provocatus de pauperibus", who tried to oust our prelate from his See, Gregory could exclaim that his opponent did not seem to realise that apart from five, all the bishops of Tours had been his relations. (27)

Gregory's own description of the election of Gregory the Great to the Papacy displays the interests of a provincial noble in one of Rome's leading sons, who was of the most distinguished senatorial stock. In what is a description of Gregory's ascetic renunciation, the historian describes with interest the Pope's former estates, household goods and glamorous clothes.

Learned and wealthy, Gregory the Great exemplifies for the Bishop of Tours the ideal of a successful transition from secular to episcopal leadership. (28) Gregory's senatorial background and position serve as a useful grooming for one called to the demands of papal office.

The concept of an inherited family capacity for leadership in either the secular or religious sphere sustained the senatorial aristocracy of Gaul from the time of Sidonius through to the troubled times of the sixth century. As a group the senatorial aristocracy were under new pressures in the fifth century, but by the sixth, their power, in direct political terms, had declined to the point where it but dimly reflected what it once had been in the distant days of Roman rule. The collapse of Roman municipal government, the invasions of new peoples and the disruption of war all destroyed true continuity. Finally the sixth century saw the gradual rise of a parallel Frankish aristocracy in the train of the Frankish kings. We shall discuss the impact of this group later in this chapter. Enough here to note the unsettling effect of its rise upon the senators of Gaul. Faced with new and disturbing conditions all around them, members of the senatorial aristocracy sought to re-assert their claim to pre-eminence, by repeatedly stressing their special relationship to a glorious Roman past. Perhaps their repeated assertions of their status signal a certain siege mentality. In a constantly changing environment there were new forces at work which put them under threat.

Fortunatus' poetry would have served to bolster the claims to pre-eminence made by this senatorial class. Venantius played with skill and flattery upon aristocratic family connections, and composed epitaphs with the most Roman of sentiments. The epitaph was seen as the summation of a

life of service to the civitas, a memorial to the individual, and a reminder of the prelate's family in the life of the community. Venantius, who was the skilled eulogist of the senatorial aristocracy, was at the same time catering to the needs of the parallel Frankish aristocracy that was slowly making its presence felt in the episcopacy.

Within the carmina ten bishops are portrayed in terms that immediately suggest senatorial nobility: Gallus of Clermont-Ferrand - "nobilis in terris", (IV. 4. 6); Gregory of Langres - "nobilis antiqua decurrens prole parentum" (IV. 2. 5); Tetricus of Langres - "nobilitatis honor" (IV. 3. 10); Leontius I of Bordeaux - "nulli de nobilitate secundus" (IV. 9. 11); Leontius II of Bordeaux - "nobilitas altum ducens ab origine nomen, / Quale genus Romae forte senatus habet" (IV. 10. 7-8); The Ruricii - "gemini flores, quibus Aniciorum / iuncta parentali culmine Roma fuit" (IV. 5. 7-8); Felix of Nantes - "maxima progenies, titulis ornata vetustis" (III. 8. 11); Eumerius of Nantes "stemmate deducit fulgens ab origine culmen" (IV. 1. 7); Cronopius of Périgueux - "nobilis antiquo veniens de germine patrum" (IV. 8. 11).

The first three bishops belonged to the family of Gregory of Tours and have been discussed earlier. The Leontii are described by Venantius as one of the most distinguished families in Aquitania. The elder Leontius took part in the fourth Council of Orleans in 541 and died at the age of fifty seven, before 549. (29) Leontius the elder was succeeded by another Leontius, most probably his son, and it was this bishop who was personally known to Fortunatus. The younger Leontius had in 531 taken part in the war against the Visigoths as a member of King Childebert's forces. By 549 he was Bishop of Bordeaux and his name appears among the signatories to the canons of the Fifth Council of Orleans (549) and the Council of Paris (some time between 552 - 573). (30)



Leontius II was married to Placidina, the daughter of Arcadius, a prominent senator from the Auvergne. Placidina brought Leontius a connection with other distinguished families for we know she was related to both Sidonius Apollinaris and the Gallic Emperor Avitus, who ruled briefly 455-56. (31) It is Placidina's rather than Leontius' family that is more easily traced. In Venantius' poems we have, beyond the Leontii themselves, only a reference to one Amelius, who may have been an earlier Bishop of Bordeaux and an ancestor of Leontius II. (I. 11. 5-10) Amelius' place in the family tree remains uncertain. (32)

The antecedents of the family remain obscure yet prosopographers have sought to link the Leontii of the sixth century to a number of earlier persons who bore this name, a notoriously hazardous approach. (33) Where these family connections are suggested they must be treated as conjectural, even if in some cases they make apparent good sense and in others offer an attractive picture of family or episcopal continuity. Mathisen suggests that the Leontii may go back to one Leontius Lascivus, a fourth century grammaticus in Bordeaux and collects other examples of individuals with the name Leontius. This leads us nowhere. (34) Heinzelmann observes that the name Leontius was often borne by members of the Gallic aristocracy and that in three cases men who bore this name were related to the distinguished family of the Ruricii. This oblique suggestion of a link between the Leontii and the Ruricii is followed by the more straightforward assertion of a connection between the Leontius of Venantius' acquaintance and Pontius Leontius, the famous contemporary of Sidonius Apollinaris. Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux is in all probability a descendant.

Pontius Leontius was related to the Pontii Paulini, it would seem. This family was one of wealthy landowners and had estates not only in Aquitania and Spain, but in the Italian campagna as well. Heinzelmann stresses this as an indication of an Italian connection. He next focuses attention on the career of the most famous of the Pontii Paulini, Meropius Pontius Paulinus, Bishop of Nola. Paulinus had earlier been consularis sexfascatis Campaniae and had members of the gens Anicia as colleagues. This is presented as an indication of a possible link to the Anicii, the theory finding support, he claims, in the fact that some Anicii bore the name Paulinus. The argument finally unfolds as follows: the Leontii were related to the Pontii Paulini who had connections in Italy to the Anicii, one of the most distinguished families in the senate at Rome. All this, Heinzelmann claims, (35) makes sense of Venantius' description of the nobilitas of Leontius as "quale genus Romae forte senatus habet" (IV. 10. 8). It is more reasonable to see in this line an attempt by the poet to create a vague aura of senatorial prestige rather than a specific allusion to a Roman connection. We must not read too much into this line, nor overlook the casual forte inserted in the line. Perhaps Venantius was not all that well informed about the Leontii. He shows that he can write with far greater precision about the family of Placidina.

It is most likely that the sixth century Leontii were related to the famous Pontius Leontius of the fifth century, if only because of the similarity of name and similar prestige in the area around Bordeaux. However, while both the fifth century Pontius Leontius and the sixth century Leontius II owned estates, the Burgus of Pontius Leontius should not be confused with the Vereginus villa owned by the later Bishop of Bordeaux. They were situated

in quite different locations, and there is absolutely no evidence that Leontius II inherited Burgus as his aula parentum. (36)

The Ruricii, grandfather and grandson, who were both bishops of Limoges, are accorded a joint epitaph by Venantius. The epitaph sets forth their long and distinguished record of service to their local community. Again we observe a continuity with the senatorial tradition of service, now translated into Christian terms. The younger Bishop Ruricius follows the mos maiorum, now translated into a Christian context and seeks to equal or outdo the deeds of his illustrious grandfather, Bishop Ruricius. (IV.5.9-10; 13-14) Here is the old Roman theme of the glory of the ancestors rewritten in terms of Christian virtue and episcopal service. Thus Sallust's famous dictum - "maiorum gloria posteris quasi lumen est, neque bona neque mala eorum in occulto patitur" (37) - is as true of the Ruricii in Fortunatus' presentation of them as it was of the Metelli in Republican Rome or the great families of late antiquity. (38) Personal devotion to particular gods was often a matter of family tradition; the Ruricii worship the one God, but Venantius has chosen to highlight their individual dedications of templa to patron saints. The Ruricii dedicate templa, one to Augustine, the other to Peter. (IV.5.11-12)

The epitaph itself is in the same Roman tradition of senatorial family commemoration as that which prompted Sidonius to compose the epitaph for his grandfather Apollinaris, praetorian prefect of Gaul in 408 under Constantine II. (39) In the epitaph composed by Sidonius we see how the Christian bishop interpreted his forebear's virtues displayed through service to his country. Apollinaris has a record of office holding. He is a fine example of a free man who lived honourably under the tyranny of despots.

Sidonius, however, stresses, as the culmination of his grandfather's cursus honorum, not the prefecture of Gaul but rather the distinction that accrued to one who was the first of his line to renounce paganism and accept baptism. (40) Sidonius can, in the Roman tradition, laud his grandfather's attempt to equal or excel the deeds of his ancestors by conspicuous office holding, yet he introduces a wholly new, Christian emphasis when he portrays Apollinaris as excelling his worldly equals through his merits and the hope baptism offers him. (41)

In a similar way Fortunatus presents the Ruricii as devoted to a life of service which reaches its culmination not in worldly honours, not even in the office of Bishop, but rather in heaven where the bishops receive their reward. The Ruricii achieve eternal bliss by divesting themselves of worldly wealth through charity to the poor, a theme found elsewhere in the Christian epitaph tradition in Gaul. (42) These fortunate nobles strike what can only be described as a good bargain – they finally exchange the transitory nobilitas that they have enjoyed in this world for an everlasting nobilitas in the next. Sprung from senatorial stock, heaven for the Ruricii is painted in terms of a senatorial paradise:

Felices qui sic de nobilitate fugaci  
Mercati in caelis iura senatus habent!

(IV. 5. 19-20)

Employing the image of the celestial senate (43), Venantius praises those who have rejected senatorial nobility for the better nobility of virtue that earns them a senatorial position above. Of course the depiction of one rejecting earthly nobility eventually to achieve the heavenly equivalent was by the sixth century a standard hagiographical topos and one with which Venantius would have been familiar. (44) As part of a picture of ascetic renunciation, it

could be employed, as Gregory of Tours was wont to do, in order to focus attention on an individual's high station and worldly nobility, albeit in an oblique way. (45) The distinction that lay in the renunciation of nobility could, of course, only be displayed by those who were noble in the first place. To renounce nobilitas was their preserve alone.

The Ruricii, for example, renounced a nobilitas that, according to our poet, stemmed from an illustrious senatorial connection that linked them to the Anicii. The Anicii, as one of the most famous of Christian gentes in the Senate of late antiquity, enjoyed an unsurpassed renown. (46) For a provincial family to have an Anician connection would have added greatly to their honour. In the case of the Ruricii, the exact connection between them and the Anicii (if it existed) remains completely hidden from us. Martin Heinzelmann has set forth an ingenious theory that links the Ruricii of Limoges to the Anicii, but it is based on the most tenuous of evidence. Firstly he draws attention to the appearance of the name (H)ermogianus in the episcopal fasti of Limoges and points out that the name was also borne by at least four Anicii. Likewise the name Adelphius borne by three bishops of Limoges holds significance for Heinzelmann for it suggests to him a further link to the same family. From this, a picture of the domination of the See of Limoges by the one family is constructed on the basis of the appearance of Ermogenianus, Adelfius (twice) and Ruricius (twice) in the fasti. The "hold" of the family on the episcopacy is then made to speak for an Anician connection. The power of the family is depicted as stemming from the prestige of a connection to the Anicii. The precise nature of this link is never spelt out. Instead the power and prestige of the episcopal "family" at Limoges is linked in a quite vague way, with the fact that Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus, Anicianae domus culmen, was

praetorian prefect of Gaul in 365. Consciousness of this connection supposedly buoyed up the family's self-confidence well into the second half of the sixth century. (47)

Much more certain than this is the link between the Ruricii and the Ommatii of the Auvergne. We know that the elder Ruricius married Hiberia, the daughter of the vir clarissimus Ommatius who hailed from the Auvergne, as we have the epithalamium written by Sidonius. (48) The children of the marriage, Ommatius and Eparchius, were associated with the See of Clermont-Ferrand. (49) Both were presbyters there under Bishop Aprunculus, 585-590, while Ommatius eventually became the twelfth Bishop of Tours from 521-525. The name Eparchius is highly suggestive of a link to the Aviti, but it is just possible that Ruricius named his son for Eparchius Avitus who was praetorian prefect of Gaul during 439-40 and Emperor in the West, 455-56. An unnamed daughter of Ruricius married Agricola, the son of Eparchius Avitus, securing a link in that way. There is also a distinct possibility that Ruricius' son, who later became Bishop of Tours, was related to Gregory of Tours. (50)

The Aviti, to whom the Ruricii were related, were closely associated with the Auvergne, and Avitus, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, 571-594, who was lauded by Fortunatus in four poems (III. 21; III. 22; III. 22a; V. 5) may perhaps be assigned to this family. Amongst Venantius' collected poems there is one addressed to a Bishop Agricola, who is perhaps to be identified with the Bishop of Nevers who involved himself in the affairs of the Convent of the Holy Cross at Poitiers. (51) Venantius portrays this Agricola as "generis Fideique cacumen". (III. 19. 1) There is a chance that this Agricola was connected to the Aviti. (52)

At Nantes' on the very border with untamed Armorica, we find Bishop Felix who followed his father Eumerius as pastor in the city. (IV. 1. 31-32) Venantius speaks of Felix as having the highest nobility. In a panegyric poem, Felix is hailed as the very personification of the Roman spirit. His nobility is obviously senatorial, but to this Felix adds more:

Ornamenta geris gemino fulgentia dono,  
Et te concelebrant hinc opus, inde genus.  
Sed qui terrena de nobilitate nitebas,  
Ecclesiam nunc spe nobiliore regis.

(III. 8. 23-26)

Felix and Eumerius like many of the bishops who appear in the carmina cannot be neatly fitted into any aristocratic stemma. (53) We lack a family context for bishops like Exocius of Limoges (54), Cronopius of Périgieux (55), Sidonius of Mainz (56), Syagrius of Autun (57), and Hilary whose See is unknown. (58) Even though some names, such as Syagrius, for example, may suggest to us certain family connections, we must avoid one of the pitfalls of Prosopography and refrain from linking up individuals on the basis of name alone, where we have no other evidence of family connection. In order to proceed at all, we need some more evidence apart from mere nomenclature.

In the case of Nicetius, Bishop of Trier 525-566, we have no direct indication of nobilitas, yet we know of noble Nicetii who formed part of the senatorial aristocracy elsewhere in Gaul. Fortunatus employs a whole series of devices to praise the bishop whom he portrays in quite extravagant terms as "totius orbis amor pontificumque caput" (III. 11. 2), yet he is silent on Nicetius' origin. It is well to remember the occasional nature of Venantius' poetry. We cannot expect the poet always to outline the nobility of his subjects. In the case of Nicetius, however, Gregory, who wrote a Vita Nicetii, also chose not to mention the bishop's background. (59) It is no doubt because

of this lack of contemporary evidence for a noble background that Stroheker did not include Nicetius in his Prosopography of the senatorial aristocracy. Eugen Ewig, in his study of the bishopric of Trier, raises the possibility of a noble background and a connection with other Nicetii of the Gallic senatorial aristocracy, who are included in Stroheker's study. (60) Ewig draws attention to the report in the eleventh century Vita Magnerici that Nicetius had been Abbot in Limoges before his consecration, but cautions that this may be a misunderstanding of Gregory's report of the relationship between Nicetius and his student Aredius, who originally came from Limoges and later became Abbot there. (61) This, most likely, would be the genesis of this report, and in the face of the silence of both Fortunatus and Gregory we should not give credence to this eleventh century source, especially in an instance such as this where there is an obvious suggestion of confusion in the source itself.

While adopting all the indications of caution, Ewig follows up the lead given by the Vita Magnerici and ascribes a southern noble background to our Nicetius. He sees the bishop in the context of a continuing connection between the Mosel area and Aquitaine. Drawing an analogy with the dioceses of Reims, Metz and Verdun, Ewig stresses landowning by the Northern Sees "trans ligerim" as an indication of continuing contact between the two areas over a number of centuries. (62) Further, in the case of the bishopric of Trier, Ewig goes so far as to suggest that the diocesan property, Cancilla in the Auvergne, came to the church at Trier through a cleric or bishop called to Trier by Theuderich I - perhaps through Nicetius himself. For Ewig this seems to be the deciding factor for suggesting an origin for Nicetius in Limoges. (63)



Ewig's assertion that "weighty pieces of evidence" speak for the origin of Nicetius at Limoges (64) must be challenged. We cannot escape the reality that there is absolutely no contemporary evidence that Theuderic called Nicetius from Limoges. Two pieces of evidence have been overlooked - the letters written to Nicetius by Florianus, Abbot of the monastery of Romanus in northern Italy. Firstly we note that Florianus was a pupil of Caesarius' and that he mentions this when he writes to Nicetius, obviously supposing that this will speak for him as a recommendation. (65) In another letter Florianus refers knowingly to the prelate who had consecrated Nicetius and who, now dead, already enjoys a reputation for sanctity. (66) It is not entirely impossible that this prelate was Caesarius or at least one of the other monk-bishops from the school of Lérins. It is not impossible that Nicetius was consecrated in the Rhône area or even in Arles itself before leaving for the North. This is of course conjecture, but a link with the Rhône area or even Arles through Caesarius or another bishop would mesh neatly with Mathisen's suggestion (67) that our poet may be alluding to Nicetius' southern connections in the following line:

Quem Mosella tumens, Rodanus quoque parvulus ambit,  
(III. 12. 7).

We might add that Venantius employs the technique of a river reference elsewhere to allude to the origins of other individuals (68), and that Mathisen's research shows a concentration of Nicetii in the upper Rhône valley. (69) We know of no Nicetii native to the Mosel area.

## (2) Family Domination of Episcopal Sees and Indications of Social Mobility

The virtual inheritance of Sees by members of the same senatorial families is a phenomenon that has been illustrated and commented upon by

Stroheker (70), Wieruszowski (71), and Heinzelmann (72). Through marriage and the procreation of children prior to the assumption of sacerdotal office, members of the senatorial order in particular provided themselves with an heir who might succeed to their episcopal office. In the absence of a direct descendant a bishop might marshal support for a close kinsman and groom him to be his successor. This led to family domination of particular Sees where the prestige and wealth of a senatorial family may have served to discourage outsiders from seeking episcopal office there. We should not however imagine that this type of domination of a See was assured. Episcopal election was essentially dependant on popular acclamation by clergy and people, the consent of the Metropolitan and the diploma of the king. During the course of the sixth century, the kings came to exert great influence on episcopal elections often frustrating well-laid local plans, as we shall see in a later chapter.

A bishop often sought to nominate a kinsman, or even a disciple, as successor. Gregory of Tours tells us that Nicetius of Lyons, (Bishop 552-573), had been chosen by Bishop Sacerdos (his uncle) to be his successor. (73) The epitaph of Nicetius, written by an unknown author (74), stresses that Nicetius and Sacerdos were tied by blood, as well as by the link that came from tenure of the same See:

Quique Sacerdotis f(a)ctus his proximus heres  
sanguine coniunctu(s), culmine, sede simul, (75) .

Sidonius Apollinaris is reported as exclaiming on his death-bed that the Holy Spirit had moved him to nominate his brother as successor on the cathedra of Clermont-Ferrand. (76) Likewise, when Bishop Felix of Nantes became gravely ill, we hear that he assembled the other bishops of the area and

in their presence made a nomination of Burgundio, his nephew, to succeed him. Burgundio was then sent to Gregory, the Metropolitan, to be consecrated bishop even while Felix still lived. Gregory refused to consecrate the nominee because he had not yet passed through the various grades of clerical office and the incumbent was still living. (77) Later we see that this type of nomination of a successor by a bishop was outlawed by the Council of Paris in 614. (78)

Fortunatus takes a positive approach to the idea of episcopal inheritance. Like Gregory of Tours he stresses the advantages of continuity in family service to a community. Continuity of service in the one See is most clearly seen in the epitaphium Ruriciorum, for here it is a family link that joins the two bishops, avus and nepos. In the epitaph written for Bishop Eumerius of Nantes an execrable pun, not without precedent in the literature of commemoration, (79) highlights the succession of the son to the father's position:

Felix ille abiit, Felicem in sede reliquit,  
Heredis meritis vivit in orbe pater.

(IV. 1. 31-32)

The most fulsome expression of this concept of the episcopacy as a type of inheritance comes in the epitaph written for Bishop Cronopius of Périgueux, who is descended from bishops on both sides of his family. (IV. 8. 7-8) Whether these bishops were bishops of Périgueux or held office elsewhere cannot be ascertained. We do not know how many bishops there were in Cronopius' family or how far back they go. The number of bishops in one's family tree was certainly a matter of considerable pride, as Gregory of Tours makes clear. (80) Venantius alludes to a rich load of episcopal forebears in the way that in an earlier period one might allude to consular descent. (81)

Despite the solid façade of senatorial self-advertisement that we meet in our sources, and the stress (at times) on virtually inherited episcopal position, we should not conceive of Merovingian society as static or fossilised, even if the senatorial order may appear to be so. Social mobility was there for all to see in Merovingian society. One can point to a number of spectacular examples from Gregory's Historia to illustrate upward movement. Brachio, a former huntsman in the service of Duke Sigivald, went on to become the Abbot of the monastery of Ménat (82), while Marileif, who rose to the position of chief physician at the court of Chilperic, came from the bottom rung of society. His father at least had been in charge of the church mills, but his brothers, cousins and other relations were employed in the royal kitchens and bakery. Marileif's rise to prominence as physician brought him wealth, horses and other possessions all of which he was eventually to lose in a series of calamities which reduced him to the service of the church. (83) The career of the infamous Leudast (84) or of the precocious slave Andarchius (85) both illustrate spectacular upward mobility. Fortunatus' poems provide examples of Frankish officials praised for careers that likewise chart their rise in royal service. (86)

The Gallic episcopacy was in the sixth century reached by men from the very lowest ranks, who, in office, did not disgrace themselves or the church. We can point to Injuriosus, Bishop of Tours for nearly seventeen years, 529-46. (Gregory is most precise : sixteen years, eleven months and twenty six days.) Injuriosus undertook building projects within Tours, and instituted the saying of Tierce and Sext in the cathedral, a practice still followed in Gregory's time. Now this Injuriosus of whom Gregory speaks with approval was "civis Turonicus, de inferioribus quidem populi, ingenuus tamen." (87) Thus the man who was

Metropolitan of Tours for nearly seventeen years was of such low birth that Gregory felt compelled to assure his reader that the good bishop was still a free man! How Injuriosus rose to the episcopacy we do not know. Gregory is silent and we have no other information to explain what was the mechanism of social mobility in his case. Still, Gregory's story of an ambitious priest is revealing, for Riculf, who rose from the pauperes, clearly believed that he had a chance of becoming Bishop of Tours if he could mobilise local support and rid the town of "the rabble from Clermont", (88) that is, the great senatorial family that had dominated the See for years.

At times the senatorial aristocracy could be intimidating, for they must have overawed others with their stories of family achievement and their sophisticated and educated conversation. Domnolus of Le Mans, we read, begged King Lothar not to send him to Avignon for he obviously felt he would be out of his social depth and easily bored by the educated conversation of the senators there. (89) Others were not intimidated so easily. In Provence, Jovinus, an ex-governor, used his armed retainers in pitched battle over the episcopal office at Uzès which had been snatched from his grasp by the son of a local senator. The senator only retained his hold on the city by buying off his assailant. (90)

Conditions in Gaul did not always only favour the members of the senatorial aristocracy. As we shall presently see, the sixth century shows the gradual penetration of episcopal ranks by small numbers of Franks. We must not overlook the fact that even foreigners could gain a cathedra. Eusebius, Bishop of Paris from 591 and successor to the Frank Ragnemodus, was a Syrian Merchant. Gregory views Eusebius with obvious distaste - he claims that

the merchant bribed his way into office and filled the domus ecclesiae with his Syrian retinue. (91) Finally, let us not forget Fortunatus himself, a native of a small town in Italy and a person without apparent claim to senatorial status. Through his literary skills he attracted the attention of the great and powerful in Gaul and ended life as Bishop of Poitiers.

These examples are but few, yet they illustrate the principle that social mobility into the Gallic episcopacy was possible in the sixth century. The senatorial aristocracy may have been a united and cohesive group, but due to the vagaries of the electoral process and increasing royal power and interference in episcopal elections, could not always stop the base-born, the Frank or the foreigner from gaining the episcopacy. The incidence of social mobility into the episcopacy as a whole is impossible to ascertain; many bishops are little more than names to us. Even the mechanism of social mobility into the episcopacy is not always clear. A royal official who has risen in the king's service might win a king's nomination. (92) Mobility up through the ranks of the clergy might be due to a reputation for personal sanctity, charismatic gifts, asceticism or learning. These things may well have counted for a great deal if one lacked a senatorial background.

Episcopal patronage played a major part in the career of Riculf, who rose to the position of Archdeacon under Euphronius of Tours. But for his outburst and subsequent eclipse he may have gone on, with similar patronage, to become bishop somewhere else within the ecclesiastical province. Venantius' epitaph for Gallus shows that even for a nobilis advancement might come from the patronage of king and bishop. (IV. 4. 13-18) The apparently non-noble Archdeacon Plato attained the episcopal office at Poitiers with the aid of his patronus, Gregory of Tours. The relationship between magister and discipulus

is most strikingly underlined in the poem penned by Fortunatus to celebrate Plato's installation at Poitiers. (X. 14. 9-12)

Administrative skill, a knowledge of canon law or of the Fathers, all of these may have helped one make one's way to the cathedra and it is this type of emphasis on personal merit that emerges in the poems Fortunatus addressed to Sidonius of Mainz, a Gallo-Roman, and Igidius of Reims, a Frank. No claim to nobilitas is advanced in Venantius' portrayal of Sidonius who rose through his own exertions:

Iura sacerdoti sacro moderamine servans,  
per cuius studium crevit et ipse gradus.

(IX. 9. 7-8)

Here there is no mention of venerable family background, no mention of ancestors who might be emulated, no suggestion of the prelate coming to the See as to an inheritance. Much the same emphasis on personal merit as a factor explaining one's rise to the episcopacy is to be seen in the portrayal of Bishop Igidius, a Metropolitan of Frankish origin. Personal merit, rather than family station, is here singled out for comment and recognition:

Actibus egregiis venerabile culmen, Igidi,  
ex cuius meritis crevit honore gradus,

(III. 15. 1-2).

### (3) Frankish Bishops

By the sixth century the senatorial nobiles did not constitute the only aristocracy in Gaul. Paralleling them, and perhaps intermarrying with them, were the members of the Frankish nobility who had entered Gaul with the Merovingian kings. The Frankish nobility established themselves mainly in the North and North-East of Gaul. Their power stemmed from their close relationship to the kings, their possession of independently held land and the number of

servants and fighting men they could command. The importance of one's name as an indication of nobility (in the Frankish sense) has been demonstrated by Irsigler, (93) who draws our attention to the method Gregory of Tours uses to designate particular Franks. Gregory uses phrases such as "Dacco, Dagarici quondam filius", (94) or "Bodigysilus, filius Mummolini" (95) to indicate family affiliation. The Frankish nobles could also be termed proceres, priores or meliores. (96) Like his Gallo-Roman counterpart, the Frank might take an interest in literary pursuits, and no doubt under the influence of the Gallic senators, turn his hand to poetry. (97) The most important accomplishments expected of a Frankish noble were the skills of riding well and the ability to handle weapons. We might note Venantius' portrayal of the Frank Gogo, hunting in the Ardennes and Vosges. (VII. 4. 17-20)

Not confining himself to praise of the senatorial nobility, Venantius knew from his contact with court circles at Metz and Paris that it was often a Frank, like Gogo, who was the man of the moment. We have noted that as an ever obliging poet, Fortunatus was quite prepared to ascribe nobilitas to barbarians. Venantius appears skilful in sensing a Frankish hankering after the trappings of Roman culture. He throws a toga around the shoulders of a Frank whom he wishes to praise. (98) His awareness of the world around him is reflected in a minor way in his vocabulary which shows that this Italian has picked up six Germanic words. (99)



Frankish bishops such as Ageric of Verdun (III. 23); Igidius of Reims (III. 15); Bertram of Bordeaux (III. 27; 28); Ragnemodus of Paris (IX. 10); Gundegisil of Bordeaux (VII. 25. 7) and Magneric of Trier (Appendix, 34), all of whom are known to us from Gregory of Tours, either received poems of praise from Venantius or at least greetings in a poem addressed to another. Other bishops who appear in Venantius' poems - Baudoaldus of Meaux (IX. 8) and Chalactericus of Chartres (IV. 7) are nothing more than names to us. Of the thirty-nine sixth century Gallic bishops mentioned in Venantius' poems, ten (100) have names that appear Frankish. Onomastic evidence such as this is notoriously difficult to interpret. Even if we could with some certainty label some of the bishops in Venantius' poems Frankish and others Gallo-Romans, the sample is still too small to extrapolate from this any picture of the relative strengths of Franks to Gallo-Romans in the episcopacy during this period. Further, the bishops represented in the carmina are a random group of individuals who happened to interest the poet.

Onomastic studies have been attempted for the secular sphere by Godefroid Kurth, who found that of the 55 names of Comites whom we encounter in our sixth century sources, thirty have Latin names and twenty-five Germanic. (101) A similar study of the Gallic episcopacy, based on all the available sources, has been carried out by Helen Wieruszowski, who showed that the relative strengths of Franks to Gallo-Romans varied from area to area with southern Gaul appearing to be more heavily dominated by Gallo-Romans. (102) Wieruszowski illustrates the slow growth in the strength and influence of the Germanic element in the course of the sixth century. At the time of the Council of Paris in 614, she notes that there are thirty-seven Germanic names among the seventy-nine signatories to the canons of this council. (103)

Caution is necessary when dealing with onomastic evidence. Bishops may well have changed their names some time prior to consecration. We know, for example, from Gregory of Tours, of Bishop Emerius of Saintes (mentioned by Fortunatus - I. 12. 5), who was called Cymulus "in infantia sua". (104) It is possible that here we have a Breton who changed his name to one with a more Roman ring to it. How many other bishops, one wonders, may have had another, perhaps Germanic, name? One can only speculate on what sort of background lies behind a name like Plato. (105) Are we dealing with an individual of Greek extraction, or merely a man with philosophical interests? Franks may have adopted Roman sounding names and Gallo-Romans, hoping for advancement under the Franks, may have adopted Germanic names. In a society with two main cultures there must have been influence and movement in both directions. One can draw the analogy with Ostrogothic Italy where a certain amount of such movement took place. Theodoric is credited with saying - Romanus miser imitatur Gothum et utilis Gothus imitatur Romanum. (106) Obviously there were some "Romans" who saw advantages in imitating their conquerers. A similar process would appear to have been under way in Gaul. (107)

In the fifth century, Sidonius Apollinaris may on the one hand commend Arbogast for his facility with the Latin tongue, (108) while on the other he was aware of the effort made by Syagrius to learn the Germanic language of the Burgundians. (109) Syagrius, pointedly addressed by Sidonius as the great-grandson of a consul, disturbed the bishop not a little. Syagrius saw the advantage in learning the language of the conquerors. He carved out a position for himself as translator and legal expert among the elders of the Burgundians. Syagrius' diligence won him barbarian friends. Sidonius is not above finding the whole thing amusing, but his final lines suggest that even at this stage he feared a drift away from Latin to the language of the barbarians. (110)

The complexity of the racial situation in Gaul in the sixth century must have been exacerbated by the possibility of intermarriage with Burgundians or the newer Franks. Much is made of the senatorial status of Felix of Nantes and his forebears, but the nephew that Felix wishes to advance bears the name Burgundio. (111) It is difficult to say what we should make of this. Even in the great senatorial family of Gregory of Tours we encounter the dux Gundulf, who was Gregory's uncle. (112) Using the indication of a name to work out the relative strengths of Frankish to Gallo-Roman elements in the episcopacy is fraught with difficulties.

One might also question the assumption that it is the size or proportion that makes up a sub-group that speaks for its importance within the whole. A few influential and extremely politically-involved Frankish bishops may well have counted for more than the percentage of the episcopacy that were Frankish by birth.

Three Frankish bishops that were lauded by Venantius were key figures in Merovingian court intrigue. Their importance in the political affairs of their time certainly balanced that inherited sense of social station characteristic of representatives of the senatorial order. Our poet adopts a panegyric tone when addressing Igidius of Reims. (III. 15. 9-12) This bishop is a prominent protagonist in the Historia Francorum where contemporary gossip makes him one of Queen Fredegund's favorites. (113) During the infancy of Childebert II, who inherited the kingdom of Austrasia from his father Sigibert in 570 when he was five years old, Igidius emerges as a key figure among the proceres of the kingdom. Igidius headed a party that opposed the Burgundian alliance that was the policy of Gogo and Queen Brunhild and sought a realignment with Chilperic of Neustria. Walter Goffart has shown the central role that Igidius played in

Austrasia as an "unofficial Neustrian agent" and the quickening of activity following the deaths of Chilperic's children, when the king was left without an heir. Igidius lead an embassy to Chilperic, the object of which was an alliance of Austrasia and Neustria against King Guntram and the confirmation of Childebert II as Chilperic's heir. (114) The alliance did not please all within the Austrasian army and Gregory tells us that in 582/3 some of the troops mutinied demanding the dismissal of Igidius and other seniores. They attempted to cut down the bishop and he had to make a quick escape on horseback to the security of the walls of Reims. (115)

Intrigue always surrounded Igidius. Suspected of treason, he was pardoned by Childebert II a first time in 587. (116) Later, in 590, the confession of Sunnegisil implicated Igidius in the plot made by Rauching and his accomplices to kill Childebert II. Tried for high treason by his fellow bishops at Metz, Igidius confessed his guilt, and was banished to Strasbourg. In the course of the trial the correspondence that had earlier passed between Igidius and Chilperic was tabled and his machinations laid bare. The king charged him with fomenting civil war, and Igidius, in his admission of guilt made clear the extent of his power: "per meum consilium multa fuisse gesta certamina, quibus nonnulla Galliarum loca depopulata sunt." (117)

Ageric of Verdun, bishop till 588, was a native of the city, (118) and one of Venantius' poems addressed to the prelate makes much of his importance for the standing of the Urbs Vereduna. (III. 23. 1-4). Like Igidius, a pastor of a northern See, Ageric also enjoyed great influence at the Austrasian court. In particular his powerful position stemmed from the special spiritual relationship that bound Childebert II to him. This prelate had the distinction of being "pater regis ex lavacro" (119) and as such enjoyed great influence over the king.

Others recognised this position and chose to exploit the bishop's influence with the king and his good nature. Guntram Boso, the rebel dux, fearful of the wrath of Childebert II, chose Verdun cathedral in which to seek sanctuary, hoping to use the bishop's influence to ensure his safety. It was, as it turned out, only the bishop's pleading that saved the rebel for a time and Guntram Boso was handed over to the bishop's custody. At a meeting of Childebert II and his uncle Guntram, however, a decision was taken, in Ageric's absence, to execute the rebel. Guntram Boso's subsequent actions sealed his fate. He kidnapped Bishop Magneric of Trier, hoping to use his influence as pater ex lavacro to Theuderic to placate Childebert II. King Guntram however had Boso smoked out of the building where he held the bishop, and he was cut down on the spot. (120)

Another rebellious dux, Berthefried, later sought to escape Childebert II, by reaching the domus ecclesiae in which Ageric lived, and although on this occasion the bishop tried to protect the rebel, he proved powerless to avert the bloodshed in his own house. (121)

Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux, the successor to Leontius II, was a relation of the Merovingian royal family. Fortunatus addresses two poems to Bertram. In one (III. 17) he thanks the bishop for giving him a ride in his chariot, while in another (III. 18) he comments on the bishop's attempts at writing poetry. In neither of these poems is there any indication of the bishop's family background. We are, all the same, reasonably well informed about Bertram thanks to Gregory of Tours. King Guntram, we are told in Gregory's account of the affair of Gundovald, was particularly incensed at Bertram's reception of the pretender, since the bishop was himself related

to the royal house. (122) Bertram's mother, Ingitrude, had founded a convent in Tours, "in atrio sancti Martini". (123) It was to this convent that Ingitrude summoned her daughter Berthegund, Bertram's sister, away from her husband. When the enraged husband brought his complaint to King Guntram, that monarch's intervention had about it all the indications of mediation in a family quarrel. (124) Bishop Bertram must therefore be counted among the most noble in Gallic society, springing as he does from royal stock.

Bishop Ragnemodus of Paris (577-591) was also a key figure in the politics of the period. He was close to the Neustrian court as can be seen by the fact that he was the bishop who baptised Chilperic's son Theudebert in 583. It was he also who, following Chilperic's assassination in 584, took in Queen Fredegund and gave her sanctuary in the cathedral of Paris. Later he was able to convince King Guntram, despite Fredegund's objections, that Bishop Praetextatus ought to be allowed to return to his bishopric, not that this chain of events turned out well for poor Praetextatus who was murdered in his own cathedral by one of Fredegund's men.

Another Frankish bishop, Magneric, a disciple of Nicetius of Trier, came to the cathedra in that city in 566/7 while Venantius was still in the north and the poet sent him a poem of greeting on his consecration. (Append. , 34) He was the bishop who baptised Theudebert, the son of Childebert in 586.

#### (4) The Bishop's Wife

Some of Venantius' bishops were married men; it was not considered unusual for the Merovingian bishop to have a wife. Having already procreated, a married candidate for the priesthood entered upon at least a year of continence

before being raised to the diaconate. (125) Deacons, priests and higher clergy who were married prior to ordination thus broke off marital relations with their wives. The wife of a cleric was henceforth to be treated by him "like a sister", but there was never any suggestion that the marriage was dissolved. (126) The ideal is spelled out in a letter of Leo the Great to Rusticus, Bishop of Narbonne - from a carnal marriage a new spiritual marriage will emerge. Marital relations are to cease, but love remains in these marriages. (127) In our period this continuing relationship between a bishop and his wife was acknowledged in the term episcopa used to refer to the bishop's wife. (128)

The episcopa is, nevertheless, a rather shadowy figure. In our period there are few descriptions of individual episcopae, and few indications of their social position in the cities where their husbands ministered. In the fifth century we read in Sidonius of the wife of Simplicius, candidate for the episcopacy at Bourges. This lady had come from an episcopal family and was thus well suited to fulfil her role as bishop's wife. Her character reflects well on her husband and she and Simplicius have brought up their children well. (129) Unfortunately we hear nothing of the role she might be expected to play following Simplicius' consecration. In the canons of the sixth century Gallic church councils we find frequent reference to the wives of the clergy, including bishops, but the picture here is very one-sided indeed. The Councils are dealing with what appears to be a continuing problem of sacerdotal discipline and with departures from the ideal relationship envisaged by the church. If one were not to read beyond the exclusively prohibitory canons, then one would be left with the distorted view that the wives of clerics merely constituted an unsolved and continuing problem in the area of sacerdotal discipline.

Canon two of the Council of Arles, 524, makes it clear that the bishops, while enforcing a trial year of continence before ordination, would, but for the shortage of priests, have stipulated a longer period of testing. This was, indeed, the case at an earlier time. (130) The Council of Clermont, 535, forbade the continuation of sexual relations between the cleric and his wife. The ideal enjoined is one of brotherly love, but the same canon that speaks of this also mentions clerics who have returned to conjugal relations - they are to be deprived of their priestly dignity. (131) The third Council of Orleans, 538, dealt with the same problem and even had to legislate against clerics marrying after ordination. (132) The fourth council held at Orleans, in 541, returned to the problem and had to legislate that sacerdotes were not to share the same bed, or indeed the same room as their wives, lest this may give rise to scandal. (133)

The episcopal household came under strict control at the Council of Tours in 567. A bishop or lower cleric may only have his mother, sister or daughter to manage his household. (134) Canon eleven of this Council seeks to ensure strict compliance. (135) The canons of this Council of Tours stipulate that the bishop and his wife must live separately from one another. The bishop is now to live surrounded by his clergy who are to ensure that no suspicion of continued conjugal relations attaches to the bishop. The clergy are also instructed to drive out "strange women" from the bishop's residence. (136) Again, it is a concern for the bishop's reputation that lies behind the following directive of the Council of Macón, 581, that no woman should be allowed entry into a bishop's bedroom unless two presbyters are present. (137)

These canons are quoted at length to illustrate just how pervasive was the portrayal of women as an occasion of sin to be avoided. There is no suggestion that the episcopa could be anything more than a hindrance to her



husband or more than a possible blot on his reputation. The few glimpses of the bishop's wife that we get in Gregory's works fit together into a somewhat more balanced picture. On the negative side, Gregory relates how Bishop Urbicus, a pastor of Clermont-Ferrand in the fourth century, was seduced by his lust-crazed wife. This "new Eve" beat on the doors of the domus ecclesiae until at length the bishop admitted her to his bedroom and fell under her charms. (138) We are assured, however, that he later repented and did penance for his sin. In Book IV, we catch sight of Suzanna, the evil wife of Priscus, a sixth century bishop of Lyons. According to Gregory, she entered not only the domus ecclesiae, but even Priscus' cell, all in blatant disregard of church discipline. St. Nicetius, however, saw to the punishment of the bishop, his wife, children and entire household. (139) Likewise the unnamed wife of Badegisil, Bishop of Le Mans, incited her husband to evil and the oppression of his flock. Gregory paints the details of her evil-doing in the most lurid of colours. (140)

A tantalizingly brief sighting of a pious episcopa is found in Book Two of the Historia. Here the unnamed wife of Bishop Namatius of Clermont-Ferrand appears as the donor of the church of St. Stephen outside the walls of that city. It was her idea to have the church decorated with coloured frescoes and she is represented as directing the workmen who were engaged on the painting. Day after day she used to sit, book in lap, reading out to them the stories that she wished illustrated on the walls. The episcopa emerges from this thumbnail sketch as a real person : she wore a black dress and she looked so much like a pauper, that a pauper who didn't know who she was, gave her food. (141) This sketch of the pious episcopal wife should alert us to the more positive aspects of clerical marriage and to the possibility of a real pastoral partnership between episcopus and episcopa.

Here Fortunatus allows us to fill out the picture further since it is from his poems that we can piece together some picture of the relationship that existed between Leontius II of Bordeaux and his wife Placidina. Fortunatus' poems make it clear that Placidina was a conspicuous public figure and that she involved herself fully in Leontius' churchbuilding projects. Like the wife of Namatius of Clermont-Ferrand, Placidina sees to the decoration of churches. She adorns the Basilica of St. Martin, newly erected by her husband, with sacred veils that she supplies. In Fortunatus' celebration of the construction of this church Placidina appears as Leontius' co-worker (I. 6. 21-22) in an inscription that was placed on the church itself. (142) On another occasion we see Placidina as the co-donor, with her husband, in the offering of a chalice. (I. 14) At Saintes, Placidina involved herself in the decoration of the tomb of St. Bibianus. (I. 12. 15-18) Together with Leontius she offered the elaborate silver and gold cover on the tomb of the sainted bishop. (143) Again the episcopa was linked to the work of her husband in an inscription (144) intended for public display.

Leontius and Placidina are the epitome of the pious couple and Fortunatus celebrates their good works in much the same way as he describes the church building of the pious Basilius and Baudegunde, a couple who restored a basilica of St. Martin. (I. 7) There is every indication that Placidina was an important figure in her own right. Fortunatus could, for example, write to her, send her presents and praise her directly. (I. 17) Placidina's genealogy was especially distinguished and Fortunatus, in praising Leontius, could refer to the important connections that Placidina brought to the already noble Leontii. We have seen that Placidina was descended from the Gallic emperor Eparchius Avitus, and the glory of this connection reflects on Leontius.

As the poet observes – "semine Caesareo nil superesse potest". (I. 15. 100)

Imperial blood flows in the veins of Leontius' offspring.

It has been suggested that the young Arcadius, whose epitaph appears in Book IV of the carmina may have been a brother of Placidina who died young and for whom Fortunatus wrote an epitaph, perhaps at Placidina's bidding, a considerable time after Arcadius' death. The description of the youth as "veniens de prole senatus" (IV. 17. 3) makes it clear that we are dealing with a member of the senatorial aristocracy. It is possible that this Arcadius is not a long dead brother of Placidina, but rather her son. (145)

Placidina's family background, while clearly distinguished, should not obscure what Fortunatus saw as the lady's personal qualities. Her virtues made her the ornament of her sex. (I. 15. 105-106) Finally we see Placidina cast in the role of a pious Roman widow, when we glimpse her in the epitaph Venantius wrote for Leontius:

Funeris officium, magni solamen amoris,  
Dulcis adhuc cineri dat Placidina tibi.

(IV. 10. 25-26)

The epitaph completes the picture that comes through in other earlier poems. The bishop and his wife may live apart, but Fortunatus can portray their love. In an earlier poem Venantius speaks of a real affection (like that enjoined by Leo the Great) still linking the couple who lived in strict accord with the canons:

Cogor amore etiam Placidinae pauca referre,  
Quae tibi tunc coniunx, est modo cara soror.

(I. 15. 93-94)

Following Leontius' death Fortunatus may depict Placidina as the episcopal widow, a public figure whose grief and bereavement are a matter for public recognition, as was her connection to her husband while he still lived.

Another episcopal widow appears in the carmina: Euphrasia, the widow of Namatius, Bishop of Vienne, d. 559/60. (146) Euphrasia is accorded an epitaph which stresses her personal virtues, her noble background, her association with Bishop Namatius and finally the life of a religious lived after his death - "coniuge defuncto, consociata Deo". (IV. 27. 14) Venantius' portrait of this femina sancta is distantly based on the model of the perfect Christian widow (I Tim. 5. 10), well attested for her good deeds. (147) Having devoted herself to the care of the poor and of prisoners and exiles, Euphrasia is finally raised to the starry heights where she may be addressed as one of the blest at the court of the King of Paradise. (IV. 27. 17-22) A sharp contrast indeed to the Nova Eva who hinders the bishop or brings him to disgrace.

#### (5) Monasticism and Celibacy

Our sample produces two individuals who are portrayed as a monk-bishop although there are indications of lifelong celibacy in the poet's description of a number of prelates. One passage in Gregory's Historia suggests that there may have been some opposition to married bishops on the part of those from ascetic backgrounds. Bishop Dalmatius of Rodez, who died in 580, was, we are told, an ascetic, "temperate in his eating habits and free from carnal desires". (148) He went out of his way to adjure the king, in his will, not to permit a married man to replace him as bishop. (149)

Monasticism had come early to Gaul and the monastic tradition was, by the sixth century, extremely rich and varied. At the time of Athanasius' writing of the Vita Antonij there were already monks in Gaul, (150) and the eremitical form of the monastic life is still in evidence in the sixth century. (151)

The influence of Basil and Cassian in the development of cenobitical monasticism in Gaul is well-known<sup>(152)</sup> and it was in Gaul that the monk-bishop emerged as an important figure, as early as the fourth century. Through the hagiographical literature that developed around the monk-bishop a model of sanctity was constructed and it was this model that was transmitted to future generations. <sup>(153)</sup> This tradition and the powerful influence of the island of Lérins, that nursery of bishops, produced in the fifth century a series of individuals who combined in themselves the practice of asceticism and monastic virtue while rising to the demands that the pastoral care of a city placed upon them. <sup>(154)</sup>

In our period we see this ideal personified in the figure of St. Caesarius of Arles, whose life exemplified the perfect combination of the monastic and episcopal roles. <sup>(155)</sup> Fortunatus praises him as a father of monasticism and places him on a level with Basil in the East. (V. 3. 40) Writing to Bishop Martin of Braga in Galicia, himself a monk, <sup>(156)</sup> Venantius characterizes the author of the rule followed by Agnes and Radegund at Poitiers as both a splendid bishop and a faithful monk:

Qui fuit antistes Arelas de sorte Lerini,  
Et mansit monachus pontificale decus.

(V. 2. 69-70)

Only one other bishop in our sample is directly portrayed by Fortunatus in terms of this ideal and that is Gallus, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand (525-551), and grand-uncle to Gregory of Tours. We know from Gregory's Vitae Patrum that the bishop had entered the monastic life at an early age, and became a disciple of St. Quintianus at Clermont. During a campaign in the Auvergne, King Theuderich sent a number of clerics from the area to Trier to serve in the church there. Theuderich noticed Gallus, then a young man, for he had a

fine voice. The king showed favour to Gallus and took him to the royal palace at Cologne. During his stay in Cologne, Gallus launched an offensive against paganism in the area. While the people of Trier later wanted him to be their bishop, Theuderic designated him to succeed his monastic father Quintianus at Clermont-Ferrand, when that monk-bishop died in 526. (157)

The epitaph that Venantius wrote for Gallus lists in summary the cursus followed by this monk-bishop. We see his renunciation of the world; he left behind father and mother and found in St. Quintianus a new spiritual father. (IV. 4. 9-14) At a young age he took up hard service as a monk in the militia of the Lord, and was formed by the teachings of St. Quintianus. The love that Theuderic felt for him and his move to the king's palace are both noted, (IV. 4. 15-16) as is the inheritance of the See from his magister, Quintianus. (IV. 4. 17-20)

What is most striking about Venantius' portrayal of Gallus is the fact that despite the thoroughly monastic background of the bishop, sketched in outline in the epitaph, the poet, while picking up the theme of ascetic renunciation and referring to the hard service required of one enrolled in the militia of Christ does not dwell upon the details of ascetical practice. Indeed one gets the impression that Venantius did not on the whole approve of excessive asceticism. (158) Here, in Gallus' epitaph, the emphasis is more on the pastoral role of the bishop, than on monastic life as such:

Pontificatus enim moderans ita rexit habenas,  
 Pastor ut officiis esset, amore pater;  
 Mansuetus, patiens, bonus, aequus, amator, amandus:  
 Non erat offensae, sed locus hic veniae.

(IV. 4. 19-22)

Bishop Germanus of Paris is briefly mentioned as the model of a good Abbot in the poem addressed to Abbot Droctoveus, who succeeded Germanus as Abbot at Autun. (IX. 11. 3-4) No mention is however made of Germanus' episcopal role and the poem does not aid our understanding of the monk-bishop. In the case of Germanus, military imagery, often associated with monasticism, is another clue to his background. (189) Nicetius of Trier is not specifically categorised by our poet as a monachus, yet he is portrayed in a fashion that highlights renunciation of the world:

Divino insistens operi terrena relinquis;  
Cui moritur mundus, non moriture manes.

(III. 11. 5-6)

In the case of Nicetius we are fortunate that Gregory in his Vita Nicetii indicates the monastic life of this bishop. (160) Nicetius was followed by his disciple, Magneric (Appendix , 34) most probably another monk-bishop. (161)

Apart from Gallus, who is portrayed as a monk-bishop and Germanus and Nicetius, whom we know from other sources came from a monastic background, we find in the carmina indications of lifelong celibacy in the portrayal of three other bishops. Note Exocius of Limoges, (IV. 6. 7-8), Ageric of Verdun, (III. 23. 8; III. 23a. 9-16) and Felix of Nantes. (III. 7. 25-26) What we are probably dealing with here are men who neither married nor entered a monastic community, but who took minor orders at an early age. Our period also saw a move away from the situation that existed in Caesarius' day when clergy lived at home, (162) to a form of communal living based on the domus ecclesiae. This community of clerics may be observed coming more and more under regulation by the Councils. (163) Such a communal life-style approaches, at least to some degree, the monastic ideal.

One is struck by the diversity encountered in Fortunatus' episcopal subjects. There is public recognition of the marital status of the married bishop and some signs of the vitality of the ideal of the monk-bishop who serves a hard apprenticeship before taking up the duties of pastoral care. There is, as well, the non-monastic celibate. On the evidence available it is impossible to ascertain the relative strengths of each group, one against the other, or to extrapolate from this evidence a general picture of the relative strengths of each group within the Gallic episcopacy as a whole. We should remember that we are dealing with occasional poems which may not always provide us with the information that we seek. Nicetius of Trier is established as a monk-bishop on evidence external to the carmina, while similarly the married status of Gregory of Langres is established by reference to the writings of Gregory of Tours. (164) Our evidence has its own limitations and the poems cannot always be supplemented with other information.

#### (6) Indications of Intellectual Background

The despair expressed by Gregory of Tours, in the Preface to his Historia, at the state of letters in Gaul is often quoted as an indication of the decline of intellectual life in the sixth century Merovingian Kingdoms. The complaints are, he claims, widespread and repeated:- Vae diebus nostris, quia periit studium litterarum a nobis, nec reperitur rethor in populis, qui gesta praesentia promulgare possit in paginis. (165) Yet it is significant for us that the one person who did write an orderly account of events was a bishop. Despite all he had to say about the decline of letters, Gregory could still fear that a future bishop of Tours, his head full of the artes liberales of Martianus Capella, might one day destroy his history by misguided structural change of



an editorial character or by attempts at rhetorical redecoration. (166) Similarly, Gregory can still envisage a future bishop having the ability to transpose the Historia into verse. A metrical version of the Acts of the Apostles written by Arator and the metrical Vita Martini of Paulinus of Périgueux enjoyed great popularity among clerics. Towards the latter part of the sixth century we see Bishop Aunarius of Auxerre asking the priest Stephen to write a Life of Amator in prose and a Life of Germanus in verse, since, as he explains, some like prose while others like to be charmed by the numbers, rhythms and musical sounds of verse. (167) Certainly those bishops who knew Fortunatus himself would appear to have a healthy liking for poetry. We see Venantius' bishops requesting poems on various subjects and the poet providing pieces for great occasions such as the dedication of a church or the installation of a bishop. The epitaphs composed by Fortunatus also point to the popularity of this metrical form of commemoration in episcopal circles.

If any one group in Merovingian society could be expected to possess a certain level of education and culture it was the bishops, especially those from a senatorial background, for whom the pursuit of letters was an integral part of the aristocratic way of life. Gregory, for example, mentions in passing the erudition of other prelates. He describes Bishop Ferreolus of Uzès (died 581) as a learned man who composed a number of volumes of letters in the style of Sidonius, (168) and tells us that Bishop Sulpicius of Bourges, bishop from 584, was extremely learned and second to none as a poet. (169) The bishops tried to prevent the ordination of those without the basics of an education and they often saw to the education of prospective clerics themselves. (170) Advancement in the church would have been dependant upon a knowledge of ecclesiastical

literature, the psalms and the writings of the Fathers. With the decline of the educational institutions of Gaul by the sixth century, (171) our bishops were no doubt educated as children on a private basis at home with their families or at the house of a local bishop.

Unfortunately, we can reconstruct little of our bishops' earlier educational experience. We only possess information about the educational cursus followed by Gregory of Tours and we have no way of telling if this was the form of education received by other prelates.

Gregory tells us that he learned the alphabet at home at the age of eight. (172) He later attended the episcopal school at Clermont under the supervision of Archdeacon Avitus. (173) There his education was composed of the study of the psalms and ecclesiastical texts. Gregory's exposure to secular literature appears to have been meagre, and what knowledge he did acquire in this area, was picked up at a later date.

Despite obvious gaps in his education, and the well-known and quite conventional aspersions that he heaped on his own powers, (174) Gregory still felt sufficiently confident to pass judgement on the verse written by King Chilperic, (175) to request quite specific verse forms from Fortunatus, (176) and to become involved with his fellow prelates at the Council of Macôn in 585 in the debate about the literary quality of the orationes written by Bishop Praetextatus while in exile. (177) It is not without a certain note of condescension that he says of Bishop Agricola of Chalon-sur-Saône - humanitatis exiguae, facundiae vero magnae erat. (178)

We may assume that the recipients of Fortunatus' poems were expected to be able to appreciate the poet's classical allusions. A superficial knowledge

of classical literature is presupposed. Three of the bishops who received poems from Venantius were poets in their own right. Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux is praised for the small poems that he has sent and Venantius answers also in verse. This good bishop is assured that Rome herself did not hear poems more stately than these in the famous Forum of Trajan. (III. 18. 7-8) Despite the supposed popularity of Bertram's poetry, (III. 18. 11-12) these literary productions may well have been defective attempts at the imitation of earlier models.

Gregory of Tours was able to turn his hand to poetry when he wished. Gregory notified Fortunatus of the gift of a villa, and celebrated the poet's cursus in a poem. Venantius mentions this in his reply:

Tramite munifico celebravit pagina cursum,  
Carminis dulcifluis quam tuus edit amor,

(VIII. 19. 1-2).

