Merovingian Letters and Letter Writers

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is a survey of the more than six hundred letters that form the surviving epistolographical output of the Merovingian era, i.e. *circa* AD 500-750. These pieces of correspondence have been gleaned primarily from the *epistolae*, *auctores antiquissimi*, *passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, and *formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi* sections in the *monumenta Germaniae historica*; a few have been taken from the *libri historiarum decem* of Gregory of Tours. Much of this corpus has never before been translated into English, or indeed into any modern language. It has also been underutilized by scholars. Although work has been done on some of the collections in isolation, no study to date has approached the material as a whole. This study focuses on the letter as a conveyor of personal and private information, and the letter collections as a corpus that contains important historical, sociological, and cultural implications for our understanding of Merovingian Gaul.

Five chapters discuss various aspects of Merovingian epistolography. Chapter 1 examines letters to and from women. Chapter 2 focuses on the large body of poetic epistles composed by Venantius Fortunatus. Bishops were prolific letter writers and Chapter 3 discusses various aspects of these. Chapter 4 is in two sections: the first examines that shadowy third party in an epistolographical transaction, the bearer, while the second focuses on the gifts that sometimes accompanied letters. Finally, Chapter 5 investigates the role of the Bible in Merovingian epistolography by analyzing the sources, extent, and purpose of the Scripture quotations employed by letter writers. Also included with the chapters are an Appendix of Unusual Poems and *carmina figurata* with translations, an Appendix of Biblical Quotations, and several charts that serve to quantify the material.

The last half of this dissertation consists of a comprehensive Appendix containing summaries of each letter in the Merovingian collections, with historical context. This is followed by an Index of Epistolographical Prosopography that matches each individual with his or her epistolographical output, which can extend over a number of collections.

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Abbreviations

LH	<i>historiarum libri decem</i> of Gregory of Tours
HL	<i>historia Langobardorum</i> of Paul the Deacon
MGH	<i>monumenta Germaniae historica</i>
Fred.	<i>chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri</i>
LHF	<i>liber historiae Francorum</i>
PLRE	The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire
PL	<i>patrologia latina</i>
HE	<i>historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i> of Bede
MLLM	<i>mediae latinitatis lexicon minus</i>

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Introduction

This work is a survey of what can broadly be termed the Merovingian Letter Collections, a body of Latin correspondence that has survived from the era of the Merovingian kings, that is, *circa* 500 to 750. In its modern dress this correspondence is to be found in its entirety only in the *monumenta Germaniae historica*. The present work is made up of five chapters that discuss various aspects of the corpus as a whole plus an Appendix that contains summaries of the contents of each letter and supplies historical context.

Although many of the collections in the MGH are accompanied by Latin summaries of individual letters as supplied by their nineteenth-century German editors, these have proved to be disappointing: occasionally erroneous, often misleading, and almost always incomplete. I have therefore provided a new summary for each letter in order to facilitate a balanced and accurate sense of the contents. Where translations are available I have naturally made use of these; otherwise, I have based the summaries on my own translations of the letters. Besides the Chapters and Appendix of Summaries, I also provide an Index of Epistological Prosopography, which matches up Merovingian letter writers with their letters. Since many writers appear in more than one collection, this will aid the reader in gaining an overall view of an individual's epistological output. As an additional aid, I have included at the beginning of each chapter a list of all letters referred to therein. In all cases translations in the body of this dissertation are mine unless otherwise stated. Finally, it goes without saying that there is room for a great deal more work to be done on the Merovingian letter collections. This is particularly true, for example, in the area of relations between the Frankish kingdom and Byzantium, and in the area of Latin language usage, style, and development. Unfortunately, I was compelled to leave these topics aside for the sake of brevity.

My work rests on two pillars. Firstly, Appendix and Chapters have been designed to be read in conjunction with one another. Secondly, I have approached the corpus holistically, because I believe we can only fully appreciate what this body of material has to offer when we cross the boundaries artificially imposed by the various collections. I

also wish to emphasize at the outset that this is not a study of epistolography as genre, but as a corpus that contains important historical, sociological, and cultural implications for our understanding of Merovingian Gaul. Finally, I have focused on the letter as a conveyor of personal and private information; in other words, embassies and political communiqués, while not ignored entirely, play only a small role in this survey.¹