Felix of Nantes was most probably a poet. He wrote prose in a distinctive, almost poetic style. (III. 4. (3))

More often Fortunatus comments on the eloquentia of bishops, (179) but these comments must be seen in the context of the episcopal task of preaching and expounding the bible, and not necessarily as an indication of great rhetorical competence. A knowledge of church law and practice is the starting point for the bishop's task of preaching. Thus Venantius, using the same phrase characterises both Gregory of Tours (V. 12. 5) and Baudoaldus of Meaux (IX. 8. 5) as "florens in studiis et sacra in lege fidelis". Preaching was one of the primary episcopal duties stressed by Caesarius of Arles. Caesarius sums up the episcopal duty in this regard in his sermon, In Ordinatione Episcopi : "Multa enim adversa te necesse est sustinere, si doctrinae regulam custodire, si verbum Dei sicut expedit, adsidue volueris praedicare. . . . Unde contestor te hodie coram Deo et angelis eius, et apostolica voce denuncio:

Adtende lectioni, exhortationi, doctrinae.  
 praedica verbum; insta oportune, inopportune:  
 argue, obsecra, increpa in omni patientia  
 et doctrina. (180) (1 Tim 4.13; 2 Tim 4.2)

Caesarius picks up the first words of part of the Epistle reading of the Mass, In Ordinatione Episcopi. The earliest Gallican lectionary, from the palimpsest Codex Weissenburgensis 76, dating from the fifth or sixth century and thought to come from Septimania, lists I Tim 4.13, among other selections from Paul's letters to Timothy, (181) an obvious choice for this occasional Mass. Caesarius underlines the bishop's role as preacher. The duty of preaching required a certain level of sacred and rhetorical education, in fact some clerics neglected preaching since they felt they lacked the necessary rhetorical skills. (182) On the other hand, a frequent complaint leveled against the clergy was that they preached in such a rhetorical fashion that their teaching could not be comprehended by the faithful, let alone followed. The ideal that emerges from both the works of Gregory of Tours and Caesarius, is one of an elevated style which is at the same time easy to follow. (183)

Venantius' letters to Felix of Nantes (III. 4) and Syagrius of Autun (V. 6) show that he wrote to bishops in a dense rhetorical style that he believed they would appreciate, yet on another level he also shows in the Preface to his Vita Albini that he was conscious of the need for the educated man to adapt his style to the level of his audience in order to instruct the faithful. (184)

Venantius praises an eloquentia that is useful and practical to the bishop in the discharge of his duty. On the anniversary of his consecration, Gregory of Tours is praised since his tongue brings the apostolic light to his people. (V. 4.5) Ageric of Verdun is able to unlock through his preaching, the secrets of faith and then nourish his congregation (III. 23. 9-10; see also III. 23a. 21-22) and Felix of Nantes is able to use his river of eloquence to instruct. (III. 8. 17-18) The

fight against heresy has a weapon in the bishop's preaching, and the epitaph of Chalactericus of Chartres notes that he employed his eloquence to cleanse error. (IV. 7. 17-18) This is suggestive of the Augustinian ideal of a practical and fitting Christian eloquence, rather than of a mere display of rhetorical skill. (185)

#### (7) The Episcopal Cursus

A decided clerical cursus is absent from Fortunatus' portrayal of the bishop. We have some details of Gallus' monastic background in his epitaph, (IV. 4) a reference to the career of Gregory of Langres who was comes in Langres (IV. 2. 7-8) and an allusion to the part Leontius played in Childebert I's expedition to Spain, (I. 15. 9-10) but nothing that could be seen as an attempt to sketch an ideal or standardised episcopal career. Fortunatus could with ease praise a contemporary secular cursus as the poems addressed to Condan, (VII. 16) Galactorius (X. 19) and Sigoaldus (X. 16) illustrate. The absence of an ecclesiastical counterpart is no doubt to be attributed to the need for the bishop to display humilitas. There was a strong belief that the episcopacy should not be too eagerly (or at least too obviously) sought. This attitude was in part a legacy from the monastic and ascetical traditions in which the episcopacy was to be avoided as an occasion of sin. (186) Fortunatus' Hymnus de Leontio Episcopo (187) represents this contemporary attitude - there an unnamed usurper is castigated for his ambitio in seeking the See of Bordeaux, and is contrasted with Hilary, Martin and Gregory (of Nazianzus) who sought to avoid the episcopal honour. (I. 16. 37-40) The very recital of an ecclesiastical cursus may in itself have been suggestive of ambitio as the story of Cato in Gregory's Historia

highlights. There Gregory draws attention to the vanity, ambition and self-importance of the priest Cato by depicting him reciting the cursus which he believed fitted him for episcopal office. (188)

#### (8) The Portrayal of the Episcopal Ideal

In the carmina Venantius' idealizing purpose raises individual bishops to a lofty height. They are placed in the context of a Christian historical progression which has its ultimate end in the adventus of Christ. The idealised bishop is linked to the apostles and their evangelisation of the world and compared to the great figures of the Old Testament who are seen to prefigure aspects of the bishop's role. Felix of Bourges, in providing a "tower" for the Eucharistic bread, may be compared to Pastor Abel, (III. 20. 6) (189) while Germanus, leading his clergy, appears as an alter Aaron. (II. 9. 31) (190) A bishop at the dedication of his church is cast in the role of the new Solomon. (III. 6. 1-4)

Our poet presented the bishops of his age as forming part of the continued evangelisation of the world, a process that began with the sending out of the twelve apostles. This perspective is seen most clearly in the letter that Fortunatus wrote to Martin of Braga, who, surrounded by Arian heretics, stood at the new frontier of the faith. (191) We see described here the course of the evangelisation of peoples sketched in outline - Paul crosses the frozen land of Scythia, thawing the frozen earth with his fervent dogma, while Matthew revives burning Aethiopia. Thomas subdues bellicose Persia and "the yellow Indian" is given the clear words of Bartholomew. (V. 2. 7-13) The apostolic succession continues in Gaul with Martin of Tours (V. 2. 15) and now in Galicia, a new Martin carries on the work of the twelve:

Martino servata novo, Gallicia, plaude:  
Sortis apostolicae vir tuus iste fuit.

(V. 2. 17-18)

This portrayal of the bishop is also seen in the designation of Hilary of Poitiers as Apostle of the Allobroges. In this capacity he protects his people from the virus Graecorum. (II. 15. 6) In his own times Fortunatus shows the importance of great figures such as Martin who serve as models of episcopal conduct. Within the carmina, Martin appears as a figure of almost apostolic stature. His influence is all pervasive and the bishopric of Tours, seat of a Metropolitan and magnet to pilgrims acquires the status of an almost apostolic See. The charisma of Martin, "routinized" though it may be, is inherited in some sense by those who sit on the "sedes Martini" at Tours. In the description of the convocation of bishops assembled at the dedication of the new church erected by Felix of Nantes, the Metropolitan Euphronius is distinguished by his relationship to Martin. (III. 6. 19-20) In a poem addressed to Euphronius, Venantius advises him that he is a worthy successor:

Martinus meritis hac vos in sede locavit:  
Dignus eras heres qui sua iussa colis.

(III. 3. 23-24)

On a more playful note Venantius might even compare Vilicus of Metz to Peter since the bishop has a plentiful supply of fish for his table. (III. 13d) Hilary is the obvious model for the Bishop of Poitiers who is pictured as his successor, (X. 14. 1-6) while the caritas of Martin provides a model for Gregory who is spoken of as "successor Martini". (X. 12a. 7) Gregory's gift of land to the poet is presented as an example of the discipulus imitating the magister. Capitalising on Martin's military background, Fortunatus portrays the saint as the dux, Gregory as his miles:

Ille ubi dux residet, miles habebis opem.  
 Ut chlamydem ille prius, sic tu partiris agellum,  
 Ille tegendo potens tuque fovendo decens,  
 Ille inopem antiquum relevans, tu, care, novellum:

(VIII. 20. 4-7).

Further idealisation is achieved through the employment of a number of devices familiar in early Christian literature. The first of these is the military metaphor which can be traced back through the monastic and ascetical literature to Paul. (192) In the case of the dux Martin / Gregory miles equation we no doubt see the direct influence of Martin's own military background, for it was Martin who said after his conversion - "I am a soldier of Christ". (193) Gregory of Tours will, as miles, triumph in heaven. (V. 3. 43-44) The use of military imagery is prominent in the portrayal of the monk-bishop Gallus, (IV. 4. 11-12) the Abbot Victor (IV. 11. 5) and the Galician monk-bishop Martin of Braga. (V. 1. (1)) The military metaphor, employed by Caesarius of Arles in his sermon on the consecration of a bishop to underscore the hard service required of the candidate, (194) is also utilized in our poet's portrayal of Germanus of Paris, himself from a monastic background, as dux of his exercitus (II. 9. 71) and in the picture of Igidius of Reims fighting the heretical enemy as the miles Christi. (III. 15. 25-26)

Also employed are the New Testament images of the Shepherd, and, on one occasion the worker in the vineyard. The model for the bishop was the Good Shepherd Himself, and this is so well known as to require little comment here. (195) We know from Caesarius and from the fifth/sixth century Gallican lectionary mentioned earlier, that the Gospel reading for the Mass In Ordinatione Episcopi was John 21. 15-17, where Christ tells Simon Peter - "Feed my Lambs, Feed my Sheep." (196) The image of the worker in the vineyard, (V. 3. 25-28) (197)



also had a personal meaning in an age when Bishops often had vineyards of their own. (III. 12. 37-40)

#### (9) Episcopal Virtues

The stamp of the Pauline epistles is strong upon Fortunatus' portrayal of the bishop. Preaching and teaching must be undertaken in that spirit of patience enjoined by Paul. (2 Tim 2. 4) Fortunatus portrays the bishop as exuding patientia and placiditas, when confronted with passion and anger. (III. 2. (3))(198) This calm disposition is portrayed as reflected in the bishop's appearance for all to see. Fortunatus does not provide any personal descriptions of the bishops of whom he writes. Rather, he employs the device of the physiognomical type. (199) Thus Cronopius of Périgueux:

Sic vultu semper placidus ceu mente serenus,  
Pectore sincero frons sine nube fuit:  
Cuius ab eloquio nectar per verba fluebat,  
Vinceres ut dulces ore rigante favos.

(IV. 8. 13-16. Compare III. 24. 3-4)

After patientia and placiditas, it is caritas and hospitalitas that characterise the bishop. This Pauline emphasis on charity is particularly singled out in the poem addressed to Carentinus of Cologne:

Vocis apostolicae sectator dignus haberis,  
Quae caros animos praeposuit fidei.

(III. 14. 13-14)

The charity of the bishop was to extend to all; like Tetricus of Langres, he was to be "omnia omnibus". (IV. 3. 11-12) The ransoming of prisoners, the care of the poor, of widows and children, all works of charity enjoined by Paul, were conspicuously performed by sainted prelates of the fifth and sixth

centuries. (200) Such activities are highlighted by Fortunatus in the titles he bestows on the bishops of whom he writes – tutor viduarum (IV. 3. 11); panis egentum (IV. 7. 13); cura propinquorum (IV. 7. 14); esca esurientibus (III. 14. 19); vestis nudorum (IV. 8. 17). The evidence for the discharge of these charitable duties by bishops in our period will be discussed in context in later chapters of this work.

Hospitalitas is an episcopal virtue singled out for special mention by our poet. References to the bishop's hospitalitas abound in the carmina: Leontius of Bordeaux is hailed by our poet as susceptor peregrum (IV. 10. 14), Avitus of Clermont-Ferrand as spes peregrinorum (III. 22a. 8) and Sidonius of Mainz is told exulibus domus es. (IX. 9. 21) Particular mention of the hospitality extended by the bishop to the hospes, the exul and the peregrinus is included in Venantius' praise of Euphronius of Tours (III. 3. 19–20); Vilicus of Metz (III. 13. 29–32); Sidonius of Mainz (IX. 9. 21–22) and Eumerius of Nantes. (IV. 1. 15–18) This emphasis on hospitalitas as an episcopal virtue springs in the first instance from the New Testament. Charity and hospitality are there pictured as being in effect the reception of Christ. Christ will say to the righteous – hospes eram, et collegistis me. (201) Christ may in fact "be" the person who asks for assistance and hospitality. As Fortunatus puts it to Bishop Sidonius:

Felix cui Christus debitor inde manet!

(IX. 9. 22)

Episcopal responsibility for hospitality is stressed by Paul in I Tim 3. 2. This duty, to be undertaken by the overseers of the churches, had great significance and usefulness in the context of the missionary activity of the early church. (202) Hospitality also early became a virtue associated with

ascetics and monks(203) and figures largely in the hagiographers' picture of the monk-bishops of Gaul in the fourth and fifth centuries. Sulpicius Severus, for example, describes the hospitality with which Martin of Tours received him after a long journey, (204) and hospitality is a virtue displayed by St. Honoratus during both the monastic and priestly periods of his life. (205) Germanus of Auxerre was similarly distinguished by the practice of this virtue. (206) Paul's letter to Timothy, in which he stressed episcopal responsibility for hospitality, I Tim. 3.2, was read at the Mass In Ordinatione Episcopi, (207) thus reinforcing the expectation that the good bishop would practice hospitalitas.

Venantius himself, pilgrim and traveller, stresses episcopal hospitalitas since he made use of it in his wanderings. Letters of recommendation written by the poet for pilgrims and travellers (V.15; V.18; X.13) show that Venantius could, with some certainty, assure travellers of episcopal aid. Hospitality was, as well, a classical virtue, and something to be expected of a magnanimous aristocrat. (208)

Eschatological reward figures largely in Fortunatus' poetry as it does in the works of Caesarius of Arles. (209) The bishop, through his good works, such as hospitality to the stranger, builds up wealth for himself in the next world. The "materialistic religion" that so disturbed Sir Samuel Dill, (210) is very much in evidence in Venantius' poetry, as in other sixth century sources.

The bishops who appear in the carmina are individuals, some are married, others celibate, some Gallo-Roman, others Frankish. Yet all are, because of the eulogistic nature of the poetry itself, portrayed in terms of an ideal of episcopal competence and behaviour. That many did not live up to this ideal is obvious from the stories of episcopal drunkenness, greed, evil and

ambition related by Gregory of Tours. Still Venantius' epitaphs and panegyric poems, like Caesarius' sermons, were public documents that put an ideal before the eyes of the bishop and his community. Let us now place the bishop in context by turning to a consideration of the bishop's place in his spiritual community.

NOTES - CHAPTER TWO

## (1) Sixth century bishops in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus:

- (1) Albinus, Bishop of Angers, (XI. 25. 10)
- (2) Ageric, Bishop of Verdun, (Carm., III. 23; III. 23a)
- (3) Agricola, Bishop of Nevers, and
- (4) his un-named father, (III. 19) (See Dostal, pp. 4-5)
- (5) Avitus, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, (III. 21; III. 22; III. 22a; V. 5)
- (6) Baudoaldus, Bishop of Meaux, (IX. 8)
- (7) Bertram, Bishop of Bordeaux, (III. 17; III. 18)
- (8) Caesarius, Bishop of Arles, (V. 2. 69-70)
- (9) Carentinus, Bishop of Cologne, (III. 14)
- (10) Chalactericus, Bishop of Chartres, (IV. 7)
- (11) Cronopius, Bishop of Périgueux, (IV. 8)
- (12) Euphronius, Bishop of Tours, (III. 1; III. 2; III. 3)
- (13) Emerius, Bishop of Saintes, (I. 12. 5)
- (14) Eumerius, Bishop of Nantes, (IV. 1)
- (15) Exocius, Bishop of Nantes, (IV. 6)
- (16) Felix, Bishop of Nantes, (III. 4; III. 5; III. 6; III. 7; III. 8;  
III. 9; III. 10; V. 7)
- (17) Felix, Bishop of Bourges, (III. 20)
- (18) Gallus, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, (IV. 4)
- (19) Germanus, Bishop of Paris, (II. 9; VIII. 2)
- (20) Gregory, Bishop of Langres, (IV. 3)
- (21) Gregory, Bishop of Tours, (V. 3; V. 4; V. 8; V. 8a; V. 8b; V. 9;  
V. 10; V. 11; V. 12; V. 13; V. 14;  
V. 15; V. 16; V. 17; VIII. 9-21;  
IX. 6; IX. 7; X. 5; X. 6; X. 10;  
X. 11; X. 12; X. 12a)
- (22) Gundegisel, Bishop of Bordeaux, (VII. 25. 7-8)
- (23) Hilary, Bishop of Digne? See Nisard, Traduction p. 109,  
Note I to (III. 6). Hilary of Javols was  
not contemporary with Venantius' period  
in Gaul, see Dostal, p. 16. (III. 6)
- (24) Igidius, Bishop of Reims, (III. 15)
- (25) Leontius I, Bishop of Bordeaux, (IV. 9)
- (26) Leontius II, Bishop of Bordeaux, (I. 6; I. 8; I. 9; I. 11; I. 12;  
I. 13; I. 14; I. 15; I. 16; I. 18;  
I. 19; I. 20; IV. 10)
- (27) Magneric, Bishop of Trier, (Appendix 34). On the authenticity of  
this poem see Meyer, p. 11; p. 139. Leo, MGH edition  
p. 291 note to Appendix, XXXIV believed this poem to  
be a genuine work of Fortunatus
- (28) Médard, Bishop of Noyon, (II. 16; V M IV. 639.)
- (29) Namatius, Bishop of Vienne, (IV. 27. 13)
- (30) Nicetius, Bishop of Trier, (III. 11; III. 13)
- (31) Plato, Bishop of Poitiers, (X. 14)
- (32) Ragnemodus, Bishop of Paris, (IX. 10)
- (33) Ruricius I, Bishop of Limoges, (IV. 5)

- (34) Ruricius II, Bishop of Limoges, (IV. 5)
  - (35) Sidonius, Bishop of Mainz, (II. 11; IX. 9)
  - (36) Syagrius, Bishop of Autun, (V. 6)
  - (37) Tetricus, Bishop of Langres, (IV. 3)
  - (38) Theodore, Bishop of Marseilles, (VI. 10. 67)
  - (39) Vilicus of Metz (III. 13; VI. 8).
- (2) K. F. Stroheker, Der senatorische Adel in spätantiken Gallien, (Tübingen, 1948).
  - (3) M. Heinzelmann, Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien, (Munich, 1976) (Beihefte der Francia, 5).
  - (4) M. Gelzer, The Roman Nobility, Trans. R. Seager, (Oxford, 1969) pp. 52-53.
  - (5) T. D. Barnes, "Who were the nobility of the Roman Empire?", Phoenix 28 (1974), pp. 444-449.
  - (6) A. Chastagnol, "L'Evolution de l'ordre sénatorial aux IIIe et IV siècles de notre ère, " RH 244 (1970), pp. 305-314. Also see M. T. W. Arnheim, The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire, (Oxford, 1972) and the review by T. D. Barnes, Phoenix 27 (1973), pp. 305-309. Particularly useful on Gaul and the Gallic senators of the fifth century - J. Matthews, Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364-425, (Oxford, 1975) especially, Ch. XII and Ch. XIII.
  - (7) Stroheker, p. 115, "Die Bezeichnung senator war in seiner (Gregory's) Augen ein Ehrentitel."
  - (8) F. D. Gilliard, "The Senators of Sixth Century Gaul", Speculum LIV (1979), pp. 685-697. See esp. pp. 692-693, Gilliard argues that "senator" meant large landowner and "pauper" a small landowner. He points to Gregory's description of Justin II as "contemptor pauperorum, senatorum spoliator", finding in this what he terms a neat "chiastic contrast" in which pauper means small landowner and senator large landowner. This is clearly untenable - the pauperes here are quite simply the poor who begged for alms. Justin II is merely "the robber of the Senators, the despiser of the poor." Gilliard is unable to point to more conclusive Gallic examples to prove his case.
  - (9) Sid. Apoll., Epist., I. 9.2.
  - (10) Greg Turon, HF., VII. 37. p. 359 - Chariulf, one of Gundovald's supporters, "valde dives ac praepotens", had storehouses and granaries at Comminges and was able to feed an army. Note also the precision with which Gregory states that Aredius came of not unimportant people. He is clearly not of a senatorial background, yet his family was wealthy enough for his mother Pelagia to set up a monastery - HF., X. 29. pp. 522-523. The family were landowners.

- (11) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.29.9. p.392. There is an extensive discussion of nobilitas in J. Harries, Bishops, Senators and their Cities in Southern and Central Gaul A.D. 407-476, Unpub.D.Phil.Diss.(Oxford, 1981), p. 39ff. Many examples given there show a widening meaning of this term. I do, however, feel that a distinction must be made between Gregory's own view of what constituted nobilitas and the views of others reported in his narrative.
- (12) Greg Turon, HF., VI.2.15. p.266. I do not believe that figurative extensions of the concept of nobilitas really change the central meaning of the term. We speak of having a "royal time", of people with a "regal air," but are quite capable of maintaining a precise definition of what constitutes royalty. Many of the extensions of the concept of nobilitas, particularly in the Christian usage, would have meant little to the main usage.
- (13) Stroheker, pp.137-141.
- (14) Stroheker, p.137 - Certi Senatores; p.139 - the doubtful cases.
- (15) F.D. Gilliard, op.cit., pp.696-697.
- (16) F.D. Gilliard, ibid., p.695, arguing from analogy suggests that there must have been upward social mobility in sixth century Gaul. This he assumes must have been into the senatorial ranks.
- (17) Note the class-conscious way in which Gregory reviews those who were his predecessors at Tours. This list of bishops (HF., X.31. pp.526ff) can be divided into those who are described as coming "ex senatoribus" and those who could not make that claim. Gregory's class-conscious discrimination is seen in his description of the fifteenth bishop, Injuriosus, 529-546 - "civis Turonicus, de inferioribus quidem populi, ingenuus tamen" (HF., X.31. p.533). Gregory, like others, could spot a parvenu - note the story from Clermont - HF., IV.46. pp.180-183.
- (18) The Visigothic Princess/Frankish Queen Brunhild - "Nobilitas excelsa nitet, genus Athanagildi" - Carm., VI.1.124; "Ingenio, vultu, nobilitate potens" - Carm., VI.1a.38; Chilperic - "Rex bonitate placens, decus altum et nobile germen" - Carm., IX.1.23; Dagobert - "nobilis infans" - Carm., IX.5.7.
- (19) Fort, Carm., IV.26.13-16. J. Szövérfy, "À la source de l'humanisme chrétien médiéval: 'Romanus' et 'Barbarus' chez Venance Fortunat," Aevum 45 (1971), p.85 proposes "par cette remarque, il souligne aussi que l'adaptation et l'assimilation de la culture romaine la rendent une personne ennoblie, enrichie et complètement transformée." I would suggest however that the ennoblement came only from the barbarian blood connection. Line 13 makes that clear.

- (20) Fort, Carm., VII.14.7-14. Another aspect of a nobilitas of officeholding is seen in the way Venantius speaks of the episcopacy as an altera nobilitas - Carm., I.15.32.
- (21) The standard works on Sidonius are A. Loyen, Sidoine Apollinaire et l'esprit précieux en Gaule aux derniers jours de l'empire, (Paris, 1943), and C.E. Stevens, Sidonius Apollinaris and his Age, (Oxford, 1933). There are many new insights in P. Rousseau, "In Search of Sidonius the Bishop", Historia 25 (1976), pp.356-377. Also see R.P.C. Hanson, "The Church in Fifth Century Gaul : Evidence from Sidonius Apollinaris", JEH 21. no.1, (1970), pp.1-10.
- (22) Sid. Apoll, Epist., I.3.1.
- (23) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII.9.17.
- (24) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII.9.19.
- (25) Greg Turon, HF., I.31.p.24.
- (26) Greg Turon, HF., IV.15.p.147.
- (27) Greg Turon, HF., V.49.p.262.
- (28) Greg Turon, HF., X.1. pp.477-481.
- (29) Stroheker, no.218.
- (30) Stroheker, no.219.
- (31) Stroheker, no.307 - Placidina; no.29 - Arcadius and for further family connections - Stroheker, Appendix - "Stammbäume spätrömischer Senatorengeschlechter in Gallien, No.I. Stammbäume der Ruricii der Aviti und der Apollinares."
- (32) The Marquise de Maillé, Recherches sur les origines Chrétiennes de Bordeaux, (Paris, 1960), p.75 sees Carm., I.11 as referring to Leontius I and suggests Amelius as his father. The succession, Amelius, Leontius I, Leontius II is suggested by Duchesne, Vol. II, p.61. I would prefer to follow E. Griffe, "Un évêque de Bordeaux au VIe siècle: Leonce le Jeune", BLE, 62 (1963), pp.63-71, who suggests, pp.70-71, that the builder of the church of St. Denis was Leontius II, but I cannot agree that Amelius was probably this bishop's father. There is not sufficient evidence to support this. Amelius is an ancestor. That is all we can say.
- (33) The clear common sense of T.F. Carney, "Prosopography : Payoffs and Pitfalls", Phoenix, 27 (1973), pp.156-179 is inescapable.
- (34) R.W. Mathisen, The Ecclesiastical Aristocracy of Fifth Century Gaul : A Regional Analysis of Family Structure, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979, p.136.



- (35) Heinzelmann, pp.219-220.
- (36) Mathisen, op.cit., pp.137-138 - "the Vereginis villa is probably to be identified with Burgus, the estate of Pontius Leontius which in all probability is also the "aula parentum" in the passage above" -(Carm., I.15.19). On the contrary, Burgus has been tentatively identified with modern Bourg-sur-Gironde, see A. Nicolaï, "La Villa Gallo-Romaine de Pontius Léontius (Burgus)", Société Archeologique de Bordeaux Bulletin et Memoires, 46 (1929), pp.1-23, and Villa Vereginis with the banks of the Garonne near Baurech, see Maillé, op.cit., p.87. Mathisen, p.138, points to the similarity of the descriptions of the two villas, but overlooks the fortified nature of Burgus compared to the apparently unfortified Villa Vereginis. I do not feel convinced by the verbal parallels advanced, p.186, note 373, but even if there is a similarity in description this might, at the most, suggest a reading of Sidonius. It does not mean that Venantius is writing of the same villa.
- (37) Sall, Iug., LXXXV.23-24. Cf. Sid. Apoll, Epist., IV.13.4. "nam sacerdotis pater filiusque pontificis, nisi sanctus est, rubo similis efficitur, quem de rosis natum rosasque parientem et genitis gignentibusque floribus medium pungentibus comparanda peccatis dumorum vallat asperitas."
- (38) Heinzelmann, pp.33-40 shows by reference to the Scipionic elogia the origin of many concepts found in the commemorative inscriptions of our period.
- (39) Stroheker, no.20.
- (40) Sid. Apoll, Epist., XII. 5. lines 13-16.
- (41) Sid. Apoll, Epist., XII. 5. lines 17-20.
- (42) Epitaph of Bishop Hilary of Arles, died c.449. Le Blant, Vol. II, no.516. pp.253-254.  
 Sprevit opes dum quaerit opes mortalia mutans  
 Perpetuis caelum donis terrestribus emit  
 lines 6-7.
- (43) Compare Fort, Carm., VIII.3.177-84, Cf. Prudent, Perist., II.551-564.
- (44) Hilary, Sermo de Vita S. Honorati., I.4. (PL 50.1251) provides us with the best Gallic example - "Nemo est in coelestibus gloriosior, quam qui repulso patrum stemmate elegit sola Christi paternitate censeri. Praetermitto itaque commemorare avita illius saecularium honorum insignia, et quod concupiscibile ac pene summum habet mundus, usque ad consulatus propectam familiae suae nobilitatem, maiore generositate pectoris fastiditam. Nec placuisse illum sibi de supervacuis suorum honoribus, qui per amorem veritatis iam suos non optabat."

- (45) For example, Greg Turon, VP., VI. Praef. pp.229-230, but also see VI.1., p.230; VII.Praef. pp.236-237, but see VII.1., p.237.
- (46) Note Prudent, c.Symm., 544-71.
- (47) Heinzelmann, pp.215-217.
- (48) Sid. Apoll, Carm., X; XI.
- (49) See Stroheker, no.267- Ommatius; no.115- Eparchius. See also Stroheker, I. "Stammbäume der Ruricii, der Aviti und der Apollinares."
- (50) Gregory tells us, HF., V.49. p.262 that all but five of the bishops of Tours had been his blood relations. Gregory does not unfortunately tell us which bishops were not relations.
- (51) Greg Turon, HF., IX.41.p.46. See Dostal, p.4.
- (52) On the basis of name only and therefore purely conjectural: Stroheker, no.8; no.9. Also Mathisen, op.cit., pp.297-298.
- (53) Stroheker lists them - Eumerius - No.125 and Felix - No. 148, but does not suggest further connections. Heinzelmann, pp.214-215 sees a possible relation in a Eumelius of the fifth century, which he thinks should in the fasti be read as Eumerius, and claims that it is very possible that the family had exercised a prerogative over the See for two hundred years, down to Felix's nephew Nonnechius who succeeded him. The evidence is too inconclusive to warrant such an assertion, especially when it must in part be based on textual emendation. Mathisen, op.cit., pp.58-59 lists Felices in Aquitaine but notes it would be rash to say that they were related.
- (54) Not listed by Stroheker as of senatorial background.
- (55) Stroheker, no.90; Heinzelmann, p.215 cannot find any precise family connections.
- (56) Sidonius is an isolated figure - Mathisen, op.cit., p.528.
- (57) Stroheker, No.375. This Syagrius, the bearer of a very famous Gallic name cannot be placed in relationship to other Syagrii - Stroheker, nos.368; 369; 370; 371; 372; 373; 376; 377; 378.
- (58) See Nisard, Traduction, p.109, note 1, to Carm., II.6. Dostal makes no suggestions.
- (59) Greg Turon, VP.,XVII.pp.277-283. See also HF., X.29. pp.522-23.
- (60) E. Ewig, Trier im Merowingerreich: Civitas, Stadt, Bistum, Reprint (Trier, 1973), p.97.

- (61) ibid., p. 98. An earlier writer on Nicetius, F. Görres, "Bischof Nicetius von Trier: Ein Kultur und Lebensbild aus der fränkischen Periode des Mosellandes", Trierische Chronik, n. s. 2. No. 3. (Dec. 1905), p. 1, did not go beyond the contemporary evidence for Nicetius' origin and said that it was inconclusive.
- (62) Ewig, op. cit., pp. 98-100.
- (63) ibid., p. 100.
- (64) ibid.,
- (65) Epistolae Austrasicae, 5. (MGH Epp III. pp. 116-117). Florianus had been taught Latin by Caesarius, and therefore had probably lived for a time in Arles.
- (66) Epistolae Austrasicae, 6. (MGH Epp III. p. 117). "Quapropter salutationis obsequium famulante insinuans, precor per eum, qui vos sacravit, ut pro me, humillimo peccatore, innumerabilibus malis adflicto, divinam clementiam iugiter inploretis."
- (67) Mathisen, op. cit., pp. 258-259.
- (68) For example: Carm., I. 15. 71-72. Leontius of Bordeaux and the Garonne; Carm., VI. 5. 346-347. Galswintha's mother and the Tagus, her sister Brunhild and the Rhine. See also Carm., VII. 10. 3 - a more mundane example. Compare Sid. Apoll., Epist., 4. 17. 1.
- (69) Mathisen, op. cit., pp. 256-259.
- (70) Stroheker, pp. 112-114.
- (71) H. Wieruszowski, "Die Zusammensetzung des gallischen und fränkischen Episcopats bis zum Vertrag von Verdun (843) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Nationalität und des Standes", BJ., 127 (1922), pp. 50-56. Section 11. "Das Nepotensystem im gallischen Episkopat."
- (72) Heinzelmann, passim.
- (73) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 36 p. 168; VP., 8. 3. p. 243.
- (74) S. Kopp, Ein neues Elogium von Venantius Fortunatus, Diss. (Würzburg, 1939) argued that this epitaph (Diehl, Inscript. Christ. Veter. I. no. 1073) is a work of Venantius'. The argument against this attribution is more convincing - S. Blomgren, "De duobus epitaphiis episcoporum, utrum Venantio Fortunato attribuenda sint necne", Eranos 39 (1941), pp. 82-99. The epitaph of Nicetius: pp. 91-99.
- (75) Diehl, Inscript. Christ. Veter. I. no. 1073. 5-6.

- (76) Greg Turon, HF., II. 23.p. 68.
- (77) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 15.p. 285.
- (78) Conc. Parisiense A. 614. can. 3. (2) (CG II.p. 276).
- (79) The epitaph of Sextus Petronius Probus, St. Peters' Rome - CIL VI. 1756 b. 3-4.  
 Nomine quod resonas, imitatus moribus, aequae  
 Iordane ablutus, nunc Probus es melior.
- (80) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49.p. 262.
- (81) Cf. CIL. VI. 1754. 3-8.
- (82) Greg Turon, HF., V. 12. pp. 206-207; VP., XII. 2. pp. 262-263.
- (83) Greg Turon, HF., VII. 25. pp. 344-345.
- (84) Greg Turon, HF., V. 48. pp. 257-258.
- (85) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 46 pp. 180-183.
- (86) Fort, Carm., VII. 7; VII. 10; VII. 14; VII. 16; VII. 25.
- (87) Greg Turon, HF., X. 31.p. 533. The care Gregory takes with the explanation suggests that it was possible for a slave to be ordained as a priest. Note - Conc. Aurelianense A. 549. can. 6. (CG II. p. 150).
- (88) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. p. 262.
- (89) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 8.p. 279.
- (90) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 7. pp. 276-277.
- (91) Greg Turon, HF., X. 26. p. 519.
- (92) Heraclius of Bordeaux, one of Childebert's ambassadors, was made bishop of Angoulême, after his unsuccessful attempt to gain the See of Saintes.- Greg Turon, HF., V. 36. p. 242; Usicinus, one of Queen Ultrogotha's referendaries, favoured also by the previous bishop became bishop of Cahors. - HF., V. 42.p. 249; Flavius, Bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône was referendary to King Guntram - HF., V. 45.p. 256; Badegisil, Mayor of the palace was appointed to the See of Le Mans by King Lothar. - HF., VI. 9.p. 279; Innocentius, Count of Javols, the candidate of Brunhild gained the See of Rodez. - HF., VI. 38.p. 309; Gundegisil, Count of Saintes became Bishop of Bordeaux.- HF., VIII. 22.pp. 388-389; Baudinus, Bishop of Tours, had been one of Lothar's referendaries. - HF., X. 31.p. 533.

- (93) F. Irsigler, "On the aristocratic character of early Frankish society", trans. T. Reuter, in T. Reuter, (ed.) The Medieval Nobility, (Amsterdam, 1978), pp.114-115.
- (94) Greg Turon, HF., V.25.p.231.
- (95) Greg Turon, HF., X.2. p.482.
- (96) Proceres - Greg Turon, HF., IV.6. p.139; IX.8. p.421;  
Priores - HF., VII.7.p.330; Meliores - HF., VII.19. p.330.
- (97) Irsigler, op.cit., pp.116-117.
- (98) For example, Fort, Carm., VII.7. Lupus' brother is the Magnulf of Carm., VII.10.
- (99) Germanic words in Fortunatus' poetry and hagiography - Tardi, p.224 lists six "barbarian" words. Gregory's works contain only five Germanic words, one Hunnish, and five of Celtic origin. - M. Bonnet, Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1890) pp.225-227.
- (100) Ageric, Bishop of Verdun, (Carm., III.23; III.23a); Baudoualdus, Bishop of Meaux, (IX.8); Bertram, Bishop of Bordeaux, (III.17; III.18); Chalactericus, Bishop of Chartres, (IV.7); Gundegisel, Bishop of Bordeaux, (VII.25.7-8); Igidius, Bishop of Reims, (III.15); Ragnemodus, Bishop of Paris, (IX.10); Vilicus, Bishop of Metz, (III.13; VI.8); Magneric, (Appendix, 34); Médard, Bishop of Noyon, (II.16) - Médard had a Frankish father: Vita S. Medardi II. (4). (MGH AA. 4.2.)p.68.
- (101) G. Kurth, "De la nationalité des comtes franc au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle", in ÉF Vol. I pp.174-175. The proportion of Latin to Germanic names varies greatly from region to region and reflects the differing degrees of Germanic penetration. In Francia, for example, Kurth found nine Germanic names to three Latin, in Aquitaine, twenty-one Latin to sixteen Germanic and in Burgundy six Latin and no Germanic names.
- (102) H. Wieruszowski, op.cit., pp.16-29. "Nationalität und Heimat der gallischen Bischöfe des 6 Jahrhunderts".
- (103) ibid., p.29.
- (104) Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.p.158.
- (105) Greg Turon, HF., V.49. p.25; Fort, Carm., X.14.
- (106) Anon. Valesianus, 12.61.
- (107) See G. Kurth, "Francia et Francus" in ÉF Vol. I pp.125 - 127. And also F. Lot, Les Invasions Germaniques, (Paris, 1935) pp.230-231.

- (108) Sid. Apoll, Epist., IV.17.1.
- (109) Sid. Apoll, Epist., V.5.1.
- (110) Sid. Apoll, Epist., V.5.3-4.
- (111) Greg Turon, HF., VI.15.p.285.
- (112) Greg Turon, HF., VI.11.p.281.
- (113) Greg Turon, HF., V.18.p.225.
- (114) W. Goffart, "Byzantine Policy in the West under Tiberius II and Maurice: The Pretenders Hermenegild and Gundovald 579-585," Traditio 13 (1957), pp.91-94, see also pp.86-87. Goffart places internal Merovingian politics in the larger context of Frankish-Byzantine relations.
- (115) Greg Turon, HF., VI.31.pp.301-302.
- (116) Greg Turon, HF., IX.14.p.428.
- (117) Greg Turon, HF., X.19.p.513.
- (118) Greg Turon, HF., III.35.p.130.
- (119) Greg Turon, HF., IX.8.p.421.
- (120) Greg Turon, HF., IX.10.pp.424-426.
- (121) Greg Turon, HF., IX.12.p.427.
- (122) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.2.p.372. Guntram to Bertram -"Scire enim te oportuerat dilectissime pater, quod parens eras nobis ex matre nostra....."
- (123) Greg Turon, HF., IX.33.p.451.
- (124) Greg Turon, HF., IX.33.p.453.
- (125) Conc.Arelatense A. 524.can.2. (CG II.pp.43-44)
- (126) Conc.Turonense A.567. can.14.(13). (CG II.p.180)
- (127) Leo M, Epist., 167. Resp.III. To Rusticus of Narbonne. (PL 54.1204)
- (128) Conc.Turonense A. 567. can.14.(13). (CG II.p.181)
- (129) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII.9.24.
- (130) Conc.Arelatense A. 524.can.2. (CG II.pp.43-44)

- (131) Conc.Cleremontanum A. 535. can.12. (CG II.pp.107-108).
- (132) Conc.Aurelianense A. 538. can. 7. (CG II. p.117 ).
- (133) Conc.Aurelianense A. 541. can.17. (CG II.p.137).
- (134) Conc.Turonense A. 567. can. 11. (CG II.p.179).
- (135) Conc.Turonense A. 567. can.12.(11). (CG II.p.180).
- (136) Conc.Turonense A. 567. can.13.(12). (CG II.p.180); 14(13)(CG II. p.181).
- (137) Conc.Matisconense A. 581-583. can. 3. (CG II.p.224).  
Even the most pious appear to have been under suspicion and had to be careful of their reputation - Greg Turon, CG., 75. pp.342-343.
- (138) Greg Turon, HF., I. 44. pp.28-29.
- (139) Greg Turon, HF., IV.36. pp.168-169. Note also the tale of the bishop told to Gregory by Felix of Nantes - CG., 77. p.344.
- (140) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.39. pp.405-406.
- (141) Greg Turon, HF., II.17. pp.64-65.
- (142) Le Blant, II, pp.379-380.
- (143) Fort, Carm., I.12.13-16. On the basilica of St. Bibianus itself see Maillé, op.cit., pp.92-93.
- (144) Le Blant, II.p.365.
- (145) Maillé, op.cit., p.82.
- (146) Namatius was bishop of Yienne from after 552 till his death aged 73 in 559/60. See Duchesne I<sup>2</sup>190f; Stroheker, no.255. His epitaph, not by Venantius, Le Blant, II. pp.96-98, no.425 shows that he held secular office prior to consecration. See Heinzelmann, pp.228-229.
- (147) Fort, Carm., IV.27.15-18. See the model widow in Caesarius, Sermo., 6.7.(CC s.1.Vol.CIII.p.35) where emulation of St. Anne is enjoined.
- (148) Greg Turon, HF., V.46. p.256.
- (149) Greg Turon, HF., V.46. p.256. Dalmatius' successor should be "non coniugali vinculo nexus".
- (150) Athan, Vita Antonii., Praef; Ch.93. (PG 26. 857-859; 973.)

- (151) Some eremites: Greg Turon HF., IV. 37. p.169; VP., X. pp.258-259; HF., V. 9.p.204; VP., XI. pp.259-261; HF., V.10. pp.204-205; VP., IX pp.252-255; HF., VI 8. p.277; GC., XCIX. pp.361-362; HF., VI. 6.p.272; GC., XCV. p.359.
- (152) The most complete treatment of Cassian - O. Chadwick, John Cassian, A Study in Primitive Monasticism, (Cambridge, 1950) and P. Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian, (Oxford, 1978), pp.184-239. Also see J.M. Besse, Les moines de l'ancienne France, periode gallo-romaine et mérovingienne, (Paris, 1906), Ch.2, pp.44-52. Venantius' friend, Aredius of Limoges (Carm., V.19) ran his monastery under the rule of Cassian and Basil. (Greg Turon, HF., X.29. p.523). Basil is a great monastic figure in Fortunatus' poetry - See Carm., V. 3.40; VIII.1.54. The influence of Basil and Cassian in Gaul is analysed by F. Prinz, "Die Entwicklung des altgallischen und Merowingischen Mönchtums" in V.H. Elbern(ed.), Das erste Jahrtausend. Kultur und Kunst im werdenden Abendland an Rhein und Ruhr, (Düsseldorf, 1962), Vol.I, pp.236-237. See map 3, p.236 - "Orientalische Mönchsregeln in Gallien."
- (153) The combination of monastic and episcopal elements in Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini is given careful analysis by Philip Rousseau, "The spiritual authority of the monk-bishop. Eastern elements in some western hagiography of the fourth and fifth centuries", JThS 22 (1971), pp.406-419. See especially pp.417-419, and Part Four - "Martin of Tours" in the same author's Ascetics, pp.143-165. Note Fortunatus' stress on the monastic nature of Martin's episcopacy - VM., I.220-221.
- (154) On the influence of Lérins see F. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankreich, (Munich, 1965), pp.47-62, "Lerinum als Schule gallischer Bischöfe."
- (155) The main details of Caesarius' life may be pieced together from the Vita Caesarii (MGH SRM III. pp.457-501. ed. B. Krusch). The study by S. Cavillin, Literarhistorische und textkritische Studien zur Vita Caesarii Arelatensis, (Lund, 1934), deals with the complexities of this work.
- (156) Martin of Braga was born in Pannonia. According to Gregory of Tours, VSM., I.11 pp.144-6, he converted King Chararich and the Sueves of Galicia. Martin was the founder of the monastery at Dumium and knew and taught Greek. Raised to the episcopacy in 556, he held the See of Braga till his death in 579. See C.W. Barlow, (ed.) Martini Episcopi Bracaraensis Opera Omnia, (Yale, 1950), Ch.I, "Life of Martin," pp.1-8. On Galicia now see E.A. Thompson, "The Conversion of the Suevi to Catholicism," in E. James (ed.) Visigothic Spain: New Approaches, (Oxford, 1980), pp.77-92.
- (157) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 3.p.232.



- (158) Venantius ate well and enjoyed wine - Carm., VII.2; XI.9; XI.10; XI.14; XI.15. Although in his hagiographical picture of Radegund written after her death he pictured the rigours of her ascetical practice, her poor diet and harsh living conditions and the way she personally cleaned the sores of lepers and other unfortunates (VR., XVII-XXII, pp.42-44); during her lifetime he was not above telling her to follow St. Paul's advice and to temper her asceticism with some wine - Carm., XI.4.
- (159) One example only - Sid. Apoll, Epist., VI.1.3. "Post desudatas militiae Lirinensis excubias".
- (160) Greg Turon, VP., XVII.1.p.278.
- (161) E. Ewig, Trier im Merowingerreich, Reprint (Trier, 1973), pp.107-111, discusses Magneric's episcopacy.
- (162) Vita S. Caesarii., I.4. (MGH SRM III.p.458).
- (163) Conc.Aurelianense A.533. can.9. (CG II.p.100); Conc.Turonense A.567. can.13(12),14(13). (CG II.pp.180-181); Conc.Matisconense A.581-583. can.3. (CG II.p.224). Note also the regulation of dress: Conc. Matisconense A.581-583. can.5. (CG II.p.224).
- (164) Greg Turon, VP., VII.1.p.237.
- (165) Greg Turon, HF., Praef. p.1.
- (166) Greg Turon, HF., X.31. p.536.
- (167) Epistolae Aevi Merowingici Collectae 7. (MGH Epp. 3:1. pp.446-447). On the popularity of verse see P. Riché, Education and Culture in the Barbarian West, Trans. J.L. Contreni, (Columbia, Sth. Carolina, 1976), pp.271-272.
- (168) Greg Turon, HF., VI.7.p.276.
- (169) Greg Turon, HF., VI.39. p.310.
- (170) Conc. Aurelianense A.533. can.16. (CG II.p.101) suggests only the most basic of education was expected of clerics. Bishops however, usually saw to the education of those destined for the priesthood - See P. Riché, op. cit., pp.124-126.
- (171) Riché, op.cit., pp.31-36.
- (172) Greg Turon, VP., VIII.2. p.242; GC., 39. p.322.
- (173) Greg Turon, VP., II. Praef. pp.218-219. On Gregory's later acquired erudition see Riché, op.cit., pp.193-206.

- (174) Greg Turon, HF., Praef. p.1; VSM., I. Praef. p.136.
- (175) Greg Turon, HF., VI.46. p.320.
- (176) Fort, Carm., IX.6; IX.7.
- (177) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.20. p.387.
- (178) Greg Turon, HF., V.45. p.256.
- (179) Fort, Carm., IV.1.11 - "dulcis in eloquio"- Eumerius of Nantes; Gallus of Clermont-Ferrand - IV.4.25-26 - "plebem voce fovens quasi natos ubere nutrix, / Dulcia condito cum sale mella rigans;" Exocius of Limoges - IV.6.13 - "recreans modulamine cives;" Chalactericus of Chartres - IV.7.10/12 "Dulcior et melli lingua sepulta iacet. . . . vox suavis;" Cronopius of Périgueux - IV.8.15- "cuius ab eloquio nectar per verba fluebat;" Leontius I of Bordeaux - IV.9.25 - "namque suos cives placida sic voce monebat."
- (180) Caesarius, Sermo., 230.4. (CC s.1. Vol.CIV.p.912). Cf. Caesarius, Sermo., I.11. (CC s.1. Vol.CIII.p.7) where he picks up the text of the gospel and the prophetic reading. In this sermon Caesarius makes extensive use of I & II Tim. - Sermo., I.4. (CC s.1. Vol. CIII.p.3).
- (181) The lectionary was edited by Alban Dold, Das älteste Liturgiebuch der lateinischen Kirche. Ein altgallikanisches Lektionar der 5/6 Jhs aus dem Wolfenbütteler Palimpsest-Codex Weissenburgensis 76. (Beuron, 1936). See CVI-CXI: "Niederschriftszeit und Heimat unseres Lektionars". Text of Lectionary, pp.1-68. Under the entry In Ordinatione Episcopi, p.67, the following epistle readings are listed - I Tim 3, 1-5; 6, 11; II Tim 2, 15; I Tim 4, 13-15; 5,22; 4,16; 3,13.
- (182) See Caesarius, Sermo., I.12. (CCs.1. Vol.CIII.p.8).
- (183) Caesarius, Sermo., I.13. (CC s.1. Vol. CIII.p.10).
- (184) Fort, VA., IV.pp.28-29. "Et ne mihi videlicet in hoc opere ad aures populi minus aliquid intellegibile proferatur".
- (185) Augustine gives the fullest exposition of the ideal in De Doctrina Christiana., IV.8(22) (CCs.1. Vol.XXXII.pp.131-132). Those who speak in an eloquent way are listened to with pleasure while those who speak with wisdom are heard with profit. The Christian writers have eloquentia, "tali eloquentia qualis personis eius modi congruebat", De Doctrina Christiana., IV.7.(21)(CCs.1. Vol.XXXII p.131). The ideal teacher should use sound doctrine rather than stylistic devices to convince: De Doct. Christ., IV.28(61)(CCs.1. Vol.XXXII p.164).

- (186) Note Martin's reluctance - Sul. Sev, Vita Martini., 9.1-3, (ed. Fontaine, p.270). The story of Rusticius' trick is repeated by Fortunatus VM., I.204-208. Honoratus sought to avoid the priesthood - Hilary, Sermo. S.Honorati., 16 (PL 50.1257). Salvius was only made bishop of Albi against his will - Greg Turon, HF., VII.1.p.326 as was Gregory the Great - HF., X.1.p.478. The proud and ambitious man should be passed over - HF., V.49, p.259 - Riculf who was equal in superbia to Simon Magus. Note also Bucciovaldus - HF., IX.23. p.443. Gregory tells us HF., IV.35. p.167, that Eufrasius' lack of success in gaining the See of Clermont-Ferrand was due to his having sought it from men. Caesarius, Sermo., 230.1. In Ordinatione Episcopi, (CC s.1. Vol.CIV p.911), also warns against ambition in seeking the episcopate.
- (187) The attribution of this poem to Fortunatus has been questioned by the Marquise de Maillé, op.cit., p.84., who claims that the reference to Gregory (line 40) is anachronistic since Gregory of Tours did not become bishop till 573. There is no reason why this has to be read as a reference to Gregory of Tours. A much more likely candidate would be Gregory of Nazianzus, who in Carm. de vita sua, II.439-62 (PG 37. 1059-61); II.525-9 (PG 37.1067); II.1871-1905 (PG 37.1160-1), and letters, Epist., 49. (PG 37.101); Epist., 138. (PG 37.233-36); Epist., 182. (PG 37. 296-97); boasted of his dislike of burden of the episcopacy. Venantius knew of Gregory of Nazianzus and respected him greatly as a monastic figure - Carm., V.3.39-40; VIII.1.54; IX.6.5-6. In a letter to Martin of Braga, Fortunatus says that he has not read Gregory's works (Carm., V.1.7). This may be mere modesty, but the poet would not have had to read Gregory to be informed about his celebrated dislike of the episcopal honour. The Abecedarian form of Carm., I.16. is well suited to use in a polemical situation. Augustine had composed an Abecedarian psalmus contra partem Donati (PL 43.23.) in 394, the year of the Donatist council at Bagai. It is an easily remembered work of propaganda.
- (188) Greg Turon, HF., IV.6.p.139.
- (189) Abel's sacrifice was seen as a prefigurement of the Eucharist - See Conc. Matisconense A.585. can.4. (CG II.pp.240-41).
- (190) On the significance of Aaron as episcopus see Isidore, De Ecclesiasticis Officiis., II. V.3. (PL 83 col. 781).
- (191) Fort, Carm., V.2. 17-18. The same type of historical perspective is seen in Caesarius' Sermo, 214.1. (CC s.1. Vol.CIV.p.853). "Primum patriarchas, deinde prophetas, postea apostolos, postremum omnium ecclesiarum sacerdotes." On the geographical spheres of the apostles compare Paulinus of Nola, Carm., XIX. 84-158.

- (192) The military metaphor goes back to Paul, 2 Cor 10.4; 2 Tim 2.3-4, and was developed in the martyr literature, where the martyr fought the devil in the arena - see A. Von Harnack, Militia Christi, (Tübingen, 1905). The hermit and monk were next cast in the role of miles Christi - Jerome, Vita Pauli, 8. (PL 23.23); Greg Turon VP., I. 1.p.214. The cleric could also be cast in the same role - Ennodius, Vita Epiphani (PL 63.208).
- (193) Sul. Sev, VM., 4.3. (ed.J. Fontaine, p.260).
- (194) Caesarius, Sermo., 230.5. (CC s.1. Vol. CIV.p.913). Based on 2 Tim 2.4.
- (195) The image of the shepherd - Fort, Carm., III.3.27-30; III.11.3; 19-20; III.12.19-20; III.13.21-22; III.15.13-14; III.23.10; IV.2.9-10; IV.3.2-4; IV.6.2-3; V.3.17-24; 31-32; V.5.113-114; V.9.4-6; IX.9.13-16. The image of the shepherd-ruler has a long and fascinating history. A clear exposition of this may be found in J.C.C.S. Thomson, "The Shepherd-ruler concept in the Old Testament and its application in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, 8 (1955), pp.406-418.
- (196) On the lectionary reading for the Mass see A. Dold, op.cit., p.67, and Caesarius, Sermo., I.11, (CC s.1. Vol.CIII.p.7) and again note Sermo., 230.5. (CC s.1. Vol.CIV.p.913).
- (197) This was an apt image in the Loire. The bishop who owned vineyards became a familiar figure in the early medieval period. See R. Dion, "Viticulture ecclésiastique et viticulture princière au moyen age", RH Vol.212. (1954), pp.1-22.
- (198) Caesarius, Sermo., 230.4. (CC s.1. Vol. CIV.p.912).
- (199) See Elizabeth Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World", TAPhA n.s.59.(1969), pp.1-101. Evans notes, (pp.74-83) the interest of the church fathers in physiognomics and in the proposition that the body was seen to reflect the state of the soul. Beyond the examples adduced by Evans we might note how the sanctity and triumph of the martyr is seen in his outward appearance - Passion of Sts. Perpetua and Felicitas, 18, 2. (ed. Musurillo pp.124-126); Martyrdom of St. Pionius the Presbyter and his Companions, 22, 2-4. (ed. Musurillo p.164). The body of the hermit reveals his saintly inner disposition - Athan, Vita Antonii, 67 (PG 26.938-940). Note also the descriptions of saintly bishops - Vita S.Caesarii, I.36. (MGH SRM III.p.471); I.46. (p.474); Hilary, Sermo De Vita S. Honorati, VI.26. (PL 50.1264).
- (200) For example - Bishop Patiens of Lyons - Sid. Apoll, Epist., VI.12; Greg Turon, HF., II.24.p.70; Honoratus-Hilary, Sermo. De Vita S. Honorati, IV.20. (PL 50.1260); IV.21. (PL 50.1261), and before consecration as bishop - VI.28.(1265); Caesarius - Vita S. Caesarii, I.20 (MGH SRM III.p.464); I.32.p.469; I.37-38. pp.471-472; I.44. p.474; I.62. p.483; Bishop Eufasius - Greg Turon, HF., II.36. pp.84-85.

- (201) Matt., 25.35.
- (202) On the New Testament development of Philoxenia as a virtue, see the exhaustive study by T. Mathews, Hospitality and the New Testament Church, Unpub. thesis Th.D. Princeton Theological Seminary, 1965, esp. pp.263-276. The studies by D.W. Riddle, "Early Christian Hospitality", JBL Vol.5.(1938), pp.141-54, and H. Chadwick, "Justification by Faith and Hospitality", Stud.Patr. 4. (1961), pp.281-285 discuss the role of hospitality in the developing church. The entry "Gastfreundschaft", RAC 8.1103-1120 provides an extensive bibliography.
- (203) Some examples - Athan, Vita Antonii., 50. (PG 26.916); Palladius, Hist.Laus., 14.4. (PG 34.1035); Jerome, Vita Pauli., 11 (PL 23.26); Vita Hilarii., 25-27. (PL 23.41-43).
- (204) Sul.Sev., Vita Martini., 25.2-3. (ed. J. Fontaine, p.310).
- (205) Hilary, Sermo de Vita S. Honorati., 2.9 (PL 50.1254) and 4.20. (PL 50.1260)
- (206) Const, Vita S. Germani Autissiodorensis., 5 (MGH SRM 7.1.p.253). Hospitalitas was so expected of a bishop that when he did not extend it, his enemies could use this against him: Greg M, Dial., I. (PL 66.77).
- (207) Dold, op.cit., p.67.
- (208) Note for example Sidonius' portrait of the noble Vettius- Epist., IV.9.1-2, where hospitalitas is listed as an aristocratic accomplishment along with the training of horses and the judging of dogs.
- (209) Some examples: Fort, Carm., III.8.43-48; III.13.37-38; III.23.7-8; IV.1.23-26; IV.5.15-20; V.3.33-34; VI.3.29-32, and most especially - Carm., X.17.11-14. The sentiments expressed in the last mentioned poem are also found in Caesarius' sermons. Caesarius makes the point that he who gives a little money to the unfortunate receives eternal life as a reward. He exchanges temporal goods for those that are eternal. Sermo., 25.2. (CC s.1. Vol.CIII.pp.112-113). See also Sermo., 158.6. (CC s.1. Vol.CIV.pp.647-648) and Sermo., 230.6. (CC s.1. Vol.CIV.pp.913-914).
- (210) S. Dill, op.cit., pp.425-426.

### chapter 3

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## the Bishop and his spiritual community

On August 28, 573, fresh from his consecration by Igidius of Reims eight days earlier, and bearing the approval of King Sigibert and Queen Brunhild, (1) Gregory entered Tours as its bishop and as Metropolitan of an ecclesiastical province that included Nantes, Le Mans, Rennes and Vannes. The adventus of the newly consecrated bishop is celebrated by Fortunatus in a poem addressed ad cives Turonicos. (V. 3) Suddenly we are plunged into a busy urban scene. The cry goes out - "Spes gregis ecce venit", the acclamations follow - "plebis pater", "urbis amator". The whole community rushes to see. All eyes are on the man who will be the benefactor of all. "Plaudite!", the poet cries, and the cives give thanks to God for their newly consecrated bishop. Gregory, the man from Arvernorum civitas comes to the See of Martin as the alumnus of the great Auvergnian saint, Julian. (2)

The first few lines of this poem with their evocation of the late antique theme of adventus, could, with few alterations, be used to celebrate the reception of a secular ruler. The pictorial character of the poem evokes a dim recollection of the great scenes of civic adventus in the literature of late antiquity - the decoration of the city, the greeting of the ruler outside the city walls by a crowd bearing palm branches, lights and incense and the final entry into the city to the acclamation of all in the crowd. The adventus culminated in the distribution of largesse to the crowd; an act symbolic of benefaction to the lucky city. (3) Now, while imperial adventus had disappeared in the West, the ceremonial reception of kings, bishops and relics (4) was still a feature of life in Merovingian times, and appears to have retained at least some of the features of adventus ceremonial. Fortunatus' description of the entry of the bishop finds a parallel in Gregory's own description of the ceremonial entry of King Guntram into Orleans on St. Martin's Day, 585. The acclamations of the different groups within the city lock together in a picture of consensus: the Syrians, Latins and Jews alternate with one another in their different languages: "Vivat rex . . . . omnes

gentes te adorent". (5) In Fortunatus' poem on Gregory, the consensus omnium is represented by the worn convention (6) of greeting by young and old:

Hoc puer exertus celebret, hoc curva senectus,  
Hoc commune bonum praedicet omnis homo.

(V. 3. 3-4)

On another level the agreement extends to Igidius, to Sigibert and Brunhild and to Radegund, the royal nun of Poitiers, who had by this time forged close links with the bishopric of Tours. Finally, on the celestial level, the saints signal their agreement since Julian sends his choice, his disciple Gregory, to Martin for his city. (V. 3. 9-12) The entry of the pastor is pregnant with spiritual import, both for the bishop and for the community. Gregory comes as the spiritual benefactor of the city. Ministering to the flock, he will bring them to salvation but the cives will also be the means by which he achieves his own salvation.

Heaven was for Venantius, a celestial Roman city (7) and Gregory's entry to Tours gains a more universal significance when we see that it is merely a pre-figurement of his eventual adventus into heaven. (8) Just as on earth the people of Tours flock together, the great episcopal saints of Gaul and of the universal church will be Gregory's associates. (V. 3. 41-44)

In Chapter One we examined the panegyric depiction of the consensus omnium in Fortunatus' treatment of the bishop. We examined the tableau of Euphronius and his suffragan bishops (III. 6. 21-28) and the stately processional picture of Germanus of Paris and his clergy. (II. 9) These eloquent statements of consensus, like the adventus scene above, appear in poems of official celebration, that were no doubt read by the poet in the splendid architectural



setting of an urban basilica. The poet's role there was to give expression to an ideal of consensus, and so, by voicing it, encourage its development in the community. The bishop often sorely needed to promote enthusiasm for his rule and agreement among his people. In this Venantius aided him by the exposition of what was held to be the perfect relationship between the bishop and his spiritual community centred on the civitas.

In this chapter we will focus on some of the spiritual links between bishop and community by critically examining this generalised picture of consensus support. This will provide us with a thread of continuity as we explore in turn such disparate topics as the nature of the Christian community in city and countryside, the bishop and the cult of the patron of the city, the bishop's relationship to clergy, monks, nuns and lay people and to outsiders - pagans, heretics and Jews. A complex and fragile set of relationships are shown to bind the community together. Consensus is exposed as more a distant ideal than an everyday reality.

Gregory of Tours who was greeted so handsomely by the poet on the day of his installation at Tours certainly did not enjoy overwhelming support. Venantius makes much of the bishop being alumnus to the Auvergnian saint, Julian, and elsewhere calls him lumen ab Arvernus (VIII. 15. 3) but this same background could be used as a weapon against him. Riculf, the priest who tried to oust Gregory from his See and claim it for himself, tried to play upon the bishop's Auvergnian background and characterise the bishop and his party as outsiders. (9) The dux Berulf and comes Eunomius suggested that Gregory should flee to Clermont-Ferrand. (10) While Gregory was able to survive the plot against him he certainly had to put up a considerable struggle. Plots by clergy against their bishop were not infrequent. (11) Usurpers stood ready in the wings waiting for the

opportunity to seize a bishopric (12) and an irate crowd of the faithful could run a bishop out of town. (13) Relations between Metropolitans and their suffragans were not always as decorous as Fortunatus' portrayal of Euphronius, surrounded by his colleagues, might suggest. The dispute between Leontius of Bordeaux and Eumerius of Saintes serves to show how difficult and unpleasant it could be for a Metropolitan who sought to assert his rights within his own province. (14) Felix of Nantes, pictured as a loyal and respectful colleague of Euphronius, was a bitter enemy of his successor. Gregory informs us that Felix plotted against him (15) and quarrelled with him over land. (16) It was Felix who wrote Gregory an abusive letter in which he alleged that Gregory's brother Peter had killed his own bishop, Silvester of Langres. (17)

The election of a bishop should ideally have been an occasion for rejoicing, but all too often it seems to have divided a city and been a cause of enmity. (18) Bishop Gallus of Clermont-Ferrand, who, on his epitaph, was praised by Fortunatus as patiens, (IV. 4.21) certainly would have needed patientia when dealing with his clergy both at the time of his election and during his episcopacy. When Bishop Quintianus died and the citizens of Clermont-Ferrand had their first meeting concerning an episcopal election, at the house of Gallus' uncle Inpetratus, Gallus told a fellow cleric that the Holy Spirit had suddenly inspired him - ego ero episcopus; mihi dominus hunc honorem largire dignabitur! (19)

The cleric's response to this divine message was to shove Gallus so hard against his bed that the chosen one sustained an injury to his side. (20) Despite this, Gregory's Vita of Gallus attempts to conjure up a picture of the bishop's triumphal entry to the city on his predecessor's horse - Igitur exinde cum multo psallentio in civitatem suscipitur et in sua ecclesia episcopus ordinatur. (21)

The episcopacy of the blessed Gallus was marked, not by a quiet consensus, but by blows on the head, (22) verbal insults from a haughty senatorial priest, (23) and altercations with a pushy vocalist at the altar. (24) These examples appear to be drawn from a great store of stories, for Gregory's comments suggest anything but a happy acceptance of Gallus' rule - patientiam vero ultra hominum mores habens, ita ut, si dici fas est, Moysi compararetur ad diversas iniurias sustenendas. (25) Images of consensus, if offered by a poet, would have been gratefully received by a Merovingian prelate. Faced with dissent and opposition, an image of consensus might provide a useful bolster to the bishop's prestige in the community.

The abecedarian Hymnus de Leontio Episcopo (I. 16) sheds light on the use of images of consensus as a weapon in faction-fighting within the community. This hymn was designed to be chanted by the people of Bordeaux, or at least one faction of them, to celebrate what appears to be the forestalling by Leontius of a counter-episcopal coup, and to reaffirm support for the bishop. A would-be usurper had spread the story that Leontius had died. Filled with evil ambition this person had made his dash for the cathedra, only to be put to flight by the return of the true bishop, Leontius. The hymn is designed as a rallying cry to consolidate support for the bishop among the citizens:

Venite cives, plaudite  
Et vota votis addite:  
Quo facta sunt miracula,  
Servent eum caelestia.

(I. 16. 77-80)

Ideally the bishop should have had the support of the cives and been their mediator before God. It was he who sought on behalf of the community the intercession of the saints and by honouring their relics ensured blessings

for the community. Sometimes the spectacular effect of a bishop's prayers in time of fire or plague (26) might convince the populace that he had a particularly personal relationship with God. A sainted bishop might even intervene after death, often with considerable discrimination, to save particular individuals. (27) Yet both Sidonius and Gregory are acutely aware of the fact that even the most saintly had their detractors in the community. Sidonius speaks with polished exasperation of the factional fighting that surrounded the election of a bishop in his age and there is no reason to believe that the situation was any different in the sixth century. A monastic candidate for the episcopacy will find detractors who claim he is not worldly-wise, a humble man will appear spiritless, a self-reliant man proud. A man with little education will be laughed at; a man of learning will be thought conceited. Jealous clerics intent on episcopal office will resent those chosen on the basis of merit rather than seniority. Many "in caritate infirmi in factione robusti", (28) may be found in Gregory's works undermining the bishop's position, often with an eye on the cathedra for themselves. Even the most saintly of prelates do not appear to have escaped complaints levelled against them. (29) Further, no bishop, however charismatic, could be a continuing presence everywhere in the countryside. The further one went away from the civitas, the further one went away from the main roads, the more blurred the bishop's presence must have been. It was precisely here that the false Christs roamed, prophetesses and seers flourished and pagan practices of divination and healing offered an ever-ready alternative to the systematised channels of religious power emanating out from the bishop of the civitas.

(1) The Spiritual Community in City and Countryside

The spiritual community of the civitas often extended deep into the countryside. As we shall see in the next chapter, it would be wrong to draw a sharp dichotomy between town and countryside in this period. The civitas had its own hinterland and Fortunatus' poetry offers an easy mix of urban and rural imagery, (30) one indication that the bishop's pastoral concern for his flock did not end at the city gate. Outside the civitates of Gaul there lived a scattered Christian and semi-Christian population centred on the vici and villae. Through the deliberate and gradual extension of episcopal rule in the countryside, the bishops hoped to win the rural dwellers away from pagan practices. Our evidence for the nature and extent of Christian penetration of the countryside in the sixth century is quite fragmentary and confined to a few locales. In some instances we have literary evidence, at other times we have to rely on the interpretation of archaeological findings. We should be wary of making generalisations for the whole of Gaul since conditions varied greatly. Fortunatus had visited the northern Sees of Cologne, Metz, Verdun and Trier, but it is about Trier and its surrounds that we know most thanks to archaeological investigations. (31)

Trier was the city of Bishop Nicetius. The city was particularly resilient, having survived five sacks during the Germanic invasions of the fifth century, the migration of many influential citizens to the south of Gaul and the ensuing dislocation. The bishopric had earlier been prosperous and the ecclesiastical topography of the civitas shows that Christian shrines had by the fifth century spread out beyond the walls. To the north of the city, by the river, the churches of St. Martin and St. Marien were constructed; to the

south St. Matthias. Across the Mosel in the vicus voclannionum, the shrine of the soldier saint, Victor, arose, perhaps as a Christian replacement for the temple of Lenus Mars on the hillside above. (32)

In the countryside around Trier, Christian expansion may be traced by archaeological remains in the vici within the jurisdiction of the bishop of the civitas. Christian communities in the vici of Bitburg, Neumagen, Pacten and Arlon had a good chance of continuity since all were fortified stations on main roads with good communications with the bishop of the civitas. At Bitburg, standing on an eminence some twenty miles from Trier, there is evidence of a Christian church dating back to Late Roman times. (33) Neumagen, situated at the point where the Mosel valley branch road to Mainz diverges from the river, was strategically important. Here there is evidence of a Late Roman Christian community and it was in this area that Nicetius of Trier built his "castle". (34) Pacten, a vicus of some size, stood by a ford on the Saar and at a junction of minor roads. The site produces evidence of Christianization. (35) Further afield at Arlon, an important cross-roads vicus, sixty kilometres west of Trier, was found evidence of a Late Roman church. (36)

Christian communities may also have survived based on nucleated villae. (37) These Christian communities would have, theoretically at least, come under the pastoral care of the bishop. How close their ties were with the bishop one can only guess, but distance and problems of communication must have made whatever bonds that existed very fragile indeed. Pagan practices appear to have had a particular tenacity in the Mosel area; the sacred tree may have been closer than the bishop. (38)

We are better served with literary evidence in the case of Tours.

There Gregory's catalogue of the achievements of his predecessors at Tours (39) allows us to plot the extensive spread of the spiritual community by plotting the vicus churches of the Touraine. Martin is credited with the establishment of six vicus churches and his successors continued the trend. In the fifth century, Eustochius (444-61) built four vicus churches and Perpetuus (461-91) another six. There appears to be no expansion of this network until Euphronius' time (553-73) when three more vicus churches were constructed.

Stancliffe's study of the diocese of Tours illustrates the pattern of vicus church construction in the Touraine, at first in the valleys, and then by the sixth century on the high ground as well as the population became further dispersed. By 600 Tours was a city of sixteen churches and religious buildings, but stretching out into the hinterland was a network of forty-two churches serving a widely dispersed spiritual community. (40) A similar picture may be observed, with regional variations, at Paris, (41) Le Mans and Clermont-Ferrand. (42)

Distant shrines or individual preference might bring the bishop out into the countryside and make his presence felt outside of the civitas. The sixth century bishops of Clermont-Ferrand led their flock on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Julian at Brioude, some sixty-five kilometres to the south, in order to celebrate there the saint's festival. (43) Gregory of Langres spent a good deal of his time not in his civitas, but rather at Dijon, a pleasantly situated castrum and centre of a fruitful agricultural region. (44) Many a bishop had a villa in the countryside while sometimes the bishop might leave the city in Lent for a rustic retreat. Bishop Palladius of Saintes appears to have favoured the islands off the coast. (45)

The formal spiritual link between the bishop and the countryside was via the vicus church and its clergy. The vicus churches around Trier were situated on public roads, but Stancliffe's study shows that in the Touraine many were in inaccessible positions by the sixth century and must have posed problems of communication for the bishop.

As a general rule vici were often a considerable distance from one another - fifteen to twenty miles, and each needed a clerical staff. The Council of Tours (567) provides a picture of what may have been the normal clerical establishment of a vicus church: an archpriest stood at its head and was assisted by diaconi, subdiaconi, and a complement of junior clerics. (46)

Episcopal authority over the vicus church, its property and the clerics who staffed it was asserted on a good number of occasions by the Gallic councils. (47)

Fortunatus' poems reveal the bishop establishing not vicus churches but martyria near Tours and Bordeaux. These modest constructions are extremely significant for they extended the bishop's influence in the countryside, and in one case at least promoted the cult of saints intimately connected with the bishop himself. Both Gregory of Tours and Leontius of Bordeaux establish oratoria; in both cases the bishop who holds or renovates the shrine in the rural community acts as patron of the cult centre. He allies himself with the saints who "dwell" there and his benefaction, commemorated by Fortunatus, was recorded in an inscription or painted notice, placed on the building itself.

Gregory of Tours tells us that he dedicated so many churches and oratories in the city and its territory and furnished them with relics that a list of them would be too long. (48) Without this list we must rely on whatever evidence we can find for the nature of oratory construction under the bishop's direction.



The two poems De Oratorio Artennesi, written by Fortunatus, commemorate the restoration of an apparently small structure at Artanne, some 15 kilometres in a direct line, south-east of Tours. The shrine was originally dedicated to the archangel Gabriel as the first poem shows, (X. 5. 3-4) although there is no indication as to when it was built. The second poem (X. 10) suggests that the restoration of the structure was accompanied by the introduction of new relics of a number of saints. The Merovingians did not, we know, like to depend on only one heavenly patron, yet some of the saints whose relics were introduced on this occasion are significant for their relationship to Gregory, the bishop of the nearby civitas.

The list of relics opens with a part of the rock from Christ's tomb, an indication of the importance of this shrine 15 kilometres from the civitas. The Roman medical martyrs Cosmas and Damian offer aid to visitors and it is most likely that their relics were an innovation of Gregory's. During the pontificate of Pope Symmachus (498-514), who dedicated an oratory in the basilica of St. Mary Major and that of Pope Felix IV (526-530) who joined two temples in the Roman Forum to create a basilica named after these saints, the popularity of these Arab saints had risen in the west. At Constantinople their famous basilica had long offered cures. Relics of the martyrs had been in Tours sometime prior to Gregory's episcopate for Gregory chanced upon the relics of Cosmas and Damian in the sacristy and placed them in St. Martin's cell, adjoining the cathedral. It is quite possible that the inclusion of relics of these martyrs at Artanne was part of Gregory's fostering of their cult. (49)

Special prominence is given to St. Julian of Brioude, Gregory's patron saint. Gregory is elsewhere characterised by our poet as an alumnus of this saint (V. 3. 11-12) and Gregory's family had close ties to the shrine of Brioude,

south from Clermont-Ferrand. The cult of St. Julian was actively promoted by Gregory as his Liber de passione et virtutibus Sancti Juliani martyris testifies. This work appears to have been written early in Gregory's episcopate and in it we see the spread of the cult with the construction of churches in honour of the saint and the distribution of relics. Gregory's stories of the cures at the festival, the powers of Julian's shrine and Martin's own acknowledgment of Julian's powers were all designed to whip up enthusiasm. (50) Gregory, who was in Venantius' words the lumen ab Arvernus, (VIII. 15. 3) here at Artanne, points to what is specifically an Auvergnian cult:

Est Iulianus item, gladio iugulatus amico,  
Plebs quem Arverna colens arma salutis habet;

(X. 10. 13-14).

Martin of Tours is represented here in the oratory and honoured by the bishop who elsewhere is described not so much as his successor but as his spiritual heir. (V. 9. 3-4) The most remarkable inclusion is that of Nicetius of Lyons (552-73), Gregory's maternal grand-uncle, for it shows us Gregory's fostering of the cult of a family saint. Nicetius appears to need some special promotion and Venantius provides it:

Hic veteris virtute viri nova palma Niceti,  
Urbem Lugdunum qui fovet ore, sinu.

(X. 10. 23-24)

Gregory's promotion of Nicetius' cult was not always an easy task, for all were not as convinced as Gregory and Fortunatus of Nicetius' sanctity. Before we go further we should pause and examine this embryonic cult of St. Nicetius for it will illustrate how recognition of sanctity could be an extremely partisan issue and how the promotion of the cult of a saint could be intimately connected with the maintenance of family prestige.

Gregory's Vita Nicetii has about it the distinct flavour of the family history, combined with a touch of polemic directed against the party of Nicetius' successor, Priscus. The young Nicetius is saved for the episcopacy through a miracle wrought by St. Martin of Tours, (51) but it is not about Nicetius' episcopacy that we hear. Gregory devotes the major part of his work to Nicetius' wonder-working after death. The cures at his tomb are an indication that the bishop has his place with the angelic choirs. (52) Nicetius' successor Priscus was not so overwhelmed for he did nothing to promote the cult of Nicetius and allowed the bishop's chasuble to be ill-used by one of his deacons. This deacon counted the garment as little and wore it to bed. When someone challenged him for doing this he said he was going to cut up part of the hood to use as slippers. This story is related, for the chasuble, according to Gregory at least, had miraculous powers and Nicetius obtained his revenge on the disrespectful cleric, who, when he made the slippers, ended up spewing forth a bloody foam at the mouth, his feet devoured by a terrible burning. (53)

The partisan nature of Nicetius' cult is seen in Gregory's stories of Nicetius' revenge on Bishop Priscus and Suzanna his wife, who persecuted the bishop's party in Lyons. The whole of the bishop's household was punished by this revengeful saint; clergy met mysterious ends. All was part of the saint's plan. (54) The established cult of Nicetius at Lyons with its health-giving oil lamp, crowds of pilgrims and herbal offerings on the tomb, appears to date from the time of Aetherius, bishop of Lyons after Priscus' death and who appears to have fostered the cult. (55) When Gregory's deacon Agiulf passed through Lyons on his way back from Rome c. 590 he found a well-established cult. (56) Gregory elsewhere mentions the translation of relics of the saint to shrines near Tours and further afield. (57) In each case testimonials of the bishop's miraculous powers are received.

The oratory at Artanne thus emerges as an outstanding example of episcopal patronage of a family-linked set of cults and the extension of these into the countryside. The new cults of Nicetius and Julian led back to their promoter, the bishop of the civitas. In restoring the existing building and further embellishing it Gregory showed himself to be the benefactor of the rural dweller. No doubt in keeping with the canons, Gregory made sure the oratory was supplied with clergy to sing over the relics. (58) Elsewhere Gregory makes it clear that relics must receive great veneration or the saint will complain. (59)

Our poet's verses may have been intended, as Le Blant suggested, (60) to be inscribed (or painted), one on the outside, (X. 5) the other on the inside (X. 10) of the oratory. The first poem addresses the visitor, recalls the name of the original dedication and records the bishop's benefaction in restoring the structure. The second, (X. 10) a longer poem, is something of a potted guide to the oratory, complete with a list of the relics it contained.

The winning of the countryside for Christianity was made extremely difficult in Gaul by the natural base of the indigenous pagan religion and by its remarkable tenacity. Images of consensus-support for the Christian bishop appear out of keeping with the picture of religious belief in the countryside. Out there a battle was clearly being fought. The canons of the Councils reveal the bishops railing against such pagan practices as the eating of food offered to idols, (61) oaths taken on the head of animals, (62) the celebration of the first of January by the giving of presents and the impersonation of cows and stags, (63) the making of wooden images of a man or of a leg, (64) visits to powerful thornbushes, holy trees or fountains (65) and the practice of consulting soothsayers. (66)

Powerful relics in a country oratory could be used in this battle; a miraculous display of power by the newly arriving saint might perhaps wean the rustic from other sacred pagan objects. We lack a picture of the translation of the relics of Julian and Nicetius to Artanne, but we are fortunate to have Gregory's picture of what he considered to be an admirable translation of a relic of St. Julian to a shrine near Reims. The scene is most revealing of what the new relic was meant to mean to the rural dweller: the saint makes his presence felt for he immediately torments one demonically possessed. The message is clear: "Ecce virtutem eius! Ecce gloriam eius! Currite viri, relinquitte boves, dimittite aratra, caterva omnis eat in obviam". (67)

The episode described by Gregory acts as an important demonstration of the saint's power and as an immediate validation of the new shrine for the demoniac finds a cure. Spectacles such as this might convince the rustics that the shrine of the saint was more important than their agricultural work. It is significant that the bishops had difficulty enforcing Sunday observance in the countryside and even had to threaten punishment to get men away from the plough on Sunday. (68)

Relics were, in Gregory's thinking, powerful counters to pagan cures and practices and he tells a number of cautionary tales about those who had recourse to folk remedies. (69) It would be a distortion to characterise the Merovingian church as an urban organisation unable to understand the rural mind. (70) Gregory and Venantius both show themselves acutely aware of the rhythm of the agricultural life around them. Gregory, we might observe, shows a countryman's concern over failed crops, unseasonable weather and the ravages of floods and locusts. (71) Gregory tells a number of stories of how

relics could protect crops (72) and a rural oratory brought these powerful aids right into the countryside. The saint, present in his relic, might be a close and powerful friend.

The other side of the offensive against paganism was more direct. Gregory praises his uncle Gallus for destroying out of hand a pagan shrine in the vicinity of Cologne. From the description he gives us the shrine was used for offerings to pagan deities and the hanging of thaumaturgic wooden emblems of parts of the body. (73) Gallus and a helper burned the shrine down and were pursued by an irate band of pagans with drawn swords. Saved only by King Theuderic's intervention, Gallus always regretted his lost chance for martyrdom. (74) Also in the north of Gaul, the deacon Vulfoaic, whom Gregory at one time visited, destroyed a statue of Diana worshipped by the locals and tried to stamp out the cult. (75) After a stylitic aberration, quickly cured by local bishops who destroyed Vulfoaic's column, the deacon devoted himself to spreading the cult of St. Martin in the area around Trier. Martin played an important social role in the area as the accuser of thieves and arsonists who disrupted the community and his spectacular successes quickly diverted attention away from Diana. (76)

Fortunatus' poems (I. 8; 9) on the shrine of St. Vincent suggest that Leontius of Bordeaux used the virtus of the martyr Vincent to supersede the power of the pagan shrine at Vernemet, on the south bank of the Garonne, some eight kilometres from Pompéjac (77) and approximately 73 kilometres in a direct line from Bordeaux. Venantius tells us that the name of the place means shrine in the Gallic language. (I. 9. 9-12)

The relic of the saint, honoured at Sarragossa, was most likely brought back to Gaul by Leontius himself after he, as a young man, visited Spain in Childebert's expedition of 531. (78) The relic was installed in this martyrium, no doubt in order to wean the people from the old beliefs while providing, on the same spot, a new focal point for religious enthusiasm. Martin of Tours is recorded as having sited churches on old pagan sanctuaries (79) and the great rural shrine of St. Julian at Brioude was also placed on the site of earlier pagan worship. (80) At Vernemet, Vincent immediately gave a sign of his great power at the dedication of the shrine:

Nam cum templa Dei praesul de more dicavit,  
Martyris adventu daemonis ira fugit;  
Redditur incolomis quidam de peste maligna,  
Cui vidisse pii templa medella fuit.

(I. 9. 15-18)

Leontius also dedicated a small shrine to St. Nazaire, (I. 10) at a spot on the Dordogne, some five kilometres from Sainte-Foy, perhaps on the site of a pagan fanum as well. (81) Through these cult centres the saint visited the fields, his relics being a safeguard against evil and a promise of cure and aid. Laymen might also construct oratories, as for example the otherwise unknown Trasaricus of II. 13 has done. There is no indication of the location of the oratory but this shrine contained the relics of Peter, Paul, Martin and Remigius, Bishop of Reims (d. 553). The Councils show how the bishops endeavoured to bring these centres under episcopal control. Powerful men who owned villas, also established oratories on their estates, but this opened the door to possible interference in the affairs of the church and early came under regulation. (82) The Gallic Councils make it clear that the channels of religious power had to be made systematised and sacerdotal: all must lead back to the bishop of the civitas.

Bishops also had villas and many a church owned estates outside the civitas. (83) Four episcopal villas are described in the carmina. Leontius II of Bordeaux enjoyed three estates - the Villa Vereginis, near present-day Beaurech, some 15 kilometres from Bordeaux on the North bank of the Garonne; the Villa Praemiacum, some 30 kilometres from Bordeaux, on the South bank of the Garonne near modern Preignac; and the Villa Bissonnum perhaps near modern-day Besson near Pessac, some seven Roman miles south-west of Bordeaux. (84) (See Map IV: Environs of Bordeaux). One would naturally expect that in an age when laymen had oratories and private clergy in their villas, that those owned by bishops would be similarly appointed. Oratories are, in the time of Sidonius, a normal feature of the villa and are mentioned like the storehouses and weaving room. (85) Now, while Venantius treats us to a description of the fishponds and baths that enhanced the villas owned by Leontius, no mention is made of an oratory of any sort. Leontius' "basilica" of St. Denis may however represent the restoration of an oratory built on a private estate owned by the church. Maillé suggests (86) that this estate may have come to the church from Amelius, who began an oratory there and suggests St. Denis-de-Piles on the L'Isle in the Entre Dordogne as the most likely site, (35 kilometres in a direct line from Bordeaux). The oratory served the needs of the local Christian population (I. 11.6) and Leontius inherits both the estate and the task of completing the building. (I. 11.8-10)

Far to the north-east of Gaul in a territory once dotted with villas, some of which may have survived through the barbarian invasions of the fifth century, (87) we find the "castle" of Nicetius, Bishop of Trier at Neumagen, some 43 kilometres downstream from the civitas. Here we encounter an oratory,



most probably a repository for relics - sanctorum locus est. (III. 12. 34) The old oratorium at Neumagen may also have been restored by Nicetius, who we know imported Italian workmen for his building projects. (88)

These glimpses of the extended spiritual community served by the vicus churches and oratoria remind us that the bishop's pastoral care had to extend well beyond the walls of the civitas. Often this was achieved by some sort of episcopal visitation. (89) If ever there was a spiritual frontier it was out in the countryside. From there might appear a bogus Christ, like the man from Bourges who, dressed in animal skins, wandered around the countryside - from Bourges to Arles, and then to Javols, Le Velay and Le Puy. This fraud claimed to foresee the future and according to Gregory was followed by more than three thousand souls who contributed to his expenses. Dancing messengers announced his advent, but he was cut down in Le Puy by a servant of Bishop Aurelius. (90) Occurrences such as this were not infrequent (91) and constituted a serious challenge to the authority of the bishop.

Religious authority had to be systematised through the establishment of a network of religious centres in the countryside under episcopal control and the cult of relics brought under ecclesiastical supervision. The cult of the saints, the outstanding feature of Merovingian devotion, was the means by which the church captured the popular imagination and the greatest concentration of relics was under the control of the bishop in the civitas. In the senior ecclesia the bishop sat with his presbyterium, but the city was likely to be dotted with basilicae and oratoria filled with relics collected from far and wide. The civitas was a sacred fortress; its battlements the relics of the saints who protected those within. (92)

## (2) The Bishop and the Cult of the City Patron

The "presence" of the saint within the city, while offering the inhabitants of the civitas protection against natural disasters, acted as a gravitational force drawing to the shrine devotees from the countryside nearby, and from places further afield. Many a community found its identity and cohesion in devotion to the cult of their wonder-working patron; in other cases, collections of relics of famous saints could compensate for the lack of a local wonder-worker. The relic of a saint could protect a town in war, so it was believed, and when Childebert I and Lothar besieged Sarragossa, they came upon the citizens dressed in penitential garb, marching around the city walls carrying the tunic of St. Vincent the martyr. This immediately scared the troops and saved the town. (93) Rome had its famous protectors who looked after the city (94) while Metz had in Stephen, a deacon who at least might appeal to the apostles Peter and Paul to save the town. (95) Bishop Dumnolus of Le Mans built a basilica in honour of the martyr Vincent, pro salute populi vel custodia civitatis (96) and his successor Bertram, built the church of Sts. Peter and Paul, pro defensione civitatis. (97) The veil which covered the tomb of St. Remigius, was, according to Gregory, a stronger and more effective barrier against plague than the walls of the city of Reims. (98)

Peter and Paul were popular patrons who would protect a city as they had protected Rome. (99) In a poem celebrating the dedication of a church by Felix of Nantes, some time between 567 and 573, and inscribed on a wall, (100) Venantius pictures the apostles Peter and Paul, whose reliquiae (101) rest in the church, as visiting the city of Nantes. (III. 7) This inscriptional poem records the building of the church by Bishop Felix (III. 7. 23-26; 57-58) to house the relics of Peter, Paul, Hilary, Martin and Ferreolus. Peter and Paul, the two

lights of the world, (102)(III. 7. 3) bring with them the same type of protection they offered Rome:

Gallia, plaude libens, mittit tibi Roma salutem:  
Fulgor apostolicus visitat Allobrogas;  
A facie hostili duo propugnacula praesunt,  
Quos fidei turres urbs caput orbis habet.

(III. 7. 17-20)

The regional character of many Merovingian cults brought a close association with special patrons. (103) Fortunatus' poem De S. Medardo (III. 16) recounts the miracles wrought at the tomb of this episcopal saint in the church begun before 561 by King Lothar and finished by his son Sigibert (104) in Soissons. Julian was the saint of the Auvergne, Sts. Denis and Germanus associated with Paris. At Angers the festival of St. Albinus was celebrated. (XI. 25. 7-10) Hilary was the protector of Poitiers and, of course, Martin watched over Tours. At Tours the cult of St. Martin had early been tied to notions of social cohesion, as the famous quarrel of the Turongeaux and Poitevins over the saint's body illustrates. When arguments failed, the Turonian hijack of the saint's body received God's approval, Gregory tells us, since God did not want Tours to be deprived of its patron. (105)

Tours, with its cult of St. Martin, is the inspirational centre of Fortunatus' carmina for it was to the shrine of Martin that the poet had eventually come as a pilgrim, according to Fortunatus' account in the Vita Martini. Our poet was a fruitful source of information about cures worked by Martin in Italy (106) and the distribution of church dedications to Martin and of relics of the saint illustrated by Fortunatus' poems points to the wider dissemination of the cult as far away as Galicia. (107)

The spiritual community of the Touraine was centred on Martin's city and their bishop was in a very real sense Martin's successor. Although there were, in the time of Gregory of Tours, churches dedicated to a number of other saints, as Map VIII - Tours shows, the ecclesiastical topography of the city was dominated by Martin's presence. (108) The two main foci of devotion were the senior ecclesia, the cathedral where Martin presided, and the basilica of St. Martin extra muros, in which he was buried. In these two churches, twelve of the sixteen major vigils that marked the liturgical calendar of Tours were celebrated. (109) The cathedral, renovated by Gregory of Tours, is known to us primarily from Fortunatus' description. (X. 6)

The original building, constructed by Litorius, second bishop of Tours, in the fourth century, was the episcopal seat of Martin and his successors, and when Gregory came to the See in 573, he found the cathedral in ruins after the disastrous fire of 558. The cathedral was, in the eyes of Fortunatus, the nobilis arcis apex, (X. 6. 2) for it combined the locus sanctus where some of Martin's miracles had taken place with the sedes of his episcopal successor, Gregory.

Venantius tells us that the cathedral had been the scene of the miracle where the bishop, having given his own tunic to the pauper, found his arms covered with precious stones. (110) Here at this altar a globe of fire was seen to hover over Martin's head. (111) Gregory renovated this church so intimately associated with his sainted predecessor, (X. 6. 73-74) and sought the saint as his own powerful friend and patron.

The renovation of the church appears to have entailed major demolition and reconstruction (X. 6. 15-18) and a solution to the problem of damp. (X. 6. 21-22)

It was lit by large windows and by a system of artificial illumination at night.

(X.6.89-90) The most noteworthy and didactic element in the reconstructed church was the series of frescoes (IX.6.91-132) which depicted incidents from the life of Martin illustrative of the saint's caritas, his opposition to pagan practices and his spiritual discernment when dealing with Christian cults.

Fortunatus' description shows that the bishop had illustrated Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini. The incidents would have been familiar to the faithful from the reading of the work in church. Walking around the church the visitor would have been able to follow the programme - Martin cures the leper; Martin divides his cloak; Martin gives his tunic; Martin raises the dead; Martin destroys a pine; Martin topples idols; Martin discovers a false martyr. (X.6.93-132) This series of frescoes must have lent a particularly Martinian character to the episcopal church. (112)

Adjoining the cathedral and perhaps part of the domus ecclesiae, was yet another reminder of St. Martin - the cell where the saint clothed the pauper. The poem in cellulam S. Martini ubi pauperum vestivit; rogante Gregorio episcopo, gives every indication of having been written for the wall of the cell. The opening lines certainly suggest this:

Qui celerare paras, iter huc deflecte, viator;  
Hic locus orantem cautius ire docet.

(I.5.1-2)

Gregory used this cell to house the relics of Sts. Cosmas and Damian which he discovered in the nearby thesaurus of the cathedral. (113)

The tomb of Martin lay in the basilica extra muros. The original church over Martin's bones was raised by Bricius, Martin's successor, but this small structure was demolished by Perpetuus who replaced it with a much

larger and more commodious building, more in keeping with the importance of the tomb and the demands of the developing cult. This structure was burnt by Willichar, a runaway priest and his wife, c. 558, but restored by King Lothar and Euphronius. The King contributed towards the cost of a tin roof. (114) St. Martin's basilica was by Gregory's time generally used for episcopal burials, but had been damaged by fire and Gregory had the walls painted with frescoes. (115) The church in which Clovis received the consulate benefited from rich donations, (116) oil lamps burned with the candles before the tomb of the saint. The custodian dispensed sacred oil and wax for protection elsewhere, and the matricularii, the poor on the roll of the basilica, or their representative, collected alms from pilgrims or visitors. (117)

A convent nestled in the atrium of the great church, while in the shrine and its environs, the sick appear to have virtually taken up residence for days on end. (118) The blind, the lame and the unwanted must have choked the basilica. The great church was also a convenient dumping ground for useless sick slaves. Gregory tells us of the slave Securus, who suffering from a withered hand and foot as well as joint disease, was dumped by his masters at Martin's tomb. Since Securus was unable to feed himself, they felt that he would be fed by those who passed by. (119) Some of those cured by the saint entered upon a form of servitium as an act of gratitude to the saint, but the exact nature of this service is unclear in the sources. (120)

Twice each year the emotional atmosphere of the great basilica received an electrifying charge as the great feasts of Martin approached, for it was at these times that most cures were effected. (121) The bishop sent out invitations to kings, bishops and others to attend the feast. Within the carmina we see Venantius replying on a number of occasions to Gregory's invitation to

attend with a regretful inability to accept. Others needed no direct invitation for the miracle stories that were contained in the works of Sulpicius Severus, Paulinus, Fortunatus and Gregory virtually invited the blind, lame and diseased to visit the tomb of this healer. Gregory's De virtutibus beati Martini episcopi, completed not later than 593, provides a wealth of testimonia for the cult.

Pilgrims flocked in, particularly at festal times - July 4 which marked the consecration of Martin as bishop and the dedication of Perpetuus' church, (122) and November 11, which commemorated Martin's death. As Gregory advises his reader - Quod si fideliter celebraveris, et in praesenti saeculo et in futuro patrocina beati antistitis promereberis. (123) Outside of these times we still glimpse enthusiastic pilgrims such as the Thuringian princess Radegund, who, according to Fortunatus' Vita Radegundis, visited each holy place in Tours before going on to seek out the spot where Martin died at Candes, another station of pilgrimage by the sixth century. (124) Petri's study of the pilgrims represented in Gregory's De virtutibus beati Martini reveals that the cult was clearly of more than local importance: 20% of the pilgrims whose place of origin can be ascertained came from the Touraine, 75% came from other parts of Gaul and a further 5% were foreign to Gaul. (125)

The festivities in honour of St. Martin extended over a number of days, but the highlight was the vigil kept on St. Martin's day itself. (126) The details of the mass of the day are even less known to us than the normal sixth century Gallican mass, (127) yet it seems most likely that a reading from Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini was substituted for the epistle. (128) A sermon on the saint was a central feature of the celebration of saints' festivals

in Gaul and usually stressed imitation of the saints' virtues. (129) Gregory gives evidence of the then current belief that writings about Martin had themselves thaumaturgical or curative powers. (130) This must have raised the status of the saint's Vita to an almost canonical level. (131)

The highpoint of St. Martin's day was the visit to the tomb, but with all the crowds in Tours for this festival the church must have presented a hectic scene. There was no doubt a lighter side to the celebrations, as is evidenced elsewhere in Gaul. Bishop Sidonius could see nothing wrong with a bit of frivolity during the celebration of the feast of St. Justus at Lyons. After the vigil and while waiting for the mass at Tierce, Sidonius and his companions spent the time playing football, while his friend Domnicius organised a less energetic game of dice. (132) Elsewhere in Gaul, Gregory mentions notables dressing up for the festival of a saint, (133) and wine being placed in the forecourt of a church for the refreshment of the faithful. (134) That festivities could be taken to excessive lengths is suggested by Caesarius' tirade against those who sing songs and perform dances in front of the churches of the saints. These people, he says, come to church as Christians, but seem to return as pagans. (135) Venantius and Gregory, as promoters of St. Martin's shrine, are silent about this side of festivities at Tours.

Pignora, materials infused with the virtus of the saint, were souvenirs of a visit to the shrine and a means of blessing to those who could not come in person. Miracles might be obtained by contact with oil poured over the tomb and scraped from the marble, by contact with dust from the tomb itself, or by contact with objects placed on the tomb overnight. (136)

Miracles had two important functions. On the one hand they provided material confirmation that the saint really was among the blessed. On another



they indicated the saint's approval of the person who sought the boon - Gregory makes it clear that the miracles indicate the merit of the recipient. Evil-doers, or outsiders to the spiritual community - pagans, heretics and Jews - could not expect any aid whatsoever. Miracle stories were often recounted to encourage conversion. (137)

Episcopal control of the cult of relics, something we see asserted in Gregory's works, (138) guarded against these objects becoming alternative foci of religious enthusiasm, and thus undermining the power of the bishop. The canons show that the relics had to be honoured by clerics who ultimately came under the bishop's control. (139) Sainly bishops could quickly tell what were genuine relics and what were moles' teeth and the bones of mice. (140) This power of discernment is in itself a suggestion of sanctity for one of the most famous episodes in the life of Martin was his unmasking of the false martyr. This episode was depicted as the final scene in the frescoed programme of the walls of the cathedral at Tours and underlined the fact that Martin as bishop, had to put an end to the false cult that had claimed the devotion of the people. (X. 6. 129-132)

The saint, for his part, could also be seen as discerning the merits of those who might be his special helpers in the community. Gregory tells us a story about an unworthy man who took as a relic a part of the railing of a couch in St. Martin's monastery hoping that it would bring his household a blessing. The saint showed his displeasure by sending illness on the household and sent a message to the man via a dream, that he should give the piece of wood to the then deacon Gregory. Gregory saw to it that the relic was properly honoured. (141)

Venantius tells us that St. Eutropius, the first bishop of Saintes, expressed a similar approval for Leontius II, the Metropolitan of Bordeaux, and asked that he should renovate his church. In this case the saint's request would have had political advantages for Leontius since the Metropolitan had been involved in a bitter dispute over jurisdiction in the city of Saintes. The preference shown for Leontius by the episcopal patron saint of Saintes would have counted for much.

At some time between 563-567, Leontius, as Metropolitan, sought to expel Bishop Emerius (Cymulus) from his See of Saintes because he had been consecrated without the permission of his Metropolitan who was away at the time. Cymulus had been allowed to be consecrated on the orders of King Lothar. Leontius assembled the bishops of the province in the city of Saintes and deposed Emerius, choosing instead a priest of Bordeaux, one Heraclius. Heraclius was then sent to King Charibert with the bishop's recommendation and on his way this candidate sought unsuccessfully to obtain Euphronius' support. The episode ended in failure for Leontius and his candidate. King Charibert greatly resented Leontius' interference. He humiliated Heraclius and sent a deputation of his own clergy to restore Emerius in Saintes. Chamberlains were sent to fine the bishops who aided Leontius while Leontius himself was fined one thousand gold pieces. (142)

Fortunatus' poems concerning Leontius must have been written after this dispute since the poet did not reach Bordeaux till c. 569. I would contend that Venantius' comments on Leontius' relationship to Saintes must be seen against a background of the dispute and continuing ill feeling.

Leontius, rather pointedly devoted his wealth and energies to the patronage of churches dedicated to the episcopal patrons of Saintes – St. Bibianus, the second bishop of Saintes, (143) and St. Eutropius, the first bishop of the city. (144) See Map VI – Saintes. This munificence is singled out by the poet for special mention. (I. 15.59–60) The building of the basilica of St. Bibianus was begun by Bishop Eusebius (d. 549) and Fortunatus tells his reader that Emerius asked Leontius to finish the work. Maillé, and now Maurin, see this as an indication of a reconciliation between Emerius and Leontius, (145) but even if there were such a reconciliation, I would see in Fortunatus' wording a rather pointed barb at one who was unable to complete a task he had inherited from his predecessor. The contrast between the way Emerius and Leontius rose to the challenge of inherited building programmes is most striking if we compare two poems – I. 12.5–6, and I. 11.8–10.

St. Eutropius, the first bishop of the city, is portrayed by Fortunatus as inviting Leontius of Bordeaux to rebuild his dilapidated church in Saintes. Now, while there was merit in providing the saints with fitting shrines, Venantius takes care to point out that the saints are particular who their benefactors are. They express a clear choice and this choice in itself would be a comment on the merit of the benefactor:

Quantus amor domini maneat tibi, papa Leonti,  
Quem sibi iam sancti templa novare monent!

(I. 13.1–2)

First of all the saint revealed in a dream that it would be Leontius (perhaps pointedly not Emerius, Bishop of the city) who would restore the saint's now decrepit church:

Nocte sopore levi cuidam veniente ministro  
Instauratorem te docet esse suum.

(I. 13.7–8)

The decoration of the church, together with structural repairs that were undertaken, suggest that Leontius involved himself in an expensive work of restoration. Perhaps this church building in Saintes may be seen as an attempt to make his presence felt in the city and to bolster his position as Metropolitan.

Both of these poems were intended to be made into inscriptions to be placed in the churches in Saintes. (146) They would have reminded the people of Leontius' benefactions and served as propaganda for the Metropolitan's cause. In the poem for St. Eutropius' church, the proto-episcopal saint of the city is depicted as deferring to Leontius by right of his priority, that is to Leontius as Metropolitan:

Urbis Santonicae primus fuit iste sacerdos,  
Et tibi, qui reparas, iure priora dedit.  
Cum sua templa tenet sanctus habitando quiete,  
Instauratori reddet amore vicem.

(I. 13. 19-22)

The political point implicit in both inscriptions is further suggested by comments made by Fortunatus in his panegyrical poem De Leontio Episcopo.

(I. 15) There, after mention of Leontius' church building in Saintes, (I. 15. 59-60) his position as Metropolitan is alluded to:

Tu quoque dicendus Burdegalense decus:  
Quantum inter reliquas caput haec super extulit urbes,  
Tantum pontifices vincis honore gradus;

(I. 15. 68-70).

In Saintes, association with the patrons of the city served to bolster Bishop Leontius' position and formed part of his campaign to assert his rights as Metropolitan. Such an association with the saint is common in the period. As Peter Brown has put it - "we are in a world of men whose personal status, whose merita, depend on a highly personalised and intense dialogue with such

ideal companions." (147) Fortunatus makes much of this theme in his treatment of Euphronius and Gregory as successors to Martin, for the bishop of the Merovingian period lived in the shadow of sainted predecessors. The poet depicts the saint's approval of those who held episcopal office in his own day since the saint's approval was a powerful weapon for the bishop when dealing with elements within the community intent on undermining his authority. This is highlighted by the skilful way Gregory uses the saint's displeasure with a successor as an indication of the faults of his fellow bishops. (148) We must view Eutropius' designation of Leontius as his special helper against such a background where saints pass swift judgement on the virtues and vices of contemporary bishops.

Sainted bishops provided prescribed patterns of episcopal behaviour and in Fortunatus' poetry this is nowhere expressed so fully as in the case of Martin. At Tours, Martin's successor controlled the cult of the saint and it was the cult of the saint that gave to the community of Tours a sense of corporate religious identity. Expressed in the ecclesiastical topography of the city and in the liturgical calendar, the cult of Martin provided a matrix for the associational life of the community. Visiting Martin's tomb, seeking his aid or honouring him at his festival, the Christian forged a spiritual link with his fellow citizens, especially with the "blessed poor", who, under Martin's protection, sought their assistance. In a real sense the citizens of Tours, and those welcomed to Martin's festival, found in the celebrations a bond of spiritual association. It is the bishop, as successor to the saint and leader of the spiritual community, who invites notables to the festivities and calls kings to fellowship with Martin and Martin's community through the symbolic sharing of eulogia - "St. Martin's Bread". (149)

### (3) The Bishop and Groups within the Community

#### (a) The Christian People.

The ordinary believers (plebs) who filled their flasks with holy oil and then went back to field and farm emerge with a greater vivacity from Gregory's miracle stories than from the carmina of Fortunatus. As we have observed in Chapter One we may only expect Venantius' poems to shed light on the royal, episcopal and "aristocratic" circles in which he moved. One limitation of Venantius' poems as a source lies in the fact that the lives of ordinary people find little reflexion in them. Due to the commissions that Fortunatus received for epitaphs, we find, quite ironically, that it is often the faithful departed who stand out from the community in the carmina as rounded individuals. The epitaphs provide a cross-section of the upper classes of Merovingian society. Thus we encounter the young Arcadius, a clever boy of senatorial stock, (IV. 17) and the charitable Avolus who was secret in his benefactions to the poor. (IV. 21) Nicasia raises a tomb for her husband, Orientius, an expert counsellor and friend of the royal court (IV. 24) and Frigia has brought back and buried the body of her husband Brumachius, a legate who has died on a mission. (IV. 20) The epitaph of Eusebia provides a wealth of personal detail about this precocious young lady, who scarcely lived to the age of ten. Skilled at using pens and able to embroider on cloth as others write on paper, this beautiful girl was betrothed to be married. In losing Eusebia, the father who is left has lost both daughter and son-in-law. (IV. 28) In the consolatio written to ease the bereavement of Dagulf, who has lost his wife Vilithuta, we read of a seventeen year old girl who has died in childbirth (IV. 26) and in IV. 18, of the death of Basilius, whom we have earlier encountered as the

donor of a church restoration project. (I. 7) These then are some of the individuals who make up the Christian people.

Groups of people, rather than individuals, concern Fortunatus more when he is writing about the bishop and the laity. The flock is merely sketched en masse in a picture of consensus or various epithets such as panis egentum, (IV. 7. 13), tutor viduarum (IV. 3. 11) or spes peregrinorum (III. 22a. 8) sum up the bishop's role as patron of various groups within the spiritual community and stand as evidence of the bishop's continuing personal responsibility for those who sought the assistance of the whole Christian community. It was to the domus ecclesiae that those in need might come to seek assistance. Hence the prohibition of the keeping of hounds by bishops since it was feared that the dogs might frighten the poor away. (150)

The bishop as overseer of the community, provided for poor relief from the revenues at his disposal. (151) In each civitas there was drawn up a list, the matricula pauperum, on which was written the names of those entitled to receive the assistance of the church. The sixth century canons suggest a quite extensive system of social support and that a quite sizeable number of people benefited. Many of the bishop's charitable enterprises were administered not by the bishop himself, but by the Archdeacon or a deputy who acted on the bishop's behalf. (152) Much depended on the calibre of person who aided the bishop in the discharge of his responsibilities. St. Tetricus, Bishop of Langres, was forced to dismiss his deacon who had been robbing the poor and Gregory more than suggests that the discovery of the deacon's misdeeds contributed to the onset of Tetricus' final illness. (153)

Further, with the spread of the Christian community to the countryside we find a corresponding decentralization of poor-relief from the civitas to the vici. The Council of Tours (567) ruled that the citizens of each place had to provide for the maintenance of the poor of that area, the aim of the legislation being an attempt to stop the poor roaming at large. (154) This decentralisation did not necessarily reduce the bishop's responsibility for the poor since the tradition of this responsibility was, as we have seen in Chapter Two, very strong indeed. It would be an oversimplification to see the poor of the Merovingian age as merely protected by the legislative provisions of the Gallic Councils or to see in the canons of the Gallic Councils an incipient Welfare State. (155) The pattern was much more complex and depended on the response of individual bishops. At one end of the scale stood bishops like Caesarius who were notoriously extravagant in their charity, (156) on the other end there were prelates who kept hounds despite the fact that they could frighten away the poor. The ideal bishop was the amator pauperum who was surrounded by crowds of needy clients who looked to him for assistance and who sought his help against those who sought to oppress them. The worst charge that could be levelled against an individual was that he was a necator pauperum. (157) A saintly bishop would have a natural following of "the blessed poor", but a calculating individual, eager to impress other clerics with his sanctity and pastoral concern, would have to stage-manage such a following. (158)

Likewise, in an age that saw an increasing institutionalisation of hospitalitas, Fortunatus places great stress on the bishop's personal care for travellers and pilgrims. The movement of pilgrims along the roads and rivers of Gaul to the great shrines of Martin at Tours, Julian at Brioude and Médard



at Soissons must have placed an enormous strain on the bishop's resources if, true to the episcopal ideal, he were going to provide for the needs of the wayfarer. Royal assistance is highlighted by the establishment of a Xenodochium at Lyons, by Childebert I in 540, (159) but overall it is still the bishop who, in most places, shoulders the responsibility for the extension of hospitality.

Three letters of recommendation included in the carmina draw our attention to the personal role of the bishop in the extension of hospitality. We have seen in Chapter One that Venantius, as a traveller, made use of a network of episcopal hospitality. Perhaps Fortunatus made use of letters of recommendation similar to those he himself wrote for travellers. The theme of one brief missive to Gregory is a plea for paternal assistance and inclusion in the spiritual community:

Hic peregrinus item laetetur, summe sacerdos,  
Pastorem et patriam te meruisse suam.

(V. 15. 7-8)

Another letter of recommendation, this time ad episcopos requests aid for a traveller wishing to return to Italy. Two poems (X. 13 and V. 18) mention an Italian, but since this person is not mentioned by name we cannot ascertain whether we are dealing with two individuals or with only one individual aided with different letters at particular junctures of his journey. The poem ad episcopos, X. 13. stresses the personal responsibility of the bishop as fidei via. (X. 13. 1) A parallel is implied between the road to heaven and the road to Italy. Episcopal aid to the viator will be amply rewarded:

Semina iactetis, mercedis ut ampla metatis  
Et redeat vobis centuplicata seges.

(X. 13. 9-10)

On a personal level we know from Sidonius of the practice of providing individuals with letters of introduction. (160) The canons, however, required that priests and deacons who were travelling had to carry a letter from their bishop for without this they could not be taken into communion by the bishops of strange cities. (161) Bishops granted epistolia, ecclesiastical letters of recommendation to needy persons and prisoners, (162) and the Council of Tours (567) prohibited the writing of these by laymen and clerics alike. (163) Fortunatus' poems are in effect letters of recommendation, but there is nothing about them to suggest that they are anything more than unofficial requests for aid. The letters ask for the bearer to be included in the spiritual community.

Fortunatus' sense of spiritual community was in large measure based upon the notion of an extended family. The bishop is the father, his city itself can provide the traveller, stranger or exile with a new fatherland. The poems written in recommendation of individuals seeks the inclusion of the bearer in this extended family. The bishop, as overseer of a community of believers, must extend his pastoral care to other Christians, who sharing a common baptism, seek aid:

Ecce venit praesens Italus, peregrinus et hospes:  
Cernens pastores ne, precor, erret ovis.

(V. 18. 5-6)

### (b) Clergy

Support for the bishop among the clergy is implied by the massed clergy who surround Euphronius and Germanus in the great poems that we have earlier discussed. Individual clerics also appear in the carmina,

though none from the lower ranks of the clergy. For information about the role played by ostiarius, lector, exorcista and acolythus in the Gallic church we must depend on the canons of the Councils and the fifth century Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua. (164)

Some individuals from the upper ranks of the clergy are, however, recipients of poems and in these modest productions we are able to glimpse something of the relationship that these clerics had with their bishop. The highest ranking cleric represented in the carmina is the un-named Archdeacon of Meaux to whom Fortunatus sends a poem thanking him for some wine (mustum). What interests us is the way that the poet alludes to the vice-episcopal role of this Archdeacon, who most probably served Bishop Sidonius:

Det tibi larga Deus, qui curam mente fideli  
De grege pontificis, magne minister, habes.

(III. 27. 7-8)

That the office of Archdeacon was an exalted one is confirmed and illustrated by the status of the Archdeacons whom we come across in Gregory's Historia. The Archdeacon, provided that he wasn't plotting against his bishop, (165) often enjoyed a close relationship with his superior and acted in many instances on his behalf. He undertook administrative and charitable duties as the bishop's agent. He visited prisons and looked after widows and orphans. He may also have seen to the education of young clerics and boys. Certain disciplinary powers were also exercised in the bishop's name, (166) but still only a deacon in orders, he could not say mass. (167)

The relationship between bishop and Archdeacon was often one of patron and protégé. A good Archdeacon might even find his last resting place in the tomb of his magister. (168) Many an Archdeacon went on, perhaps with

his bishop's patronage, to become a bishop in turn. Avitus of Clermont-Ferrand, Bertram of Le Mans and Pappolus of Langres all came to episcopal office after serving as archdeacons. (169) Venantius' poem De Platone episcopo might be cited as illustration of the bishop's patronage of his archdeacon. Plato, archdeacon to Gregory of Tours and his supporter in adversity, (170) became Bishop of Poitiers through Gregory's patronage. (X. 14. 9-12) Gregory, no doubt, suggested Plato's name to King Childebert II.

Four priests are represented in the carmina. The first of these is associated with the church at Bordeaux in the time of Leontius II (III. 24) and his charity and hospitality are praised. Another, Servilion, held office in the royal palace prior to his ordination and increased the revenues. (IV. 13. 5-6) Hilary is praised in his epitaph for his justice and knowledge of the law, presumably, but not necessarily, canon law. (IV. 12. 13-16) The priest Julian, who Fortunatus tells us was a mercator, is perhaps the same person mentioned as a priest of Tours by Gregory. (171) Both Julian and Hilary were married. Julian left a son, also a priest, who raised the tomb. (IV. 23. 15-18) Hilary's wife predeceased him, leaving his mother-in-law Evantia to bury him. (IV. 12. 11-12; 17-18)

More numerous are poems addressed to those in the diaconate. The rite of ordination for the diaconus is described in the Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua where the implication is clear, in the laying on of hands, that the diaconus does not enjoy collegiality with the sacerdotes. (172) Normally one had to be twenty-five years of age for ordination to the diaconate (173) but progression to presbyter, at the age of thirty, was by no means automatic. Some men remained deacons beyond the age of thirty. (174) Our knowledge of the deacon's

duties is meagre: we catch sight of him dressed in his alb at the Offertory and Reading and we see him distributing communion, as an assistant to the presbyter. (175) His other duties appear to have been charitable, as in the early church. The charitable duties of the deacon are alluded to in the final lines of Venantius' poem to Anthimius. (III.29.17-18)

Rucco, Lupus and Waldo are deacons of the church at Paris. Rucco is about to be ordained a priest and thus it is his ministry at the altar that receives the poet's immediate attention. (III.26.1-2) Lupus and Waldo, (IX.13) while members of the diaconate, are closely associated with both the bishop and monastic circles for via them Fortunatus sends greetings to the bishop (most probably Ragnemodus of Paris) and Droctoveus, the successor to St. Germanus at the Monastery of St. Symphorian (IX.11.3) at Autun.

#### (c) Monks and Nuns

Monasticism and episcopacy were the two most interactive of religious institutions in Gaul. Martin, in legend, was the monk-bishop par excellence, and just as the episcopacy had been revived in the fifth century through the influence of Lérins, so, later in the sixth century it would be challenged by Columban and his followers. None of this finds reflexion in Fortunatus' poems although we can establish that the poet was in contact with three quite distinct monastic circles. The epitaph that the poet wrote for Abbot Victorianus (IV.11) illustrates a link with the monastery of Asana, in Tarraconensis, but we know of no further links with Spain apart from that with Braga. The second link is with Abbot Aredius, an admired friend of Gregory of Tours and a pupil of Nicetius of Trier. He was also a supporter of Radegund. (V.19) Aredius founded a monastery at Limoges, the material wants of the monks being supplied by his mother Pelagia. (176)

The third link is with the monastic circle

of Germanus and the monastery of St. Symphorian at Autun. (IX.11) Despite these points of contact Fortunatus' poems shed no light on relations between bishops and communities of monks living within their cities. The canons of the Councils, on the other hand, suggest that the bishops were especially concerned to make it clear that the monasteries ultimately came under their jurisdiction. A similar problem of jurisdiction was raised by the establishment of nunneries.

Religious withdrawal from the world by women religious took a number of forms in the sixth century. Virgins and widows could live a religious life on a private domestic basis. The poem in honour of Berthichilde (VI.4) suggests that this consecrated virgin (VI.4.8-9) changed her garments to those of a religious, (VI.4.13-14) but still lived at home. (VI.4.17-18)(177) Women religious could also "serve" a church (178) or enter a community of nuns. The rule of Caesarius, Ad Virgines, provided a structural basis for communal monasticism for women and was a spur to the development of nunneries. Venantius, in his major poem, De Virginitate, (VIII.3) written for the Abbess Agnes of the Convent of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, stresses the role of Caesaria and Caesarius in providing a structural basis for female monasticism in Gaul. In our own time, he writes, Caesaria dignified the city of Arles, and, following the precepts of Caesarius, she obtained eternal light, if not by martyrdom, then by the practice of virginity. (VIII.3.39-42) Since the rule of Caesarius drew upon an already established ascetical tradition in East and West, the poet (as in VII.1.37-38) employs the classical analogy of the docta apes. (179) Here (VIII.3) the image is used to suggest the comprehensive and discriminating way in which Caesarius and Caesaria drew on the ascetical tradition, and passed on the "honey" to Radegund. (VIII.3.47-52) The poet's message for Abbess Agnes follows from this. (VIII.3.81-84)

Established within the protective walls of the civitates, convents like this formed part of the bishop's spiritual community and came under his protection. Caesarius provided the Regula ad Virgines and the Council of Arles, 554, established the principle that the bishop had the care of the convents within his city and ordered the Abbess of such a foundation to do nothing contrary to the rule. (180) Yet the evidence that can be pieced together from elsewhere points to a very different picture indeed. As we shall see, the spiritual authority of the bishop could be seriously undermined by the establishment of a convent if the foundress were a determined woman and a member of the royal family. Having her own resources and able to draw upon a complex web of royal and episcopal patronage outside the city, such a foundress might effectively challenge the spiritual authority of the episcopus in his own city.

At Tours Gregory tried on a number of occasions to assert his authority over the convent founded by Ingitrude, mother of Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux (and a relative of King Guntram), within the very atrium of St. Martin's church. The convent appears to have early assumed the character of a private, almost family institution. Having set up her community, Ingitrude tried to persuade her daughter to leave her husband and enter the convent, so that she could be made Abbess. Gregory packed Berthegund, this daughter, back to her husband. When she returned with her possessions three or four years later her irate husband sought the intervention of King Guntram. The Metropolitan of Bordeaux was also involved in the family quarrel. (181)

Another dispute over acceptance of Ingitrude's niece as Abbess involved Gregory again in the affairs of the convent (182) and the bishops of Tours and Poitiers became similarly concerned in a dispute with her over

property. (183) When, in the 590's, Ingtrude died, Gregory's troubles did not end, for the nun's estranged daughter, angry at her mother's decision to make her niece rather than her daughter Abbess, took back family property from the convent, in blatant contravention of the canons. Bishop Gregory stood back impotently as Berthegund, armed with royal permission, loaded up the convent's possessions and carried them away. (184)

Fortunatus' heroine Radegund established a similarly royal and privately endowed convent in Poitiers. Yet while Ingtrude has come down to us via Gregory as an arrogant royal schemer whose convent was a source of trouble to her bishop, Radegund appears complete with a reputation for sanctity and a respectful attitude towards bishops. As Gregory puts it, Radegund was semper subiecta et oboediens cum omni congregatione sua anterioribus fuit episcopis. (185) Fortunatus had acted as the propagandist of Radegund as we have seen in Chapter One. To bishops in Gaul and as far away as Galicia, the poet spread Radegund's fame.

In his De Virginitate (VIII. 3) Venantius links Radegund and the Abbess Agnes to a whole procession of virginal colleagues - to Caesaria at Arles and to the great women saints such as Agnes and Thecla. Yet Fortunatus' approving attitude to women religious was not shared by all in his age and he may well be arguing a case. It was at the Council of Macôn that one bishop put forward the view that woman could not be included in the term "man" and had to be argued out of his opinion. As Kurth has argued, the prelate may have been suggesting that women lacked a soul. (186) A number of Church Councils prohibited the ordination of women as deaconesses; the Council of Orleans (533) commented that this was because of the weakness of their sex. (187)



The Vita Radegundis, written by Fortunatus shortly after his patroness' death, firmly casts Radegund in the role of ascetic saint by employing many of the themes familiar in monastic hagiography. (188) The continuation of the Vita by Baudonivia, a seventh century nun of the convent of the Holy Cross, places a greater emphasis on Radegund as a foundress and is more polemical in tone, clearly answering Radegund's detractors with proofs of her sanctity. (189) In her own time Radegund was not considered a saint by the bishop of Poitiers, Maroveus. By the time Maroveus came to his See Radegund was well established at her convent built just within the city walls during the time of Bishop Pientius and the dux Autrapius. (190) The nunnery was prosperous since it had received endowment from Radegund and Lothar. Outside the walls, but back from the river bank, the Church of St. Mary was rising. Radegund intended that it should be her last resting place. Outside the walls the nunnery owned estates, their fruitful produce suggested by the rich fare offered to our poet by Radegund and Agnes. Yet Maroveus, unlike his predecessors at Poitiers, turned his back on Radegund and her convent and sought to ignore it. He refused to officiate at the adventus of the relic of the True Cross and went off to his country estate instead. When Radegund, (who, according to Gregory, was regarded as a saint by the people) finally died, Maroveus, who was absent visiting parishes, did not feel compelled to return to bury the saint, and Gregory had to travel from Tours to perform this duty. (191) We can only assume that Maroveus' absence was intentional.

Maroveus may well have had good reason to fear Radegund's presence in the civitas, for Fortunatus' Vita unwittingly reveals her as a determined, headstrong woman. She had the strength of character to leave her husband, the

king, and she browbeat St. Médard until he agreed to what must have been a politically dangerous act - in essence the dissolution of the king's marriage. (192) Little wonder that he hesitated! The same woman, who, Gregory tells us, respected bishops, did not balk at telling St. Médard to his face - si me consecrare distuleris, et plus hominem quam Deum timeris, de manu tua, pastor, ovis anima requiratur. The bishop finally gave in and consecrated Radegund, who had already quite calculatedly dressed herself as a monacha, as a deaconess, apparently in contravention of the canons that had prohibited the practice. (193)

By the time Maroveus became bishop of Poitiers, a complex web of patronage bound Radegund's convent to bishops all over Gaul. She was not just dependant on the local bishop. First of all there was the link with Arles due to the adoption of Caesarius' rule, (194) then there was the link to Bishop Germanus of Paris forged through this prelate's consecration of Agnes as Abbess. (195) Fortunatus, who later wrote a life of St. Germanus, was closely associated with Germanus' circle and with the convent at Poitiers. He helped to cement the connection between the two. In one poem he portrays himself as being pulled in two directions at the same time by the claims on his affections:

Me vocat inde Pater radians Germanus in orbe,  
Hinc retinet mater: me vocat inde pater.

(VIII. 2. 3-4)

Ragnemodus, Germanus' successor, maintained the connection and was also a supporter of the convent. (VIII. 2. 3-4) In one poem we see that he has sent the convent of the Holy Cross a gift of Parian marble. (IX. 10)

Radegund was politically minded enough to take the precaution of writing, at the foundation of her convent, to a number of bishops asking for their protection. Gregory reproduces the text of their reply. (196) It is most striking that Radegund enjoys such prestige that in their reply the bishops picture her as little short of a new St. Martin sent from foreign parts to revive Gaul. As the bishops say - Thuringia and Pannonia are not all that far apart!

Five ecclesiastical provinces are represented by the signatories to this letter of episcopal support. The bishops not only lend the enterprise their backing, but guarantee that of their successors as well. The justification for this interest would appear to be the fact that a number of women have left other civitates to join Radegund at Poitiers. The bishops promise not to receive back runaway nuns.

Poitiers, some eighty kilometres from Tours, was subject to the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Bordeaux two hundred kilometres to the south. The ecclesiastical pull of Tours had always been strong; witness the battle between the men of Tours and the men of Poitiers over the body of Martin in the fourth century. Still, Poitiers was the resting place of Hilary and the natural focal point for the devotional life of the city had been the basilica of St. Hilary, 900 metres east of the city wall (197): See Map VII - Poitiers. While Fortunatus had earlier celebrated the saint of the civitas in his Vita Hilarii (198) during the episcopate of Pascentius, now, in Maroveus' time, the prestige of Radegund and her foundation appears to have eclipsed that of the bishop's church within the walls or the tomb of St. Hilary.

What focused attention on the convent established by Radegund was its possession of a fragment of the True Cross.

In what must have been a real "coup de théâtre", the relic of the True Cross entered this small town in Gaul in 568/69 in a spectacular illustration of the ability of Radegund to use her royal connections in order to obtain this most holy of relics for Poitiers. (199) As Averil Cameron has demonstrated, "Radegund saw further than the convent walls at Poitiers" (200) for Venantius' poem Ad Iustinum et Sophiam Augustos (201) illustrates a connection with Constantinople pregnant with political as well as religious significance for Gaul. (202) Maroveus' straight refusal to have anything to do with the installation of the relic may well be attributed to a certain peevishness at being upstaged in his own city by this headstrong and obviously very influential woman. Still, Radegund was not defeated for she immediately went to King Sigibert, asking him to arrange for another bishop to install the relic.

Euphronius of Tours was despatched by Sigibert to install the relic. This must have been a terrible affront to Maroveus for Euphronius was not even the Metropolitan with jurisdiction over Poitiers. When the relic of the True Cross made its triumphant adventus to Poitiers to the accompaniment of Fortunatus' Vexilla Regis, Bishop Maroveus was away from his city. Maroveus' absence, at this, the crucial highpoint in the spiritual life of the city, was pivotal in turning Radegund and her convent in the direction of Tours.

Without Maroveus' presence at the translation of the relic Radegund was more easily able to associate the cult of the Cross with herself and her foundation. The nun Radegund, in a letter written late in life to the bishops of neighbouring cities seeking protection for her convent, shows that

she could invoke the animus of the Holy Cross in a curse against anyone who sought to interfere with her nunnery. (203) The greatest threat she envisages, although the king's representative is mentioned, appears to be Maroveus. (204)

The pontifex loci, that is Maroveus, comes in for special attention in Radegund's letter. Radegund stresses that her convent follows the Rule of Caesarius and that the Abbess had been elected with the full approval of the bishop of the city. She thus sought to remove any pretext that the present bishop, Maroveus, might use for intervention. The bishop of the city is not to claim for himself any rights of jurisdiction that his predecessors did not have. This vital letter ends on a highly dramatic and emotive note with the founder of the nunnery returning to the theme of the Cross, commending Agnes to the bishops in the name of Christ, who, from the cross, commended the virgin Mary to St. John's keeping. (205)

The death of Radegund in 587 once more brought a bishop of Tours to Poitiers since Maroveus was not on hand to bury the nun. Gregory, like his predecessor Euphronius, had become involved as a supporter of the convent. The great adventus poem that Venantius wrote for Gregory's installation as bishop in 573 shows that the poet had sought to promote good relations from the start, (V. 3. 14) and Gregory had also promoted the cult of the Holy Cross in Tours.

Within the domus ecclesiae at Tours Gregory established an oratory of the Holy Cross to house the pallium that had once wrapped the True Cross and which he had obtained from the East. (206) Fortunatus' poem Versus in honore sanctae crucis vel oratorii domus ecclesiae apud Toronos (II. 3. 17-20) describes the decorations of this shrine - the white hangings elaborately worked with the sign of the Cross.

Gregory was involved once more in Poitiers when Maroveus, following Radegund's death, obtained from King Childebert II, a written statement putting him in charge of the convent in the same way that he was in charge of the other religious establishments in the city. The bishop, who had refused to recognise the sanctity of the blessed Radegund, was not intimidated by the curse of the Holy Cross. Yet Radegund's letter proved to be a powerful weapon in the battle to assert the independence of the nunnery, for in the later troubles of the convent after the death of Agnes, the then Abbess sent out new copies to bishops. (207)

In an epistula pleading with Gregory to involve himself in the affairs of the convent, Fortunatus orchestrates the general theme of the evil troubling the convent, a theme introduced in the preceeding poem. (VIII. 12. 1) The stress laid by the poet on paternal responsibility for the welfare of the universal church (VIII. 12a) may well be the poet's way of skirting around the fact that Poitiers was not Gregory's city or indeed even within his ecclesiastical province. Clotild's revolt against the Abbess and even against Maroveus is the evil alluded to in the poem addressed to Gregory. In the epistula appended to the poem Fortunatus presents a brief exposition of the reasons why Gregory should intervene in Poitiers. Particular stress is laid on the episcopal reassurances that Radegund had received concerning the protection of her foundation. Venantius also alludes to the day of reckoning on which the bishop of Tours will be called to account for his handling of the affairs of the convent in Poitiers. The portitor, one of Fortunatus' fellow clerics, was to explain the problems of the convent in detail. We, who are left with the covering letter, are not privy to the conversation.

The trials and tribulations of the convent are catalogued by Gregory: the stories of violence, a transvestite man in nun's garb and games of chance played within the convent walls are all given an airing. (208) Now, while Gregory did not wholly approve of Maroveus, he seems to have developed a sympathy for his predicament. When on that rainy March day Clotild and her forty nuns arrived in Tours after their tiring journey on foot from Poitiers, Gregory offered to go with them to their bishop. (209) Before the affairs of the convent were finally settled, Maroveus had to suffer a number of humiliations. Once an end was put to gang warfare in the city, the commission of bishops appointed by King Childebert II and King Guntram entered the cathedral and took their seats on the tribunal. Although Maroveus was one of their number, the real power must have rested with the three Metropolitans summoned by the Kings from Bordeaux, Cologne and nearby Tours. (210)

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Poitiers under Maroveus was a city divided. This bishop enjoyed no consensus support and life must have been shot through with tension in this little walled town. The bishop sat in his cathedral, while approximately one hundred metres north-west of the cathedral and a little downhill, Radegund, his rival, was consolidating her convent and Agnes, her "daughter", was ruling two hundred nuns. Another one hundred metres outside the wall down towards the Clain was St. Mary's Church, again Radegund's foundation. During Radegund's life the bishop would have been eclipsed by her presence and her important contacts throughout Gaul. The devotional centre of Poitiers had shifted from the Cathedral or the basilica of St. Hilary extra muros to the shrine of the

Holy Cross in Radegund's convent. Then, after the foundress' death, scandal in the convent rocked the town and prompted outside ecclesiastical intervention. In the culmination of a trend begun by Radegund, the city came more under the patronage of the bishop of Tours. The next two bishops were men who had close links with Gregory - Plato, Gregory's archdeacon, and Fortunatus himself.

#### (4) Inclusion and Exclusion: Definition of the Community

For Fortunatus the sense of spiritual community was closely tied to baptism. The sacrament of baptism signalled initiation into a spiritual community based on orthodox belief and a shared liturgical life. From the font at Reims came a new dynasty of Orthodox Christian kings for the baptism of Clovis was seen as the beginning of the Christianised Frankish community. Gregory described the event with the greatest of care - the churches are adorned with white hangings, and the baptistry is filled with the sweet smell of incense and candles. Clovis, who went to the font as a "new Constantine", was baptised and marked with the Chrism. Three thousand of his troops followed him. (211) Baptism was an act of incorporation in a spiritual community, but since this spiritual community was imposed on a social structure, baptism could be seen also to signal incorporation in a social community as well.

Social relationships within the community might be changed through the sacrament so that inclusion in a spiritual community might have social ramifications as well. Chilperic, for example, not only ordered Jews to accept baptism, but in a sense personally "adopted" them by "helping them from the font." (212) Ageric of Verdun, who baptised King Childebert II, is



described by Gregory as "regis pater ex lavacro"(213) and the rebel Guntram Boso felt that the bond between Ageric and the king was so strong that his life might be saved by the bishop's special pleading. He was right.

Baptism and Chrismation were the symbols of incorporation that defined those within the fold and those without, as much in this world as in the next. The social ramifications of this line of demarcation may be seen in the canons of the Councils which restrict social intercourse to those within the spiritual community. These restrictions, sanctioned, and indeed at times extended, by the Merovingian monarchs, aimed at the exclusion of Jews and heretics. The rite of entry for heretics, whose original baptism was apparently held to be valid was the signing with Chrism which marked the incorporation within the body of true believers, and a profession of Orthodox belief. (214) Jews were required to make a confession of faith and submit to baptism and the anointing with Chrism. (215)

Heresy must still have existed in Merovingian Gaul, albeit in secret. The Arian Visigoths in particular must have left their mark south of the Loire; Clovis' victory cannot have produced one hundred per cent orthodoxy. It would merely seem that we are ill-informed about the continued existence of small groups of heretics in Gaul. The fact that the Council of Orleans, 541, set out a rite for the readmission of heretics (216) suggests that conversion to Orthodoxy was a sufficiently regular occurrence as to require legislation. We get little help from Venantius who speaks vaguely of Bishop Chalactericus of Chartres cleansing error (IV. 7. 17-18) and of Igidius of Reims, as the soldier of Christ fighting heresy. (III. 15. 25-26) Arianism is somewhat archaically referred to as the virus Graecorum of the days of Hilary. Visigothic Spain

was its contemporary bastion, and while Martin of Braga is praised for his conversion of the Sueves (V.2.29-32) and Sigibert is congratulated on Brunhild's conversion, (VI.1a.29-30) that aspect of the Visigothic realm is not mentioned further.

Jews, like heretics, were subject to social exclusion. This was seen as a protective measure for the "elect" within, and, as a form of disability which, in itself, might induce conversion. In late antiquity, although Jews suffered certain disabilities, their status as Roman citizens was made quite clear in the Codex Theodosianus. They and their places of worship were protected by law, if not always in practice. The law at least stated that synagogues were not to be destroyed or plundered. (217) By the sixth century, however, this recognition of the Jews as protected cives Romani had disappeared from Gaul where forced conversions and the destruction of synagogues are reported (218) and no legal problems ever arise as they did in late antiquity. Knowledge of the Codex Theodosianus was perhaps already considered something of an antiquarian accomplishment. (219) If Roman law was remembered, it was remembered most selectively. Certainly, its protection of the Jews was completely disregarded. The legalism of Pope Gregory the Great who in 591, 598 and 599 intervened to protect Jewish synagogues and the right of Jews to worship, and who followed the letter of Roman law, (220) is not to be found in the Gaul of Chilperic, Gregory and Fortunatus. Jews were outsiders in society and cut off from the community of belief. Their position in society was regulated by royal decree and by the bishops in their councils. (221)

The regulations aiming at social exclusion of Jews took many forms, yet the very repetition of these prohibitions in the canons suggests that they

were often disregarded by Christians who continued to have social and business dealings with these religious outsiders. (222)

Episcopal responsibility for the conversion of the Jews is stressed by Gregory and Fortunatus alike. Gone are the comparatively friendly days of Sidonius. (223) Bishop Cautinus of Clermont-Ferrand is condemned by Gregory because he bought goods from Jews rather than setting about their conversion. (224) Gregory himself tried to convert the jeweller Priscus and was so proud of his apologetics that he relates the incident in detail. (225)

Gregory's interest in the conversion of the Jews is reflected in his request to Fortunatus for a poem on the subject of the conversion of the Jews of Clermont-Ferrand by Avitus (Cautinus' more active successor), during 576. (V. 5. Praef.) In what appears to be more than a literary commonplace, Fortunatus relates how he has been put under great pressure by Gregory's messenger. He wrote the poem in great haste, the messenger beside him "like a troublesome creditor". (V. 5. Praef. (1)) Gregory's motives in requesting the poem are unclear. Perhaps he hoped the account would be inspirational to his clergy and people and a counter to everyday fraternisation with the Jews on a social and economic level. On the other hand he may have wished to eulogise Bishop Avitus, who had, when Archdeacon, been responsible for his own education, and who, now on the cathedra of Clermont-Ferrand, renewed the city after the episcopate of the "evil" Cautinus. (226) The scope of the poem suggests that it was intended to be recited before an audience, but on what occasion we do not know. The theme of the poem would be most appropriate at Pentecost.

The prose Preface to the poem suggests that the Portitor told the story of events in Clermont-Ferrand per verba singillatim (V. 5. Praef (1)) and

that the poet had put the story into verse. That the account originated from Gregory is also suggested by the fullness of Gregory's own account in the Historia which contains details either not included by Fortunatus in his poems or merely alluded to in passing. (227)

Our interest in the poem centres on Fortunatus' descriptions of the spiritual community of the civitas Arvernorum, and on the associated issues of social cohesion and disruption that this description raises. We see in the poem that it was the celebration of Easter that had brought the Christian community together in worship within the civitas, led by their bishop. The ceremonies of Easter with their readings of the Gospel accounts of the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ brought an emotional charge to the cities as congregations communally lived through the symbolical representation of the death and resurrection of Christ in a liturgical cycle that culminated in the Easter Vigil. At that ceremony the catechumens died, in a Pauline sense, with Christ in the waters of baptism, and rose to greet the festal day, clad in white, anointed with sweet-smelling Chrism and bearing lighted tapers. (228)

During this emotionally charged time the lines of demarcation between Christian and outsider were most clearly drawn. By royal decree and episcopal ordinance, Jews were banned from the streets for the four days from Holy Thursday; the very sight of Jews on the streets or in public places during Easter was held to be an insult to Christians. (229) The slightest incident involving Jews could, in these days, unleash a wave of vicious anti-Jewish reaction. In the cities of Gaul the Jews formed a distinct sub-group, their synagogues stood in public view while their use of Hebrew in liturgy set them further apart from the Christian population, (230) and no doubt contributed

to tensions. The Jews, like the Syrians, (231) were involved in trading and money-lending (232) and the canons of the Councils that prohibit Jews acting as judges and tax-gatherers over Christians suggest that in spite of all that stood against them some Jews were socially mobile and that the bishops were moving to block this upward mobility. As a group the Jews show a remarkable resilience in this period: the Jews of Orleans, having seen their synagogue destroyed, were still able to mount an embassy to King Guntram as late as 585, seeking its rebuilding. (233) Unfortunately they failed to achieve their objective, and obtained no compensation. Gregory of Tours shows a total lack of sympathy for what was a quite justified appeal by the Jews for restoration of their place of worship.

In his poem on the Jews of Clermont-Ferrand, Fortunatus emphasises the supposedly divisive effect that this religious minority had in what he believes should have been an exclusively Christian community. The civitas Arvernorum, we are told, was prey to division and disorder. Despite the fact that they lived in the one city, the people did not share the one faith. (V. 5.17-18) Judaism is presented by Fortunatus as a source of communal friction. The incident that sparked the disturbances in Clermont-Ferrand occurred at Easter, 576, and is alluded to by Fortunatus' reference to the odor judaeus. (V. 5.109) Gregory is full of detail: at Easter one of the Jews tipped rancid oil on the head of a recent convert from Judaism who was processing with the newly baptised through the city gate. (234) In incident after incident in the sixth century, we see that when a community was split along religious lines into two rival camps, those who crossed the lines of demarcation often provoked disturbance or violence. (235)

In this instance the act against the newly baptised convert is answered with the destruction of the Synagogue at Clermont-Ferrand. What is puzzling is the fact that forty days separate the Easter incident and the destruction of the Synagogue on Ascension Day. Why the fury of the mob did not erupt with some earlier result is not entirely clear from the accounts, although both Fortunatus and Gregory suggest some moderating influence by the bishop during this period. Yet when the Synagogue is destroyed both approve of this terrible act as a pious undertaking. Thus Fortunatus' account:

Plebs, armante fide, Iudaica templa revellit  
Et campus patuit quo synagoga fuit.

(V. 5. 29-30)

Highlighting the teaching role of the bishop, Fortunatus presents Avitus preaching to the Jews and seeking their conversion. (236) Central to the dramatic structure of the poem is the somewhat one-sided dialogue between the bishop and the envoys of the Jews. Underpinning Avitus' apologetics is the theme of religious and social cohesion. The God of Abraham is our God, says Avitus, but in a new dispensation. The division between the peoples must end. Fortunatus portrays the bishop as pleading:

Unius estis oves, heu, cur non uniter itis?  
Sit rogo grex unus, pastor ut unus adest.

(V. 5. 55-56)

To remain in the civitas the Jews had to embrace the Christian faith. Those who refused to acknowledge Christ had to leave the city. Gregory tells us that many Jews fled to Marseilles. (237) Fortunatus however concentrates his attention on those who, faced with the violence of the crowd and the bishop's offer of conversion, chose the latter. (V. 5. 89-98) For Fortunatus, who saw the bishop as the active successor to the apostles and involved in the evangelisation

of peoples, (V. 2. 17-22) the conversion of the Jews had a special significance. The mass baptism takes place at Pentecost, not the traditional time of baptism in Gaul (238) and without the normal eight months' catechumenate. (239) Yet this Feast of the Church was of course closely associated with evangelisation and Fortunatus likens the candles held by the converts to the flames that descended upon the apostles. (V. 5. 119-122) The Feast has a significance all its own and Fortunatus exploits this for his own poetic purpose. (240)

The Chrism, the symbol of incorporation into the Christian community, also has an important place within the poem. Baptised outsiders and reconciled heretics were sealed with the Chrism as a symbol of incorporation in the extended spiritual kin-group that was the Christian community, in which, for example, a bishop could be "pater ex lavacro." (241) We have noted how baptism created new bonds such as those based on spiritual relationship. Baptism created spiritual "kin" and the Chrism was the symbol of this incorporation. (242) The anointed formed a single community, a holy race, a people set apart.

The Chrism was sweet smelling, a mixture of aromatics and olive oil (243) and according to Tertullian and Isidore made one a Christian. (244) The incident of the rancid oil, alluded to by the reference to the odor judaeus, that is, the odour of the unconverted, is contrasted with the sweet smell of the newly baptised who have been sealed with the Chrism and thus exude a new spiritual odour:

Hinc oleare ovium perfunditur unguine vellus,  
 Aspersuque sacro fit gregis alter odor.  
 .....  
 .....  
 Abluitur Judaeus odor baptismate divo  
 Et nova progenies reddita surgit aquis.  
 Vincens ambrosios suavi spiramine rores,  
 Vertice perfuso chrismatis efflat odor.

(V. 5. 103-104; 109-112)

In the poem, social cohesion is shown to result from religious assimilation.

The rural dwellers join with the urban dwellers for the great Feast of Pentecost at which the Jews, no longer "wolves" outside the fold, are reborn as lambs.

At this festival the theme is one of communal reconciliation:

Excepit populus populum, plebs altera plebem:  
Germine qui non est, fit sibi fonte parens.

(V. 5. 115-116)

The city of Clermont-Ferrand is now united in faith under the one shepherd - the bishop. The dissension caused by religious division will be a thing of the past. A new kinship has evolved.

The theme of this chapter has been an examination of the nature of the spiritual community as reflected in the carmina. We have seen Fortunatus' idealised picture of consensus support for the bishop and have explored some of the tensions that formed the reality of episcopal rule during this period. Struggling to assert control over a convent within his own city, Maroveus does not appear as the unchallenged overseer of his community. Other bishops had to counter the influence of pagan practices and the claims of false prophets and supposed seers. As we have observed, the further one went away from the civitas, the less the bishop's authority was felt. Here the relics, oratories and clergy supplied by the bishop might form links with the episcopal city, but it was the civitas that was the ritual centre at the great festivals of the church.

Through the liturgical life of the church and the veneration of the saints the cives found, under the leadership of the bishop, a corporate sense of spiritual community. The bishop through the acquisition of relics and their veneration guaranteed the health and safety of the community. Yet, in the sixth century, Jews, and no doubt a sprinkling of quiet heretics, lived within the city or



countryside but they are pictured in Venantius' poems as not forming part of the community. They were seen to have enjoyed the benefits of divine favour shown to the city, without having undertaken the communal religious obligations that had attracted the blessing. (245)

The events in Clermont-Ferrand during 576 and Fortunatus' view of them are extremely revealing for they illuminate, at one point, the transition from a Roman sense of corporate identity to the medieval conception of a community of belief. While Gregory the Great could envisage a populus Romanus which, albeit grudgingly, included non-Christians, and even Gallic hagiographers could picture the Jews as a separate ethnic and religious group, in a predominantly Christian community, swelling a crowd in a set-piece picture of consensus, (246) Fortunatus could not. For Venantius, despite his obvious affection for things Roman, the populus Christianus had really replaced the populus Romanus. Thus the word civis is not always used by the poet to convey a legalistic notion of citizenship. When it suits his poetic purpose he may use civis as a synonym for Christicola, to denote membership of a Christian community. Such a community is centred on the civitates of Gaul which are the citadels of the faith. The cities were repositories of the relics of the saints. They brought together in one place the power and sanctity of many patrons. To be a member of the spiritual community centred on the civitas was to have access to this protection.

### NOTES - CHAPTER THREE

- (1) On the importance of the royal praeceptio see P. Cloché, "Les élections épiscopales sous les Mérovingiens", Moyen Age 26 (1924-25), pp. 203-254.
- (2) Gregory had close ties to the shrine of St. Julian at Brioude, through his maternal Grandfather, Nicetius of Lyons and his uncle, Gallus of Clermont-Ferrand. See Greg Turon, VSJ., 2.p.114; 23.p.124; HF., IV.5.p.138. St. Martin was aware of Julian's special powers and, according to Gregory, referred a blind woman to the Auvergnian saint - VSJ., 47.p.133.
- (3) Note for example Constantius II at Rome in 357 - Amm. Marc., 16.10.2-11; Julian at Vienne in 355 - Amm. Marc., 15.8.21; Julian at Sirmium in 361 - Amm. Marc., 20.10.1-2. On the ceremony of Adventus see S. MacCormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity. The ceremony of Adventus," Historia 21. (1972), pp. 721-752, and now the same author's Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity, (Berkeley, 1981), Ch. I - Adventus, pp. 17 ff. Also O. Nussbaum, "Geleit", RAC fasc. 70-71, (1975) cols. 908-1049. In the poem we are considering, Venantius can exploit the ambiguity of the word praesul which can refer to either a bishop or a secular ruler. Note this last use in Epist. Austr., 10. 39. (MGH Epp. Vol. 3. p. 125). Bishop Aurelian of Arles to King Theudebert I - "Cogita semper, sacratissime praesul diem iudicii...."
- (4) In the east the adventus of the relics of St. Stephen into a chapel in the imperial palace at Constantinople built by the Empress Pulcheria forms the subject of the famous Trier Ivory, now dated to the fifth century by K. G. Holum and G. Vikan, "The Trier Ivory, Adventus ceremonial, and the relics of St. Stephen", DOP 33 (1979), pp. 115-133. In Gaul, Victricius, De Laude Sanctorum, 2-3 provides us with a picture of crowds greeting the arrival of relics in his city in 396. Text: ed. R. Herval, Origines Chrétiennes de la Ile Lyonnaise gallo-romaine à la Normandie ducale IVe - XIe siècles, (Rouen-Paris, 1966), pp. 112 ff. Discussion of the event: N. Gussone, "Adventus-Zeremoniell und Translation von Reliquien. Victricius von Rouen, de laude Sanctorum", FMS 10 (1976), pp. 125-133. A sixth century wood carving from Vienne also shows the translation of relics on a cart- Bulletin de la société des amis de Vienne, 67 (1971), p. 31. fig. 2. The practice in general - MacCormack, "Continuity and Change", p. 746. Venantius' Vexilla Regis (II. 6) was of course written for the adventus of the relic of the True Cross into Poitiers c. 569 and exploits the military imagery associated with imperial adventus. Vexilla are offered by the soldiers represented on the Arch of Galerius at Salonika, at the emperor's adventus and appear on adventus coins of Hadrian. On the latter see H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. II, Vespasian to Hadrian, (London, 1926) p. 451, no. 875; p. 453, no. 883; pp. 455-56, nos. 897-900, 904.

- (5) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.1.p.370.
- (6) Compare the picture of consensus in Prudent, Perist., VI. 148-50, and Corripus, In laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris, III.40; IV.54 - "omnis sexas et aetas".
- (7) For example, Carm., VIII.3.177-84. Cf. Prudent, Perist., II.551-564.
- (8) Compare the heavenly adventus of Theodosius into heaven: Ambrose, De Obitu Theodosii., 56 (CSEL 73.400/1).
- (9) Greg Turon, HF., V.49. p.262.
- (10) Greg Turon, HF., V.49. p.260.
- (11) Greg Turon, HF., VI.11. p.280; 22, p.290.
- (12) Greg Turon, HF., VI.36. p.307.
- (13) Greg Turon, VP., VI.4.p.233. Evodius, bishop-elect of Javols was ejected before his consecration.
- (14) Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.pp.157-158.
- (15) Greg Turon, HF., V.49.p.262.
- (16) Greg Turon, HF., V.5.p.200.
- (17) Greg Turon, HF., V.5.p.200.
- (18) Greg Turon, HF., IV.7.pp.139-140; IV.36.pp.168-169; VI.7.pp.276-277; VI.38.p.309. See D. Claude,"Die Bestellung der Bischöfe im merowingischen Reiche", ZRG kanon. Abt. 49 (1963), esp.p.23.
- (19) Greg Turon, VP., VI.3.p.232.
- (20) Greg Turon, VP., VI.3.p.232.
- (21) Greg Turon, VP., VI.3.p.232.
- (22) Greg Turon, VP., VI.4.p.233.
- (23) Greg Turon, VP., VI.4.p.233.
- (24) Greg Turon, VP., VI.5.pp.233-234.
- (25) Greg Turon, VP., VI.4. p.232-233.
- (26) Gallus saved Clermont-Ferrand from fire - Greg Turon, VP., VI.p.234, and from plague - VP., VI.6. pp.234-235; St. Quintianus brought rain for the countryside - VP., IV.4. pp.226-227; the holy bishop, like the basilicas, saves the city from attack - VP., IV.2.p.225, just as the prayers of Bishop Anianus saved Orleans from a Hun attack - HF., II.7.p.48.

- (27) Miracles at episcopal tombs: St. Illidius: VP., II.2, pp.219-220; St. Quintianus: VP., IV.5.p.227; Gallus of Clermont: VP., VI.7. pp.235-36; Gregory of Langres: VP., VII.5.p.240; Nicetius of Lyons: VP., VIII.5.p.245; VIII.6.pp.246-47; VIII.8.p.248.
- (28) Sid. Apoll., Epist., VII.9.12; See Also 8-11; 13-14. Cf. Epist., IV.25; VII.5.
- (29) Note for example Caesarius of Arles, who was accused by one Licinianus, a church notary, of aiding the Burgundians. It was due to Licinianus that Caesarius was exiled to Bordeaux - Vita S. Caesarii., I.21. (MGH SRM III.p.465).
- (30) The complex development of urban and rural imagery in the literature of the early medieval period is outlined by M. Richter, "Urbanitas-Rusticitas: Linguistic Aspects of a Medieval Dichotomy", Studies in Church History, 16 (1979), pp.149-157.
- (31) E.M. Wightman, Roman Trier and the Treveri, (London, 1970).
- (32) Ibid., p.232.
- (33) Ibid.,
- (34) Ibid.,
- (35) Ibid.,
- (36) Ibid.,
- (37) J. Percival, The Roman Villa, (London, 1976) p.184.
- (38) See Wightman, op.cit., pp.219-227,"Pagan Cults - The Countryside."
- (39) Greg Turon, HF., X.31. pp.526-534.
- (40) C.E. Stancliffe, "From Town to Country : The Christianisation of the Touraine 370-600," Studies in Church History, 16 (1979), pp.43-59.
- (41) M. Roblin, Le Terroir de Paris aux époques Gallo-Romaine et Franque, (Paris, 1971), pp.151 ff.
- (42) The vici of Le Mans are discussed by R. Sprandel, "Grundbesitz -und Verfassungsverhältnisse in einer merovingischen Landschaft: die Civitas Cenomannorum", in Adel und Kirche, eds J. Fleckenstein and K. Schmid, (Freiburg in Breis, 1968) pp.36-37. See map p.34; Clermont-Ferrand had twenty parishes situated for the most part along the main roads: See G. Fournier, Le Peuplement rural en Basse Auvergne durant le haut Moyen Age, (Paris, 1962) pp.402-409. A general survey: E. Griffe, "A travers les paroisses rurales de la Gaule au VIe siècle," BLE 76. Pt.I.(1975) pp.3-26. See also H. Netzer, "La condition des Curés ruraux du Ve au VIIIe siècles," Mélanges M. Ferdinand Lot,

- (Paris, 1925) pp.575-601. The vici of the Roman period are receiving a greater amount of scholarly attention, for example Mlle B. Beaujard's study of the area around Metz - "Les vici des Mediomatriques au Bas-Empire," Caesarodunum (1976), No. 11, Numéro special, (Actes du Colloque Le Vicus Gallo-Romain, 14-15 June, 1975) (1976) pp.296-308. Note the vici with Merovingian cemeteries - table p.306. More recently the study of vici near Bourges - A. Leday, Rural Settlement in Central Gaul in the Roman Period, Pts. I & II, (Oxford, 1980), B.A.R. International Series 73(i) (ii).
- (43) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 13. p.144.
- (44) Greg Turon, HF., III. 19. p.120; VP., VII. 2. p.237. Discussed by P. Gras, "Le Séjour à Dijon des Evêques de Langres du Ve au IX e siècle", in Recueil de Travaux offert à M. Clovis Brunel, (Paris, 1955), pp.550-561.
- (45) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 43. p.409.
- (46) Conc. Turonense A.567 can.20(19) (CG II.pp.183-184). On the office of archpriest see Imbart de la Tour, "Les Origines de l'archiprêtre de district", Revue d'histoire de l'église de France, 13 (1927), pp.16-50.
- (47) Vicus church property purchased by the priest of a rural church must be put down in the name of the church: Conc. Epaonense A.517 can.8. (CG II.p.26); when property is left to a village church, local custom is to be followed - Conc. Aurelianense A.538 can.5. (CG II.p.116); Clergy who serve a vicus church are to obtain from their bishops the canons that it is necessary for them to read: Conc. Aurelianense A.541 can.6. (CG II.p.133); The date of Lent must be obtained by rural priests from the bishop via messengers and passed on to the people: Sinodus Autisoderensis A.561-605 can.2. (CG II.p.265); Chrism to be obtained from the bishop by the priest or his archdeacon: Sinodus Autisoderensis A.561-605 can.6. (CG II.p.226). At Auxerre a synod of rural priests was to be held in the city during May: Sinodus Autisoderensis A.561-605 can.7. (CG II.p.266).
- (48) Greg Turon, HF., X. 31. p.535.
- (49) Ibid.,
- (50) Greg Turon, VSJ., II. 47. p.133.
- (51) Greg Turon, VP., VIII. 1. p.242.
- (52) Greg Turon, VP., VIII. 5. p.245.
- (53) Greg Turon, VP., VIII. 5. pp.245-246.
- (54) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 36. pp.168-169.
- (55) Greg Turon, VP., VIII. 8. p.248.

- (56) Greg Turon, VP., VIII.6.p.246.
- (57) Greg Turon, VP., VIII.11.p.250; VIII.8.p.248; VSJ., 50.pp.133-134.
- (58) Conc. Epaonense A.517 can.25. (CG II.p.30).
- (59) Greg Turon, VSM., I.35.p.155; HF., VII.31.pp.350-351, where St. Sergius is credited with displeasure.
- (60) Le Blant, Vol I, pp.257-258.
- (61) Conc. Aurelianense A.533 can.20. (CG II.p.102). On conciliar legislation see E. J. Jonkers, "Die Konzile und einige Formen alten Volksglaubens in fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert", VChr 22 (1968), pp.49-53. Pagan practices were a continuing problem for Caesarius: See Sermo., I.12. (CC s.1. Vol.CIII.1.p.9); 13.3. (Ibid., pp.66-67); 13.5. (ibid., 67-68); 52.3. (ibid., p.231); 53.1,2,3. (ibid., pp.233-234); 54.5. (ibid., pp.238-239). Gregory the Great complained to Queen Brunhild that Christians worshipped at trees and made offerings to idols while still attending church services: Greg, Reg., VIII.4.Sept.597. (MGH Epp. II. p.7). Also see the praeceptum of King Childebert I. (ed. Boretius, MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum I.pp.2-3). A general survey of the problem of paganism in Gaul: E. Vacandard, "L'Idolâtrie en Gaule du VIe et VIIe siècle", Revue des Questions historiques, 65 (1899), pp.424-54.
- (62) Conc. Aurelianense A.541 can.16. (CG II.p.136).
- (63) Sinodus Autisioderensis A.561-605 can. 1. (CG II.p.265).
- (64) Sinodus Autisioderensis A.561-605 can.4. (CG II.p.265).
- (65) Sinodus Autisioderensis A.561-605 can. 3. (CG II.p.265).
- (66) Sinodus Autisioderensis A.561-605 can.4. (CG II.p.265).
- (67) Greg Turon, VSJ., 32.p.127.
- (68) Conc. Aurelianense A.538 can.31.(28). (CG II.p.125).
- (69) Greg Turon, VSM., I.26.p.151; VSM.,1.27.p.151.
- (70) I. N. Wood, "Early Merovingian devotion in Town and Country", Studies in Church History, 16 (1979), pp.61-76, overlooks the establishment of rural oratories by bishops.
- (71) Some examples only - Greg Turon, HF., VI.44.pp.316-317; IX.44.p.475; IX.5.p.416; X.23.p.515; X.33.p.304. Locusts in the Auvergne and Limousin - HF., IV.20.p.153.

- (72) Oil from Martin's tomb was used by Perpetuus to keep tempests from fields - Greg Turon, VSM., I. p.138. Wax has the same ability: VSM., I. 2.p.138. Gregory used some of the sacred wax in his own fields: VSM., I. 34.pp.154-55.
- (73) Greg Turon, VP., VI. 2.p.231.
- (74) Greg Turon, VP., VI. 2.p.231.
- (75) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.15.p.381.
- (76) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.16.pp.383-384.
- (77) Marquise de Maillé, Recherches sur les origines Chrétiennes de Bordeaux, (Paris, 1960),p.91.
- (78) Fort, Carm., I.15.9-10. See Greg Turon, HF., III.10.pp.106-107.
- (79) Sul. Sev, VM., 13.9. (ed. J. Fontaine p.282). "Nam ubi fana destruxerat, statim ibi aut ecclesias aut monasteria construebat." See also Greg Turon, GC., II.pp.299-300.
- (80) The site at Brioude: Vieillard - Troiekouroff, pp.70-71 and also A. Leclercq art. "Julien de Brioude", D.A.C.L. 8.1. cols. 399-407.
- (81) The theory of the Marquise de Maillé, op.cit., pp.91-92, Note 2.
- (82) Oratories came under the control of clerics of the vicus nearby. Where oratories were erected over sacred relics, the person who established an oratory had to provide food and clothing for those appointed to pray over sacred remains: Conc. Epaonense A.517 can.25. (CG II.p.30); Clergy who lived in the villae of great men and who did not form part of the canon of the clergy, were required to celebrate the great festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost with the bishop of the civitas: Conc. Claremontanum A.535 can.15. (CG. II. p.109).
- (83) Episcopal villas: Greg Turon, HF., III.16.p.116; VSJ., 14 p.120.
- (84) Villa Vereginis - Fort, Carm., I.19., site: Maillé, op.cit., p.87; Villa Praemiacum - Fort, Carm., I.20, site: Maillé, ibid., pp.88-89; Villa Bissonnum - Fort, Carm., I.18, site: Maillé, ibid., p.86.
- (85) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VIII.9.1. - sacrarium in Consentius' estate near Narbonne; Carm., XXII.218. - chapel of the celebrated "castle" of Pontius Leontius at Burgus (Bourg-sur-Gironde).
- (86) Maillé, op.cit., p.75.
- (87) See J. Percival, op.cit., p.164.
- (88) Epist. Austr., 21. (MGH Epp 3.pp.133-134).

- (89) Note the episcopal visitation by Caesarius - Vita Caesarii., II.18, 19, 20. (MGH SRM III. pp.491-492). Incidents connected with the wonder-working of St. Germanus also illustrate his movements: Fort, VG., 14.p.15. Essones; VG., 26.p.17. Sèvres; VG., 17.p.15. Nogent-sur-Marne; VG., 43.p.20. Brie-Comte-Robert.
- (90) Greg Turon, HF., X.25. pp.518-519.
- (91) Greg Turon, HF., X.25. p.519; IX.6.pp.418-19.
- (92) Jean Hubert's "ville sainte de l'époque mérovingienne", one aspect of the city described in the author's important "Évolution de la Topographie et de l'aspect des villes de Gaule du Ve au Xe siècle", Settimane di Studio 6 (Spoleto, 1959), pp.529-58.
- Note Greg Turon, HF., VIII.33.p.402, and Caesarius, Sermo., CCIV.2. Homelia in depositione S. Honorati, (CC s.1. CIV.p.854).
- (93) Greg Turon, HF., III.29.pp.125-126.
- (94) Peter and Paul as guardians of the eternal city: Paulinus of Nola, Carm., 19.53.ff.
- (95) Greg Turon, HF., II.6.pp.47-48. According to Gregory, Metz was too wicked to be saved, but St. Stephen's oratory escaped the Huns' flames thanks to Peter and Paul.
- (96) Actus pontificium Cenomannis in urbe degentium, ed.G. Busson and A. Lendru. (Le Mans,1902) p.84. (Archives historiques du Maine Vol.2).
- (97) ibid., p.103.
- (98) Greg Turon, GC., 79.p.346.
- (99) Dedications to Peter and Paul: Greg Turon, HF., II.14 - Basilica of St. Martin originally dedicated to Peter and Paul; Marmoutier dedicated to Peter and Paul - HF., X.31.p.527. See É. Mâle, La fin du Paganisme en Gaule et les plus anciennes basiliques Chrétiennes, (Paris, 1950) p.37. See also E. Ewig, "Der Petrus-und Apostelkult im spätrömischen und fränkischen Gallien", ZKG 71 (1960), pp.215-251.
- (100) Le Blant, Vol. I, No. 198, pp.261-264.
- (101) While we do not have a description of the relics it is most unlikely that they would have been corporeal. It is more probable that the church would have possessed brandea or even benedictiones - possibly filings from the saints' chains, or in the case of Peter, key-shaped objects containing filings. Brandea: note the sanctification of cloth at Peter's tomb - Greg Turon, GM., 27. p.54. Thus a palliolum becomes a pignus. Filings from Peter's chains were later sent by Greg. the Great to important persons. See Epist., 6.55, to Queen Brunhild (MGH Epp I.p.430); Epist., 3.33. (ibid., p.192).



- (102) Cf. Arator, Act Apost., II.1219; John Chrys, Hom 32 on Romans., (PG 60.678).
- (103) The cry of a possessed woman at the death of the Abbot Aredius illustrates the regional character of Merovingian saints - Greg Turon, HF., X.29. p.525.
- (104) Greg Turon, HF., IV.19.p.152.
- (105) Greg Turon, HF., I.48.p.33 - "Sed Deus omnipotens noluit urbem Turonicam a proprio frustrari patrono."
- (106) Gregory recounts three stories: VSM., I.13; 14; 15; p.147.
- (107) The basilica of St. Andrew at Altinum(?) had a relic: Fort, Carm., I.2.17-18; Carm., I.7. shows the pious Basilius and Baudegunde renovating an existing church (site unknown); Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux constructed a Basilica of St. Martin in Bordeaux - Carm., I.6. On the site of this church, the Mont Judaïque, see Maillé, op.cit., p.209. Nantes had a relic of Martin - Carm., III.7.52. Martin of Braga, who had visited the shrine of the saint at Tours was addressed by the poet - "Martini meritis cum nomine nobilis heres", Carm., V.1.(11). Martin promoted the cult of the saint in Galicia. The considerable evidence for the wider diffusion of the cult is assembled by E. Ewig, "Le culte de Saint Martin a l'époque franque," Revue d'histoire de l'église, 47 (1961), pp.1-18.
- (108) See Vieillard - Troiekouroff, pp.304-329, and also, by the same author, "Tours au temps de Grégoire de Tours, au point de vue archeologique", in Gregorio di Tours, Convegno del Centro di Studi sulla spiritualità medievale, XII (Todi, 1977), pp.209-249.
- (109) Greg Turon, HF., X.31.pp.529-530.
- (110) Fort, Carm., X.6.3-8. Cf. Sul.Sev, Dial., III.10.
- (111) Fort, Carm., X.6.9-10. Cf. Sul.Sev, Dial., II.2.
- (112) Fort, Carm., X.6.91-92. See Vieillard-Troiekouroff, p.305.
- (113) Greg Turon, HF., X.31. p.535. See Vieillard-Troiekouroff, p.307.
- (114) Greg Turon, HF., X.31. p.534.
- (115) Greg Turon, HF., X.31.p.535.
- (116) Greg Turon, HF., VI.10.pp.279-280; VSM., I.11.p.145; HF., II.37.p.88.
- (117) Greg Turon, VSM., I.31.p.153. On the Matricularii see S.H. MacGonagle, op.cit., pp.32-35, "Organisation of the Poor". Also see M. Rouche, "La Matricule des Pauvres. Évolution d'une institution de charité du Bas Empire jusqu'a la fin du haut moyen age", in M. Mollat, (ed.) Études sur l'histoire de la Pauvreté. Moyen age - XVIe siècle, (Paris, 1979), pp.83-110.

- (118) The blind Chainemunda visited the tomb every day for three years before she was finally cured - Greg Turon, VSM., I. 8.p.143.
- (119) Greg Turon, VSM., I. 40.p.156.
- (120) On servitium see H. G. J. Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France during the sixth century, (Rome, 1950). Analecta Gregoriana, 51.pp. 300-301.
- (121) See L. Petri, "Le pelerinage Martinien de Tours à l'époque de l'évêque Grégoire", in Gregorio di Tours, Convegni del Centro di Studi sulla spiritualità medievale, XII (Todi, 1977) p.129.
- (122) Greg Turon, HF., II.14.p.64. Martin signalled his approval of the translation of his body by Perpetuus to the new church: VSM., I. 6. pp.141-142. (On July 4, the sainted bishop's choice of day).
- (123) Greg Turon, HF., II.14.p.64.
- (124) Fort, VR., XIV.p.42.
- (125) L. Petri, op.cit., p.108.
- (126) Greg Turon, HF., X. 31.p.530.
- (127) The most succinct account of the Gallican Mass and some of the problems of the liturgical sources is still: W.S. Porter, The Gallican Rite, (Studies in Eucharistic Faith and Practice, No.4). London, 1958.
- (128) Greg Turon, VSM., II. 29.p.170.
- (129) See for example Caesarius, Homelia in Depositione Sancti Honorati, Sermo., 214. 3. (CCs.1. CIV.p. 854).
- (130) Greg Turon, VSM., III.42.pp.192-193; VSM., I. 2.p.139; VSM., II. 49.p.176; VSM., II. 14.p.163. Compare VP., VIII.12.pp.251-252.
- (131) Augustine had occasion to remind his readers that the Acts of Felicity and Perpetua were not to be used as Holy Writ: Aug, De Anima., 1.12. (PL 44.481. = CSEL 60.370).
- (132) Sid.Apoll, Epist., V.17.6.
- (133) Greg Turon, HF., IX.9.p.423. Note the archpriest who holds a special dinner on a feast day - GC., V.p.302.
- (134) Greg Turon, VP., III.1.p.223. The wine was multiplied by the saintly Abbot Abraham.
- (135) Caesarius, Sermo., 13.4. (CCs.1. CIII.p.67).

- (136) Oil was poured over Martin's tomb and scraped off - Greg Turon, VSM., I. 1.p.138; The wax of candles blessed at the sepulchre could cure chills and other illness - VSM., I. 35.p.154; Dust from the tomb cures dysentery - VSM., I. 37.p.155. Cf. VSM., III. 52.p.195; Cloth placed on the tomb overnight was so infused with the virtus of the saint that it weighed more in the morning - VSM., I. 11.p.145. Cf. the sanctification of a palliolum at St. Peter's tomb Rome - GC., 27.p.54. On these practices see A. Marignan, Études sur la civilisation Française, Vol. 2, "Le Culte des Saints sous les Mérovingiens," (Paris, 1899). Ch. VII. "Ses Remèdes," pp.183-212.
- (137) Greg Turon, HF., V.43.p.252; HF., IX.5.p.429; VSM., I. 1.p.137; I. 11.p.145. See also Epist.Austr., 8. (MGH Epp III. p.121).
- (138) Greg Turon, HF., IX.6.pp.418-419.
- (139) Conc. Epaonense A.517. can.6. (CG II. p.30).
- (140) Greg Turon, HF., IX.6.p.419.
- (141) Greg Turon, VSM., I. 35. p.155.
- (142) Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.pp.157-58. No canons of the Concilium Santonense survive - see CG II. p.174.
- (143) On the site of the church - Vieillard-Troiekouroff, pp.284-285. On St. Bibianus see Greg Turon, GC., 57. pp.330-331, and Vita S.Bibiani Episcopi Santonensis, (MGH SRM III. pp.94-100). Krusch believed the work to have been written in the eighth or ninth century.
- (144) On the church see Vieillard-Troiekouroff, pp.281-283. Of the saint's tomb only his name remains in an inscription - Le Blant, Vol. II.No.579. pp.360-362. The eleventh or twelfth century Miracula S. Eutropii Santonensis, Acta Sanctorum 30. April, Vol. III. pp.736-44, promotes the cult.
- (145) See Marquise de Maillé, op.cit.; p.93, and L. Maurin, Saintes Antique des Origines à la fin du VIe siècle après Jésus Christ, (Saintes, 1978), p.358 - "Ainsi Léonce essaya d'abord d'invalider l'élection du successor d'Eusèbe, Emerius qui est Cymulus, puis il se réconcila avec lui et intervint activement dans les affaires de Saintes..!"
- (146) Le Blant, Vol. II. Nos. 580 & 581, pp.362-365.
- (147) P. R. L. Brown, Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours, 1976 Stenton Lecture, Univ. of Reading, (Reading, 1977), pp.15-16. See also, by the same author, The Cult of the Saints, (London, 1981), Ch.3: "The Invisible Companion", pp.50-68. Another treatment - A. B. Orselli, L'idea e il culto del santo patrono cittadino nella letteratura latina cristiana, (Bologna, 1965), Univ. degli Studi di Bologna. Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia. Studi e Ricerche n.s.12. See especially pp.120-124, "S. Martino Patrono di Tours".

- (148) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 36. p. 169; V. 5. p. 205.
- (149) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 2. p. 371.
- (150) Conc. Matisconense A. 585 can. 13. (CG II. p. 245).
- (151) The fragmentary evidence for the division of church revenues is collected by A. H. M. Jones, "Church Finance in the 5th and 6th centuries", JThS n.s. 11 (1960), pp. 84-94. It is not clear however if the decisions of Orleans I regarding the sharing of offerings were followed throughout Gaul during this period. On the tithe used for the poor, the clergy and the ransom of prisoners see Conc. Matisconense A. 585 can. 5. (CG II. p. 241). The canon speaks of the practice of tithing being forgotten and threatens excommunication to those who do not pay the tithe in future.
- (152) Conc. Aurelianense A. 549 can. 20. (CG II. p. 155).
- (153) Greg Turon, HF., V. 5. p. 200.
- (154) Conc. Turonense A. 567 can. 5. (CG II. p. 178).
- (155) Walter Ullmann, "Public Welfare and Social Legislation in the Early Medieval Councils", Studies in Church History 7 (1971), pp. 1-39, places far too much emphasis on institutionalised charity in the Frankish period. Ullmann pictures the bishops as the virtual architects of a type of Christian social security system. This is certainly going too far.
- (156) Vita S. Caesarii., I. 32. (MGH SRM III. p. 469); I. 44 (p. 474); I. 62. (p. 483); II. 9. (p. 487).
- (157) See Conc. Aurelianense A. 549 can. 15; 16. (CG II. pp. 153-54); Conc. Arelatense A. 554 can. 6. (CG II. p. 172); Conc. Parisiense A. 556-73 can. I. (CG II. pp. 205-206).
- (158) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 11. p. 142.
- (159) The property of the Xenodochium at Lyons, set up by the king, had to be protected against the local bishop who might have sought control - Conc. Aurelianense A. 549 can. 15. (CG II. p. 153). Xenodochia clearly existed elsewhere - note the plural in Conc. Aurelianense A. 549 can. 13. (CG II. p. 152). See also Leclercq (art.) "Hospitâux, Hospices", D. A. C. L. VI. 2. col. 2748-2770, and W. Schönfeld, "Die Xenodochien in Italien und Frankenreich im frühen Mittelalter," ZRG 43 kan. Abt. 12. (1922), pp. 1-54.
- (160) Sid. Apoll, Epist., III. 4; III. 10; V. 1 ; V. 15; VI. 5 ; VI. 6; VI. 8; VI. 11; VII. 4; VII. 7; VII. 13; Sidonius provided Jews with personal letters of recommendation: Epist., III. 4; VI. 11.

- (161) Conc. Epaonense A.517 can.6. (CG II.p.25).
- (162) See Conc.Lugdunense A.583 can.2. (CG II.p.232), and Greg Turon, VP., VIII.9.pp.249-250.
- (163) Conc. Turonense A.567 can.6. (CG II.p.178).
- (164) Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua c.a.475. (CG I.pp.162-188).
- (165) Greg Turon, HF., V.36.p.307; HF., V.49.p.262. Cf. Conc. Aurelianense A.538 can.24 (21). (CG II.p.123).
- (166) The close associate of the bishop, the archdeacon is referred to by St. Ambrose as diaconus episcopi: De offic., 1,4. (PL 16. 84). The archdeacon instructed lower clergy and boys - Greg Turon, VP., II.1.pp.218-219 and punished clerics - Conc. Aurelianense can.26. (CG II.p.139). See also HF., IX.6.p.419 where the archdeacon of Paris chains up a religious imposter and has him held in custody. Under the bishop the archdeacon administered charity and church property. Thus Leo the Great speaks of the archdeacon having "dispensationem totius causae et curae ecclesiasticae," Leo M, Epist., III.2. (PL 54.1021).
- (167) Gregory describes Vigilius of Marseilles going to the altar celebrare, but he is merely dressed in an alb and is assisting others celebrating. HF., IV.43.p.178.
- (168) Greg Turon, HF., I.45.p.29. A fourth century example from Clermont-Ferrand.
- (169) Greg Turon, HF., IV.35.p.168; HF., VIII.39.p.405; HF., V.5.p.202.
- (170) Greg Turon, HF., V.49.p.259.
- (171) Fort, Carm., IV.23.3-4. Cf. Greg Turon, VP., VIII.6.p.247.
- (172) Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua 92. (CG I.p.181). "Diaconus cum ordinatur, solus episcopus, qui eum benedicit, manum super caput illius ponat, quia non ad sacerdotium sed ad ministerium consecratur."
- (173) Conc. Agathense A.506 can.16. (63) (CG I.p.227). However as Beck illustrates, op.cit., p.55, this age requirement was not always enforced.
- (174) Note for example: E. Le Blant, Nouveau recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule, (Paris, 1892) No. 64, p.88.
- (175) Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua 60. (CG I. p.176). - "Ut diaconus tempore tantum oblationis et lectionis alba utatur;" 58 (CG I.p.176). "Ut diaconus, praesente presbytero, eucharistiam corporis Christi populo, si necessitas cogit, iussus eroget."
- (176) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.15.p.381; X.29.pp.522-525.

- (177) Nisard, Traduction, p.171, suggests that this Berthichilde was, without a doubt, one of the religious of the Convent of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, but Meyer, p.42 rightly draws our attention to the "tua tecta" of line 18 and the continued practice of a religious life on a domestic basis, as, for example, during the early stages of Radegund's own monastic career. Note the practice as late as 614 - Conc. Parisiense A.614 can.15 (13) (CG II.p.279).
- (178) Greg Turon, HF., II.43.p.94. Clotild "post mortem viri sui Turonus venit, ibique ad basilica beati Martini deserviens...."
- (179) The Greeks and Romans held the bee in great reverence. The bee was linked to the Muses and thought to possess reason. See A.B. Cook, "The Bee in Greek Mythology", JHS 15 (1895), pp.1-24 and A. Sauvage, "Les Insectes dans la poésie romaine", Latomus, 29 (1970), pp.274-287. The image of the discriminating bee is also found in Christian literature - Basil the Great, Address to Young Men., 7-8; and earlier in Clement of Alexandria, Strom., 1.1 where he refers to his teacher, most probably Pantænus, as the Sicilian bee who gathers from the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow a spoil that engenders a deathless knowledge. Antony the Hermit, "the wise bee", also visited devout men extracting from each a particular virtue - Athan, Vita Antonii., 3-4. (PG 26. 844-845).
- (180) Text: Caesarius, Regula ad Virgines., (PL 67. 1107-1120). Authority over nunneries: Conc. Arelatense A.554 can.5. (CG II. pp.171-172).
- (181) Greg Turon, HF., IX.33.pp.452-453.
- (182) Greg Turon, HF., X.12.p.495.
- (183) Greg Turon, HF., IX.33.p.454.
- (184) Greg Turon, HF., X.12.p.495.
- (185) Greg Turon, HF., IX.40.p.464.
- (186) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.20.pp.386-387. It was the theological implication of the usage that was important. See G. Kurth's essay, "Le Concile de Mâcon et L'Âme de Femmes," in Kurth ÉF Vol.I.pp.161-167.
- (187) Conc. Epaonense A.517 can.20. (CG II.p.29); Conc. Aurelianense A.533 can.18. (CG II.p.101). "Placuit etiam, ut nulli postmodum foeminae diaconalis benedictio pro conditionis huius fragilitate credatur."
- (188) On Fortunatus' Vita Radegundis see Meyer, pp.90 ff.

- (189) Baudonivia composed her Vita Radegundis shortly after 600 - Meyer, p. 91. See also C. A. Bernoulli, Die Heiligen der Merowinger, (Tübingen, 1900), p. 87 - "Das Radegundenleben der Baudonivia". The biography of the saint by R. Aigrain, Sainte Radegonde vers 520-587, (Paris, 1918) is heavily based on the hagiographical sources.
- (190) Baud , VR., 5, pp. 381-382.
- (191) Greg Turon, GC., 104.p. 365; Baud, VR., 23; 24. pp. 392-93. A sympathetic view of Maroveus: R. Mineau, "Un évêque de Poitiers au VIe siècle: Marovée", BSAO 11:1. (1972), pp. 361-383. Mineau, p. 364, suggests that Maroveus was the first bishop of Poitiers to come from Frankish stock.
- (192) Fort, VR., XII.p. 41.
- (193) Fort, VR., XII.p. 41.
- (194) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 40. pp. 464-65. Gregory's account suggests that the adoption of the rule of Caesarius was caused by Maroveus' lack of support at Poitiers.
- (195) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 42.p. 471.
- (196) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 39. pp. 460-463.
- (197) On the religious topography of the city see Vieillard-Troiekourov, pp. 218-230. The city in the Roman and Merovingian periods - D. Claude, Topographie und Verfassung der Städte Bourges und Poitiers, (Lübeck, 1961) pp. 27-40; 50-55.
- (198) Fort, VH., Praef. I. p. 1.
- (199) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 40. p. 464.
- (200) Averil Cameron, "The Early Religious Policies of Justin II," Studies in Church History, 13 (1976), p. 57.
- (201) Fort, Carm., Appendix 2.
- (202) See Averil Cameron, op.cit., pp. 59-60. The reliquary of the True Cross: Sir. M. Conway, "St. Radegund's Reliquary at Poitiers", The Antiquaries Journal, 3 (1922), pp. 1-12.
- (203) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 42.p. 472.
- (204) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 41.p. 471.
- (205) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 42.p. 474.

- (206) Greg Turon, GM., 5.pp.41-42. On the site see Vieillard-Troiekouroff, pp. 306-307.
- (207) Greg Turon, HF., IX.42.p.470.
- (208) Greg Turon, HF., X.15; 16; 17. pp.501-509.
- (209) Greg Turon, HF., IX.39.p.460.
- (210) Greg Turon, HF., X.15.p.503.
- (211) Greg Turon, HF., II.31.p.77.
- (212) Greg Turon, HF., VI.17.p.286.
- (213) Greg Turon, HF., IX.8.p.421. Compare Vita S. Epifani, 28. (MGH AA VII p.87). Bishop Crispinus who baptised Epiphanius had begotten him through the waters of baptism - "Erat enim genitor".
- (214) Conc. Epaonense A.517 can.16. (CG II.p.28). Usually administered by bishops, the Chrism could be administered to sick heretics by a priest. See Greg Turon, HF., IX.15.p.429 - the reception of King Recared.
- (215) Fort, Carm., V.5.95-112. We lack details of the sixth century baptismal rite and are on much surer ground in the seventh century. See J.D.C. Fisher, Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West, (London, 1965)
- (216) Conc. Aurelianense A.541 can.8. (CG II.p.134).
- (217) Cod. Theod., 16.8.4; 16.8.9; 16.8.11; 16.8.12; 16.8.13; 16.8.20; 16.8.21; 16.8.25. We should remember that there was often a great gulf between what was the law and what was practice. The most celebrated example of this is the incident of the burning of the synagogue at Callinicum on the Euphrates which led to a battle of wills between Bishop Ambrose of Milan and the Emperor Theodosius: Ambrose, Epist., 40.6,18; 41.1.
- (218) Forced conversion in 582 - Greg Turon, HF., VI.17.p.286; Destruction of the synagogue at Orleans well before 585 - HF., VIII.1.p.371.
- (219) Greg Turon, HF., IV.46.p.181. Bishops would however have had an interest in those parts of the Theodosian Code that related to their legal position and rights. Canon 21 (20) of the Conc. Turonense A.567 (CG II.pp.184-188) shows a knowledge of Cod. Theod. IX, 25 that suggests bishops were familiar with the collection. They were obviously selective when it came to following Roman law.



- (220) Gregory's attitude is discussed by S. Katz, "Pope Gregory the Great and the Jews", Jewish Quarterly Review n.s.24. (1933), pp.113-137, and by J. Richards, Consul of God, (London, 1980), pp.228-229.
- (221) The legal status of Jews is discussed by S. Katz, The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul, (Camb, Mass, 1937), pp.83-84, who provides a summary of conflicting points of view on this central issue. His own view is the only one possible given the evidence - "since Roman law, including enactments concerning Jews, had lost its force, the Jews were not only considered as foreigners, but without civic or legal status." p.84.
- (222) Christians were forbidden to partake at banquets with Jews or to marry a Jewess: Conc. Epaonense A.517 can. 15. (CG II. pp.27-28); Conc. Aurelianense A.533 can.19. (CG II. p.101.) See also S. Katz, The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms, (Camb, Mass, 1937), p.90.
- (223) Sidonius could draw a distinction between a person and his beliefs; he could show affection for one and hatred for the other. See the treatment of Gozolas - Sid. Apoll, Epist., III.4.1 - "cuius mihi quoque esset persona cordi, si non esset secta despectui." Bishop Eleutherius was advised by Sidonius to protect a Jew's person, even if he disliked the individual's belief, and as a bishop wished to convert him - Epist., VI.11. The ideal was however the converted Jew like Promotus - Epist., VIII.13.3.
- (224) Greg Turon, HF., IV.12.p.144.
- (225) Greg Turon, HF., VI.5.pp.269-271.
- (226) Greg Turon, VP., II.1.pp.218-219.
- (227) Greg Turon, HF., V.11.pp.205-206.
- (228) This is the theme of the great Easter poem written for Felix of Nantes, the famous Salve Festa Dies - Carm., III.9. Note especially lines 85 - 92. This aspect of the poem has attracted the careful attention of Ruth Ellis Messenger, "Salve Festa Dies", TAPhA, 78 (1947), pp.208-222.
- (229) Conc. Aurelianense A.538 can.33 (30) (CG II.p.126); Conc. Matisconense A.581-83 can.14. (CG II.p.226) in accord with an earlier ordinance of King Childebert.
- (230) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.1.p.370., mentions that at the entry of King Guntram into Orleans in 585, the Jews acclaimed him in the lingua Iudaeorum. This is not however conclusive evidence that the Jews spoke Hebrew in everyday life. These are biblical phrases and may have merely been used by the author to show through the diversity of languages, the unanimity of support for the king: See B. Blumenkranz, Juifs et Chrétiens dans le monde occidental 430-1096, (Paris, 1960), p.4.

- (231) See P. Lambrechts, "Le Commerce des Syriens en Gaule du Haute Empire à l'époque mérovingienne", L'Antiquité Classique 6 (1937), pp. 35-61.
- (232) The trading activity is attested by Sid. Apoll, Epist., VI.11; Greg Turon, HF., IV.12.p.144; VI.5.p.268; Moneylending - Greg Turon, HF., VII.23.p.343, but see Katz, op.cit., p.268 who cautions against reading a medieval situation back into the sixth century.
- (233) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.1.pp.370-371.
- (234) Greg Turon, HF., V.11.p.205.
- (235) See Fort, VG., 64.pp.64-65 where Amantius, a Jewish convert to Christianity has been imprisoned by other Jews; Gregory the Great, Epist., IX.195. (MGH Epp 2. pp.182-184).
- (236) B. Blumenkranz, "Les auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Age sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme," REJ n.s.9. (1948), p.49, suggests that the dogmatic exposition of the faith put in Avitus' mouth by the poet may be inspired by conversion sermons of the period.
- (237) Greg Turon, HF., V.11. p.206. "Hii vero qui baptismum noluerunt discedentes ab illa urbe, Massiliae redditi sunt."
- (238) Synodus Autissiodorensis A.561-605 can.18. (CG II.p.267).
- (239) On the normal catechumenate of eight months note Conc. Agathense A.506 can.34 (CG I.p.207).
- (240) Greg Turon, HF., V.11.p.206.
- (241) Many of the general observations of John Bossy, "Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," Studies in Church History 10 (1973), pp.129-143, have a great relevance for our period as well.
- (242) On the significance of Chrism see the comments of the Carolingian bishop Theodulfus of Orleans, Liber de Ordine Baptismi, XV. (PL 105.234).
- (243) The recipe may come from Exodus 30.23-25. We have no sixth century description of the making of the Chrism, but the Pseudo-Germanus (c.700) links the aromatic in the oil to the cross of Christ. The Chrism is made from balsam, the balsam comes from the tree called Lentiseus, which tradition says was used for the cross-piece of the cross - Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae, ed.J. Quasten, (Munster, 1934, p.27). Further details of the use of Chrism in baptism - L.L. Mitchell, Baptismal Anointing, Alcuin Club Collections, No. XLVIII, (London, 1966), p.121.

- (244) Tertullian, De Baptismo , 7 (CCs. 1. I. p. 282). Cf Isidore, Etymologiae. , VI. 50. (PL 82. 256).
- (245) See J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "Early Medieval History," in Early Medieval History, (Oxford, 1975) p. 7.
- (246) Note Vita Caes. , II. 49. (MGH SRM p. 501); Hilary, Sermo de Vita S. Honorati. , II. 14. (PL 50. 1256); Vita Hilarii Arelatensis Episcopi. , XXII. 29. (PL 50. 1243).

## chapter 4

# episcopal authority and secular power

"Fecisti ut libeat cunctos huc currere cives  
 Et domus una vocet quicquid in urbe manet.  
 Ornasti patriam cui dona perennia praestas,  
 Tu quoque dicendus Burdegalense decus:

(I. 15. 65-68).

Civic life and episcopal rule were, to the mind of Venantius Fortunatus, closely interconnected. The poet who might use civis and Christicola interchangeably when describing those who formed part of the community of belief, is also acutely aware that the Christian communities of Gaul were centred on the civitates of Gaul that had survived from Roman times. He exploits an urban vocabulary in order to emphasise the indissoluble links that bound together civic life and Christian spiritual community. As a consequence of this the bishop of the carmina appears as a significant urban leader in his own right. This chapter therefore has as its aim the investigation of the power and influence enjoyed by the bishop in the secular affairs of the civitas and its surrounding territory. The nature of the bishop's influence within the power structures of the Merovingian state will be interpreted as we examine the nature of the tasks entrusted to the duces and comites in sixth century Gaul and assess their working relationship with members of the episcopacy.

#### (1) The Bishop as Urban Leader

The casting of the bishop in the role of urban leader is seen, in the first instance, in the range of civic titles and forms of address employed by the poet. Gregory of Tours is hailed on the occasion of his adventus to his city as pastor in urbe gregis (V. 3. 10) and the community's approval of the praesul (V. 3. 2) is underlined in another poem by reference to the communia vota. (V. 8. 7) Felix of Nantes is hailed as caput urbis. (V. 7. 2) Bishops are also portrayed in terms that provide a reminiscence of the titles of defensor

civitatis/plebis and amator urbis. Venantius exploits the legalistic connotations of these words even if the bishop did not hold these offices, (1) for, as we shall see, the poet could perceive something in the Bishop's civic function that was analogous - Gregory of Tours, newly arrived in his city, is pictured as urbis amator, (V. 3. 5) Felix of Nantes is defensio plebis, (III. 5. 5) and Venantius tells us that when Leontius I died, people of all ages lost a defensor. (IV. 9. 7)

The close association of the bishop with civic life springs in the first instance from the fact that the fortunes of the church were firmly tied to those of the civitates. Indeed the administrative structure of the Gallic church was based on the administrative organisation of Gaul under the Romans. Those cities that had been provincial capitals under the Romans - cities such as Reims, Trier, Tours or Bordeaux were the Metropolitan Sees of the episcopal administration. (2) (See Map X - Ecclesiastical Organisation) Social cohesion and concordia, (3) economic prosperity and civic viability were the hallmarks both of the sound civitas and of the sound bishopric. It was with practical considerations in mind that Pope Leo the Great, writing to the bishops of Mauritania Caesariensis in Africa in the fifth century, stressed the principle that episcopal rule ought to be centred on larger groups of people and on the more populated cities. If any little hamlet were to be made a bishopric, then, he argued, the highest priestly office would, as a result, become cheapened and devalued. (4)

This sense of the interdependence of civic viability and the dignity of episcopal rule comes through most strikingly in the epistles of Sidonius, (5) and in the writings of Gregory of Tours. Gregory's famous description of

Dijon is often quoted as an example of what should constitute a sound civitas in this period. The castrum of Dijon is so prosperous and well defended that Gregory expresses his surprise that the place had not been raised to the dignity of a civitas.

Economic viability and good defences figure largely in Gregory's description. The castrum is set in the centre of a fertile plain. There is an abundant source of fish in the river Ouche, while the surrounding countryside is well watered. The inhabitants of the area can make use of the water-turned mill wheels outside the gate. The hills to the west supported vines producing a good "Falerian" wine. Laid out like a typical Roman fort, Dijon possessed walls that were in places thirty feet high, and fifteen feet thick. The circuit of the walls was topped by thirty-three towers. (6) This then was the perfect civitas and episcopal seat. Gregory, Bishop of Langres, preferred it to his own episcopal city and spent much of his time there.

Fortunatus saw the viability of the urbs as a civic centre as reflecting on the dignity of the episcopal office, and the prestige of particular bishops as reflecting on their cities. The city and the bishopric are considered as taking in a considerable area of countryside outside the protection of the city wall and the bishop is a leader to those who live outside the urban settlement. The plebs Arverna, for example, includes both ruricolae and urbani. (V. 5. 107) The dignity of a city could, as we shall see, reflect favourably on the bishop who was fortunate enough to hold a prestigious See in a prosperous area. On the other hand a city that had slumped into economic decline could be rescued by a bishop who was a tireless worker and undertook building projects, or who injected a new spirit of confidence into his cives. Either way the fortune of the bishop and that of the city went hand in hand. Great cities like Bordeaux

and Tours would, because of a long tradition of economic or religious importance confer immense prestige on a bishop. Tours was a great religious centre, but it was also economically viable. Situated on a plain beside the Loire, Tours was the principal city of a region where wheat could be grown and the vine cultivated. The river offered easy transportation of goods at times when the water level was high enough to permit easy navigation(7) and the trade route of the Loire led to Nantes, the Atlantic and on to both Britain and Spain. (8) Roads joined Tours to Orleans and Paris, Le Mans and the coast of the north-west, and to Poitiers and Bordeaux. Another road ran along the northern bank of the Loire and linked the city to Angers, Nantes and Brittany. (9) Bordeaux likewise enjoyed the advantage of being a long established port and trade centre. Although the major trade route from the Mediterranean via Narbonne and the Garonne to Bordeaux appears to have been closed by the Visigoths in Septimania, Bordeaux, at the mouth of the Garonne, was still able to function as an Atlantic port. As well as having commercial significance, Bordeaux had a glorious cultural tradition. It had been the home of Roman rhetorical schools and of the poet Ausonius, who had sung its praises. As a result the city had a self-conscious Roman character. (10) Bordeaux found in Leontius II a bishop who fostered the Roman traditions of the city and who did all he could to increase the prestige of his Metropolitan See. His pretensions even extended to the affectation of referring to Bordeaux as the "Apostolic See". (11) The civic importance of Bordeaux, must, according to Venantius, be matched by the standing of its bishop. Leontius is told by our poet that he and his city have much in common: (12)

Ornasti patriam cui dona perennia praestas,  
 Tu quoque dicendus Burdegalense decus:  
 Quantum inter reliquas caput haec super extulit urbes,  
 Tantum pontifices vincis honore gradus;  
 Inferiora velut sunt flumina cuncta Garonnae,  
 Non aliter vobis subiacet omnis apex.



The particular character of a city could be obliquely referred to by the poet in his picture of the bishop as the apposite leader of his community. Thus Felix of Nantes reflects the maritime character of Portus Namnetum and civic harmony:

Vox procerum, lumen generis, defensio plebis  
Naufragium prohibes hic ubi portus ades.

(III. 5. 5-6)

Of course not all Gallic cities were prospering. Gregory's narrative suggests general decline and disruption. Civil war left cities in flames, crops destroyed and trade dislocated. Epidemics were a recurring nightmare and nearly wiped out whole communities. (13) Nantes during this period was also exposed to attacks by the Bretons and raids by Saxon pirates. Despite the calamities that befell it, and its situation on the edge of the civilized world, Nantes was raised by the standing of its bishop Felix (III. 8. 3-4) who, as we shall see, attempted to deal with both the Saxon and Breton menace. Elsewhere, in a letter to Bishop Felix, Venantius again stresses the importance of Felix's standing for the prestige of the city of Nantes:

Nam si personae merito urbes sibi vindicant principatum,  
nulli per vos est ille locus inferior, ubi quidquid de laude  
requiritur Felix actibus pontifex est adsertor.

(III. 4. (6))

Such expectations were sometimes more than mere poetic flattery. Verdun, which had earlier slipped into decline, was saved by its bishop, Desideratus. This prelate, observing the poverty of his cives, obtained a loan from King Theudebert and shared out the money among the businessmen of the city. The businessmen put the money to good use and restored prosperity to the city. Desideratus was able to offer to repay the loan, but the king would

not take the money back. Gregory comments that the people of Verdun were still prosperous in his day. (14) Verdun, despite its prosperity, does not appear to have been a large place. Indeed throughout Gaul in this period we find reduced wall circuits. (15) Yet even in Sidonius' day there was, for some, no more immediate indication of a city's standing than the size and circumference of its walls. (16) Verdun appears to have fared badly, but Venantius assures the city that the standing of its bishop increases its prestige:

Urbs Vereduna, brevi quamvis claudaris in orbe,  
Pontificis meritis amplificata places:  
Maior in angusto praeferet gratia gyro,  
Agerice, tuus quam magis auxit honor.

(III. 23. 1-4)

Mainz has been revived through the actions of its bishop Sidonius, who, with his royal contacts and building projects, was deserving of the title genitor urbi. The city is congratulated on having Sidonius to save it and restore its fortunes:

Reddita ne doleas, felix Magantia, casus:  
Antistes rediit qui tibi ferret opem.  
Ne maerore gravi lacrimans orbata iaceres,  
Te meruisse fame  
Porrigit ecce manum genitor Sidonius urbi,  
Quo renovante locum prisca ruina perit;

(IX. 9. 1-6).

A disastrous fire such as that which swept through Bordeaux allowed Leontius II to rebuild "Phoenix-like" (I. 15. 45-52), and Cronopius of Périgueux is praised for rebuilding his burned out churches and for repopulating his city, a probable reference to the ransoming of captives taken from Périgueux:

Implesti propriis viduatam civibus urbem  
Videruntque suos te redimente lares.

(IV. 8. 23-24)

Using a device familiar from the panegyric tradition, Fortunatus presents Bishop Vilicus protecting Metz like a wall (III. 13. 24) and increasing the standing of his city. (III. 13. 15-16) The bishop may be portrayed as caput urbis (V. 7. 2) or caput regioni. (VIII. 15. 9) In an age where identification with the civitas was so close that one could speak of Pectavi or Turonici, (17) Gregory of Tours is cast in the role of the first citizen when he is described as Toronicensis apex (VIII. 15. 2) or caput Turonis. (V. 10. 2)

The portrayal of the bishop as urban patron or civic leader owes much to the traditional aristocratic extension of patrocinium to the people of a city. In all parts of the Roman Empire there was a long tradition of the aristocrat, often a man with local ties, who had adopted the role of patronus civitatis and benefited his fellow citizens by undertaking public works such as the restoration of buildings and city walls, the provision of fountains, baths, aqueducts or religious shrines, or the staging of public games or spectacles. While many of these patroni were holders of public office, it was still possible for wealthy men not currently holding public office to use their conspicuous wealth for the benefaction of their fellow citizens and the embellishment of their city. Benefaction of this type, and of course its careful commemoration in inscription, assured the patron and his family of pre-eminence in their city. (18) The bishops of Merovingian Gaul, and in particular those who came from a senatorial background, continued in this tradition and Venantius recorded their benefactions in inscription or panegyric. We must also see the portrayal of the bishop as urban patron against the ceremonial setting in which some of the poems were read. The adventus poem, (V. 3) written for the celebration of Gregory's consecration, was probably read at a great occasion of civic

rejoicing, following his actual entry into the city and his installation. The poem is actually addressed to the cives as the first line shows. The panegyrical poem in honour of Leontius II (I. 15) which also portrays Leontius as civic leader was also written, it would seem, for public recitation in Bordeaux.

The expectations that a bishop might excite in the minds of citizens encompassed many things that we might categorise as secular, yet in the tradition of aristocratic urban patronage, a bishop with resources at his disposal would have felt an obligation to provide material benefits of various kinds for his fellow citizens. Thus the bishop, often a landowner of some substance in his own right, could initiate public works programmes. As we shall presently see, the bishop had a judicial competence as well: a right to intervene in legal cases, the ability to undertake deputations to obtain tax relief or financial aid for his citizens. By the sixth century in Gaul there was an already developed tradition of the bishop as a de facto political leader in times of crisis. Bishops during the fifth and sixth centuries often showed by their actions a readiness to protect their cives in trying times, and in the absence of any other leader, rapidly came to be seen as political leaders themselves.

The reactions of the Visigothic kings to the Catholic prelates in the cities of Gaul in the fifth and early sixth centuries shows that these monarchs were quick to perceive the importance of the bishop as a de facto civic and political leader. When they suspected disaffection among the bishops, they quickly sent them into exile. The Visigoths obviously feared that the bishops would stir up revolts based as much on actions of political independence as on religious differences. Those bishops who came from a senatorial background

had a sense of leadership that was almost inherited and provided the most obvious advantages as leaders. Sidonius Apollinaris, as Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, was very much involved, together with his brother-in-law Ecdicius, in the defence of the city in 471/72 against the Visigoths who had put the place under siege. (19) When the treaty of 475 between the Emperor Nepos and Euric threatened to buy peace at the expense of the Auvergne, Sidonius mounted a diplomatic war in which he showed that the publica salus of the Auvergnians and the cause of the orthodox faith both demanded defence of the city. (20) He failed to stop what he saw as betrayal of the city and when the Visigoths were masters of the city, they promptly exiled Sidonius to the fortress of Livia near Carcassonne. (21)

At Arles, Bishop Caesarius, himself of Burgundian origin, was suspected by the Visigoths of Burgundian sympathies. When he was denounced to the Visigoths by Licianus, a church notary, the bishop was summoned to the capital Toulouse and then exiled to Bordeaux. (22) Allowed by Alaric II to return to Arles, Caesarius was again suspected of collaboration with the forces of Gundobad the Burgundian and Theuderic the Frank during the siege of Arles 508-510 and imprisoned. (23) When the city was relieved by the Ostrogoths, Caesarius remained under a political cloud. By 513 Caesarius was again suspected of traitorous intentions and summoned to Ravenna, where, according to his biographers, his charisma had an immediate effect on Theoderic. (24)

These bishops were feared by the Visigoths because they were seen to be power brokers on a city level. The orthodox cause and notions of civic identity and independence might be neatly locked together in an attitude of resistance to heretical overlordship. Remigius of Reims was able to perceive the advantage for the orthodox cause that lay in having a champion like Clovis,

yet he writes to the king in a confident tone that suggests that he has a power base of his own. His letter of greeting is also one of admonition and he tells Clovis to show deference to the bishops of Belgica II and to seek their advice. The rest of the letter continues in the imperative with Remigius urging the king to undertake corporal works of mercy. In this way Clovis' kingdom will prosper. (25) Following the conversion of Clovis, Frankish expansion was viewed by the bishops as a religious crusade against the heretic foe. Exactly what role the bishops played in the lead up to the Battle of Vouillé (507) we shall never know, but the Visigoths appear to be reacting to signs of stress in a number of cities. Quintianus of Rodez was driven out of his city by the Visigoths and a faction they manipulated in the city. The charge levelled against the bishop was one of plotting to aid the Franks. (26) Bishops Volusianus and Verus of Tours were also suspected of plotting against the Visigoths and sent into exile. They both died far from their city. (27)

Following the victory of the Franks over the Visigoths, many came to the episcopacy after a career in the service of Orthodox monarchs. This experience of administration, often on a city level, further enhanced the bishop's ability to be of service to his cives after consecration. Indeed some bishops continued in forms of royal service after being raised to the episcopacy, being sent on delicate missions of diplomacy by the Frankish kings. A number of bishops in the carmina had experience of royal service prior to consecration. Gundegisil of Bordeaux had been comes of Saintes under King Guntram (28) and Gregory of Langres had also successfully made the transition from secular office under the Burgundian kings to episcopal office in Langres. For forty years Gregory had served as comes of Autun before being elected by the people

and consecrated bishop of Langres. It is this transition from secular to spiritual rule that is sketched in his epitaph written by Venantius:

Arbiter ante ferox, dehinc pius ipse sacerdos  
Quos domuit iudex fovit amore patris.

(IV.2.7-8)

Gregory of Tours cites a number of examples of royal officials who were raised to the episcopacy, but he often writes of this practice in a manner suggestive of strong disapproval. (29) He complains, for example, that in the time of Chilperic, few clerics were raised to the episcopacy, (30) the implication being that the king's men filled all the vacant Sees. Secular office is however something quite praiseworthy in the case of his great-grandfather Gregory of Langres and we are told that he discharged his office well. (31) Both Germanus of Auxerre and Rusticus of Lyons, to cite two earlier examples, both held secular office prior to consecration and this was seen by Constantius and Ennodius respectively as a further indication of their high standing in the communities in which they lived. (32) Secular office and the experience of administration would have proved a useful training ground for one destined to be bishop. Experience such as this might equip a bishop to deal with the seniores of the city, while experience as comes would be of great value to a bishop when he sat in court or when he sought to intervene before the iudices.

Translation from the sphere of secular service to that of spiritual leadership had almost become a tradition in Gaul from the days of Sidonius. Leontius II of Bordeaux, whose father had been bishop of that city had, when a young man, accompanied Childebert I on his campaign against the Visigoths in 531:

Versus ad Hispanas acies cum rege sereno,  
Militiae crevit palma secunda tuae.

(I. 15. 9-10)

Leontius, who is characterised as regum summus amor, (IV. 10. 11) appears to have forged strong links with the court circle around Childebert, and his promotion of the cult of St. Vincent was, as we have seen in Chapter Three, due to his experience in Spain. The good relations that Leontius enjoyed with Childebert I do not appear to have continued under Lothar and Charibert as the affair of Saintes illustrates. It is significant that Leontius' appointee on this occasion, Heraclius, a priest of Bordeaux, had earlier been one of Childebert's ambassadors and that Charibert went out of his way to humiliate Leontius and Heraclius by sending this bishop-elect back to Bordeaux on a cart of thorns. (33) Leontius' days of influence at court were clearly over by the time Venantius knew him.

Royal favour was also shown to Gallus who rose from a monastic background to become bishop of Clermont-Ferrand. Theudebert of Austrasia recognised in this young monk, then living under the care of St. Quintianus, one who possessed great gifts of voice and sanctity and summoned him to court where he and Queen Suavegotha treated him like their own son. (34) It was this special mark of favour that is alluded to by Venantius in the epitaph which he wrote for Gallus:

Inde palatina régis translatus in aula,  
Theuderice, tuo vixit amore pio.

(IV. 4. 15-16)

It was Theuderic who refused the request of the people of Trier that Gallus should be their bishop, reserving him instead for the See of Clermont-Ferrand where he succeeded St. Quintianus in 525.



## (2) Bishops as Royal Envoys

Royal service of a kind could also continue after a bishop's consecration for the Merovingian kings often made use of bishops as royal envoys, a practice that was of course common both in Gaul and elsewhere in the fifth and sixth centuries. In delicate negotiations a bishop, sent as envoy, might impress with his spiritual demeanour in a way that a secular official was unable to do. In the fifth and sixth centuries, astute rulers, Ostrogothic and Merovingian, were sensitive to this and quick to capitalise upon it. (35) In Gregory's narrative we hear of Bishop Elafius of Châlons-sur-Marne who died on a mission to Spain where he was attending to the affairs of Queen Brunhild, (36) and we glimpse Bishop Igidius of Reims who appears as the spokesman of the envoys sent by King Childebert II to Guntram. (37) The prestige of a bishop as envoy is confirmed by the urgency with which Childebert II sent Gregory of Tours as envoy to King Guntram in 588 to reaffirm the Treaty of Andelot. (38) It is also particularly revealing that Duke Desiderius thought he could regain the favour of King Guntram if he took with him the Abbot Aredius and a number of bishops. His confidence in the prestige of the bishops was well founded since in the end it was the entreaties of the bishops that saw him restored to favour. (39)

Felix of Nantes gives every indication of having acted as ambassador between the Merovingian kings and the troublesome Bretons who plagued his city. It is of course possible that the negotiations held by Felix of Nantes with the Bretons (III. 5. 7-8; III. 8. 41-42) were carried out on his own initiative, yet it is far more likely that he would only have taken such action under the general overview of the Kings Charibert or Chilperic. The situation of Nantes on the lower Loire and within striking distance of Brittany meant that it was subject to raids by the warlike Bretons. The Bretons who had immigrated into Armorica in the fifth and sixth centuries, brought with them the customs of

the Celtic church in Britain as well as the language and traditions of their native territory, the Devon-Cornish peninsula. (40) Pushed by either the Saxons or Irish raiders, most probably the latter, they established in Brittany an enclave that was in many ways quite different from the rest of Gaul. The Breton language was, for example, spoken outside the districts included in the cities of Rennes, Vannes and Nantes where bishops of the "Roman" church held Sees. (41)

The Frankish kings refused to recognise Brittany as an independent territory. From the time of Clovis' death the Bretons were under the nominal domination of the Franks. Gregory tells us that their native kings were now considered as comites, (42) yet his narrative reveals that the peninsula continued to be racked with tribal warfare. The Bretons, on a number of occasions, agreed to accept Frankish overlordship and pay tribute, but again and again broke their word and went on a rampage of burning and pillaging. The worst-hit cities were the closest to Brittany-Rennes, Vannes and Nantes which were subject to repeated raids by the Bretons. Fields were ravaged, vineyards denuded and captives led away.

Fortunatus gives prominence to the role played by Bishop Felix in overcoming these troublesome Bretons, and one can see in Venantius' portrayal of Felix how the bishop could be considered to live at the very edge of the civilised, Romanised world. In such a context Felix is presented as himself bearing the Roman tradition. (III. 8) What Venantius is expressing is a real sense of culture-clash in a frontier society where a series of Celtic tribal kingdoms stood but a short distance away. Of course the Gallo-Romans themselves had a Celtic background, but a canon of the Council of Tours (567) shows that the line between

Brittani and Romani was clearly and firmly drawn. (43) Armorica is the end of the earth, yet Felix, in whose spirit Rome is evoked anew, (III. 8. 20) still makes his presence felt in this western frontier.

Felix was notable for the way he had much earlier (c. 552) saved the Breton chief Macliaw from the prison where he was chained and from certain death at the hands of his brother Chanao. (44) Perhaps this is what Venantius is alluding to when he describes Felix as the actor apostolicus who conquers the iura britannica. (III. 5. 7) Macliaw was saved through Felix's intercessio and swore to be faithful to his brother. This Macliaw did not however keep his word and Chanao once more pursued him. After a period hiding from his brother, literally underground, Macliaw fled to the city of Vannes, received the tonsure and was consecrated bishop. On the death of Chanao, Macliaw deserted his See and his vows, reclaimed his wife and left to seize his brother's kingdom. (45) The episcopacy had been merely used by Macliaw as a convenient refuge from the tribal warfare of Brittany, and the bishops, Gregory tells us, excommunicated him. It may well be that this and other incidents convinced the bishops at the Council of Tours to draft clear guidelines for the filling of episcopal Sees in Armorica.

The involvement of Felix in negotiations with the Bretons is tied to his watchfulness and his care for his flock:

Insidiatores removes vigil arte Britannos:  
Nullius arma valent quod tua lingua facit.

(III. 8. 41-42)

That Felix played an important part in negotiations with the Bretons is confirmed by Gregory of Tours, who although certainly not a friend of the prelate, still reports his attempts to protect his city and its inhabitants from these raiders -

Ad quos (the Bretons) cum Felix episcopus legationem misisset emendare promittentes, nihil de promissis implire voluerunt. (46)

Perhaps Venantius is referring to the sending of such a deputation rather than a personal visit by Felix himself, although the appearance of a prelate in person might have a more immediate effect. What is of particular interest to us is the basis of the position from which Felix bargained. Did he deal with the Bretons as the bishop of the city, and on his own initiative to protect his flock, or did he operate, in some sense at least, as the representative of the king? We cannot be sure in the case of Felix, but bishops did play a role in the dealings the Frankish kings had with the Bretons. Gregory makes it clear that Chilperic considered the bishops of his realm to be his "ambassadors" in the broadest sense. Thus, when Bishop Eunius of Vannes was sent by the Bretons to Chilperic as, it seems, an envoy, he was exiled by the king and forbidden to reside in Vannes. (47) Later, in 587, after Felix's death, King Guntram, now in control of the area after Chilperic's demise, also made use of bishops in the delegation he sent to the Bretons. Namatius, Bishop of Orleans (who had estates near Nantes) and Bertram of Le Mans joined the comites and other illustrious men appointed for this purpose. (48) When in 590 Vannes was relieved by the Frankish army under dux Ebrachar, Bishop Regalis and his clergy came out to welcome the force. We hear that on this occasion Bishop Regalis, and his clergy and townfolk all took an oath of loyalty, but it is interesting to note further that the bishop protested his loyalty in a speech of careful self-justification which Gregory reports, supposedly verbatim:

Nihil nos dominis nostris regibus culpabelis sumus  
nec umquam contra utilitatem eorum superbi extitimus,  
sed in captivitate Brittanorum positi, gravi iugo  
subditi sumus. (49)

Under Guntram as under Chilperic earlier, a bishop clearly had to establish his loyalty to the Frankish king. In a tense and suspicious situation the bishop from the "Roman" side who conducted negotiations with the Bretons would most probably have done so on the understanding that he was ultimately responsible to the king. It is in terms of such a negotiating position that we should see Felix, who also had dealings with Saxons, possibly Saxon pirates (50) for Venantius praises the bishop for turning the rough Saxons, who lived more like beasts than men, from brutes to sheep. (III. 9. 103-104) In this way the bishop might protect his civitas from external threat.

### (3) The Bishop and the Social and Economic Life of his City

The internal affairs of the civitas were also touched by the bishop's presence in a number of ways. The bishop might initiate building projects and provide from church revenues for the support of the poor and sick of the city. Outside the city itself the bishop may also have villas which had a significant impact on the economic life of the countryside. Let us therefore look at each of these areas of episcopal activity in turn.

Within the city and its surrounding territory we glimpse the bishop undertaking works programmes that would have been of practical benefit to the cives. In this the bishop assumes a role akin more to a secular official than to a cleric. Unfortunately we do not know how the bishops involved raised the revenue needed for their projects or how they obtained the necessary labour. It may well be that the prelates used their personal fortunes to offer these benefactions to the people. At Mainz, where the city stood at the confluence of the Main and the Rhine, Bishop Sidonius undertook an embankment project to protect his people from the waters of the Rhine - Ut plebem foveas et Rheni

congruis amnes: (IX. 9. 27). Venantius devotes a whole poem to the celebration of a more extensive project undertaken by Felix of Nantes, who diverted the Loire, or more probably, an arm of the Loire near his city. (51) The work undertaken appears to have been of some magnitude and would have required the marshalling of large forces. As a result of Felix's plan a new road was laid, the force of the river diminished and the productivity of the land increased. In a poem with a strong panegyric tone, Felix is portrayed in heroic terms altering the face of the earth and commanding the river to change its course. (III. 10. 7-14)

Felix appears to have undertaken the large-scale project without the assistance of the secular power. We do not hear of any secular official stationed in Nantes during this period. In the absence of such an official Felix appears to have undertaken the direction of the project himself as an expression of his episcopal patronage of the cives of Nantes.

Building projects undertaken by bishops within their cities also helped the local economy by providing employment for skilled workers and labourers alike. In the carmina we hear of church building projects being undertaken in the northern cities of Mainz, (II. 11; 12; IX. 9. 25); Trier, (III. 11. 21); Metz, (III. 13. 39); Cologne, (III. 14. 21-24); and Verdun (III. 23. 11-12; III. 23. 17). In the south-west of Gaul new churches are built or renovations undertaken at Périgueux, (IV. 8. 27); Bordeaux, (I. 6; I. 8; I. 9; I. 11; I. 15); Nantes, (III. 6; II. 7); Limoges, (IV. 6. 13); and Tours (I. 5; II. 2; X. 6). In Merovingian Gaul the destruction of war and the effects of city fires required the rebuilding of churches, some of which would have gone back to the fourth century and may well have been teetering on the brink of ruin. Fire is mentioned in the poems on a number of occasions as the reason for rebuilding. (52) Gregory of Tours, for example, entered his

episcopate at a time when the cathedral of the city had been destroyed by fire. (53) Gregory rebuilt the cathedral and made it bigger and higher. The church was not finished until the seventeenth year of his episcopate and Fortunatus celebrated the occasion. (X. 6) This type of rebuilding must have greatly increased the people's confidence in both their bishop and the viability of their city.

In some cases if the bishop came from a wealthy family he would have been able to use his personal fortune to embellish his city. Such buildings would be seen as a type of memorial and continue the senatorial tradition of benefaction towards a city. Bishop Perpetuus of Tours was a man of great wealth and owned property in a number of cities. (54) A proportion of the costs for the Basilica of St. Martin that he rebuilt at Tours may well have come from his own pocket. The inscriptional poem written on the wall of the church by Sidonius suggests that Perpetuus was himself the major benefactor. (55) Bishop Leontius II, who undertook church building projects at Bordeaux (see Map II) and Saintes (see Map VI - Saintes) was another wealthy patron of both cities. Some bishops had considerable personal resources at their disposal, but others like Dalmatius, Bishop of Rodez, had grandiose plans but they were over-ambitious and their building schemes ended in disaster. (56) When a bishop's own resources or those of his church were insufficient to cover the cost of building or renovation he might turn to benefactors for aid. (57) When St. Martin's church at Tours was without a roof, following a fire, Euphronius roofed it in tin with the financial aid of King Lothar. (58) In a similar way Bishop Sidonius of Mainz engaged the assistance of Princess Berthoara in the building of his baptistry. (59) (II. 11. 9-10) Sidonius who had restored churches in his city (IX. 9. 25) and built the embankment by the Rhine, may well have exhausted his resources.

The splendour of some of the Merovingian churches shines through in Fortunatus' descriptions of the churches at Nantes and Tours. (III. 7; X. 6)

Some of these buildings must have been of considerable size and their construction must have had a considerable impact on the local economy. Nicetius of Trier, who renovated the ancient churches of his city, (III. 11.21) is credited with the restoration of the famous double cathedral. His building projects were on such a scale that he imported Italian workmen from over the Alps, (60) while Carentinus of Cologne is credited with the construction of a church with a second storey gallery. (III. 14. 21-24)

Archaeology tells us little about Merovingian church building. Apart from the Baptistry of St. Jean and the hypogeum of Mellebaudis at Poitiers, few traces of Merovingian ecclesiastical architecture have survived. Often continuity of devotion on the same site over the centuries has obliterated earlier buildings. The grand buildings of Merovingian Gaul are completely swept away and Venantius and Gregory alone remain to tell us of their existence. Even a celebrated structure like the Basilica of St. Martin which was rebuilt again and again during the Middle Ages, was swept away by roadbuilding in the nineteenth century. (61)

In the case of St. Martin's church we have a description by Gregory of Tours of the building erected by Bishop Perpetuus, bishop 460-490. Perpetuus removed the small chapel that had stood over the saint's tomb and replaced it with a basilica, one hundred and sixty feet long and sixty feet wide. Up to the vaulting it was forty-five feet high and it had fifty-two windows, one hundred and twenty columns and eight doorways. Restored after a fire in the time of Bishop Euphronius, it stood restored when Gregory came to Tours as bishop.



Given the paucity of other evidence for Merovingian church architecture, chance indications in Venantius' poems therefore assume considerable importance, even though Venantius' poetic descriptions make interpretation difficult. Small details of decorations emerge - it would appear that the church of St. Eutropius at Saintes had painted elements in a ceiling that was clearly worked in low relief, and perhaps pictures on the wall, and that the cathedral at Tours had pictures on the walls but it remains unclear whether these were painted or worked in mosaic. (62) Venantius' description of the church at Nantes suggests a building of some height and complexity. The roof appears to have been summounted by a dome. (III. 7. 31-34)

A poetic description of the sun and the moon being reflected on the roof of the church contains the information that the church was roofed with metal, (III. 7. 37-44) probably tin imported from Britain, since Nantes was in a good position for trade with that area. Leontius' Basilica of St. Vincent was also roofed in tin. (I. 8. 14) We know very little about Merovingian building materials. Poorly dressed stone covered with a stucco seems to have been the most likely material for the walls of the important churches. Marble was much valued and in short supply while elements from earlier Roman buildings were probably recycled. (63) Venantius wrote a note of thanks to Bishop Ragnemodus of Paris who sent some marble for the shrine of the Holy Cross at Poitiers. (IX. 10)

Not all Merovingian buildings were substantial stone structures. Venantius' poem De domo lignea (IX. 15) alerts us to the use of different types of wood in buildings of some sophistication. (IX. 15. 1-4) Many smaller churches in city and country were made of wood (ex ligneis tabulis), something that helps to account for their non-survival. (64) Many of the oratories celebrated by

Venantius were no doubt made of wood. The description of the church of St. Eutropius at Saintes built by Leontius of Bordeaux suggests a wooden structure, (I. 13. 16) but the decoration of this church is quite elaborate. Venantius contrasts the condition of the church now that it is restored to what it was before. (I. 13. 13-18)

Outside of the city itself the bishop is revealed as a large landowner for we are treated to a brief sighting of villas owned by Nicetius of Trier in the north and Leontius II near Bordeaux. These two examples, far removed though they be in distance one from the other, allow us to form some picture at least of what may have been the social and economic role played by the bishop in the countryside outside the civitas. Gregory of Tours on occasion mentions bishops going off to their villas in the countryside. Often these villas would have been private possessions although many bishops willed their estates to the church and from these and other offerings the church became a landowner in its own right. (65) Such estates were placed under the supervision of church bailiffs, agentes or actores. (66) We hear, again from Gregory, of the virtue of Chrodinus who gave to poor bishops new estates which he had laid out and planted with vines. With the gift of land and house came money, servants and slaves. (67)

The poetic depiction of the bishop's villa by Venantius must be seen in the context of the traditional depiction of the senatorial aristocrat as a type of gentleman-farmer. Supervision of one's estates and the enjoyment of one's villa were an essential part of the aristocratic lifestyle. Sidonius' celebrated description of his own villa at Avitacum, overlooking the Lac d'Aydat near Clermont-Ferrand and that of Pontius Leontius at Burgus (Bourg-sur-Gironde) exemplify the ideal in Gaul. (68) The aristocratic conception of the gentleman-farmer finds succinct expression in the epitaph that Sidonius wrote for his grandfather -

consultissimus utilissimusque  
ruris militiae forique cultor, (69).

The aristocrat should be equally at home in a rural setting as in the midst of the concerns of city life. Some bishops took estate management very seriously indeed. Gregory tells us that Nicetius of Lyons gave full attention to the sowing of his fields and the planting of his vines, yet these things did not distract him from prayer, (70) but Caesarius of Arles rails against those bishops who became so involved in the cultivation of their fields that they forgot their episcopal duty:

Lectio enim prophetica qualis in ordinatione pontificis  
legitur? Speculatorem, inquit, dedi te domui Israhel.  
Non dixit, procuratorem vinearum, villarum, non actorem  
agrorum: speculatorem sine dubio animarum. (71)

Bishop Nicetius of Trier owned an extensive villa described in some detail by Venantius. The estate was most probably at Neumagen, approximately 43 kilometres downstream from Trier. The country is extremely fertile down towards the river, (III. 12. 13-18) which has an abundance of fish. (III. 12. 11) The villa itself is surrounded by a defensive wall topped with thirty towers. (III. 12. 21-24)

The extent of the wall circuit suggests that the estate was designed to be a point of defence and a refuge for the people living around. It is also likely that the estate would have had considerable numbers of servi and coloni. The Bishop of Trier would, as patronus of such an estate have been responsible for their safety in a violent age when soldier -bishops were not unknown. (72) The main villa building is described like a fortress and it has been suggested by Pervical that the type of building indicated in Venantius' description may have resembled in appearance the fourth century castle excavated at Pftatzel upstream near Trier. (73) This structure at Pftatzel was rectangular in shape, and built

around a central courtyard. Three stories in height, it had no windows on the ground floor and was entered by one main door in the middle of the long west side, and by narrow, easily blockaded doors elsewhere. (74) Nicetius' building must have had a similar forbidding appearance. It is worthy of note that the bishop's oratory was protected by deadly ballista. (III. 12. 31-36)

The fortress was a place of refuge for the workers in the vineyards which covered the nearby slopes. The cultivation of the grape on terraced hillsides was, as in Roman times, (75) a feature of the area and Venantius makes special mention of the vineyards. On Nicetius' estate we read of an irrigation system which brings water down the hillside and turns a mill wheel which grinds grain for the people of the area. (III. 12. 37-38)

Possession of a water-mill would have further enhanced the importance of Nicetius' villa to the people of the surrounding territory. A labour-saving device highly prized in the sixth century, mills were only owned by the more prosperous landowners and the church. (76) Nicetius provides this as a form of service to his local community, while his stewardship of the land has increased its productivity. Exploiting the bucolic association of the words pastor gregis, Venantius leaves us with a picture of Nicetius as the gentleman-farmer whose labour is a benefit to all. (III. 12. 39-44)

Far to the south, in the area along the Garonne, we glimpse the villas of Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux. The first of these is the villa Bissonnum, which Venantius tells us was seven Roman miles from Bordeaux. Modern Besson in the Médoc has been suggested as the most likely site. (77) (See Map III-Environs of Bordeaux). Here Bishop Leontius has taken possession of a ruined villa and set about its restoration. (I. 18. 9-14)

Leontius rescued the villa from the wolves (I. 18.17-18) restoring the baths and making a pleasant country retreat. The second of Leontius' villas, the villa Vereginis also represents the restoration (I. 19.15-16) of a country house at Baurech on the north bank of the Garonne. (78) The house is raised on a triple arcade, it has an ornamental pond with a fountain. Fish swim in this pond and are easily at hand for the pastor's dinner. (I. 19.7-14) The villa Praemiacum has also been placed on the south bank of the Garonne, at Preignac, approximately 38 kilometres up-stream from Bordeaux. (79) The countryside here is extremely fertile, giving rise then as now to the cultivation of the vine. (I. 20.15-16)

Here at Preignac, Leontius has also undertaken renovations. (I. 20.20-22) (See Map III - Environs of Bordeaux) This evidence for a revival of three villas in the area around Bordeaux is singular. Leontius must have been a man of considerable means, for he is actually expanding his villa holdings at a time when elsewhere in Gaul some villas went out of use and were being turned into graveyards. (80) We know from Venantius that Bishop Felix of Nantes had a villa at Cariacum, by the Loire (V. 7) but unfortunately are given no specific details.

It is dangerous to generalise about the villa in sixth century Gaul. We have few literary portrayals of the villa and its life while the findings of the archaeologist offer a picture of overwhelming complexity and baffling inconclusion. In the case of the most successful villas, the ones that survived through to the early Middle Ages, modern villages built around or over them have obliterated all trace. Often it is only where there has been some break in the continuity of the settlement and where the site has eventually been abandoned that the archaeologist may work. Conditions varied greatly from one part of Gaul to

another and from one villa to another, yet some broad patterns may be tentatively sketched. In many places we see a triple co-incidence of villa, burials and church. The villa of Arnesp (Valentine, Hte. Garonne), for example, included a small temple of Jupiter in the early fourth century. This was destroyed in the course of that century and replaced by a small Christian mausoleum by the early fifth century. Visigothic burials next filled the mausoleum while later a Frankish chapel and monastic establishment were built on the site in the sixth century. The villa was abandoned, but the religious quarter of the site continued going through these many transformations. (81) Similar continuity may be seen at Montcaret (Dordogne) and at Martres-Tolosane (Hte. Garonne). (82)

Monasteries and villas coincide in some instances, while in others we read of monks establishing themselves far from other human habitation, deep in the forest. (83) The site of the villa at Loupiac, on the south bank of the Garonne, not far from Preignac, was taken over by a monastery. (84) Unfortunately no archaeological material that would suggest the exact location of Nicetius' villa or the three villas of Leontius has come to light. Thus we are totally dependant on Venantius' descriptions.

For those bishops who were men of means the way was also open for patronage of the citizens of the civitas and its surrounds through conspicuous works of charity. Practical assistance of a charitable kind within the city and its hinterland has already been discussed earlier in this work in terms of the Christian virtues of caritas and hospitalitas. We should now pause to consider the economic and social consequences that stemmed from the charitable work of the bishop. The bishops of the sixth century in Gaul, as elsewhere, were overseers of an

elaborate social welfare programme that required sizable revenues in order to operate. The canons of the Councils alert us to the fact that the church received legacies and was assiduous in protecting this form of income. (85) These resources, offerings and perhaps a bishop's own fortune allowed prelates to extend their patronage to the poor.

The bishop was personally responsible for the care of the poor. In economic terms he was their patron and many cives were his economic dependants. The bishop would collect the revenues from church lands, donations and perhaps, in some places, tithes, and redistribute some of this income among the poor. The institution of the matricula pauperum further regulated the circulation of money that was given by the laity as alms.

Patronage of the poor is categorized by Fortunatus in the titles employed in praise of bishops - esca inopum, tutor viduarum, cura minorum. (IV. 3. 11) Now while the bishop's care of the poor sprang from the teaching of Christ it still resulted in a form of patronage laden with economic and social significance. Gregory's description of Cato at Clermont-Ferrand shows that a crowd of poor dependants could be politically valuable to a bishop. Cato, not wishing to leave Clermont-Ferrand for Tours, may well have stage-managed the crowd of poor who appealed to him - Cur nos deseris, bone pater, filios, quos usque nunc edocasti? Quis nos cibo potuque reficiet, si tu abieris? Rogamus, ne nos relinquoas, quos alere consuesti. (86) At Tours we see the matricularii were a socially significant group within the city and easily turned into a city mob protective of the church's interest.

The aristocratic tradition of benefaction towards the inhabitants of one's city and the paternalistic care of the lower orders in society, also included the

feeding of the populus. (87) Gregory of Tours for example, was most impressed by the fifth century senator Ecdicius, a relative of Sidonius, (88) who, when Burgundy was suffering from a great famine, used his horses and carts to bring in the starving poor from distant cities to feed them. This charitable senator fed four thousand people. This type of munificence is also observed in the ecclesiastical sphere for Bishop Patiens of Lyons was still famous in the sixth century for his action in sending food from his storehouses on carts to all parts of Aquitania to relieve famine. (89) What is most striking about Sidonius' letter of appreciation to Patiens is the way he draws attention to the fact that Patiens' generosity extends beyond his own city and province. These were, it would appear, the normal boundaries on one's beneficence. (90)

The clientes of the sixth century bishop were the urban poor, the sick, widows and wayfarers. The ransoming of captives, alluded to by Venantius on a number of occasions, (91) was also an important and costly episcopal task made necessary by the almost constant warfare of the century. We hear of Bishop Maroveus of Poitiers melting down a chalice in order to buy his citizens' freedom and of Bishop Salvius of Albi who bought back his cives and repopulated his city. (92) Those ransomed must have become the clientes of the bishop. The importance of these acts of charity led to the increased social and economic significance of the bishop. As MacGonagle puts it - "The larger the crowd of dependants grew, reciprocally their sphere of influence was proportionally widened." (93)

#### (4) The Growth of Episcopal Influence

Scattered references in Fortunatus' poems may be pieced together to show that the bishop might play a significant role in the social and even the economic life of his community. The titles that Venantius employs in praise of bishops



reflect the expectations of an urban populace that in many cases saw in the bishop an urban patron. We must, however, be cautious and not push the evidence too far. Not all Merovingian bishops would have been held in high esteem, not all Sees would have been prosperous, nor all bishops wealthy landowners. Some cities were, during this period, anything but prosperous, some bishops far from rich. It is with this in mind that we must carefully weigh up Chilperic's claim that the bishops were displacing him throughout the cities of Gaul. Gregory tells us that Chilperic was often heard to complain - Ecce pauper remansit fiscus noster, ecce divitiae nostrae ad ecclesias sunt translatae; nulli penitus nisi soli episcopi regnant; periet honor noster et translatus est ad episcopos civitatum. (94) Chilperic saw that much of the power of the bishops came from their property holdings and he sought to destroy wills that left property to bishops. (95) There is no doubt some element of truth in what Chilperic is saying, but it is most unlikely that Gregory of Tours wants us to take the king's comments as a true reflexion of the situation in Gaul.

Chilperic's complaints about a loss of revenue to the church, his concern about a transfer of power to the bishops who virtually rule in the cities is intended by Gregory to be seen as gross exaggeration. Chilperic's charges must be seen in the context in which they are placed by the author. They come in the final summary of the misdeeds of the "Nero and Herod of our time," (96) a mocking portrait of a gluttonous, violent and insensitive individual, who on top of everything else wrote bad poetry. This monster always used bishops as his targets, accusing one of luxuria, another of superbia. At the end of such a catalogue of supposed episcopal vice we find the charge that the bishops had taken wealth and power from the king.

Venantius' portrayal of the bishop as a civic leader in his own right has long drawn the attention of historians who see the bishop of this period assuming many of the attributes of a secular leader. Fustel de Coulanges went so far as to speak of their semi-regal actions "Voyons nous, sans cesse, durant cette époque les évêques faire acte de souverains temporels." (97) Christian Pfister, citing Venantius and other evidence, pictured the bishop as taking the place of the former municipal magistrates whose office had died out. (98) Sir Samuel Dill remarked that the bishop was often a replacement for the "imperial officer who had vanished." (99)

A more cautious note was struck by Beck who addressed himself to the problem of the bishop's pastoral role in South-Eastern Gaul. Beck concluded that while the bishops there were not municipal or royal officials, they assumed "civil importance" in their communities. This Beck attributes to their pastoral concern for their people and he stresses the de facto position they had won for themselves because of the broad nature of pastoral beneficence. (100)

More recently however, Friedrich Prinz has advanced a radical development of the interpretation that stresses the secular power of the bishop during this period. (101) According to Prinz who generalises over three centuries, the overall trend was to the bishop as an independent city ruler. The bishop stays just ahead of royal attempts at effective control of his sphere of operations. The foundations of Prinz's theory are two source quotations - one from Gregory of Tours, the other from Venantius Fortunatus. In the first instance Prinz believes that Chilperic's complaints about the power of bishops are to be taken both seriously and literally. Gregory is credited with unmistakable satisfaction at a situation which he knows to be only too true. All the same, it is hard to see why Gregory would want to highlight Chilperic's clear perception of social and

economic change. I would suggest that Chilperic's comments are meant to be seen as distortions of the true situation.

Venantius' poem on Nicetius' castle is seen by Prinz as confirmation of Chilperic's claims. Both sources are fitted together, one reinforcing the other in a broad sweep of interpretation that leads forward to the seventh century. In all Prinz sees evidence for a translatio imperii taking place in the cities of Gaul. (102) The aristocratic senatorial background of many Gallic bishops provides the cities with pastors who inherit a tradition of service to their communities. These bishops become more and more like secular rulers in their cities. The social and legal functions of the defensor become fused into the bishop's position in a change which comes so gradually it does not involve an institutional transfer. As Prinz sees it, whoever had the ability to protect the cives of a city in no matter what form, inevitably took to himself the function of a ruler. The absence of the comites from many cities also strengthened the bishop's position, and Prinz sees the bishop developing into a type of comes. (103) Indeed he goes so far as to speak of the interchangeability of both positions, "Die Austauschbarkeit der beiden Ämter", and of the independent organism of the bishop's city. (104) The bishop is portrayed surrounded by the fullness of his economic and social power in the midst of the "organisationally undernourished, personally united Merovingian state". (105)

One must raise a number of objections to this interpretation. The first objection rests upon the degree of generalisation involved - three centuries are encompassed and a succession of kingdoms and rulers pass by, yet there is no more than a passing acknowledgement of the diversity of conditions that prevailed. Secondly, Prinz is overly selective in the use of source material

from the sixth century. A few poems of Venantius' are utilized but their relationship to the bulk of the poet's output ignored. Venantius also wrote poems to duces, comites and kings; these are not brought to bear on the problem. Thirdly, insufficient attention is given to the power of the kings and the nature of royal administration. It is true that our knowledge of civil administration under the Merovingian kings is incomplete, yet for all this, we do have many significant passages in both Venantius' and Gregory's works which throw light on the nature of secular rule and the duties of comites and duces. We have instances of powerful comites and weak bishops. No-one would deny that some bishops assumed de facto the function of civic leaders in their cities, but we must be careful not to generalise from this. The situation would have varied from city to city and according to the relative strengths of bishop and comes in the city from time to time.

The relationship between bishop and secular officials is illuminated, at least for Tours, by a number of Venantius' poems and of course by Gregory himself. There is much that can be gained from looking at particular incidents which bring together bishop and comes. What we should turn our attention to is an investigation of just how powerful the bishop was when faced with representatives of the secular power. Did he fall back on any real powers or was he dependent on his auctoritas?

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#### (5) Conflict or Co-operation with Secular Officials at the City Level

At Easter, 589, two envoys from the court of King Childebert II, Romulfus comes and Florentinus major domus (106) of the Queen's palace, came to Tours in an effort to collect taxes from the populace. A number of Venantius' poems written at this time shed light on the delicate diplomacy

that must, on occasion, have characterized relations between a bishop such as Gregory and the representatives of the secular power. The immediate issue in dispute on this occasion was the tax-free status of Tours. This special status had its genesis in the Merovingian kings' respect for St. Martin. As each monarch acquiesced in the arguments of a bishop of Tours, his actions were recorded to be used as examples of pious behaviour to those who came after. Thus Gregory records that Lothar was so stung with fear of St. Martin that he had the tax books thrown into the fire. Bishop Euphronius had been able to convince King Charibert also to recognise this tax-free status, and Sigibert likewise complied. (107) Now, in 589, under Childebert II, the issue became live once more. Bishop Maroveus had requested that tax collectors be sent to Poitiers, in order, so it seems, that tax relief might be given to widows, orphans and infirm people, who, due to changed circumstances, were now wrongly listed on the tax assessment sheets. The tax collectors went on to Tours, having been first supplied by one Audinus with an inventory which would serve as the basis for the tax collection there. Gregory's account of the visit makes it quite clear that he sees an opponent in Tours trying to oppress his cives, by having them threatened with tax assessment. (108)

Venantius' versus facti in villa sancti Martini ante discriptores must have played its part in Gregory's determined efforts to resist the imposition of a tax in Tours. The setting for the reading of the poem (X.11) is most revealing. The poem may be dated to Easter (X.11.7-10) and it would seem that the tax collectors have been invited to St. Martin's table, by Gregory, who appears in the poem as the saint's successor. (X.11.17) Now there is great

symbolic force in the shared meal, particularly during the Merovingian period. In royal circles we are familiar with the significance of the shared meal as an indicator of the establishment of friendly relations or of their re-affirmation after a break. King Guntram, for example, signalled his forgiveness of Bishops Bertram and Palladius after their implication in the revolt of Gundovald by re-admitting them to "table-fellowship". (109) Since the shared meal may have such political implications we may observe the way in which certain individuals carefully avoided sitting down to dinner with those to whom they were opposed on religious or political grounds. (110) The Christian practice of offering eulogiae also symbolized the spiritual relationship between individuals by the sharing of food. Gregory of Tours could, for example, offer the eulogiae sancti Martini to King Guntram in a form of hospitality extended, in a sense, on behalf of the saint. (111)

The sharing of food from St. Martin's table, food offered by the saint's successor, must have been overlaid with a rich symbolic meaning, and especially so on an important feast-day, such as Easter, when one ate a special celebratory meal. (112) The discriptores, in Tours on this high feast-day, may however have found it impossible to refuse the bishop's invitation. The prandium was a sharing of fellowship, and whichever way one chooses to view this particular meal, it would have provided Gregory with a perfect opportunity to lobby against the tax collection. The poem written by Venantius to be read at the dinner is a carefully controlled piece of propaganda in favour of his patron Bishop Gregory and the people of Tours, yet nowhere in the work is the issue of the tax mentioned. Instead the poet plays upon themes that emphasise the saint's power as the amicus Dei. Easter commemorates

Christ's own power over death and Venantius links this to the power given to Martin to raise a man from the dead. (X. 11. 15-16) The people of Tours, Martin's people, are commended to the care of these representatives of the King and his pious mother. (X. 11. 25-28)

Tax collectors were as hated in Merovingian Gaul as they were in New Testament times and late antiquity, (113) but the people of the cities at least had the bishop who could intercede before a monarch to seek mitigation of the tax burden of the citizens who found it too onerous. (114) Yet while the tax collector, as a representative of the king, exercised a real potestas and could count on the backing of arms if necessary, the bishop had to rely on his own auctoritas and the virtus of a powerful heavenly patron who could be invoked. In this sense the bishop could stand as a bulwark between the cives and those who had come to collect the tax, although on at least one occasion a bishop had to intervene to save a tax collector who was in danger of being ripped to pieces by an irate mob. (115) The tax-free status of Tours, something that must have been of immense benefit to the citizens of the city and to its economic life, had only been secured by a careful campaign mounted by earlier bishops. The previous year, 588, Venantius who had been in Metz with his patron Gregory, had reminded Childebert II and Brunhild that they owed all they had to the intercession of St. Martin, (X. 7) and Gregory in his Historia makes it obvious that he believed the royal house owed the saint a debt of gratitude. However, while Venantius in this present poem merely hints at the great powers of the saint, we may be sure that Gregory made use of examples of the saint's vengeance. On a number of occasions Gregory makes mention of the vindictive actions of the saint. Soldiers who attacked the monastery of

St. Martin at Latte, where some of his relics were housed, and stole property, met a swift punishment when the boat in which they were travelling sank. All the soldiers, save the one man who had protested at his comrades' actions, perished. The monks, of course, recovered the property. (116) Stories such as this may well have played their part in Gregory's campaign on this occasion. Gregory makes it quite clear in his account of the visit of the tax collectors, that he treated the fever and subsequent death of Audinus' son as an obvious warning from the saint. Gregory's account suggests that it was after this warning-sign that the discriptores asked the king for instructions. The royal reply recognised the tax-free status of Tours, pro reverentia Sancti Martini. (117) According to Gregory it was Chilperic's excessive tax demands that had caused the deaths of Dagobert and Chlodobert. (118) Childebert II may well have feared a similar punishment.

The occasion of the visit of these officials to Tours is also seized by Fortunatus to focus attention on the case of a young woman who has been wrongfully imprisoned by the iudices, and whose father has been cruelly treated. The woman's case is the subject of poems addressed to Romulfus, Florentinus, Gallienus, the local comes and Bishop Gregory himself. These poems allow us to glimpse what may have been an opportunity for episcopal co-operation with these secular officials in order to see that justice is done; unfortunately we do not know the outcome of the case. Here we might remember again that our source has its limitations. Poetic letters of recommendation may serve to introduce the bearer and his need, but will not supply all the details we may wish for. The poems addressed to Gregory (X. 12a and V. 14) highlight the same case and stress the role of the bishop as intercessor for citizens before representatives



of the secular power. This aspect of the episcopal office is familiar to us from Sulpicius' Vita Martini. There we see the example of Martin who interceded for a group of condemned criminals and saved them from death by lying prostrate all night outside the door of the comes Avitianus. (119) It was the same saint who even interceded before the Emperor Maximus in an effort to save the lives of the condemned Priscillianists. (120) This and other models of episcopal behaviour had its effect and by the time of Sidonius, we find a clear assumption that intercessio on behalf of the oppressed is something to be expected of a bishop and that in order successfully to carry out his task, he would have to know well the ways of the world. Thus Sidonius notes that the detractors of a monastic candidate for the episcopacy might say of him - non episcopi, sed potius abbatis complet officium et intercedere magis pro animabus apud caelestem quam pro corporibus apud terrenum iudicem potest. (121) In the hagiographical portrayal of the bishop, this second type of intercession, before the judges, also becomes established as a familiar theme and an indication within these works both of the bishops' concern for the welfare of their flocks and of their personal ability in dealing with representatives of the secular power. (122)

While we know that bishops in Merovingian Gaul did intervene in secular cases before the judges, Gregory disapproved of this if the bishop's only purpose appeared to be a desire to cause trouble. His attitude to Bishop Badegisil of Le Mans makes this apparent. (123) The bishop was expected to be a peacemaker who promoted concordia. He was expected to expose injustice and heal social rifts. (124) The sixth century canons show that it was the bishop's task to ease the plight of prisoners or to obtain the release of captives. (125) The bishop had a clear judicial authority over clergy, (126) but besides this we catch sight of the continued practice of audientia episcopalis in sixth century

Gaul, (127) although it is unclear if it was everywhere in evidence. Under Roman law a bishop was able to hear civil cases involving laymen providing that both parties agreed to the matter being heard by the bishop. The bishop's jurisdiction was recognised by the state; once the bishop had given his decision there could be no appeal to a secular court. (128) More often, however, we read of a mixed tribunal where local notables, both clerical and lay, sat with the comes in hearing cases. (129) To such a body the bishop should have brought a moderating influence, an ideal which Venantius sums up in his description of Eumerius of Nantes, who was, we are told inde gradu iudex, hinc pietate pater. (IV. 1. 10)

Venantius' poem to Gregory seeks his intercession not his jurisdiction. The girl has been made a captive during a time of peace (X. 12a. 6) and without apparently having committed a crime. The exact details of the case would however have been given orally. The poet appeals to Gregory specifically as the successor Martini, an image which must have drawn upon the powerful memory of one, who, out of compassion, sought to save even heretics tainted with the occult. Gregory is asked to take up the cause of the father who has lost his daughter, since he is himself the pater populi. (X. 12a. 7-8) He is asked to imitate Martin's example by intervening. (V. 14)

Gregory would have had to take up the case with Gallienus comes, the local royal official. This Gallienus is most probably Gregory's friend who had, together with Archdeacon Plato, earlier supported him during the troubles caused by the comes Leudast and the priest Riculf. (130) Together with Plato, Gallienus had suffered arrest, the indignity of chains and the threat of the death penalty, all on Gregory's behalf. It may well have been on Gregory's

recommendation that after the Treaty of Andelot in 587 Childebert II appointed him comes. We know that Plato, Gregory's other supporter, was given the See of Poitiers by Childebert II on Gregory's recommendation. (X. 14. 7-12)

The relationship between Gregory and comes Gallienus must have been particularly cordial if we are in fact dealing with the same individual who had earlier stood firm in Gregory's cause.

The comes was, within the city and its territory, the representative of the king, and the descendant of the Roman comes civitatis. (131) His duties encompassed administrative, judicial and military tasks, there being no strict compartmentalisation between his military and civil functions. While some comites were companions of the king at his palace, others were sent out to the cities, where they exercised power on his behalf. When cities changed hands between the Merovingian kings, the comites were often replaced. In Venantius' poem the appeal is to the comes of the city and to the royal officials against the action of the iudices. The title iudex is used very broadly in this period and any one of a number of officials may be indicated. Not every iudex is a comes. (132) What we are most probably dealing with here are members of a local tribunal, perhaps even in a vicus.

Although we do not know the outcome of the appeal Venantius' poems remind us that the bishop was paralleled in many cities by an important secular official who might serve as a figurehead to whom one might turn in an effort to secure justice. We know of comites in twenty cities in sixth century Gaul. (133)

The relative strength of bishop and comes would have varied widely from city to city. The situation would also have altered as one bishop died and another was elected, or as one comes fell from royal favour and was replaced. We are best

informed about the relationship of bishop and comes in the Touraine and here we may observe the importance of personalities. Venantius' poems suggest the possibility of fruitful co-operation between Gregory and Gallienus, but the situation would have been quite different during the time Leudast and Eunomius held the same office of comes at Tours.

Leudast, for example, whose father was a servus in charge of vineyards, had a meteoric rise to power, (aided, Gregory assures us, by cunning and bribery), gaining the position of comes in the city of Tours under King Charibert. On that king's death, and having supported Chilperic's cause, Leudast found himself in exile at Chilperic's court for seven years while Sigibert held the city of Tours. From 566 Sigibert's appointee, Justinus, (134) held Tours and it was he who, with Bishop Euphronius, accompanied the relic of the True Cross into Poitiers. (135) In 573, when Gregory was bishop, Chilperic's son Theudebert seized Tours for a time and reappointed Leudast as comes in the city, seeking Gregory's support for the nomination. Leudast, for his part, found it politic to behave with great deference toward Gregory, at least for some time and Gregory extracted oaths of loyalty, sworn on St. Martin's tomb, that Leudast would protect the church. (136)

When the city of Tours was brought once more under the control of Chilperic, Leudast, now entered upon his third term as comes and, feeling more secure in his power, began to act in a much more arrogant way towards the bishop. Gregory complains that Leudast wore his armour into the domus ecclesiae, no doubt in an act of defiance. He sat in court with the seniores, some of whom were clerics, and oppressed the people. Leudast's oppression of the people and of the church forced Chilperic to send the dux Ansovald to

depose him in 580. In what appears to be a most exceptional case (137) Ansovald allowed the bishop and people a free choice in the matter and Eunomius was chosen as comes. While Leudast later spread the story that Gregory had slandered Queen Fredegund, and conspired with the priest Riculf against the bishop, (138) the dux Berulf started an intrigue of his own. Berulf conspired with the comes Eunomius, who no doubt wished to impress Chilperic with his vigilance, by spreading the rumour that King Guntram was proposing to take the city and then trying to implicate Gregory by urging him to flee the city with the church treasure.

At the same time, Leudast, hoping to win the king's favour once more, conspired with Riculf spreading the slanders mentioned above. After the trial of the bishop at Berny-Rivière, Gregory was exonerated, and Leudast fled, only to meet his end near Paris in 583. Following Chilperic's death, the city passed to Guntram in 584, Willichar was appointed comes for a time, and he was followed by Eborius. After the Treaty of Andelot in 587 returned Tours to Childebert II, Gallienus was appointed comes. (139)

Venantius' poems addressed to bishop and comes only date from the period in which Tours appears to have been at its most peaceful and settled state for years. Neither of the earlier comites who were enemies of Gregory find a place in Venantius' occasional poems, although the dux Berulf received a poem from Fortunatus in his earlier days when he was comes, though not, it would seem, in Tours. (VII. 15) We may also safely assume that the type of intercession that Venantius envisages (X. 12a) would have been impossible under Leudast and perhaps also under Eunomius, both of whom saw in Gregory not one with whom they could co-operate, but rather a powerful rival and possible opponent.

In the present case of the girl who has been captured by the iudices, the poet envisages the court officials, the comes and the bishop working together to effect the girl's release and her return to her father. Gregory's intercessio was something to be valued and as the bishop himself reveals he knew how effective it could be. This is shown in the story he tells of how he intervened on behalf of Garachar, the comes of Bordeaux and Bladast who had supported Gundovald's party. Gregory presented his appeal as a message from his "Master". This startled King Guntram who asked - "Who is this master who told you to come?" and Gregory, with a knowing smile, replied - "It was St. Martin who told me to come." The two traitorous officials were pardoned by the king - a telling illustration of Gregory's powers of persuasion and of his skilled use of the power of St. Martin. (140)

Venantius, however, also takes us out of the Touraine since he writes two poems to Galactorius, comes of Bordeaux under King Guntram. (VII. 25; X. 19) During the episcopacies of Leontius II and Bertram, Venantius mentions no secular official stationed in Bordeaux, yet the strategic importance of the city must have necessitated Lothar and Charibert stationing a representative there near the border with the Visigoths. When Gundovald visited Bordeaux we hear that he was aided by Bishop Bertram and Garachar comes, mentioned above. It was this official who was pardoned by King Guntram in 585. In this year, shortly after assisting at the council of Mâcon, Bishop Bertram died and was succeeded by Gundegisel. (141)

Bishop Gundegisel was the king's appointee and he had, prior to his ordination, been comes of the city of Saintes. (142) It was he who, as Metropolitan, intervened, after 590, in the affairs of the convent of the Holy Cross

at Poitiers. (143) Galactorius may have been appointed in 585 to replace Garachar who had disgraced himself, for it is not clear if the restitution Gregory mentions as occurring in 585 included Garachar's restoration to the office of comes at Bordeaux. It is most unlikely that Guntram would have taken such a risk. Most probably the king merely restored Garachar's property with the pardon and appointed a new comes - Galactorius. With Venantius' wishes for a future advancement to the office of dux, go greetings to Galactorius' household and to the bishop:

Cumque domo sociis antistite coniuge natis  
Vive comes, cui sint iura regenda ducis.

(VII. 25. 21-22)

The bishop to whom conventional greetings are sent is Gundigesil, who celebrates at the ara Dei the mysteries for the good of the people. (VII. 25. 7-8) The relationship between comes and bishop is based, it appears at first sight, on a close amicitia. In another poem (X. 19. 3) Galactorius' relationship to the city of Bordeaux is delineated by the description of this official as amator, although, as we have earlier observed, this does not necessarily mean that Galactorius actually held this office which is otherwise unknown in Gaul. Venantius merely wishes to stress the official's care for his city.

This same poem is a celebration of Galactorius' cursus honorum. Venantius assures his subject that he, like Martin or Justinian, was deserving of a higher station long before he achieved it. (X. 19. 15-20) At this time Galactorius had been made dux and given a ducatus which extends to the Pyrénées. (X. 19. 7-12)

The reference to the border of the fatherland highlights the deployment of duces by the Merovingian kings to deal with emergency situations or difficult areas. We do not know when Galactorius was appointed dux. It is clear that

the office of dux was, for some, the pinnacle of the cursus honorum and the rise of Galactorius from comes to dux is paralleled by that of Berulf who when Venantius hailed him as bon vivant was a comes, but who later rose to be dux of Tours and Poitiers. (144) Venantius' poems shed considerable light on the nature of the duties undertaken by the duces, as the poems addressed to Bodegisil, (VII. 5), Lupus, (VII. 7; 8;9), Chrodinus, (IX. 16) and Launebode (I. 8) illustrate. In many respects the duties of the duces correspond closely to those of the comites, in that there is a combination of functions, civil and military in the one official. The military qualities of the dux are not surprisingly given prominence in an age when the Merovingian kings organised invasion forces under as many as twenty duces. The dux Lupus is assured by the poet that he has united in himself the wisdom of a Cato and the luck of a Pompey. (145) His rule is in itself a revival of the Roman spirit:

Illis consulibus Romana potentia fulsit,  
Te duce sed nobis hic modo Roma redit.

(VII. 7. 5-6)

This "Roman" conception of rule has two balancing parts. In war the dux must be strong, swift and dependable. In peace time however his rule must be moderate and just. Venantius devotes considerable attention to Lupus' administration of justice. (VII. 5. 25-26) A similar emphasis may be observed in the treatment of dux Chrodinus. (IX. 16. 15-16) The military and judicial duties of the dux are complementary and are summed up neatly by the poet:

Antiquos animos Romanae stirpis adeptus  
Bella moves armis, iura quiete regis.

(VII. 7. 45-46)

At this point we should remember the type of source material that we have here in this poetry. We must bear in mind the laudatory nature of



these poems to royal officials and Venantius' obvious idealising purpose. We get a quite different picture of the duces from the pages of Gregory's History, for there we see them with their armies sweeping across Gaul. In 583 we catch sight of dux Desiderius, who, acting for Chilperic, raised levies and marched on Bourges. He was, however, unable to control his troops who set fire to everything in the area around Tours. In 586 we see dux Beppolen destroying crops near Angers as a punishment when the people of that city resisted his attempts to bring them under the jurisdiction of King Guntram. In 590 dux Audovald's troops stole, killed and destroyed property in Metz while on their way to fight the Lombards in Italy. As Gregory exclaims: "You might have imagined that he had been sent to attack his own territory (regio)". (146)

Venantius was merely setting forth in these poems an ideal which was thoroughly Roman in character and may have had little correspondence to the daily realities of secular rule. The duces often led forces that were poorly paid, if paid at all, and in the absence of this and proper provisioning were dependant on plunder.

The judicial administration of the duces mentioned by Fortunatus is not well attested and Dietrich Claude draws attention to the near silence of the sources concerning the duces sitting in judgement. Only one literary source gives a clear indication of a dux sitting as a judge. (147) Claude suggests that if duces frequently appeared as judges we would find beside the stereotyped phrase ante illo comite the additional aut illo duce in the later formulas. (148)

The primary importance of the duces has been argued by Archibald Lewis, who maintains that the duces and their equivalents, the rectors and patricians, were "from the beginning more important than the counts, who were less important

basic officials and generally their subordinates". (149) Lewis bases his argument on a quantitative analysis of the number of times duces, rectors and patricians are mentioned by name in the works of Gregory of Tours, Fredegar and Fortunatus. From this data he claims that "if one is willing to judge the relative importance of officials in this way, then dukes, rectors and patricians, would seem to be twice as important as counts during these years". (150)

Nothing could be more mechanistic than this nor more fatuous, yet this remains the main support for Lewis' assertion that the importance of the duces so outweighed that of the comites, that "we can only conclude that the counts were not the territorial officials par excellence in the regnum francorum during the Merovingian times." (151)

No-one would dispute that duces were higher on the cursus honorum of the Merovingians or that they could, on royal orders, depose a comes and supervise the election of his successor, undertake various commissions on the king's behalf or act as his ambassador. Yet while comites are not found everywhere in Merovingian Gaul, their presence in twenty-one civitates suggests that it was they who formed the backbone of Merovingian secular administration. In times of danger the comes would raise forces and like the duces see to the defence of city walls. (152) The city would be his fortress and the comes might also serve as a sectional commander under the more important military officials, the duces. In the administration of the civitas and its surrounding territory the comes was assisted by subordinates who increased his effectiveness. We catch but brief glimpses of the comes' subordinates, his iuniores. The exact relationship of the comes to the under-officials such as vicarii and tribunii in this period remains unclear. (153)

The absence of comites in Provence is explained by the particular character of this territory which the Merovingians gained from the Ostrogoths in 537. Here the imprint of the earlier "Roman" organisation was strong and the Franks allowed Provence a certain amount of freedom in the administration of its own affairs. (154) In Provence the rector provinciae was the royal official whose duties included those activities carried out elsewhere by comites. As well, the rector had a status and military position equal to the duces. Venantius, no doubt through court circles in Austrasia when he first came to Gaul, met Dynamius and Jovinus, both of whom served as rector provinciae. Two early poems addressed to Dynamius (VI. 9; 10) were written by Venantius in northern Gaul in 566 and 567 and sent as poetic letters to Provence. (155) Dynamius who had acted as a patron to Venantius in the north is also presented as a poet (VI. 9. 57-60) and the centre of what appears to be an agreeable circle of amici. Through Dynamius, Fortunatus sends greetings to the "sacred Bishop Theodore, first in the community by virtue of his episcopal office", to Sapaudus, to the distinguished Felix, "the honour of all the world", to the excellent Albinus, to Helias and "the illustrious Jovinus".

Jovinus (VII. 11; 12) also received poems from Venantius but these were written much later. The theme of one poem is of lost contact over the years. The passing of time is alluded to from the first line - tempora lapsa volant, fugitivis fallimur horis and, as in a consolatio, Venantius shows how time destroys all. This theme leads to a request for a word from his absent friend (VII. 12. 59-64) and the poem is revealed as a type of mock consolatio used as the vehicle for Venantius to ask for a poem from his absent, distant friend. (VII. 12. 111-112)

This Jovinus was rector provinciae after Dynamius, and held office

until deposed by Sigibert in 573. He was replaced by one Albinus, perhaps the individual mentioned by Venantius. (VI. 10. 69) Meyer treats VII. 12 as a consolatio written by the poet to console his important friend on the loss of his office in Provence. (156) This is not a convincing explanation of the poem. Firstly, Venantius makes no reference to a loss of office or dignity. Secondly, the kernel of the poem is a request for a poem in reply, and finally Venantius was inclined to use the most elevated style to discuss the most mundane matters (157) and there was a clever point to be made in employing some of the features of the consolatio to underline the poet's sadness at no news of his friend. There is no high political point to the poem.

The friendly relations that existed between those in the circle of Dynamius (VI. 10. 67-70) did not last. Jovinus greatly resented Albinus who replaced him in office. (158) In the dispute between Albinus and the Archdeacon Vigilius, the ex-rector took the side of the cleric and spoke for him at the hearing before Sigibert. Later this same Jovinus tried to gain for himself the See of Uzès, but was forestalled by the deacon Marcellus, the son of one Felix "a senator", who was able to obtain through Dynamius the approval of Sigibert. It has been suggested that the learned senator of Marseilles, mentioned elsewhere by Gregory of Tours, is identical with the Felix mentioned in Venantius' poem to Dynamius. (159) While this is merely conjecture, it is a possibility. Jovinus appears in Gregory's narrative to be an extremely determined man and one who as ex-rector had his own armed retainers. With his own force he laid siege to the city of Uzès and the new bishop, Marcellus, had to buy him off with a bribe in order to ensure peace. Later, when Dynamius was rector and the dispute between him and Bishop Theodore split the city of Marseilles, Jovinus

sided with the bishop. (160) The happy days of amicitia sketched in Venantius' earlier poems were clearly over, the men to whom the poet had earlier sent greetings were now enemies.

The civil strife in Marseilles is reminiscent of the worst days in Tours under Leudast and Eunomius and Gregory's account shows that he is well informed about these later events in the city. The troubles in Marseilles serve to show how much depended on the relationship between the bishop and the representative of the secular power and how this can change over time. Co-operation might quickly turn to conflict as Gregory's narrative in the history shows. The possibility of conflict might however be lessened if the bishop were, prior to consecration, one who had served the king in secular office. It was no doubt with such a consideration in mind that the Merovingian kings sought to have their own men consecrated bishop. Chilperic did this frequently, according to Gregory who exaggerates somewhat. (161)

Whatever the later developments that gave power to individual bishoprics, there is no substantial evidence in the sixth century that would justify us talking of an "episcopal city", or episcopal city rule, along the lines indicated by Prinz, in our period. Even in the most powerful Sees such as Tours or Bordeaux, the bishop was paralleled by secular officials. The comites or duces were appointed on the king's order and with forces at their disposal could get the better of the bishop (162) who could only rely on his diplomacy and a local following. Perhaps in cities such as Nantes where we do not hear of a comes, more power came to the bishop in a de facto way. We are still however dealing with isolated cases and we are ignorant of the situation in many sixth century cities. To generalize would be rash.

In his dealings with secular officials at the city level the bishop was forced to rely not on special powers in a formal sense, but on his auctoritas for the most part. This auctoritas had to be built up over many years and many things contributed to its establishment. Patronage of the poor and sick for example, won the bishop clientes, while the protection of the people from injustice was a task long associated with the episcopal office. Yet a bishop could only plead for his people if they were struggling under the burden of excessive taxation. He could only hope that his intercessio before a civil judge would sway the verdict or mitigate a sentence for one dragged before the civil judges. Our evidence for audientia episcopalis during this period is meagre and it is in this area alone that the bishop appears to have exercised a real potestas.

Venantius' use of civic titles in his depiction of the bishop owes much to the aristocratic tradition of patrocinium and to the poet's extension of panegyric from the secular to the ecclesiastical sphere and his employment of this genre long connected with rulers, in praise of bishops. On the one hand Venantius may be giving expression to the expectations of the citizens, yet it is quite conceivable on the other that he is merely hoping to stimulate feelings of civic pride and cohesion where these things were in fact lacking. A survey of Fortunatus' poetry shows that the bishop is not alone in the city and that Venantius could create similar poems of praise for officials such as duces and comites and speak of their beneficent rule.

The individuality of particular cities should also caution us against making sweeping generalisations about a transfer of power from the kings to the bishops in the cities in the course of the sixth century. Tours, we might note, was a great episcopal centre, but never a royal capital, while cities like

Paris and Soissons were garrison and administrative centres under the Romans and royal capitals under the Merovingians. When, in the carmina, Venantius writes of these cities we get a completely different picture of civic life.

Venantius' picture of the bishop in his city is paralleled by the depiction of the king, his court and capital. It is here, rather than with the bishop that the power lay, for the kings appointed the officials sent to the civitates. It is of course true that the further one went away from the capitals the more likely it was that one would encounter groups of people who, from time to time, escaped effective royal control. On the periphery of the kingdom in the south it was more often a rebel dux like Chilperic's military commander, Desiderius, or the pretender Gundovald who most benefited from this situation. Yet despite the lack of a complete and systematic administrative structure covering all parts of the Merovingian kingdoms, the kings did, at various times, appoint comites, and send them to some of their cities. Our sources mention comites in twenty civitates at different dates in the sixth century. The kings' duces also moved around the country or saw to the defence of groups of cities. Royal power itself, was however, concentrated in the north, but from their capitals, the kings were able to exert a considerable power over the church in their respective realms. It is to the king and his capital that we now turn.

NOTES - CHAPTER FOUR

- (1) The office of defensor civitatis/plebis, see A.H.M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire 284-602, (Oxford, 1964) Vol I. pp.144-145; 279-80; 479-480. On the relationship between bishop and defensor, see É. Chenon, "Étude historique sur le defensor civitatis", Nouvelle Revue de droit français et étranger, 13, (1889), pp.515-61, esp. p.559. The office was still filled in some cities in sixth century Gaul - Greg Turon, VP., VI.6.p.234, and Venantius, Carm., X.19.3.  
The office of amator urbis is more obscure. The office is only attested in North Africa in epigraphic evidence. The only reference to the position in Gaul comes from Venantius' poem to Galactorius at Bordeaux - Carm., X.19.3. I would argue that Venantius is merely using the word amator in this case in an untechnical sense. D. Claude, "Untersuchungen zum frühfränkischen Comitatus", ZRG germ. Abt. 81. (1964), pp.40-41, note 201 suggests that the position of amator at Bordeaux was possibly akin to that of the North African amatores. How the possibly Punic office reached Bordeaux is, Claude admits, unclear. I would prefer to see Venantius playing with words.
  
- (2) The relationship of ecclesiastical organisation to Roman provincial administrative structure: Jill Harries, "Church and State in the Notitia Galliarum", JRS Vol. LXVIII, (1978), pp.26-43. On the importance of the bishop's presence in ensuring the continuance of the city see R. Latouche, The Birth of the Western Economy, trans. E.M. Wilkinson, (London, 1961), pp.103-104 with examples.
  
- (3) Concordia was central to the Roman conception of the civitas. Sallust pictured a wandering multitude becoming a civitas at Rome through concordia. Sall. Cat., 6.2. The traditional Roman definition of the civitas is repeated by Augustine - De civ. D., I.15. "cum aliud civitas non sit quam concors hominum multitudo" and Epist., 138, 2, 10: "quid est autem civitas nisi multitudo hominum in quoddam vinculum redacta concordiae?" Note Gregory of Tours who repeats Orosius' verdict on Carthage - HF., V. Praef. p.194: "Quae res eam tamdiu servavit? Concordia. Quae res eam post tanta distruxit tempora? Discordia."
  
- (4) Leo M, Epist., 12.10. (PL 54.654-655).
  
- (5) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII.9.23-25. A bishop worthy of the standing of Bourges and of its citizens.
  
- (6) Greg Turon, HF., III.19 pp.120-121. The walls of Dijon were demolished from the eighteenth century onwards. Only one tower and some foundations remain. For a full description see A. Blanchet, Les enceintes romaines de la Gaule, (Paris, 1907), pp.27 ff. See esp. Map fig.5. p.30, and also R.M. Butler, "Late Roman Town Walls in Gaul", AJ (1959), p.37, who provides a summary of more recent work.



- (7) On the problems of navigation on the Loire see T. L. Bratton, Tours: From Roman 'Civitas' to Merovingian Episcopal Center, c. 275-650 A.D. Unpublished Ph. D. Diss. Bryn Mawr College, 1979, pp. 2-3, and L. Bonnard, La Navigation Intérieure de la Gaule à l'époque gallo-romaine, (Paris, 1913), pp. 100-109.
- (8) See Latouche, op. cit., p. 136, and A. Lewis, "Le commerce et la navigation sur les côtes atlantiques de la Gaule du Ve au VIIIe siècle," Le Moyen Age, 8. ser. 4. (1953), pp. 269-271.
- (9) On the road networks near Tours see Salin, Vol I. pp. 122 ff, and T. Bratton, op. cit., pp. 4-8. We know little of the condition of the Roman roads in the Merovingian period, but Venantius speaks of the wheel-furrowed roads - Carm., VI. 5. 207.
- (10) The Roman heritage of the city: R. Étienne, Bordeaux Antique, (Bordeaux, 1962) esp. Bk. II, Ch. III, "Une petite Rome" pp. 159-199 and Bk. III, Ch. II, "Une ville universitaire" pp. 235-264.
- (11) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 26. p. 158.
- (12) Compare Themistius, Or., XIV. 183b. (ed. W. Dinsdorf, p. 225) where the pre-eminent position of the city of Constantinople makes it apt that she should welcome Theodosius. Constantinople excels other cities as does the emperor other men. Note also Claudian, Cons. Hon. IV., 611-613 where the majesty of Honorius enhances the majesty of the Roman people.
- (13) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 31. pp. 165-166 - Plague in Auvergne, spread to Burgundy; Epidemic of 580 in Paris and North - HF., V. 34; 35. pp. 238-241; Epidemic of 588 in Marseilles - HF., IX. 21; 22. pp. 441-442; Plague in Viviers and Avignon in 590 - HF., X. 23, p. 515; Epidemic in Tours and Nantes, 591 - HF., X. 30. p. 525.
- (14) Greg Turon, HF., III. 34. pp. 129-130.
- (15) On the subject of reduced wall circuits from the end of the third century see F. Vercauteren, Étude sur les civitates de la Belgique Seconde, (Brussels, 1934) pp. 353 ff.
- (16) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII. 9. 23 "quocirca si urbium status non tam murorum ambitu quam civium claritate taxandus est. ...."
- (17) Greg Turon, HF., I. 48. p. 32.
- (18) The evidence for the practice of patrocinium is extensively set out by L. Harmand, Le Patronat sur les collectivités publiques, (Paris, 1957). See "Le patronat de cité traditionnelle", pp. 430-447, and especially the table of material benefactions, pp. 435-437. (Later Empire).

- (19) Sid. Apoll, Epist., III. 3.
- (20) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII. 6. - To Bishop Basilius of Aix; Epist., VII. 7. - To Graecus, Bishop of Marseilles, who with Faustus of Riez and Leontius of Arles were given the task of drafting the treaty with Euric.
- (21) Sid. Apoll. Epist., VIII. 3.1. See C. E. Stevens, op.cit., pp.162 ff.
- (22) Vita S. Caesarii., I. 21. (MGH SRM III. p. 465).
- (23) Vita S. Caesarii., I. 29. (MGH SRM III. pp. 467-468).
- (24) Vita S. Caesarii., I. 36. (MGH SRM III. pp. 470-471).
- (25) Epistolae Austrasicae, 2. (MGH Epp. III. p. 113).  
"Et beneficium tuum castum et honestum esse debet, et sacerdotibus tuis debebis deferre et ad eorum consilia semper recurre; quodsi tibi bene cum illis convenerit, provincia tua melius potest constare."
- (26) Greg Turon, HF., II. 36. p. 84.
- (27) Greg Turon, HF., X. 31. p. 531.
- (28) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 22. pp. 388-389.
- (29) For example - Greg Turon, HF., VI. 38. p. 309.
- (30) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 46. p. 320.
- (31) Greg Turon, VP., III. 1. p. 237.
- (32) Const, Vita S. Germani 1. (MGH SRM 7.1. p. 251); Ennodius, Vita B. Epifani, 151. (MGH AA VII. p. 103).
- (33) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 26. p. 158.
- (34) Greg Turon, VP., VI. 2. p. 231.
- (35) There are, for example, some passages in Ennodius' Vita B. Epifani that reveal the calculated use of a bishop as envoy in the fifth century. In 471 Ricimer sent Epiphanius of Pavia to the emperor Anthemius. Anthemius observed - "Callida mecum Ricimer et in legationibus suis arte decertat: tales dirigit, qui supplicatione expugnent quos ille lacescit iniuriis," Vita B. Epifani., 60. (MGH AA VII. p. 91). Euric is also presented by Ennodius as similarly impressed by Epiphanius - "Facio ergo, venerande papa, quae poscis, quia grandior est apud me legati persona quam potentia destinantis?" (The emperor Nepos) Vita B. Epifani., 91. (MGH AA VII. p. 95). A similar situation obtained in Gaul - see Const, Vita S. Germani., 28. (MGH SRM 7.1. pp. 271-272) - Germanus sent as envoy to the most ferocious King Goar of the Alans.
- (36) Greg Turon, HF., V. 40. p. 247.

- (37) Greg Turon, HF., VII. 14. pp. 334-335.
- (38) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 20. p. 434.
- (39) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 27. p. 390.
- (40) See N. Chadwick, "The colonization of Brittany from Celtic Britain," PBA LI. (1965), pp. 225-299.
- (41) The Breton language - ibid., p. 273.
- (42) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 4. pp. 137-138.
- (43) Conc. Turonense A. 567. can. 9. (CG II. p. 179).
- (44) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 4. p. 137.
- (45) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 4. p. 138.
- (46) Greg Turon, HF., V. 31. p. 236.
- (47) Greg Turon, HF., V. 26. p. 233.
- (48) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 18. pp. 431-432.
- (49) Greg Turon, HF., X. 9. p. 492.
- (50) Saxon pirates plagued the coast of Gaul. Sid. Apoll, Epist., VIII. 6. 13, mentions Saxon pirates off the west coast of Gaul and Gregory, HF., II. 18 & 19. p. 65, mentions Saxons on the islands of the lower Loire in the fifth century. A. Longnon, Les Noms de lieux de France, (Reprint, Paris, 1968), p. 180, suggested that some of the place names near the mouth of the Loire with -ic suffixes are due to Saxon influence. See also F. Lot, "Les migrations saxonnes en Gaule et en Grande Bretagne du IIIe au Ve siècle", Rev. Hist., CXIX (1915), pp. 1-40, esp. pp. 19-20.
- (51) The possible sites of Bishop Felix's diversion - D. Aupest-Conduché, "Les Travaux de Saint Felix a Nantes et les Communications avec le sud et de la Loire", Actes du 97 Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Nantes, 1972, (Paris, 1977) pp. 147-163. See map p. 148 showing the various hypotheses. The evidence is insufficient to enable a precise location of the work undertaken by Felix.
- (52) Fort, Carm., I. 15. 47-52; IV. 8. 27.
- (53) Greg Turon, HF., X. 31. p. 534.
- (54) Greg Turon, HF., X. 31. pp. 530-531.
- (55) Sid. Apoll, Epist., IV. 28. 5. Cf. II. 10. 4. Church of St. Justus built by the wealthy Bishop Patiens at Lyons.

- (56) Greg Turon, HF., V. 46. p. 256.
- (57) Note for example the way Bishop Rusticus of Narbonne (427-462) obtained the financial aid of other Sth. Gallic bishops and of Marcellus, the praetorian prefect of Gaul to rebuild his burned cathedral. Marcellus contributed the greatest amount - 2,100 solidi which came from the proceeds of his administration in Gaul over two years. (CIL XII.5336). Rusticus also built the Church of St. Felix with the contributions of other clerics and distinguished laymen. (CRAI 1928 p.191). See H.I. Marrou, "Le Dossier épigraphique de l'évêque Rusticus de Narbonne," Riv. Arch. Crist., XLVI. (1970), pp. 331-49.
- (58) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 20. p. 153.
- (59) The baptistery and cathedral group of buildings - E. Ewig, "Die ältesten Mainzer Patrozinien und die Frühgeschichte des Bistums Mainz," in V.H. Elbern, (ed.) Das erste Jahrtausend, Kultur und Kunst im werdenden Abendland an Rhein und Ruhr, (Düsseldorf, 1962), pp. 114-118.
- (60) Epistolae Austrasicae, 21. (MGH Epp III. pp. 133-134).
- (61) See Vieillard-Troiekouroff, pp. 311-324. The Rue des Halles now runs through the site of the Merovingian and medieval churches which ran East-West, while the new basilica was built along a side street, the Rue Descartes and runs Nth-Sth. The apse of this unimposing structure still covers the site of Martin's tomb.
- (62) Saintes: Fort, Carm., I. 13. 17-18; Tours: X. 6. 91-92.
- (63) On the considerable problems of the archaeological evidence for Merovingian building techniques see James, op.cit., p. 269 ff.
- (64) A survey of wooden church building in this period - W. Zimmermann, "Ecclesia lignea und ligneis tabulis fabricata", BJ., CLVIII (1958), pp. 414-53.
- (65) Bishop Bertram of Le Mans, who died before 626, left 35 estates to his church in his will. See G. Busson and A. Ledru, Actus pontificium Cenomannis in urbe degentium, (Archives historiques du Maine, 2) (Le Mans, 1902), pp. 101-141.
- (66) See for example Greg Turon, HF., VII, 22. p. 343. actores ecclesiae. Marculf, Form., I. no. 3. 20 (MGH Legum Sectio 5 Formulae p. 43) - agentes ecclesiae.
- (67) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 20. pp. 288-89.
- (68) Sid. Apoll, Epist., II. 2; Carm., XVIII; XIX. Sid. Apoll, Carm., XXII. - Castle of Pontius Leontius.
- (69) Sid. Apoll, Epist., III. 12 - Epitaph lines 9-10.

- (70) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 36.p.168. See also Bishop Aetherius of Lisieux who had land and vineyards to give away and who went out to the fields with his farmworkers - HF., VI. 36.p.307.
- (71) Caesarius, Sermo., I.11 (CCs.1. Vol.CIII.p.7).
- (72) The brothers Salonus and Sagittarius are the celebrated examples. See Greg Turon, HF., IV.42.p.175 - both bishops in battle against the Lombards; HF., VII.37.p.359 - Bishop Sagittarius defending Comminges for Gundovald. On Nicetius' military defences see F. Prinz, Klerus und Krieg im früheren Mittelalter, (Stuttgart, 1971), p.58.
- (73) J. Percival, The Roman Villa, (London, 1976),pp.175-176.
- (74) A description of Pfalzel with plans and drawings of what the castle may have looked like: F. Kutzbach, "Das ältere Hochschloss in Pfalzel bei Trier," Germania 19 (1935), pp.40-53. The castle was glimpsed by Venantius from the Mosel and he mistook it for a palace associated with the "senate" of Trier. See J. Steinhausen, "Palatiolum und Venantius Fortunatus", in Aus Mittelalter und Neuzeit, Festschrift G. Kallen, (Bonn, 1957), pp.303-315.
- (75) Auson, Mos., 25; 153-156.
- (76) A mill was much valued. The Merovingian texts reveal the mill as part of the villa and its domain. It is sold or given with the villa and there is no record of a mill as the collective property of a group of individuals. The private mill was covered by the protection of the Salic Law - see Fustel de Coulanges, Histoire des Institutions Politiques de l'ancienne France,3rd Edition, (Paris, 1922) Vol.4. - L'Alleu et le domaine rural, pp.127-128. The church also owned mills - Greg Turon, HF., VII.25.p.345.
- (77) Marquise de Maillé, Recherches sur Les Origines Chrétiennes de Bordeaux, (Paris, 1960) pp.84-86.
- (78) ibid., pp.86-87.
- (79) ibid., pp.87-88.
- (80) See J. Percival, op.cit., pp.184-187, who discusses villas at Berthelming (Moselle), Pompogne (Lot-et-Garonne) and St. Aubin-sur-Mer, (Normandy).
- (81) On the religious quarter of the site at Arnesp-Gallia, 17 pt.2. (1959), pp.430-433 esp. plan of site p.431. A further description - H. P. Eydoux, Résurrection de la Gaule, (Paris, 1961) pp.333-60, and Percival, op.cit., pp.187-88.
- (82) Montcaret:Percival, op.cit., pp.188-191; Martres-Tolosane: Pallas, 3 (1955), pp.89-115, and Percival, op.cit., p.191.

- (83) For example - Greg Turon, VP., I. 2 , pp.214-215 - The Abbots Lupicinus and Romanus and the foundation of the Abbey of Condat in forest of the Jura.
- (84) Gallia 12 (1954) pp.208-9. See fig. 13 - the mosaic at Loupiac, and Percival, op.cit., p.197.
- (85) Whosoever takes from a church that which was bequeathed to it in writing, unless he returns it after being told to by a bishop, is to be excluded - Conc. Claremontanum A.535. can.14. (CG II.pp.108-109); Anyone who prevents the legacies of departed persons from going to the church, to be excommunicated - Conc. Aurelianense A.538. can.25. (22) (CG II.p.124); Anything bishops or clerics leave to the church shall remain church property even if not strictly according to the form of secular law. Such legacies cannot be interfered with - Conc. Lugdunense A.567-570. can.2. (CG II.p.201); Those who keep that which is left to the church are excommunicated - Conc. Matisconense A.581-583. can.4. (CG II.p.224); Protection of that which was given for the maintenance of churches - Conc. Parisiense A.614 can.8. (6) (CG II.p.277).
- (86) Greg Turon, HF., IV.11.p.142.
- (87) See L. Harmand, Le Patronat sur les collectivités publiques, (Paris, 1957), pp.368-369 (B) "Banquets publics epulae" .
- (88) Greg Turon, HF., II.24. pp.69-70.
- (89) Greg Turon, HF., II.24.p.70.
- (90) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII.12.2.
- (91) Fort, Carm., III.11.11-12; IV.8.23-24; IV.9.19.
- (92) Greg Turon, HF., VII.24.p.344 - Maroveus; HF., VII.1.p.327 - Salvius of Albi.
- (93) S. MacGonagle, op.cit., p.40.
- (94) Greg Turon, HF., VI.46.p.320.
- (95) Greg Turon, HF., VI.46.p.320.
- (96) Greg Turon, HF., VI.46.p.319.
- (97) Fustel de Coulanges, op.cit., Vol.III.p.596.
- (98) Christian Pfister, "Gaul under the Merovingian Franks" in H. M. Gwatkin and J. P. Whitney (eds), Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. II. Reprint, (Cambridge, 1936) p.144.
- (99) Sir Samuel Dill, op.cit., p.359.

- (100) H. G. J. Beck, op.cit., p. 359.
- (101) F. Prinz, "Die Bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert", HZ 217 (1973), pp. 1-35.
- (102) ibid., p. 3.
- (103) ibid., pp. 24-25.
- (104) ibid., p. 25.
- (105) ibid., p. 29.
- (106) On the position of major domus see A. H. M. Jones, op.cit., Vol I. pp. 260-262.
- (107) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 30. p. 449.
- (108) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 30. p. 449.
- (109) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 7. pp. 375-376.
- (110) Gregory shows that he would not eat with Chilperic until the king had sworn to obey the law and the canons - HF., V. 18. p. 220. Bibianus of Saintes would not sit at the same table as the Arian king Theodoric - Vita S. Bibiani, 6. (MGH SRM III p. 97). This scene is a hagiographical borrowing from Ennodius as Courcelle has demonstrated - "Trois diners chez le roi wisigoth d'Aquitaine", REA 49 (1947), pp. 169-177.
- (111) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 2. p. 371.
- (112) A special easter banquet is suggested by Greg Turon, HF., IX. 20. p. 441, while Fort, Carm., X. 28 De Prandio Defensoris celebrates a Pascal banquet.
- (113) Jesus, for example, shocked the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners: Matt., 9. 11. See also Lk., 19. 1-10, and the Parable of the Publican, Lk. 18. 9-14. The tax collector was hated in Gaul: Salvian, De Gub. Dei., V. 7. 28. (MGH AA 1. 1. p. 60): "leniores his hostes quam exactores sunt. Et res ipsa hoc indicat: ad hostes fugiunt, ut vim exactionis evadant." Gregory of Nazianzus, Orat 19. 14. (PG 35. 1061) called War the father of taxes. On hatred of the tax-gatherer see H. C. Youtie, "Publicans and Sinners", Mich. Alum. Quart. Rev. 43 (1937) pp. 650-62. E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, Three Byzantine Saints, (London, 1948) p. 248 provide evidence of devils and tax-gatherers being combined into representations of evil.
- (114) Bishop Bibianus of Saintes was celebrated for his journey to Toulouse to convince the Visigothic king Theodoric to ease the tax burden of the citizens of Saintes. Vita S. Bibiani, 4. (MGH SRM III p. 96). Ennodius mentions his hero's ability to successfully petition Odovacar for tax relief for the citizens of Liguria - Vita B. Epifani., 106-107. (MGH AA VII p. 97). Epiphanius also obtained tax relief for the Italians ransomed from Burgundy - Vita B. Epifani., 187-189. (MGH AA VII pp. 107-108).

- (115) Greg Turon, HF., V.28.p.234.
- (116) Greg Turon, HF., IV.48.p.185.
- (117) Greg Turon, HF., IX.30.p.449.
- (118) Greg Turon, HF., V.34.p.240.
- (119) Sul. Sev, Dial., III.4.
- (120) Sul. Sev, Dial., III.3.
- (121) Sid. Apoll, Epist., VII.9.9.
- (122) This type of intercession: Ennodius, Vita B. Epifani., 32. (MGH AA VII p.88); 79.p.94; 122-135.pp.99-101. Bishop Maurilio of Cahors protected the poor of his diocese from the hands of unfair judges - HF., V.42.p.249. Bishop Phronimius helped a robber get off with a light sentence - VP., VIII.9.p.250. Gregory's intervention - HF., VIII.26.p.390. Saintly bishops were adept at miraculously breaking the bonds of captive prisoners - Const, Vita S. Germani., 36 (MGH SRM 7.1.p.277). St. Médard had a similar power - HF., IV.19.p.152; GC., 93.p.357, and Fort, Carm., II.16.77-104. Release of two men, one from chains and the other from wooden bonds. St. Martin and St. Médard combined to break the chains of the carpenter, Modestus, a supporter of Gregory of Tours - HF., V.49.p.260.
- (123) Greg Turon, HF., VIII.39.pp.405-406.
- (124) Greg Turon, HF., VII.47.pp.366-368.
- (125) The bishop was to see that the archdeacon or provost visited prisoners each Sunday. A responsible person was to be appointed to see to the needs of prisoners - Conc. Aurelianense A.549 can.20. (CG II.p.155). Euphronius and three bishops from the province of Tours sought to raise money by tithe for the redemption of captives - Epistula Episcoporum provinciae Turonensis ad plebem, (CG II.p.199). On the attempted revival of tithing for, among other things, the redemption of captives - Conc. Matisconense A.585 can.5. (CG II.p.241). Bishops also wrote letters of recommendation for those who sought to raise their own ransom, but this practice led to abuses - Conc. Lugdunense A.583 can.2. (CG II.p.232).
- (126) Beck, op.cit., pp.62-66.
- (127) Beck, op.cit., pp.325-327.
- (128) Cod. Theod., I.27.2. (ed. Mommsen-Meyer, I.2.p.63). Constitution of Impp. Arcadius, Honorius, Theodosius, 13th Dec, 408. The crucial legal text.



- (129) On mixed tribunals see Beck, op.cit., pp. 327-328, who draws attention to the institution at work in Tours - HF., VII. 47. pp. 366-368. A mixed tribunal is to be seen in the ruling of the 2nd Council of Mâcon that in order to protect widows and orphans, the bishop or his archdeacon are to take part in the trial of these people if they come before the secular judges - Conc. Matisconense A.585. can. 12. (CG II.pp. 244-45).
- (130) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. pp. 259-260.
- (131) J. Declareuil, "Des Comtes de Cité à la fin du Ve siècle", Nouvelle Revue historique de droit français et étranger, 34 (1910), pp. 794-836 argued that the comites did not come from a Roman but rather a Germanic background. R. Sprandel, "Dux und comes in der Merowingerzeit", ZRG germ. Abt. 74 (1957), p. 66 tended to the conclusion that the Frankish comes was connected to his Roman predecessors only through the continuity of literary traditions and civic life. However D. Claude, "Untersuchungen zum frühfränkischen Comitatus", ZRG germ. Abt. 81 (1964), p. 11 points to things in common with the Roman official - the civitas is the territory of both, both had judicial authority, both had military power - the Frankish comes certainly, the Roman probably.
- (132) Claude, Untersuchungen, pp. 38-41.
- (133) See G. Kurth, "De la Nationalité des Comtes franc au VIe siècle", ÉF Vol. I. pp. 170-171 who provides a list.
- (134) Justinus is mentioned buying the freedom of the slave Securus who received a miraculous cure at the Basilica of St. Martin - Greg Turon, VSM., I. 40. p. 156.
- (135) Baud, VR., 16. 7-11. p. 389.
- (136) Greg Turon, HF., V. 48. p. 258.
- (137) Greg Turon, HF., V. 47. p. 257 - "Qui veniens ad festivitatem sancti Martini, data nobis populo optionem, Eunomius in comitatum erigitur." Ferdinand Lot, "La nomination du Comte à l'époque Mérovingienne et la Novelle 149 de Justin II", Nouvelle Revue historique de droit français et étranger, 4th Series 3. (1924), pp. 272-285, attempts to place this occurrence in the context of the later practice in Tours where the seventh century bishops in Tours and Le Mans won the right to nominate the comes in the city. Lot argues for the influence of the Byzantine practice, notably Justinian's Pragmatic Sanction of 554 under which the emperor allowed bishops and other important persons of the dioceses of Italy to choose their own local iudices. The practice was confirmed by the Novel of 569 in the reign of Justin II. In the case of the election of Eunomius in Tours this is reading too much into the event. Chilperic was merely exasperated and no doubt wished to bring peace to the city by letting the bishop and people have a choice in their local official. There is no need to have recourse to Byzantine influence to explain this.

- (138) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. p. 259.
- (139) G. Kurth, "Les Comtes et les Ducs de Tours au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle", ÉF., Vol. I. p. 212-214.
- (140) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 6. p. 375.
- (141) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 22. p. 388.
- (142) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 22. pp. 388-89.
- (143) Greg Turon, HF., X. 15. p. 503.
- (144) Greg Turon, HF., V. 49. p. 260.
- (145) Pompey as lucky - See Cicero, Pro Lege Manilia., 10. 28; 16. 47.
- (146) Greg Turon, HF., X. 3. p. 484; Desiderius marching on Bourges - HF., VI. 31. pp. 299-300; Beppolen destroying crops near Angers - HF., VIII. 42. p. 408; Note also the devastation caused by the troops of the dux Ebrachar as they marched out of Brittany - HF., X. 9. p. 493.
- (147) Claude, op. cit., p. 50.
- (148) ibid.,
- (149) A. Lewis, "The Dukes in the Regnum Francorum", Speculum 51 No. 3, (1976), p. 408.
- (150) ibid., pp. 387-388.
- (151) ibid., p. 389.
- (152) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 41. p. 313. "Misitque (Chilperic) ad duces et comites civitatum nuntius, ut murus conponerent urbium...." The levy of the civitas was commanded by the comes, but the superior officer was the dux. See B. Bachrach, Merovingian Military Organisation, (Minneapolis, 1972), p. 37; pp. 67-70.
- (153) See D. Claude, op. cit., p. 17.
- (154) Stressed by R. Buchner, Die Provence in merowingischer Zeit, (Stuttgart, 1933) pp. 6-29 - "Die Verwaltung der Provence unter den Merowingern."
- (155) Dating of the letters: Koebner, pp. 17-18. On the career of Dynamius see Buchner, op. cit., p. 94. "Provençalischer Patriziat." No. 9.
- (156) Meyer, p. 89 - "Wie Fortunat das Unglück seines hochstehenden Freundes hört, schreibt er diesen Trostbrief". Jovinus' career - Buchner, op. cit., p. 93. "Provençalischer Patriziat." No. 7.

- (157) In Carm., VI.8, De coco qui ipsi navem tulit we see that the poet could, in a poem of mock self-pity, compare his woes to those of the shipwrecked hero Apollonius, (lines 1-5). The piece may start with the elegaic cries:  
 Cur mihi tam validas innectis, cura, querellas?  
 Heu mea vel tandem desere corda, dolor.  
 However, the rest of the poem shows it is meant to be humorous. The culprit of the piece, the cook, is painted with care. He is dark of heart and is blackened by the soot of his kitchen. In another poem, a note of thanks to Agnes for some milk confection that she has apparently made with her own hands, the poet in a playful way brings in Daedalus, the legendary craftsman - "Daedalus an vobis doctor in arte fuit?" (XI.14.4)
- (158) Greg Turon, HF., IV.43.p.177 "Magnam enim inter eos inimicitiam haec causa conguessit."
- (159) Dostal, pp.11.ff; Stroheker, No. 147.
- (160) Greg Turon, HF., VI.11.p.280.
- (161) Greg Turon, HF., VI.46.p.320. \*In cuius tempore pauci quodammodo episcopatum clerici meruerunt."
- (162) Some examples: Greg Turon, HF., VI.11.p.281 - Bishop Theodore of Marseilles was only safe from the armed men of Dynamius, Rector Provinciae when protected by the dux Gundulf. Jovinus, former Rector Provinciae attempted to oust Bishop Marcellus of Uzès with an armed force that appears to be his own: HF., VI.7.p.277. Leudast, comes at Tours dressed in his armour to intimidate Bishop Gregory - HF., V.48.p.258.

## chapter 5

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king, court  
and  
church

Dilige regnantem celsa, Parisius, arce,  
 Et cole tutorem qui tibi praebet opem.  
 Hunc modo laeta favens avidis amplectere palmis,  
 Qui iure est dominus, sed pietate pater.

(VI. 2. 9-12)

Cities such as Paris, Soissons or Metz, which served as royal capitals, developed a quite distinct character from the presence of the king. Here, around the palatium, and in proximity to the monarch the citizens could develop a sense of community centred on the monarch who dispensed favours and whose court must have contributed much towards the prosperity of the city in which it was established. The contrast between the royal capitals and distant cities such as Nantes and Bordeaux cannot be stressed too strongly. In these latter cities, King and court were far distant, the royal power represented in Bordeaux by a local official. As we have seen earlier, it may well be that the absence of such a royal representative in Nantes led to a situation where the bishop, Felix, shouldered some of the responsibilities that we might expect to be undertaken normally by the secular official of the civitas. In this chapter, we shall examine firstly the importance of the royal presence in cities such as Paris and Soissons. Until this point our attention has been focused on the bishop in his city, here we shall first focus on the king and the importance of his capital.

It was in cities such as Paris, Soissons and Metz that the kings held their court, and it was from here that they themselves went forth to visit their cities from time to time. The capitals as well as favoured royal villae in the countryside (1) were the centres of Merovingian power, but via the king's duces and comites his rule extended, albeit in an apparently uneven way, out into his realm. In Chapter Four we examined the role of these officials on the city level and here we shall examine Venantius' portrayal of the monarch in an effort both

to understand his view of the monarch's role and function in society and to isolate those qualities that were to be expected in a Christian ruler. Since the power of the Merovingian Kings was absolute and since sixth century expectations of the Christian monarch rested upon a developed Roman tradition that allowed the king considerable opportunity to make his voice heard in the affairs of the church, we shall investigate the relationship between bishop and monarch in this context. Finally, we can attempt to establish what bearing Venantius' poetry has on the debate concerning the relative power of king and bishop in sixth century Gaul.

#### (1) Court and Capital

The capital was a seat of power. There the presence of members of the royal family over time gave to the city a sense of continuity and must have aided the development of a feeling of allegiance on the part of the cives. The court establishment, with its large number of royal officials and retainers, must both have increased the economic prosperity of the city and acted as a powerful magnet which attracted the ambitious and the gifted. The defences were maintained and the building of churches commenced under royal patronage. Even if the early Merovingians did not do a great deal to beautify and embellish their capital cities, their very presence and the economic impact of their court stopped these cities slipping into further decline.

Paris was one of the most distinguished of the four sedes regni which are mentioned in the divisions of the kingdoms in 511 and 561. It was in Paris that Clovis had established his court. Here in Paris the king was buried with his wife Clotild, in the church of St. Peter, also called Holy Apostles, that Clotild herself had built on the left bank, (2) and which later was to be known as the church of St. Geneviève. (See Map IV - Paris). The royal palace was most

probably located within the castrum, that is to say on the Île de la Cité and on the site where earlier the Roman praetorium had stood and where later the Palais de Justice was built. (3) The inhabitants of the city lived on the banks of the Seine, with the left bank, where most of the building activity took place, being the most favoured. The castrum, it would appear, served only as a place of refuge for the inhabitants in time of danger. (4) Good numbers of people lived further afield in the vici that surrounded the civitas.

Childebert I had received Paris in the division of the Kingdom of Clovis in 511 and he held the city until his death in 558. On his death his brother, Lothar, seized the kingdom and treasury, sending Queen Ultrogotha and her daughters into exile. Lothar held the city until his death in 561. When Venantius entered Gaul in 566, the city of Paris was under the control of Charibert, yet the memory of Childebert was still very much alive. We know from Gregory that Charibert was no respecter of bishops (5) and that his marriages to Merofled and Marcovefa, a runaway nun, earned him excommunication by Germanus, Bishop of Paris. Even in the face of the excommunication Charibert refused to give up his wives, but the death of Marcovefa and the king's own death shortly after, in 567, were seen by Gregory as the judgement of God. (6) Venantius' early panegyric, De Chariberctho rege (VI.2) must be dated to 567, but of course cannot be expected to give even a hint of the king's difficulties with Bishop Germanus. (7) Instead there is the expected and conventional praise of the king's piety. (VI. 2. 112). It is significant however that Venantius avoids all mention of the Queen in his panegyric of Charibert, while mentioning Brunhild in his panegyric of Chilperic. (8) Venantius must have been made aware of the king's highly unconventional marriage arrangement, and doubtless chose to ignore the queen(s) entirely.

Most striking is the way that Charibert is cast in the role of the protector of the widow of Childebert I, Queen Ultrogotha, and her daughters. (VI.2.21-26)

A major theme of the poem is the blood connection between Childebert and Charibert, uncle and nephew being linked by shared virtues. Although Charibert had inherited the city from his father Lothar, there may well have been a political advantage for Charibert in stressing continuity with his uncle, who, in the partition of 511, had first received the city as an inheritance from Clovis. The protection of a widow, a Christian duty in itself, may have won over those who may have felt allegiance to this branch of the royal family and who were alienated by the actions of Lothar. Charibert may have been seeking to heal old wounds by such ostentatious protection, or he may have sought to control the Queen and her daughters lest they should become an alternative focus of allegiance. Considerations of security alone would have forced Charibert to seek consensus support in his own capital, Paris. One way of doing this would have been to link himself to the memory of Childebert, who, at least in death, seems to have had a reputation for sanctity.

Childebert I emerges with little credit from Gregory's narrative. His intrigues against Lothar and his complicity in the murder of the children of his dead brother, Chlodomer, an incident graphically told by Gregory, (9) reveals the worst of his character. Yet this same monarch was a generous benefactor of the church. Gregory writes with evident approval of his gifts of plate to churches and monasteries. The virtue of this action was twofold. The sixty chalices, fifteen patens and twenty jewel-encrusted gospel bindings which made up this gift were all looted from Arian churches. Despite their value, it was to this pious king's credit that he did not have them broken up. (10) While in Spain in 531 the king had been brought into contact with the cult of St. Vincent of Saragossa, and



it was to house the tunic of this saint that Childebert built the church of St. Vincent on the left bank at Paris. It is this church with its large windows to let in light that is described by Venantius in the poem De ecclesia Parisiaca. (II. 10) It was in this church that the king was buried in 558. Later, in 576, Bishop Germanus was buried beside him, to be followed later by other members of the royal family. (11) The celebrity of St. Germanus however eventually outshone that of Vincent, the church taking Germanus' name. The church Venantius described stood on the site of the present St. Germain-des-Prés. (12)

The poem De ecclesia Parisiaca is designed as an inscriptional monument to the royal founder and was no doubt written as a gift for his widow, Ultrogotha. Venantius' poem De horto Ultrogothonis, (VI. 6) is a delightful piece which evokes the beauty of her garden and also serves to conjure up the memory of Childebert I who, when alive, took such an interest in the plants and their propagation. (VI. 6. 9-14) The poem on St. Vincent's church must also be seen in such a context of commemoration. Here is evoked the memory of the pious benefactor, whose own qualities and gifts to the church will earn him a place in heaven. (II. 10. 25-26) While the poem on the garden is however a personal poem designed perhaps to be read just by the Queen, the poem on St. Vincent's church was designed to be inscribed, as Le Blant has suggested, (13) on the wall of the very church that was Childebert's own monument.

Paris under Charibert is described by Venantius in the same panegyric poem in which he praises the king for the protection afforded Ultrogotha. (VI. 2) Now while there is much that would justify the assertion that the rule of the Merovingian kings was little more than "the exploitation of the state by the king", (14) there was a more positive side to Merovingian rule as well. To control their territories the Merovingian kings depended on the loyalty of magnates both Frankish

and Gallo-Roman and on their followers. These men were amply rewarded with land or official positions. (15) The kings often spotted talented men even among the lowest in society and offered them advancement at court. Those who really suffer under the Merovingians are the country folk who find their houses and fields in the direct path of one of the ill-disciplined, poorly paid and ill-provisioned armies that on occasion swept across Gaul, often en route to a distant war. (16) The closer one came to the centres of royal power, the more likely one was to find benefit in the rule of the Merovingian kings. As discussed in Chapter One, the Frankish kings sought to build their monarchy upon a Roman base and in this they were encouraged by Venantius. Part of the Roman tradition of monarchical rule was the ideal of the king who would both protect and benefit his people. Such is the stuff panegyrics are made of and Venantius embroiders upon this theme in his poems to the Frankish kings. The ideal also found expression in such symbolic actions as the adventus of a monarch. Gregory's description of the adventus of King Guntram at Orleans in 585 shows that the arrival of a king in a city that had recently been regarded as a royal capital was an occasion for both royal benefaction and civic rejoicing. The king who now lived in Chalon-sur-Saône (17) visited the important men of the city, showered gifts upon the citizens, and after a banquet, received deputations. (18)

As we have seen in our earlier discussion of genre, Venantius' themes came from the standard Roman repertoire. There is advantage for the people of Paris in the rule of Charibert who is, by law, Lord of his people, but by piety, a father to them. (VI.2.12) The king's moderate rule and the protection he affords his cives are praised. Around the king we may glimpse the proceres. (VI.2.73-74) Like the ideal ruler, Charibert listens to good advisors; he can count on their co-operation. All benefit from the king's liberality,

(VI. 2. 105-106) while even the lowly find protection. (VI. 2. 109) The theme of the paternal rule of the king, rehearsed by Venantius earlier in the poem, finds further eloquent expression towards the end:

Protegat omnipotens pietatis munere regem  
Et dominum servet quem dedit esse patrem.  
Cives te cupiant, tu gaudia civibus addas:  
Plebs placeat famulans, rex pietate regat.

(VI. 2. 111-114)

Earlier we have observed that Venantius can on occasion use civis synonymously with Christicola in designating one who belongs to a community of belief. In this sense, the bishop is the head of the community; those who make up his flock are his cives. Likewise in the previous chapter we examined those poems which show the bishop engaged in activities conducive to the social and economic well-being of the community centred on the civitas, and where the bishop assumes some of the duties that one might expect to be carried out by a secular official. Venantius' poem, De Chariberctho rege, with its emphasis on consensus support for the king in Paris and its picture of the loyal cives, serves to remind us that it is not just the bishops who are, in the carmina, portrayed as civic leaders. Here the king is cast in such a role. Here the word civis is used in a purely political sense to designate a loyal inhabitant of the city. Elsewhere in the carmina the word concives can also denote "fellow-citizens" who are loyal subjects of the king. (VII. 7. 61; VII. 14. 9)

The importance of the court to the continued prosperity of a civitas is well illustrated by the changing fortunes of the city of Soissons. A capital which figures prominently in the divisions of the kingdoms in 511 and 561, Soissons had been a centre of secular power for some considerable time. A strong point under the Romans, it had been the seat of the magister militum Aegidius and of his son Syagrius, who maintained some sort of Roman presence in late fifth century Gaul prior to the takeover by the Franks. Clovis brought the city under

Frankish rule and under Lothar and Chilperic the city received considerable attention from the Merovingians. Chilperic showed a particularly Roman conception of civic life, at least in its externals, in that both here at Soissons and at Paris he restored circuses and staged spectacles. (19) Chilperic may well have felt heir to the Roman past if, in Soissons he resided near the North-East corner of the wall. (See Map IX - Soissons) On this site once stood the Roman praetorium, the most probable location for the Merovingian palace. In the tenth and eleventh centuries here stood the Tour-des-Comtes, and later the Château Gaillard. (20)

The city was endowed by Lothar with the Church of St. Médard, which he commenced outside the city wall and across the Aisne to the east of the civitas. (21) (See Map IX - Soissons) The king did not live to see the work completed and he was buried in the church which was finished by his son Sigibert. The completion of this church which honoured this most famous of Frankish saints is celebrated in Venantius' poem De S. Medardo, a production that may have been read at the consecration. This poem, while building up in a crescendo of miracles performed by the saint, finds its coda in a prayer for the donor of the church, and of course for the poet. (II. 16. 161-164)

The fame of St. Médard spread quickly in the sixth century (22) and the tomb of the saint attracted pilgrims, thus making Soissons an important religious centre. The church also took on the character of a royal mausoleum for Sigibert was buried here by Chilperic, (23) and other members of the royal family also found their last resting place here as well. It was to St. Médard's church that Chilperic and Fredegund brought their son Chlodobert in a vain attempt to have him cured by contact with the saint's tomb. Having first lost Samson, and then Dagobert and then Chlodobert, Chilperic was until 584, without an heir. As we

have seen in Chapter One, Venantius addressed an elaborate consolatio to Chilperic and Fredegund and this poem culminates in the hope that God will assure an heir to Chilperic, just as He had seen to it that Solomon followed David on the throne of Israel. (IX.2.135-40) While Dagobert was buried at St. Denis, near Paris, (24) Chlodobert was buried in the church of St. Médard at Soissons, with an epitaph written by Fortunatus on his tomb. (IX.4)

Following Chilperic's death the city of Soissons declined. It was not used by Childebert II as his capital. We know that the walls of the city suffered unexplained damage in 582, (25) but while we do not hear of repair work this does not necessarily mean that it was not undertaken. The decline in the importance of Soissons would appear to stem from the fact that Childebert II chose not to make it his capital. Reims was his official seat but he appears to have favoured Metz as a place of residence. Without a member of the royal family in residence at Soissons, the civic cohesion of the city started to disintegrate. The economy of the city may also have suffered some dislocation. The importance of a royal presence in engendering a sense of community spirit is most strikingly revealed in the message sent by the viri fortiores of Soissons and Méaux to Childebert II: "Da nobis unum de filiis tuis, ut serviamus ei, scilicet ut de pro genie tua pignus retinentes nobiscum, facilius resistentes inimicis, terminus urbis tuae defensare studeamus." (26) The king, when he agreed to send his four year old son Theudebert, dispatched a complete royal household to precede the prince's arrival. The household included comites, domestici, maiores and nutricii, and "every other type of person necessary for the royal household". (27) Russell estimates the retinue of a medieval Duke at about 350 persons (28) and perhaps if slaves and retainers were sent with Theudebert's household we should imagine such a retinue in this case. The arrival of such a train of people would

not only have contributed greatly to the prestige of the city, but also would have acted as a stimulus to the economic life of the city and its surrounding region, as the court, supported by taxes collected from far afield, would have spent money in the civitas. In the case of Soissons, the imminent arrival of the prince caused the alcoholic Bishop Droctigisel to be refused admission to the civitas. A royal city could not be disgraced by such a pastor. (29)

The magnetic pull of a royal court, with its opportunities for service, reward and advancement, is amply illustrated by the careers of the learned slave Andarchius who found himself advanced at the court of Sigibert(30) and that of the infamous comes Leudast, born a slave on a royal estate. (31) Venantius himself came, as we have seen, to Metz, hoping to make a name as a poet. His contact with court circles in Metz allows us to glimpse the structure of the royal entourage and the careers of those who rose in royal service at court.

Metz was designated a royal capital in the division of the kingdom in 511, but while not mentioned in the division of 561, (32) the city remained a place of royal residence under Sigibert. The strategic importance of Metz lay in its easy communication with the Rhineland both by road and river. It was thus close to the Eastern frontier beyond which were the Danes, Saxons, Bavarians and Thuringians. Venantius describes a voyage he made with King Childebert and the princes Theudebert and Theuderic down the Mosel in 588 when he was in Metz with Gregory of Tours. The poet travelled from Metz, down the Mosel to Coblenz, where we know Childebert II had a place of residence (castrum),(33) and then down the Rhine to Andernach. (X. 9) The road from Metz lead east to Strassburg, higher on the Rhine, while communications to the west were good with a road running via Verdun and Châlons-sur-Marne to Reims, the southerly route led via Toul to Langres, an important road junction, and then in a number

of possible directions. Metz had, after the partition of 511, served Theuderic as his royal capital and then both his son Theudebert and grandson Theudebald, who died without issue in 555. The city came under the control of Lothar and finally by the time Venantius entered Gaul in 565, it was ruled by Sigibert.

The career of Condan (VII. 16) illustrates many of the important offices that were held by royal officials at court. Condan had, from his youth, been involved in the service of the kings and his career is mapped out by Fortunatus. Condan's rise had been dramatic. (VII. 16. 15-16) Theuderic, Theudebald and Lothar were all in turn served by Condan. Now they are all dead but the aged Condan continues in the service of King Sigibert. Condan is obviously the great survivor, a fact neatly alluded to by Venantius:

Mutati reges, vos non mutastis honores,  
Successorque tuus tu tibi dignus eras.

(VII. 16. 35-36)

Beginning as a tribune, perhaps a tribune of the fisc, Condan was raised to the status of comes by Theudebert. The title of comes designated one who was, as in Roman times, a companion of the monarch at court. Those comites who remained at court might assist the king in judicial or administrative matters; they might also be sent out to the king's civitates on special tasks such as the collection of taxes or on embassies. We also hear of the office of comes stabuli who supervised the royal stables and whose position carried considerable prestige.

(34) King Theudebert showed his approval of Condan when he presented him with the cingulum, (VII. 16. 20) the belt that signified royal favour and high rank in the Frankish state. This type of belt would have been distinguished by the elaborate ornamentation of its buckle. (35) Condan was then made domesticus. (VII. 16. 23)

The domesticus was the principal household officer of the royal palace and exercised a general supervision over the royal domains. (36) The running of the household, of estates and the financial management of the palace all came under his governance:

Crevisti subito, crevit et aula simul.  
Florebant pariter veneranda palatia tecum,  
Plaudebat vigili dispositore domus.

(VII. 16. 24-26)

In the infancy of Theudebald, Condan both acted as if he were his protector and dispensed justice in the name of the king, as if he were an old king himself. (VII. 16. 27-32)

It was at Sigibert's court that Venantius must have met this, by now aged, official. Condan owns slaves of his own, which are granted exemptions of an unspecified nature, (VII. 16. 39-40) and his career is capped by his inclusion among the convivae regis. This act of Sigibert's was a mark of special honour. The designation of one as conviva regis signalled inclusion in the table fellowship of the Frankish king. The honour had its origin in Germanic custom, and is referred to in both the Salic and Burgundian law codes. (37) Those who enjoyed this honour were set apart from the rest of the court by their particular closeness to the king since he shared food with them:

Iussit et egregios inter residere potentes,  
Convivam reddens proficiente gradu.  
Rex potior reliquis merito meliora paravit,  
Et quod maius habet hoc tua causa docet.

(VII. 16. 41-44)

The presence of the young Childebert II at the court of Metz during the last five years of his father's life required provision to be made for his education. As we have seen in Chapter One, the position of governor of the child, nutricius, was given to Gogo, who, on Venantius' entry to Gaul, had befriended the poet. Following Sigibert's death Gogo became a major figure in the politics of the regency and favoured the Burgundian alliance. An early poem (VII. 1. 41-44) speaks of



Gogo as recently returned from Spain and alludes to his part in the arrangements for the marriage of Sigibert to Brunhild. Venantius speaks elsewhere of Gogo as a cultivated bon vivant whose lavish meals presage indigestion. (VII.2) He clearly had experience of Gogo's lavish hospitality. A devotee of the hunt in the great forests of the Ardennes and the Vosges, (VII.4.17-22) Gogo has an estate of his own (VII.4.23-24) and is in charge of the scola at court:

Sive palatina residet modo laetus in aula,  
Cui scola congregiens plaudit amore sequax?

(VII.4.25-26)

Gogo's prosperity and importance, depicted in VII.4, is confirmed by Gregory's story of a priest called Transobadus who later trusted that he would gain the See of Rodez from the young King Childebert II since he had placed his son in the household of Gogo, who had been Childebert's nutricius. (38) Unfortunately death cut short this ambitious priest's career.

The king's secretary, the referendarius, is represented in the person of Boso, most probably associated with the court at Metz. The referendarius kept the king's seal and drafted royal documents, keeping records of diplomas issued in the king's name. Unfortunately Venantius' poem Ad Bosonem referendarium (VII.22) sheds very little light on the duties of this official and gives us no information that might help us to place Boso himself in a larger context. The association of this Boso with the rebel dux Guntram Boso is a dangerous conjecture, based on nothing more than a name, and must be rejected. (39) We have no evidence that Guntram Boso held the office of referendarius before being made dux.

The circle of royal officials with which Venantius was brought into contact at Metz, found its centre in the person of the king to whom close bonds of loyalty tied them and to whom they were indebted for favours received. The

concept of service that Venantius expresses in poems to royal officials is focused on loyalty to the person of the monarch and on the need to defend the king's territory, which is often referred to as the Fatherland - the patria. (40)

We get little indication of such a love of country when we read Gregory's account of the civil wars of the sixth century. Yet Venantius could articulate such an ideal based firmly on Roman assumptions and he no doubt expected that what he had to say would be intelligible to those to whom he writes. Perhaps in the defence of the realm against foreign invaders and usurpers the Merovingian kings made such a call to idealism of a Roman sort as well as eliciting a response by the Franks to the call of their war-leader. It may well be that it is an exaggeration to say that "in early Merovingian times there was nowhere any patriotism or love of country." (41) Venantius did not feel it inappropriate to give expression to a strongly patriotic theme in his praise of Condan, who, as an old man, has borne arms for the king, and whose two sons have died fighting for Sigibert against the Saxons:

Quae fuerit virtus, tristis Saxonia cantat:  
 Laus est arma truci non timuisse seni;  
 Pro patriae votis et magno regis amore  
 Quo duo natorum funera cara iacent.

(VII. 16. 47-50)

## (2) The King

The view that Venantius takes of the Merovingian monarch is essentially a Roman one and we must note that the Germanic subjects of the king would have had a different view of their royal leader. This view might have been amalgamated in a rather eclectic way with elements of Roman political theory as part of the cultural synthesis that was being created in Gaul during this century, but such

attitudes are impossible to glean from our sources. In the Germanic view, the king would have been still in some sense a war-chief, although Clovis had seen to it that it was only from his family that war-chiefs could come. Military ability and a sacral quality inherited in the royal blood were confirmed by success in battle and general prosperity. The royal line was distinguished by the flowing locks of the reges criniti. (42) The armed retinue (trustis) of the king was founded on a personal bond between man and monarch. To be one of the antrustiones of the king was to be shown a special favour by the king and this would have elicited a loyal response. The high standing of the antrustiones as royal followers is seen in their high Wehrgeld. (43) Despite the essentially Roman complexion of Venantius' portrayal of the Merovingians, he is able, on occasion, to take a bi-focal view of the monarchy and alter his focus from a Roman magnification of the ruler's position and character to a more personal view of Germanic background. Note, for example, the treatment of Chilperic's name in the panegyric that Venantius delivered on Gregory's behalf at the Council of Berny-Rivière in 580. Since the names of the Merovingian kings were formed by the joining together of two Germanic words, for example Sigibertus= Shining+ victory, or Theudericus= King+people, (44) Venantius was able to draw out the significance of the warrior name, Chilperic, by translating it into Latin:

Chilperice potens: si interpres barbarus extet,  
"Adiutor fortis" hoc quoque nomen habes.

(IX.1.27-28)

In the tradition of panegyric, a good ruler is one who extends his patronage to the cultivation of letters. (45) Now, in the courts of barbarian kings who had pretensions to Roman culture, this conventional theme of panegyric must have taken on new significance. Both Charibert and Chilperic are complimented on their eloquence in Latin; Chilperic's attempts at poetry are praised. The

following lines addressed to Charibert make it clear that while Venantius sees cultivation of Latin eloquence as praiseworthy, descent from the famous Sicambri (46) cannot be forgotten in a rush from germanitas to romanitas.

An illustrious barbarian who speaks an eloquent Latin is doubly praiseworthy:

Cum sis progenitus clara de gente Sigamber,  
Floret in eloquio lingua Latina tuo.  
Qualis es in propria docto sermone loquella,  
Qui nos Romanos vincis in eloquio?

(VI. 2. 97-100)

Chilperic, we know from Gregory, took the cultivation of Latin letters very seriously indeed and not only wrote poetry (which Gregory assures us was bad), but also sought to add new letters to the Latin alphabet. (47) Riché suggests the possibility that Chilperic may have been imitating the Emperor Claudius. (48) In the panegyric delivered at the Council of Berny-Rivière, the proceedings of which took place in Latin, Venantius sees the opportunity to praise the king's linguistic ability and the fact that he did not need interpreters. Our poet must therefore have been well satisfied with Chilperic's understanding of Latin and his bi-lingualism. The presence of interpreters around the king is ruled out by the following lines:

Quid? quoscumque etiam regni dicione gubernas,  
Doctior ingenio vincis et ore loquax,  
Discernens varias sub nullo interprete voces,  
Et generum linguas unica lingua refert.

(IX. 1. 91-94)

The king's poetry is also praised in the same poem. No doubt it must have been gratifying for Chilperic to hear his poetry accorded the praise of one trained in the schools of Ravenna, and Venantius and his patron Gregory would have known that the king would have liked the flattery. Still, Venantius' comments on the king's poetry cannot be taken as a critical judgement of the worth of the verses, which, if they were of the standard of the one piece that has survived,

were not very good at all. (49) The value of Venantius' comment lies in what it tells us of the acceptable ideal of the perfect prince who is both warlike and learned:

Regibus aequalis de carmine maior haberis,  
Dogmate vel qualis non fuit ante parens.  
Te arma ferunt generi similem, sed littera praeferit:  
Sic veterum regum par simul atque prior.

(IX. 1. 105-108)

What stamps Venantius' conception of the Merovingian monarchy with a Roman character is more than a few stock exempla and the praise of Latin learning; it is the nature of the political theory that underpins it. The kings are given an ideal of rule to which to aspire and this ideal may in general terms, be traced back in the Roman panegyric tradition to the days of Pliny. Charibert is told that the ideal rule of the king over his subjects should resemble that of a pater, even though the king is by law dominus. (VI. 2. 12) He rules well if he meets the needs and expectations of his subjects. (VI. 2. 105-106) He is their protection in war and seeks not war but peace, (VI. 2. 37-44) and in this way Charibert surpasses his ancestors. In peace the monarch can count (VI. 2. 73-74). on the co-operation of all since his rule is marked by moderation and wisdom.

After the model of a perfect prince, Charibert and Chilperic are wise, generous, not open to bribery, placid, just, constant, brave and trustworthy. In his appearance the ruler, like the emperors of late antiquity, (50) gives evidence of the serenity of his inner disposition. (VI. 2. 101-104)

From the panegyrics written for the Merovingians there emerges a sense of patriotism which, while based on the stock themes of Roman panegyric, may yet have had some effect in moulding the outlook of those associated with court circles. In these poems, Venantius may well have contributed to the development

of a sense of patriotism among those who surrounded the monarch. One theme of the panegyric addressed to Chilperic at the Council of Berny-Rivière is that of rejoicing at the successful way that the king has been able to halt the encroachment by his brothers on his territory. In the case of both Charibert and Chilperic, the protection of the king's territory, the protection of the cives and a sense of the unity of the realm, coalesce in the concept of the patria. Charibert's ancestors had won territory and increased the realm, but this was through bloodshed. Now Charibert gains more by protecting the peace. (VI. 2. 37-40)

The citizens in the realms are protected from external threat and are portrayed as living under the beneficent rule of monarchs filled with solicitude for their peoples. Venantius employs the image of a wall, familiar in panegyric, (51) to express the king's protective concern for his subjects and his defence of the patria:

In te, rector, habet regio circumdata murum  
 Ac levat excelsum ferrea porta caput.  
 Tu patriae radias adamantina turris ab austro  
 Et scuto stabili publica vota tegis.  
 Neu gravet haec aliquis, pia propugnacula tendis  
 Ac regionis opes limite forte foves.

(IX. 1. 79-84)

Panegyric had long had a didactic aspect, (52) and Venantius' portrayal of Chilperic in particular may well have been intended to present to the king an image of that type of Roman conception of rule to which he should aspire. Chilperic, throughout his life, shows a consistent interest in things Roman. We have mentioned his literary interests and his restoration of circuses, but he was also aware of the Roman government that lived on in the East. Frankish Gaul was in contact with this Roman world on a number of levels, a doctor might have trained in Constantinople, (53) a bishop might visit from as far away as Armenia, now under Persian control, (54) and ambassadors passed between the Merovingian kings and the Byzantine Emperor, at least from time to time. (55) From his

ambassadors to Constantinople, who arrived back in 581, Chilperic received a number of gold medallions with the image of the Emperor Tiberius II and the legend Tyberii Constantini Perpetui Augusti around the edge. On the reverse was a charioteer and the words Gloria Romanorum. The king's interest in these medallions suggests that he had plans to issue something similar in his own realm. The description of these objects comes in the same passage where Gregory tells of how Chilperic had a great jewel-encrusted salver made in order to adorn and ennoble the Frankish people (56) and told the bishop that he proposed to have other objects made if he lived long enough. Unfortunately we have no other indications of his ambitions, but those we do have suggest some imitation of Roman grandeur.

The promotion of a Roman conception of the ruler and of the patria would have found favour with Chilperic, yet it is a harder thing for a king to adopt concepts such as these than to issue an imitative coinage like that put out by Theudebert or to stage spectacles in restored Roman arenas. These other things are by comparison but minor aspects of Romanisation. Yet the portrayal of just and harmonious rule in Venantius' panegyrics may have had some small effect. Gregory may have hoped in particular that Chilperic would be influenced by the message of the panegyric delivered at Berny-Rivière. Gregory believed that the Franks had to learn from the Romans, and most importantly from their mistakes, if they were to prosper. In the Preface to Book V of his Historia, Gregory, much influenced by his reading of Orosius and Sallust(57) warned the Frankish kings of the evil of discord and civil war. Clovis had fought external enemies and from his victories created a kingdom, which was now threatened with disintegration because of the growth of luxury, greed and discord. Here Gregory presents one side of the message - the Franks must learn from Rome's

mistakes; in the Panegyric of Chilperic, Venantius presents the other side - the Franks might learn from Rome's ideals.

It is significant that the panegyric of Chilperic was delivered in 580 at the royal villa at Berny-Rivière, not in fact on a secular occasion but at a Council of the church that the king had called. Before an audience of bishops Venantius also presents an idealised picture of the ruler in his relationship to the church. Like the Roman emperors before them the Merovingian monarchs, in order to win the favour of God, were expected to take an active interest in the church. The king could call Councils of the church and preside over their deliberations and this gave him a power which could be used against dissident bishops. While the king was expected to conform to a certain pattern of Christian behaviour, any king, whether pious or impious, could, because of his royal position, call Church councils and intervene in the affairs of the church on a number of levels.

### (3) The King and the Church

The involvement of the kings in the affairs of the church on a number of levels is something that must be considered in any discussion of the relationship between the bishops of Gaul and the secular power. The Gallic bishop of the sixth century only gained his See in the first place, if, following election by the clergy and people in his city, he was able to win royal approval. The royal diploma became increasingly important in the course of the sixth century. However, while the Council of Orleans (549) specified that one had to have the assent of the king as well as the support of clergy and laity in order to be consecrated, (58) the bishops on that occasion stated emphatically that no-one must



be forced upon a diocese contrary to the wishes of the clergy and citizens. (59)

The tension between the requirement for royal approval and the possibility of "appointed" bishops being given by the king surfaced once more, this time during the third Council of Paris (556/73), when the Fathers stressed the need for free election in the choice of a bishop and warned that if anyone used the royal command to force himself upon a city as bishop, he would not be received by the other bishops of the province. (60) This ruling of the Council (attended by Euphronius of Tours), contrasts most strikingly with the outcome of the story Gregory tells of the affair of Eumerius of Saintes. Since the date of the Council of Paris cannot be fixed with accuracy, we do not know if the affair of Saintes predates the Council or whether it should be dated to some time after. Yet, writing some considerable time after both, Gregory gives every indication that he believed Leontius, the Metropolitan, was insolent and arrogant in trying to override the decision of King Lothar concerning the See of Saintes. Gregory thought Euphronius justified in refusing to back Leontius against Lothar's son Charibert. In detailing the fines imposed on Leontius and his fellow bishops, Gregory concludes his story of the incident - et sic principis est ulta iniuria. (61)

In the event of a disputed election the advantage lay with the king's candidate and on many occasions monarchs filled episcopal Sees with trusted royal officials. (62)

Venantius, in poems written to celebrate the consecration of a bishop and his reception in the city, carefully stresses the monarch's approval for the candidate and the good relations that existed between the two. (V. 3.15-16; X.14.1-2; 7)

The acceptance of the king's right to convoke Councils of the church, a right that flowed from Roman tradition, gave the monarch the means by which he might secure the trial of individual bishops even on trumped-up charges. The principle of the Orthodox ruler calling his bishops together to discuss the

problems facing the church was considerably strengthened by the Council of Orleans (511). At this council, Clovis, the Orthodox champion who had vanquished the heretic foe, brought together five Metropolitans and twenty-seven bishops from the now extended kingdom. As the bishops wrote in their letter to the Frankish king, they came together in council on his orders, and he is their Catholic monarch. (63) Eugen Ewig has demonstrated the close connection between the venues of the important Gallic Councils and the seats of royal power in Gaul. The Councils of 511, 533, 541 and 549, Councils which brought together bishops from the entire realm, were all held at Orleans which served as the principal Burgundian royal residence in the first half of the sixth century. (64) When King Guntram transferred his royal residence to Chalon-sur-Saône, the Councils that were held in his kingdom were convoked in Chalon 559 and 602, Lyons 567 and 570, Mâcon 583 and 585 and Valence 585. (65) The preface to the canons of the Council of Mâcon, 583, make it clear that the bishops came ad iniunctionem gloriosissimi domni Guntramni regis. (66)

Paris, the Neustrian capital, was chosen by Childebert I for the Council of Paris (552) that he convoked to judge Bishop Saffaracus of Paris, who was subsequently deposed and relegated to a monastery. (67) The city was the venue for the Councils of 556/7, 573 and 577, the Council of Paris, 577, being convoked by Chilperic to deal with Praetextatus of Rouen. What was really at issue at this gathering was the dignity and independence of the episcopacy. Despite the sage advice of Aetius, Archdeacon of Paris, the angry Franks outside the doors of St. Peter's church, the king in his rage and the possibility of sycophants among their number, cowered the bishops into a frightened silence. Threats and attempts at bribery were employed to ensure compliance with the king's wishes. (68) It was only Praetextatus' dramatic confession and the king's appeal that won the bishops over to the king's side.

When Chilperic sought to move against Gregory of Tours, who had on many occasions stood up to him with force and determination, the charges of treason and calumny levelled against the bishop had to be heard by a council. It is significant that the council was convoked at Berny-Rivière, for the king obviously sought to call the bishops together at a place far removed from Gregory's power base in Tours. What better place could Chilperic have chosen, but his own villa, his home territory?

In the panegyric delivered by Venantius on this occasion, the ideal relationship of the king to the church is given some exposition. Surrounded by the bishops of his realm, the king is the very image of the pious and Orthodox ruler. He is the guardian of the church. In the tradition of the Christian prince, a tradition going back to Constantine, the rule of the king on earth is linked to the rule of Christ over the Universe. The king's enemies are unbelievers and heretics. (IX. 1. 143-146)

There are a number of indications that the Merovingian kings were genuinely committed to the propagation of the Orthodox faith and took seriously their role as protector of the church. Clovis was the "new Constantine" of the Frankish people. (69) His battle with the heretic foe brought victory, but he was aided by St. Hilary and St. Martin. The Christian character of Merovingian rule was later symbolised on the coinage of Theudebert by the "Chi-Rho" or by a figure of Victory holding a long cross in the right hand and a globe with a cross in the left. (70)

Even Chilperic, who was, according to Gregory, one of the worst of the Merovingians was still concerned enough to dispute with the Jew Priscus and to order the baptism of Jews. Chilperic also fancied himself as a theologian and sought to solve disputes about the Persons of the Trinity, by replacing them with

one word – God. Eventually Bishop Salvius' almost violent reaction convinced him to abandon the idea. (71) Gregory was clearly exasperated with Chilperic's theological ignorance, but it is revealing that Gregory follows his report of this theological adventure with information about Chilperic's poor imitations of Sedulius and the addition of new letters to the Latin alphabet. All three were for him on the same level and close to the ridiculous. Yet Chilperic's theological pretensions are significant if he, like the Christian Roman Emperors before him, had to preside over Councils of the Church. It is not surprising that like the emperors he sought to imitate, he should have become involved with theological issues. It is quite ironic that in his ignorance of matters Trinitarian, he recalls Constantine in the early stages of the Arian controversy. As he sat among his bishops at the Council of Berny-Rivière Chilperic was easily seen as a protector of the church, even if his motives in calling the Council were far from religious.

Church building was also a tangible reminder of a king's piety. As we have seen in the case of Childebert I at Paris and that of Sigibert at Soissons, the Christian ruler might be the benefactor of particular shrines and undertake the building of churches. In Mainz we have seen how Bishop Sidonius was able to enlist the aid of Princess Berthoara, daughter of King Theudebert (d. 547) in the construction of a baptistery.

Princess Berthoara is the epitome of the pious Christian lady, distinguished by her liberality towards the poor. Venantius hails her as catholicae fidei splendor. (II. 11. 11.) Earlier we observed that the bishop may be portrayed as the cultor templorum, but similarly the princess may be cultrix templorum. (II. 11. 12) The virtues of the princess are pictured as reflecting on her upbringing. She is the daughter of King Theudebert and Venantius seizes

upon the opportunity to praise this now dead monarch. The poet praises his example, his benefactions towards the church and his care of the poor. The memory of Theudebert is still very much alive. (II. 11. 15-22)

Protection of the poor was considered to be not only the duty of bishops and clergy, but of all Christians. The king had a special obligation to provide for the needs of the poor, and the piety of a Christian prince was to be judged by his attitude to the poor. In both East and West the ruler who loved the poor and provided for their needs was considered to have Christ's special patronage and protection. (72) Attitude to the poor is, for example, an important element in Gregory's delineation of the characters of the Emperors Justin II and Tiberius. Justin is an evil, avaricious man who amasses wealth but neglects his duty to the poor, while the piety of Tiberius, his successor, is evident in his attitude to the poor. Gregory recounts how Tiberius was rewarded by God with a surprise find of gold under the floor of the palace, so that he could increase his benefactions. In a similar way he receives information about the hoarded treasure of Narses. (73) In Gregory's history, Guntram is distinguished by his concern for the poor; Chilperic criticised for his oppression of the poor. (74) In the sixth century there could no more damning criticism than this levelled against Chilperic, for Christ was held to dwell in the poor man who asked for alms.

The distribution of alms to the poor on behalf of the king had both a practical and symbolic aspect. The poor were aided and the monarch showed himself conforming to the pattern of the pious ruler. According to Gregory, Chilperic and Fredegund were made to recognise that the illness and deaths of their two sons Chlodobert and Dagobert were due to their oppression of the poor through harsh taxation and a lack of alms-giving. Fredegund recognises

her crime:

Ecce! iam eos lacrimae pauperum, lamenta  
viduarum, suspiria orfanorum interimunt,  
nec spes remanet cui aliquid congregemus. (75)

Among the carmina we find one poem in which Venantius commemorates the distribution of alms to the poor by a comes acting on behalf of King Childebert

II. The poem Ad Sigoaldum comitem, quod pauperes pro rege paverit (X.17)

celebrates a distribution of alms at the Festival of St. Martin. (X.17.31-32) This action was both an imitation of St. Martin's generosity by a member of the royal family which claimed the saint's special protection, and an action which would ensure divine favour and protection for the royal line. Venantius' comments about the rewards that flow from such liberality are based on the assumption that a good monarch would never have even contemplated neglecting the poor.

Venantius presents the benefits that concern for the poor may bring while we have seen above that Gregory could just as easily outline the consequences of their neglect. Love of the poor is a guarantee of continuance in power and prosperity:

Da: sic Christus erit tibi Thesaurarius inde;  
Praesta inopi quidquid reddere Christus habet,  
Hac animatus ope exposcens meliora Tonantis  
Nec dubitante fide quod Deus ista dabit.  
Pro Childebercchi regis florente salute,  
Surgat ut in solio qui fuit altus avo,  
Fiat ut hinc iuvenis validis robustior annis,  
Ceui viguit proavus, sic sit in orbe nepos,  
Ergo suus famulus Sigoaldus amore fidelis  
Pauperibus tribuit, regis ut extet apex.

(X.17.17-26)

Monarchs were also expected to promote a Christian way of life among their subjects. A carta of Childebert I, which dates from some time between 511-558, shows this king waging a war against the remnants of heathenism in his realm. (76) Likewise, in an edict dated 10 November 585, we see King Guntram enjoining a stricter interpretation of Christian precepts in everyday

life and especially in the administration of justice. (77) Both documents make it clear that the kings believed that their own well-being and that of their realms depended on divine favour. Such divine favour had to be won and kept.

There is a distinctly pastoral aspect to the expected role of a good king, indeed there is a correspondence between the virtues of a good king and those of a bishop. For Venantius a good king is one who undertakes such things as the ransoming of captives, the feeding of the poor and the building of churches: he is fired with a concern for the spiritual. The duties of a monarch are described in a way that sometimes parallels Venantius' depiction of the episcopal ideal and the portrayal of the relationship between bishop and people. This type of overlap between expected episcopal virtues and expected royal virtues is not peculiar to Venantius. It is illuminating in this regard to read the letter of exhortation sent by Remigius of Reims to Clovis (c.486), for it sets a similar ideal before the king. The king should encourage his citizens, console the afflicted, support orphans and see to the needs of the poor and of travellers. (78) Much later (546-548), we find Bishop Aurelian of Arles, in a letter of praise and exhortation to Theudebert I, enjoining works of mercy and piety. (79)

Gregory of Tours was also of the view that a good king and a good bishop had a great many concerns in common. Seated at dinner, King Guntram distinguished himself in Gregory's eyes, by his animated conversation "of God, of building churches and of aiding the poor". (80) In his time Guntram was known for his charity, his vigils and his fasting. (81) When, in 588, an epidemic hit the village of St. Symphorien d'Ozion, near Lyons, Gregory tells us that the King "acsi bonus sacerdos providens remedia, qua cicatrices peccatoris vulgi mederentur, iussit omnem populum ad ecclesiam convenire et rogationes summa cum devotione celebrare et nihil aliud in usu vescendi nisi panem ordeacium cum aqua munda adsumi, vigiliisque adesse instanter omnes iobet." (82) The correspondence between bishop and king was always in Gregory's mind. It even

rose from his sub-conscious to haunt his dreams of Chilperic - "viderem eum, ante tonsorato capite, quasi episcopum ordinari; deinde super cathedram puram, sola fuligine tectam, inpositum ferri, praelucentibus coram eo lychnis ac cereis."(83)

In the light of the quasi-episcopal role of the Merovingian monarch, it is extremely significant that Venantius, in his poem on the church of St. Vincent built at Paris by Childebert I, finds the following parallel between the king and Melchisedech:

Haec pius egregio rex Childebercthus amore  
 Dona suo populo non moritura dedit.  
 Totus in affectu divini cultus adhaerens  
 Ecclesiae iuges amplificavit opes;  
 Melchisedech noster merito, rex atque sacerdos,  
 Conplevit laicus religionis opus.  
 Publica iura regens ac celsa palatia servans  
 Unica pontificum gloria, norma fuit.

(II. 10. 17-24)

What is merely hinted at in other poems addressed to Merovingian monarchs is here, in this early piece, insisted upon with the clearest of intentions. Melchisedech, "priest and king", exemplifies the royal priesthood of ancient Israel. By the sixth century Melchisedech was viewed as the image of the pious ruler. Venantius must have been familiar with the famous mosaic of Melchisedech in San Vitale at Ravenna where the king of Salem appears both in his role as one who offers bread and wine as a prefigurement of the Eucharist and as "the embodiment of the theocratic aspirations of the Byzantine monarchy."(84) Melchisedech was, due to a passage in St. Paul, also seen as the forerunner of Christ and as Otto von Simson remarks, this "did not prevent the early middle ages from seeing in him an image of the Christian emperor whose ideal features seemed to blend imperceptibly into those of Christ."(85) Venantius would have understood the place that Melchisedech played in the iconographical scheme of the sanctuary of San Vitale, a scheme that included representations of both



Justinian and Theodora, on either side of the altar and also linked to the Eucharist in that they form an offertory procession. Above the altar was the mosaic of the enthroned Christ, clad in the purple and surrounded by his heavenly courtiers. (86) The divine order in heaven and on earth, in the present dispensation and in the past, form a coherent programme. In Venantius' poem Charibert is cast in the role of priest-king. Even though he is a lay person, he devotes himself to the work of religion. Venantius hails him as the glory of the pontificate, as though he were one of their number, in a poem designed to be inscribed on the wall of the church itself.

The image of Melchisedech brings together all the quasi-episcopal expectations that could centre on the person of the Merovingian king. We have discussed these in relation to Venantius' portrayal of the kings and at this point it is appropriate to raise again the issue of the location of power in sixth century Gaul. Did the power and initiative lie with the kings or was there, as Prinz has argued, (87) a shift of power from the kings to the bishops? No-one would deny that members of the Gallic episcopacy possessed great prestige or that bishops from the time of Remigius and Volusianus had played a vital role in the rise of the Merovingians, yet, for all this, so many examples of interference by the king in the affairs of the church can be cited as evidence against the proposition that in this period the bishops were becoming more independent.

Leontius of Bordeaux, one of the most distinguished of prelates, was fined by King Charibert for attempting to remove a royal appointee from the See of Saintes that was, according to canon law, under his jurisdiction, and Gregory of Tours does not condemn the king's action. Gregory's own career shows that even a Metropolitan had to be careful when dealing with the kings. He came to his See with the blessing of King Sigibert, but had a most difficult time when

he found his city under the control of Chilperic. Tried on a trumped-up charge at Berny in 580 Gregory only saved himself by careful diplomacy that included the employment of Venantius Fortunatus. One can point to other trials organised by kings to remove episcopal opponents from their Sees, and when the kings had difficulty persuading the bishops they could always resort to bribery or intimidation. (88)

To suggest a systematic extension of episcopal power in Gaul in the second half of the sixth century is to be influenced overly by later developments in Gaul and by spectacular examples such as that of Desiderius of Cahors, who, in the seventh century, repaired the walls of his city and restored its aqueduct. (89)

There is a great gap between Felix of Nantes and Desiderius of Cahors and selected pieces of evidence skilfully pieced together can create the illusion that the growth in power of the Gallic episcopacy was in some way inevitable. It is a long and twisting path to the Prince-Bishops of the High Middle Ages. Before expansive generalisations are made about the episcopacy, more detailed case studies of individual bishops and kings in conflict or co-operation are needed.

What bishops did, how they reacted, was governed by the immediate situations before them. A consideration of the vagaries of personality, opportunity and even caprice, to say nothing of the incomplete nature of our sources, makes generalisation suspect. The value of the evidence of Venantius in the debate about the relative strength of king and bishop in this period centres on the fact that after 573 he became the satellite of Gregory of Tours and that his poetry provides us with an insight into the type of diplomacy used by the Metropolitan of Tours. On three occasions Venantius acted in concert with his patron in highly controlled exercises of diplomacy to achieve specific ends, in 580, 588 and 589. On each occasion Venantius' message is subtle and complementary

to other diplomatic moves taken by Gregory to attain his ends - acquittal at his trial, good relations with a king now in his majority and tax immunity for Tours.

In the case of Gregory's relations with Chilperic and Childebert II, this prelate, who came from a distinguished senatorial family, and who held one of the most prestigious Sees in the land, often seems to be walking a political tightrope. There was in his city, at one time, a faction bent on his removal and his friends were tortured in an effort to obtain information that would implicate him in treasonable activities. When Gregory ate at Chilperic's table he ate suspecting poison. (90) If a major prelate were in such danger, how much more tenuous must have been the position of lesser bishops!

What protection, then, did Gregory have? On the evidence of Venantius' poems and his own testimony, his major weapon was respect for, or more accurately fear of, St. Martin or divine wrath. Right through Gregory's works there is the theme of St. Martin's retribution. This vindictive saint punished those who stole his property or harmed those under his protection. The bishop stood before God and the saints and through his sacerdotal power acted as an intermediary between God and man. He could therefore present himself as the interpreter of the Divine Will and the will of the saints, and this gave him a valuable weapon, but often his only weapon, that could be used in defence of church, self or city.

Gregory's political success lay in the skilled way he was able to use his position as successor Martini in order to convince monarchs that what he wanted was an expression of St. Martin's preference. The other part of this equation is a superstitious monarch not always confident enough to disbelieve

what he is told. Even Chilperic, the most evil of kings, tried to use the relics of saints as an antidote to divine displeasure. When, in 583, he decided to break a treaty with Guntram by entering Paris, he sent numerous relics of the saints on ahead of himself, thus making his entry safe. Such a person could easily be made to see any personal loss as a sign from above, but is not cowed for too long if we follow Gregory's narrative of Chilperic.

The first part of such a use of St. Martin depended on establishing the saint as the author of prosperity and blessing, provided that he is honoured, of course. Venantius aided his patron by portraying him as the saint's successor and by lauding the saint and his role as royal patron. In 588 Venantius celebrated St. Martin's day with Gregory at the court of Childebert II and Queen Brunhild at Metz, and a poem on St. Martin, (X. 7) delivered on that occasion, affords us an insight into the relationship of the royal family to St. Martin and his cult. From the time of Clovis there had been a close association of the royal family with the cult of St. Martin. Clotild, Clovis' widow, had served St. Martin's basilica as a religious and it was always remembered that Martin had brought Clovis victory. In the poem on St. Martin's Day, Venantius, on behalf of his patron, stresses that the prosperity of the royal family is thoroughly dependent on the continued favour of God and of St. Martin. A majestic Christ is pictured in the shining Senate of heaven, surrounded by the saints. Amongst them is the triumphant, almost regal Martin complete with diadem and shining belt. (X. 7. 28-29)

The royal family are discriminating in choosing to honour St. Martin's Day and Martin as their special patron. He is their special protector and he intercedes for them in heaven:

Pergat et ad Christum pro vobis ille precator  
 Cui vos in templis vota precando datis.  
 Ante poli referat sua haec sollemnia regem,  
 Dentur ut hinc vobis, regna, salutis opes.

(X. 7. 39-42)

Martin's miracles are enumerated and their relevance to the royal family given explication. The hand of the saint that was once covered with jewels, protects them. (X. 7. 47-48) Martin, who brought life to a dead body, prays now for their health, (lines 49-50) and protects them from poisons, (line 52) accident (line 54) and disease (line 55). The list culminates in wishes for the protection of the royal offspring and of the realm:

Qui viduae matri revocavit ad ubera natum,  
ipse tibi hic tribuat pignora, mater, ava,  
Ut Childebercthus maneat cum prole novella,  
Rex sua regna tenens et nova regna trahens,

(X. 7. 59-62).

The wishes for the well-being of new offspring remind us that Childebert's two sons Theudebert and Theuderic were but small children when Venantius and Gregory visited the royal court at Metz in 588. The prayers that Martin would protect the children and the realm culminate in the hope that Brunhild and the royal family will show by their manner of life that they are following the example of Martin:

Sic quoque te erudiat, regat et sic tramite ducat,  
Actibus ipsa piis ut sibi iuncta mices.

(lines 69-70)

The proposition that St. Martin will protect the royal house is dependent, in the final analysis, on the royal family's conforming to a certain pattern of conduct. Hence the significance of the poem Ad Sigoaldum comitem, quod pauperes pro rege paverit. (X. 17) The corollary to all this is the certainty of disease, death and loss of power if, by evil actions, the saint's favour is lost. Indeed the very next year, 589, Childebert and Brunhild courted the saint's displeasure by making tax demands on Tours, Martin's city, in contravention of established practice. We have seen that Venantius was enlisted by Gregory to "greet" the tax collectors with a seemingly innocuous poem detailing the saint's power.

I would suggest that Venantius' poetry was used in a quite calculating way by Gregory as one side of his diplomatic offensives. There was as well a harsher side to the way he operated, for Gregory was adept at using the terror of the saints as a political weapon. He played relentlessly on the superstitions of the kings, but this is not to say that he wasn't superstitious himself. Gregory sincerely believed in the terrors that he invoked. The power of the saints was to him very real and Gregory believed in divine vengeance. When the young princes Chlodobert and Dagobert died, Gregory makes it clear that Chilperic and Fredegund were made to believe that their sins had caused the deaths of their sons. Venantius sent off the consolatio and the epitaphs for the tombs, and Gregory felt they had learnt their lesson. When Childebert II made his unwise tax demands on Tours, the man who produced the tax inventory for the tax collectors met a quick demise.

Underpinning the rule of the Merovingian kings was the acknowledgement that the monarchs owed their position to the Divine Will. In the panegyric of Charibert, Venantius stresses the traditional view that kingly power comes from God (VI. 2. 111-112) and in the poem of thanks to Justin II and Sophia, the poet also places emphasis on the divine gift of earthly power in a prayer that returns throughout the poem:

Gloria summa tibi, rerum Sator atque Redemptor,  
Qui das Iustinum iustus in orbe caput.

(Append., II. 49-50)

Venantius' attitude to the Merovingians is based on the same assumptions which are the legacy of the Christianised Roman Empire. In a more highly developed form they are found in the great panegyric poem written for Justin II and Sophia by Venantius' contemporary, Corippus. In this poem, Justin, following

his coronation and in the presence of the senators, acknowledges that his power comes from God and that God must be worshipped in gratitude. All people in the state should also perform their functions correctly as part of the body politic of which he, God's appointed, is head. (91) Venantius by 569 knew this poem, but the basic concept of a divinely ordained monarchy had a wide currency in East and West and is of course implicit in the iconography of the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna.

We have observed that a bishop could warn a king that if he did not follow the divine plan then he would fall from power, or suffer misfortune. All depended on the auctoritas of the bishop who wished to make his voice heard. Gregory the Great in his later correspondence with Queen Brunhild, Theuderic and Theudebert was much more blunt, but then again he spoke from the chair of Peter and at a distance. The Pope warned the monarchs to check simony and other abuses, lest God withdrew His favour from their kingdom. Thus he wrote to Queen Brunhild that she and her grandsons should see to their provinces lest God stretch out His hand to smite them. If God does nothing to punish now it is only to strike more sharply later. (92)

In Gaul, the power of the bishop was essentially a moral one. Despite the wealth of his church and the scope of his benefactions towards the cives of his city which won him clients, the bishop was still a vulnerable person. Even in his own city the bishop could not count upon consensus support and could find challenges coming to his authority from many quarters. If the bishop's power base was his city, then the king's power base was his royal capital or country villa. There Church Councils might be held and bishops summoned forth to attend. The bishop could manoeuvre and propagandise for his own cause or for that of his

citizens, but in the end he had to rely on his own auctoritas or the power of his heavenly patron. Even Gregory of Tours did not forget that he was living in an age that saw Bishop Praetextatus stabbed to death, on Queen Fredegund's orders, while at prayer in his own cathedral.



NOTES - CHAPTER FIVE

- (1) The following royal villas are mentioned by Gregory of Tours:  
Berny-Rivière, near Soissons - HF., IV.22.p.154; V.34.p.240;  
V.39.p.245; V.49.p.260. (Chilperic); Chelles, near Paris - HF.,  
V.39.p.245 (Chilperic); Compiègne, near Soissons - HF., IV.21.p.154.  
(Chilperic); Marlenheim, in Alsace - HF., IX.38.p.459 (Childebert II);  
Nogent-sur-Marne - HF., VI.2.p.266. (Chilperic); Noisy-le-Grand,  
dép. Seine-et-Oise - HF., V.39.p.247. (Chilperic); Rueil, near  
Rouen - HF., VII.19.p.339. (Chilperic); Vitry, near Arras, dép.  
Pas-de-Calais - HF., IV.51.p.188.
- (2) On the church see Vieillard-Troiekouroff, pp.206-208.
- (3) On the site of the Merovingian palace see C. Brühl, Palatium und Civitas,  
Vol I. - Gallien. (Köln, 1975), pp.20-21.
- (4) This is the theory of M. Roblin, "Cités ou citadelles?", REA 53 (1951),  
pp.301-311.
- (5) Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.pp.157-158.
- (6) Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.p.159.
- (7) Charibert rates no mention in Venantius' Vita S. Germani (MGH AA  
IV.2.pp.11-27).
- (8) Fort, Carm., IX.1.121-128. The Theudechilde of Carm., IV.25, and  
VI.3 should not be confused with Charibert's wife of the same name. As  
Nisard, Traduction, pp.127-128 points out, the wife of Charibert was a  
shepherd's daughter (Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.p.157) whereas this woman  
is described as of royal birth. She is the sister, daughter, wife and  
grand-daughter of kings. It is most probable that this Theudechilde  
here is the daughter of Theuderic, and the sister of Theudebert. On  
the chronology of the princess' life see E. Ewig, "Studien zur merowing-  
ischen Dynastie", FMS 8. (1974), pp.57-58.
- (9) Greg Turon, HF., III.18.pp.118-119.
- (10) Greg Turon, HF., III.10.p.107.
- (11) Greg Turon, HF., IV.20.p.152 - Childebert; VI.46.p.321 - Chilperic;  
VIII.10.p.377. - Clovis and Merovech, sons of Chilperic; Fredegar,  
IV.56. - Clothar II; Liber Hist. Franc., 37.p.306. - Fredegund.  
According to a document of the Abbey of St. Germain, Queen Ultrogotha  
and her daughters were buried here. See R. Poupardin, Recueil des  
Chartes de l'abbaye de St. Germain-des-Prés. (Paris, 1909) I.p.5 ff.
- (12) Vieillard-Troiekouroff, pp.211-214. Jean Dérens and Michel Fleury,  
"La construction de la cathédrale de Paris par Childebert I<sup>er</sup> d'après  
le De Ecclesia Parisiaca de Fortunat ", JS (1977), pp.177-253, claim  
however that the poem refers not to the church of St. Vincent but to the  
cathedral. This assertion rests primarily on the observation that  
Venantius does not mention St. Vincent in the poem. Dérens and Fleury  
fail to convince.

- (13) Le Blant, Vol I. No. 208, pp.295-299.
- (14) F. Lot, The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages, Trans. P. and M. Leon, Reprint. (New York, 1965), p. 349.
- (15) The nature and extent of landholding by Merovingian officials is much clearer to see in the seventh century rather than the sixth.  
A. Bergengruen, Adel und Grundherrschaft im Merowingerreich, (Wiesbaden, 1958), pp.174-176 sets forth the evidence.
- (16) Greg Turon, HF., X. 3. pp.483-484.
- (17) See Brühl, op.cit., p.131.
- (18) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 1. pp.370-371.
- (19) Greg Turon, HF., V. 17. p.216.
- (20) Brühl, op.cit., pp.39-40.
- (21) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 19. p.152. On the site of the church see the map in Brühl, op.cit., pp.40-41 and Vieillard-Troiekouff, pp.289-290.
- (22) The cult of St. Médard: J. Leomte, S. Médard, son tombeau, ses reliques, (Chauny, 1959).
- (23) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 51. p.189.
- (24) Greg Turon, HF., V. 34. p.240.
- (25) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 21. p.289.
- (26) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 36. p.457.
- (27) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 36. p.457.
- (28) J. C. Russell, Medieval Regions and their Cities, (Bloomington, Ind, 1972), p. 35.
- (29) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 37. pp.457-458.
- (30) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 46. p.181.
- (31) Greg Turon, HF., V. 47. pp.257-258.
- (32) Greg Turon, HF., IV. 21. p.154.
- (33) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 14. p.380.
- (34) On the Roman background to this position see A.H. M. Jones, Later Roman Empire, (London, 1967), pp.625-626.

- (35) See E. James, op.cit., p.100.
- (36) The domesticus: Roman background in Jones, op.cit., pp.602-603. The development of the office under the later Franks is treated by A. Carlot, "Étude sur le domesticus franc," Bibliothèque de la faculté de Philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège, 13 (Liège, 1903).
- (37) Leges Burgund - Liber Constit., XXXVIII.2. (MGH Legum Sectio I. Leges Nat. Germ. Vol. II.Pt.1. p.70); Lex Salica, LXVIII.69, 6. (MGH Legum Sectio I. Leges. Nat. German. 4.pt.2.p.116).
- (38) Greg Turon, HF., V.46.p.256.
- (39) Nisard, Traduction, p.194.
- (40) Venantius' use of patria in the sense of the country/realm: Carm., II.11.16; VI.2.37; VII.5.35; VII.6.28; VII.7.23; VII.8.50; VII.16.49; VII.22.4; IX.2.140; IX.3.18; IX.4.9; IX.5.2; X.19.9. Venantius also uses patria in a vague sense meaning city, region or community when he employs it in poems in honour of bishops. Here the poet is conscious of the classical ring to the title pater patriae which he applies to bishops - V.10.1; VIII.16.3. - Gregory of Tours and IX.10.1. - Ragnemodus of Paris. The poet is ever on the lookout for opportunities for alliteration as in V.15.7-8 where Gregory of Tours is pastor and patria to the peregrinus. Leontius II is caput patriae IV.10.11, and Felix of Nantes salus patriae III.5.1. Venantius plays with the connotation of the word.
- (41) O. M. Dalton, Gregory of Tours, The History of the Franks, (Oxford, 1927) Vol. I. Introduction. p.194.
- (42) See J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Long-Haired Kings" (i) "Reges Criniti," pp.149-157 in The Long-Haired Kings and other Studies in Frankish History, (London, 1962).
- (43) J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "Frankish Gaul" in ibid., esp. pp.3-4.
- (44) L. Musset, The Germanic Invasions, Trans. E. & C. James, (London, 1975) p.138.
- (45) Pliny, Pan., 47.1-4. Note also Pan.Lat., V.9-11. (ed. Galletier, pp.128-130).
- (46) Note Greg Turon, HF., II.31.p.77. Remigius' famous words at the baptism of Clovis - "Mitis depone colla, Sigamber; adora quod incendisti, incende quod adorasti."
- (47) Greg Turon, HF., V.44.p.254.
- (48) P. Riché, Education and Culture in the Barbarian West, Trans. J. L. Contreni, (Columbia, Sth.Carolina, 1978), pp.224-225.
- (49) Ibid., p.224. This hymn in honour of St. Medard: MGH Poetae latini IV.2, Rhythmi aevi Merovingici et Carolini I. pp.455-457. The text concludes with the note - "Chilbericus rex composuit istud ymnum."

- (50) Note Ammianus' portrayal of Constantius, entering Rome with calm countenance and carefully rehearsed fixed gaze - Amm. Marc, XVI. 10. 5; 9-11. and the discussion by R. MacMullen, "Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus", Art Bulletin, 46 (1964), pp. 435-455.
- (51) Note Menander Rhetor, Treatise II. (Epibatērios)., 381.11. (ed. Russell and Wilson, p.100).
- (52) Pliny, Pan., 4.1.
- (53) Greg Turon, HF., X.15.p.504.
- (54) Greg Turon, HF., X.24.p.515-516.
- (55) Greg Turon, HF., VI.2.p.266; VI.42. p.314; VIII.18.p.384.
- (56) Greg Turon, HF., VI.2.pp.266-267.
- (57) Orosius is quoted HF., V.Incip.p.194. The sketch of the decline of Rome and especially the warnings about civil war, which breaks out when the Franks become luxury loving and lack external wars, is reminiscent of the moralising of Sallust - Cat., VI-XIII. Gregory was familiar with this work and quotes Sallust - HF., IV.13.p.145; VII.1.p.326.
- (58) Conc. Aurelianense A.549. can. 10. (CG II.pp.151-152).
- (59) Conc. Aurelianense A.549. can. 11. (CG II.p.152).
- (60) Conc. Parisiense A.556-573. can. 8. (CG II.pp.208-209).
- (61) Greg Turon, HF., IV.26.p.158.
- (62) See Chapter II, Note 92 for a list of royal officials raised to the episcopacy.
- (63) Conc. Aurelianense A.511. Epistola ad regem (CG II.p.4.)
- (64) E. Ewig, "Résidence et capitale pendant le haut Moyen Age," RH 230 (1963), p.48.
- (65) ibid.,
- (66) Conc. Matisconense A.581-583. Praef. (CG II.p.223).
- (67) Greg Turon, HF., IV.36.p.168; Conc. Parisiense A.552. (CG II.pp.166-169).
- (68) Greg Turon, HF., V.18.pp.216-223. On the connection between the Councils held in Paris and royal residence see E. Ewig, "Résidence et Capitale", pp.50-53.
- (69) Greg Turon, HF., II.31.p.77.

- (70) The "Chi-Rho" - A. Blanchet and A. Dieudonné, Manuel de Numismatique Française. (Paris, 1912) Vol I. p.197. fig.172. Figure of Victory with cross - M. Prou, Les Monnaies Mérovingiennes: Catalogue des Monnaies Françaises de la Bibliothèque Nationale, (Paris, 1892), p.10, no. 39. Plate I. No. 15.
- (71) Greg Turon, HF., V. 44. pp.253-254.
- (72) See Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris., II. 399. ff. and the note by Averil Cameron in her edition (London, 1971) pp.177-178 on the concept of Philanthropia as an imperial virtue, and for a collection of the contemporary evidence.
- (73) Greg Turon, HF., V. 19. pp.226-227.
- (74) Greg Turon, HF., VI. 46. p. 320.
- (75) Greg Turon, HF., V. 34. p.240.
- (76) Childebert I. Regis Praeceptum 511-558., (MGH Cap I. pp.2-3).
- (77) Guntram, Regis Edictum Nov.10,585., (MGH Cap I. pp.10-12).
- (78) "Civos tuos erige, adflictos releva, viduas fove, orfanos nutre, si potius est, quam erudies, ut omnes te ament et timeant. Iustitia ex ore vestro procedat, nihil sit sperandum de pauperes vel peregrinis ne magis dona aut aliquid accipere vellis: praetorium tuum omnibus pateatur, ut nullus exinde tristis abscedat." Epistolae Austrasicae, 2 (MGH Epp., III. p.113).
- (79) Epistolae Austrasicae 10, (MGH Epp., III. pp.124-125).
- (80) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 21. p. 441.
- (81) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 21. p. 441.
- (82) Greg Turon, HF., IX. 21. p. 441. Guntram's good works are a quite separate thing from his own thaumaturgical powers also outlined by Gregory, HF., IX. 21. p. 442. R. Folz, "Zur Frage der heiligen Könige: Heiligkeit und Nachleben in der Geschichte des burgundischen Königtums", Deutsches Archiv, 14 (1958), pp.325-326 argued that the virtus of King Guntram was believed to be an inheritance from the sainted King Sigismund whose kingdom he had taken over, and that this, rather than his personal goodness, explained his miracles. Marc Bloch, Les Rois Thaumaturges, (Paris-Strasbourg, 1923), pp.33-36, insisted however that it was the personal sanctity of the king, rather than any "family virtue" that Gregory perceived in Guntram. Finally Wallace-Hadrill rightly stressed that in the case of Guntram we must separate sanctity and miraculous power, since they are not identical. If Guntram possessed a special thaumaturgical power, then, he argues, this is something quite separate from sanctity. The sanctity of the king resided in "his willingness to conform to the church's pattern of a good king" - J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "Gregory's Kings", in The Long-Haired Kings, (London, 1962), p.200.

- (83) Greg Turon, HF., VIII. 5. p. 374.
- (84) Otto von Simson, Sacred Fortress, Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna, (Chicago, 1948) p. 31. The mosaic of Melchisedech at Ravenna even depicts his palace in the background. The biblical references - Gn. 14. 18-20; Ps. 109. (110)4.
- (85) ibid., The significance of Venantius' portrayal of Childebert I as Melchisedech in terms of continuing royal intervention in the affairs of the church is well presented by D. Claude, "Die Bestellung der Bischöfe im merowingischen Reiche", ZRG 80 kan. Abt. 49 (1963), pp. 67-71. Claude may place too much emphasis however on Venantius' understanding of the sacral nature of Germanic kingship. I find no evidence that Venantius understood this. On the quasi-sacerdotal nature of the monarch see ibid., pp. 70-72, and E. Ewig, "Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter", in Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien, ed. H. Atsma. Vol. I. (Munich, 1976) pp. 15-19.
- (86) On the imperial mosaics in San Vitale see S. MacCormack, Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity, (Berkeley, 1981) pp. 259-266, and F.W. Deichmann, Ravenna, Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes, Vol. 2, Kommentar, 2, (Wiesbaden, 1976) pp. 180-187).
- (87) F. Prinz, "Die bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis 7. Jahrhundert", HZ 217 (1973), pp. 1-35.
- (88) Greg Turon, HF., V. 18. pp. 216-223 - the trial of Praetextatus; HF., X. 19. pp. 510-513 - trial of Igidius of Reims. Note also the imprisonment of Salonus and Sagittarius - HF., V. 20. p. 228.
- (89) The career of Desiderius of Cahors: Vita Desiderii (MGH SRM IV. pp. 563-602). See R. Rey, "Un grand batisseur au temps du roi Dagobert: S. Didier, Évêque de Cahors," AM LXV. (1953), pp. 287-293).
- (90) Greg Turon, HF., V. 18. p. 220. Note that Gregory did not drink the special soup prepared for him.
- (91) Corippus, In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris. Bk. II. 178-274.
- (92) Gregory M, Epist., LXIX. (PL 77. 1209-1210) = XI. 46 (MGH Epp. II. pp. 318-319).

## chapter 6

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## conclusion

The historical value of the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus lies in the fact that Venantius acted as the mouthpiece of many contemporary attitudes about the role of the bishop and the nature of the ideal Christian community. It has been shown that Venantius, after his initial success at the Austrasian court, found no continuing royal patronage and following on his early experience in Italy, once more sought patrons among the episcopacy. This search brought him into contact with Leontius of Bordeaux, Felix of Nantes and Euphronius of Tours. After 573 Venantius found a particular patron in Gregory of Tours and the death of King Sigibert in 576 put an end to all hopes of advancement at court. The poet was also closely associated with the Convent of the Holy Cross established by Radegund at Poitiers, but it is argued here, that Venantius did not hold the position of agens in the convent. Venantius acted as propagandist for the monastery and for Radegund, but his most important and enduring patron was Gregory of Tours from whom he obtained the gift of a villa at some distance from Poitiers. The later panegyric addressed to Chilperic and poems addressed to Childebert II and Brunhild have been presented as part of a diplomatic offensive launched by Gregory. They do not signal any further attempt by Venantius to carve out a place for himself at court. Gregory remained a patron to Venantius into the 590's and may have aided the poet to the cathedra of Poitiers, just as he had aided his friend and archdeacon, Plato, to obtain this honour.

Perhaps Venantius' greatest innovation as a poet was to extend the genre of panegyric to the ecclesiastical sphere, and thus create a form of episcopal panegyric based on the secular model. The panegyric poems, together with occasional pieces and epitaphs, fit together to provide us with an idealised picture of the bishop and his relationship to significant groups within the community.



To his episcopal patrons and to the audiences who heard his poems on either great civic occasions, or in the more intimate surroundings of the bishop's mensa, Venantius held forth an ideal. It would be foolish for the historian to mistake this ideal for the reality of life, but it would be most rash to dismiss the poetry of Fortunatus as of no historical value on this account. It has been stressed early in this work that Venantius wrote for an audience that accepted the convention that panegyric was about exaggeration and an ideal poetic world.

Much of this study has been concerned with the mapping of the ideal represented in Venantius' poetry. This has been done on the assumption that the aspirations of a society tell us much about how a society hopes to operate and where it sees itself headed. The correspondence of many of Venantius' ideals with those of Gregory of Tours, Caesarius of Arles and others shows that he was not merely expressing an idiosyncratic view of society. The great panegyric poems were designed to give voice to assumed attitudes in the community. It has also been suggested here that the function of the episcopal panegyrist was to stimulate feelings of spiritual and social cohesion within the civitas.

Despite the stylised nature of epitaph and panegyric we can glimpse some of the individuals who rose to the episcopacy in the sixth century. The poetry affords considerable prominence to members of the senatorial aristocracy, but they did not enjoy a monopoly of power. Merovingian society was not static and social mobility was a feature within the episcopacy, as in secular life. Besides the senatorial bishops, Venantius wrote in praise of important Frankish bishops such as Ageric of Verdun and Igidius of Reims. The poetry of Fortunatus makes it clear that the bishop's wife, the episcopa, could play a socially significant role as helper to her husband in his pastoral duties, and by way of

contrast, the monastic sphere finds scant reflexion in Venantius' portrayal of the episcopal office.

The sense of community conveyed by Venantius' poems springs in the first instance from the baptismal bond which joins together fellow Christians and their bishop in a "Community of Belief". This has been discussed in detail in the analysis of the poem on the conversion of the Jews of Clermont-Ferrand by Bishop Avitus where we noted that spiritual, and indeed social cohesion, was seen to have been promoted by the forced conversion of non-Christians in the city. The spiritual community delineated by the poet coalesces around the bishop of the civitas and the cult of the urban patron saint. Venantius' great poems, delivered before an audience, served as an expression of community support for the bishop and as a formal and stylised recognition of his spiritual authority. It has been argued that this stress on consensus sprang from the bishop's need for expressions of the ideal for their didactic effect, in the face of the different reality that was ever before his eyes. We have noted that consensus was a very fragile thing indeed and we have assessed the threats posed to the bishop's spiritual authority from such disparate factors as determined monastic foundresses, tenacious pagan practices in the countryside or ambitious clerics at his side.

The sense of a social grouping centred on the civitas has a particular vivacity in the poems. The terminology employed by the poet alerted us to the conjunction of notions of spiritual community and city life. Venantius pictures the bishop as a conspicuous urban figure, while stressing the civic-mindedness of prelates who undertook projects to aid their citizens. The Christian believer, the civis, looks to the praesul, as to a secular ruler, for practical benefits and the bishop, depicted in terms usually reserved for secular

figures, appears in an ambiguous role as first citizen of an urban community. This raised the question of whether the bishop had replaced, in some sense, secular officials and whether he was a virtual ruler in his own city.

The relationship of the bishop to the officials of the Merovingian state, the duces and comites, suggests that in his dealings with the representatives of the secular power on the city level, the bishop had to rely on his auctoritas. The incidents at Tours involving the tax collectors and the woman falsely imprisoned, both highlighted by Venantius' poems, suggest that the bishop had to rely on diplomacy and the established tradition of episcopal intercessio if he were to assist those within his civitas community. His position appears to have been much weaker than that of the royal officials, but so much would have depended on the vagaries of personality and circumstance.

There is little evidence for a translatio imperii to the bishops in this period and it has been argued here that selective quotation from Venantius can warp and distort the picture we get over all from the poems. Using the evidence of the poems it is possible to point to such balancing themes as the sense of civic cohesion centred on the monarch in his capital that is evoked in royal panegyric or the development of the concept of the patria in these and other poems.

The King and his court still appear centres of activity in Venantius' poems, as in Gregory's Historia. The importance of officeholding and of court life is amply illustrated by Venantius' poems. Court and capital have a character all their own, within the carmina.

Royal control over the church has been stressed in this study. The king's power in the appointment of bishops, in the calling of councils and in benefaction allowed him a considerable influence in ecclesiastical affairs. Venantius' poems do not illustrate a clear one-way trend in favour of increased

power and prestige for the episcopacy, and certainly not at the direct expense of the monarch. Instead I would suggest a much more complex, shifting and fluid situation where much still, at this time, lay in the balance. The role of the poet in all this was to provide the bishop with one further aid in asserting and protecting his own position. Leontius II of Bordeaux, we will remember, obtained from the poet an abecedarian hymnus to be sung by his partisans within the city and two poems designed to be inscribed on church walls as a rebuff to his earlier opponent Emerius of Saintes, a prelate who was placed and maintained on his cathedra by royal intervention. Gregory used Venantius to woo kings and disarm tax collectors.

That the bishops of Gaul were in need of public affirmations of their status and dignity is suggested most strongly by their enthusiastic patronage of Fortunatus. Panegyrical poems, verses sung at table and finally inscription and epitaph reinforced the standing and auctoritas of the bishop and the prestige of his family within the city. As Peter Brown has observed, "the hoarding of reputation and its rapid dispersal by others was an earnest occupation in Gregory's world." (1) This study has emphasised the function of the poet who was used by his episcopal patrons to mould and guide public opinion, to draw out the significance of acts of piety and to point to episcopal benefactions. All these things contributed to the improvement of the bishop's standing within the community. Venantius' literary career and his function as episcopal panegyrist provides further evidence in support of Brown's assertion that "in the creation of status, public opinion counted for as much as wealth, genealogy and an entry in Karl Stroheker's Senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien". (2)

Given the role that Venantius played in his society, one can appreciate why, in the eighth century, Paul the Deacon and Abbot Ager felt it was intolerable that this poet and bishop did not have a fitting epitaph. Paul the Deacon performed for Venantius the service that he, in his lifetime, had so often performed for others:

Hos modicos prompsi plebeio carmine versus,  
Ne tuus in populis, sancte, lateret honor. (3)

NOTES - CHAPTER SIX

- (1) P. Brown, Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours. The Stenton Lecture, 1976. (Reading, 1977), p.17.
- (2) ibid.,
- (3) Paul the Deacon, Hist Lang., II. 13. (MGH Script. rer. Lang. p.81).

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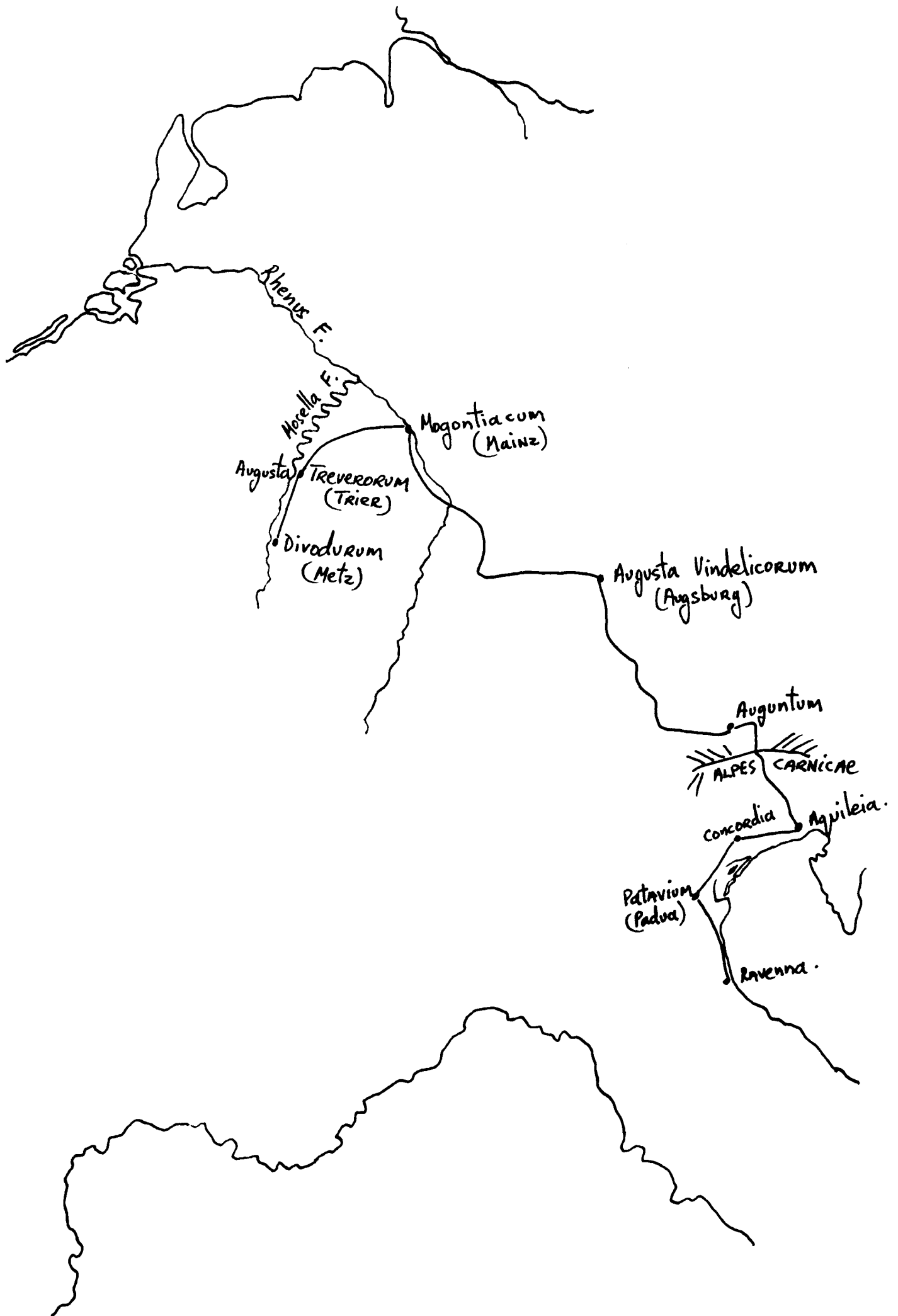
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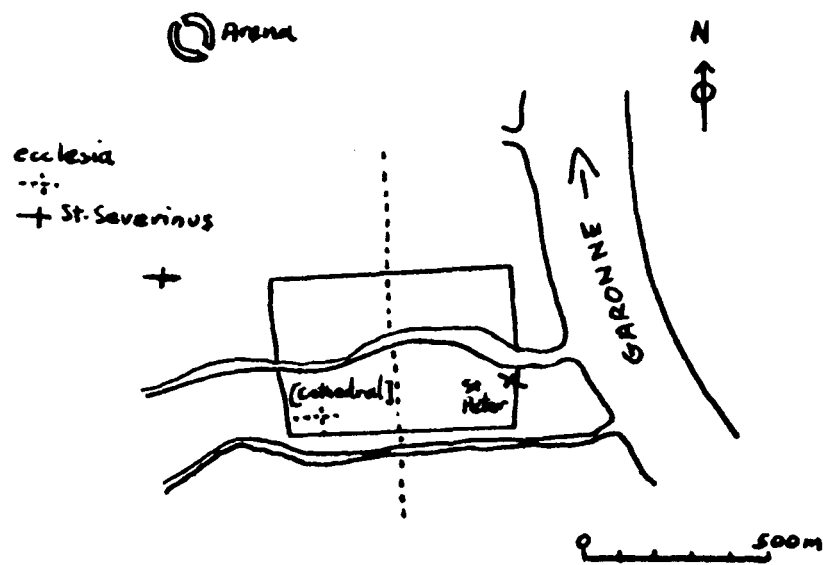
**map 1.**





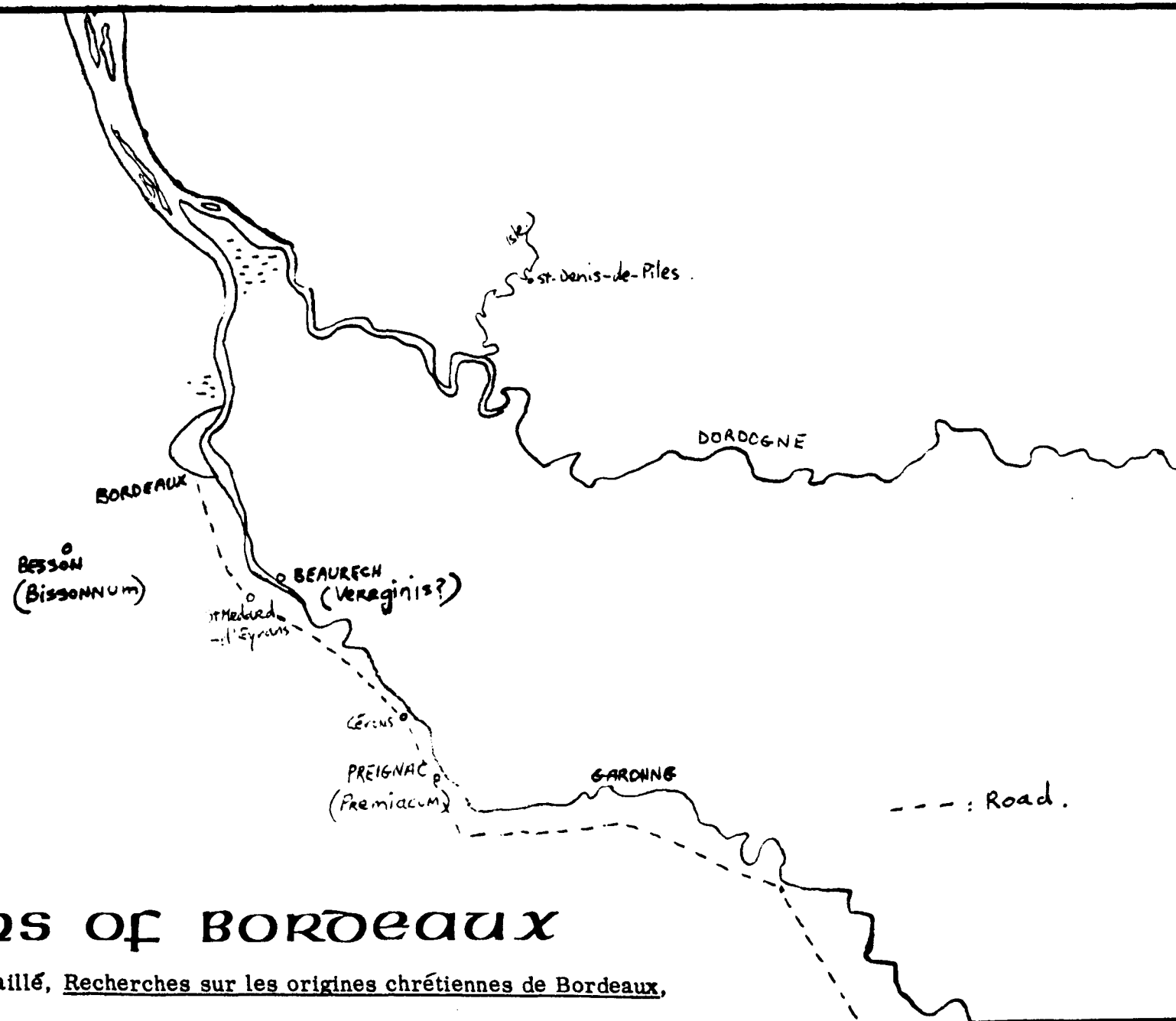
**map II.**

# BORDEAUX



After M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976) p.55.

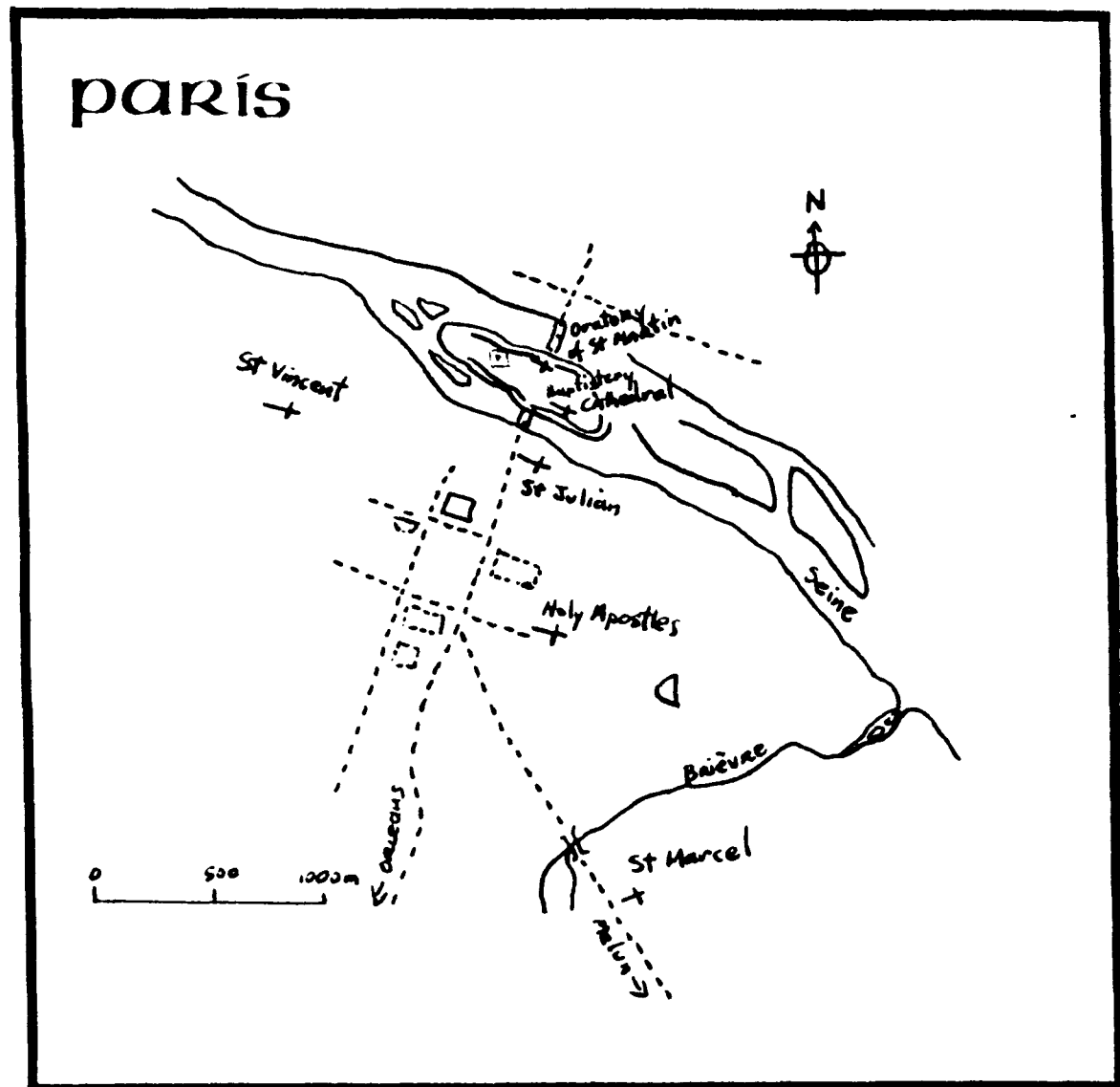
map III. ;



## environs of Bordeaux

After the Marquise de Maillé, Recherches sur les origines chrétiennes de Bordeaux,  
(Paris, 1960) p. 85.

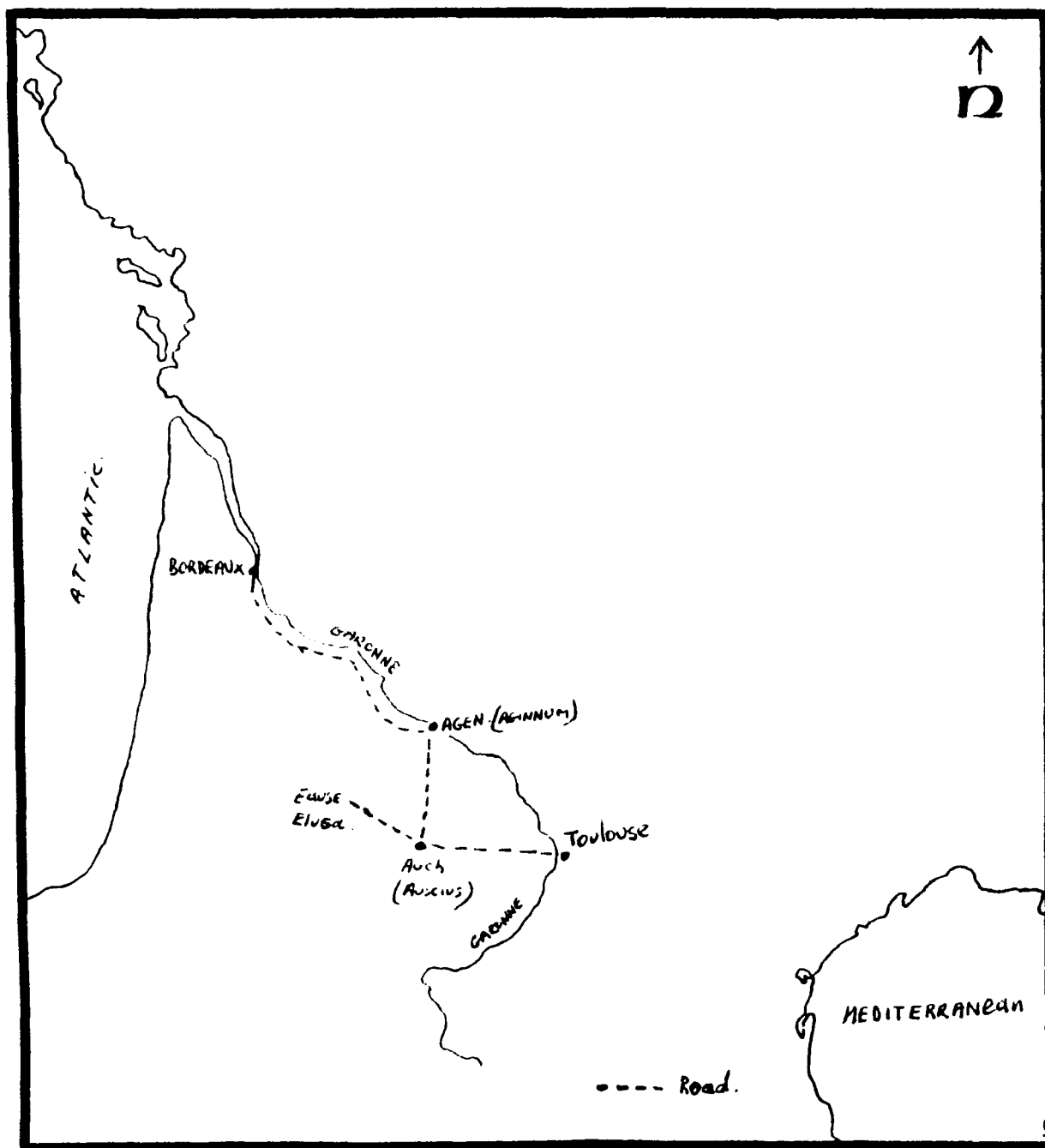
map 10.



After M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976) p.203.

map  $\mathcal{U}$  ;

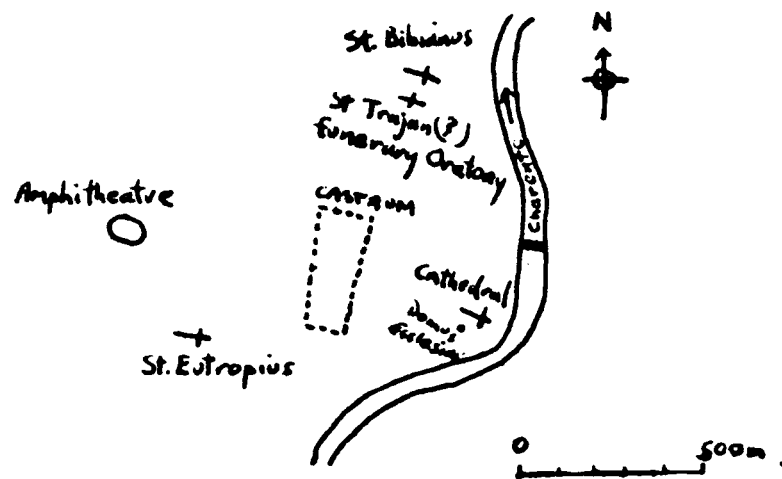




communications  
BORDEAUX—TOULOUSE

map vi,

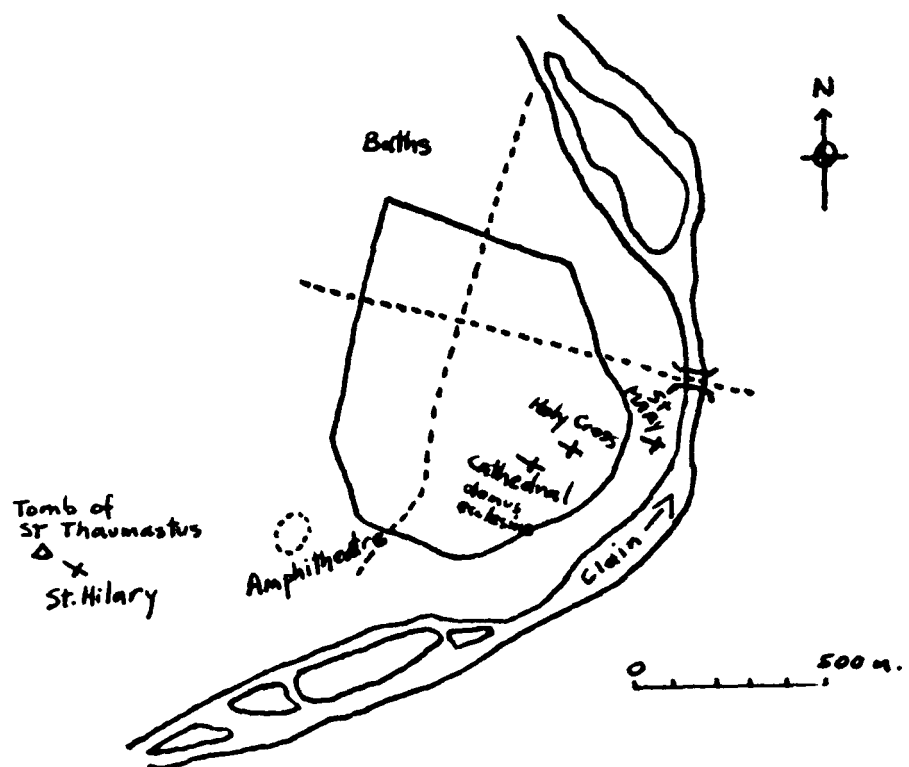
# saintes



After M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976) p. 281.

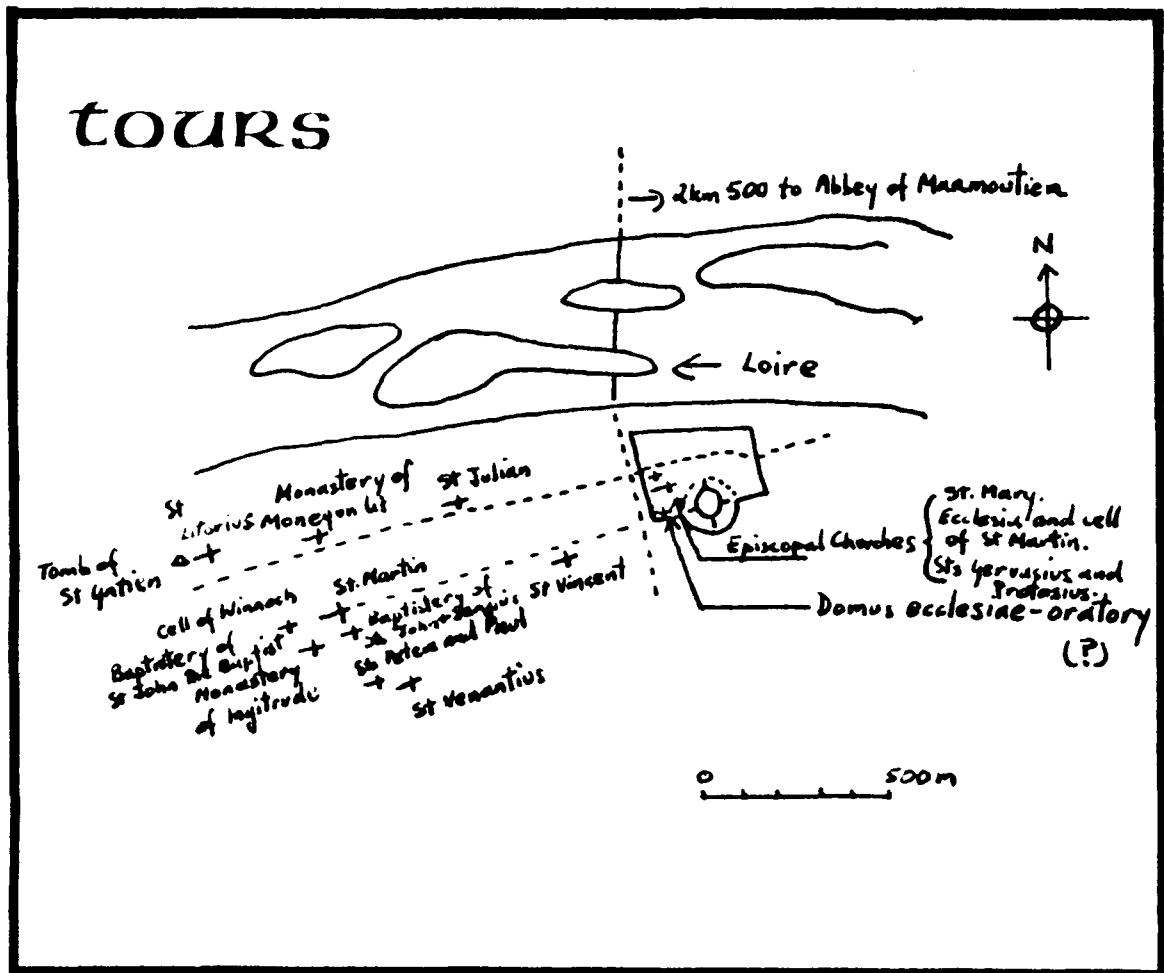
map on,

# poitiers



After M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976) p.220.

map VIII.

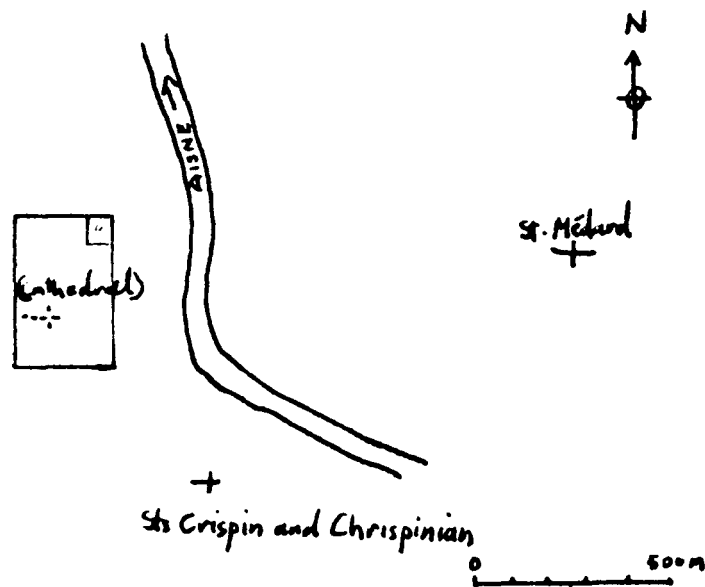


After M. Vieillard-Troiekouff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976) p. 305.

359.  
**map ix.**



# SOISSONS



After M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours, (Paris, 1976) p. 288.

**map** *x*,

# ecclesiastical organisation