It is important for the reader to understand that I have of necessity gone through a process of selection and decided exactly which letters warrant inclusion in this survey and which do not. For this purpose I began by asking two questions of the material: (a) what is Merovingian? and (b) what is a letter? I decided that “Merovingian” must mean that the sender and/or the recipient of the letter was resident in the Frankish kingdom during the Merovingian era, even if that residency was temporary. This allowed for the inclusion of the Irish *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* and the Anglo-Saxon *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae*, along with the more obviously Merovingian *epistolae Desiderii episcopi*, *epistolae Austrasicae*, *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*, *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*, *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*, and *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis*, to use their modern designations. These are all considered here in their entirety.² Other times only a portion of a collection can be classified as “Merovingian,” and I have therefore included from the *variae* of Cassiodorus and *registrum* of Pope Gregory the Great only those letters sent to Gaul by those individuals. A handful of the *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* and the *epistolae Wisigoticae* also fall into this category. Others that qualify for inclusion are strays found in other texts such as the *additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium* and the *libri historiarum decem* of Gregory of Tours. A few *vitae* also include letters, either embedded within them or acting as Prologue. (This last is extremely rare, however: out of over one hundred *vitae* extant from the Merovingian era, only nine letters can be gleaned, five of which are in the *vita Desiderii*).

¹ For a thorough study of political epistolography, see Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West 411–533* (Cambridge: 2003). Please note, however, that this does not cover much of the Merovingian period.

² While all the letters are not discussed individually in the body of this dissertation, each appears in the Appendix of Summaries at the end of the work.

I decided further that “Merovingian” did not mean the large letter collections of the later fifth century that represent the extensive correspondence of Sidonius Apollinaris, Ruricius of Limoges, Ennodius of Pavia, and Avitus of Vienne. While these overlap chronologically with the Merovingian group, neither Sidonius (d. 489), Ennodius (d. 521), nor Avitus (d. 518) were at any time subject to the Merovingian kings, while Ruricius, who died in 510, lived under the rule of Clovis I for a mere three years.³ Ruricius, Ennodius, and Avitus do make cameo appearances, however, in the collection of their younger contemporary Caesarius of Arles, and Avitus appears a second time as the author of a letter to Clovis I, congratulating the king on the occasion of his baptism.

The second question – what is a letter? – resists both categorization and consistency, for in Late Antiquity many communiqués could be fashioned epistolographically that today we would not necessarily class as such. Clovis I’s “letter” to the Aquitanian bishops shortly before his defeat of the Visigoths in 507 is a prime example, for it is a political directive rather than an act of correspondence.⁴ It is not included in this study. As already noted, other political communiqués were written to accompany embassies. The last half of the *epistolae Austrasicae*, for example, is made up of such letters, which accompanied Frankish legates to Constantinople and were addressed to the emperor and empress as well as powerful figures both ecclesiastical and secular. In spite of their political content and more public nature, these are designed to convey greetings, information, and personal points of view to specific individuals. I have therefore included them. The *opera poetica* of Venantius Fortunatus present classification difficulties of a different sort, since their contents functioned primarily as gifts inviting patronage rather than letters. At the end of the day I was reduced to including those addressed “to” an individual, for example, *ad Lupum ducem*, while excluding those “about” that individual such as *de Lupo duce*. (I

³ Ennodius of Pavia was born in Gaul, but lived in Italy from a young age after his parents died, while Avitus’ see of Vienne was in Burgundy, which was not conquered by the Franks until the 530s. Clovis’ rule over parts of southern Gaul, where Limoges is situated, dates from his defeat of the Visigoths at the battle of Vouillé in 507. The same reasoning applies to Sidonius’ birthplace of Lyons and his see of Clermont.

⁴ This is *Chlodowici regis ad episcopos epistola*, ed. A Boretius, MGH, Leges, Capitularia regum Francorum 1 (Hannover: 1883). The corpus of royal charters are also cast as letters to officials although they are directives of an administrative nature.

have also excised the poet's extensive collection of epitaphs, because they are not addressed to live individuals). While this causes us to miss some pieces of a panegyric nature as well as descriptions of estates and material possessions, I have nonetheless striven ruthlessly – albeit at times with a certain regret – to include only those poems that can reasonably be classed as personal communication. Notwithstanding these omissions, the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus is the largest collection here represented, forming a full 25% of this study.

The result of this selection process is an array of over 600 individual pieces of Latin correspondence composed between 481 – the accession of Clovis I to the throne of his father, and 751 – the deposition of the last Merovingian king Childeric III and the accession of Pippin III. (A few stray outside these dates but have been retained for the sake of continuity and/or the integrity of the collection).⁵ Some quantitative data are at once apparent, and although subject to the uneven nature of the surviving corpus, the profile that emerges reflects statistics suggested by other sources of the period. For example, in these collections, bishops are the most prolific letter writers: 60% of the letters have a bishop as either sender or recipient, approximately 20% of which have a bishop as both. Of this 20%, the majority (60%) were written for the purpose of establishing or maintaining relationships of *amicitia*. (This total is somewhat higher than that of other Merovingian letter writers, whose letters of *amicitia* total 50% of their total correspondence). We can conclude, therefore, that while Merovingian bishops communicated widely with many types of people for multiple purposes, friendship and relationship prompted most of their letters to each other. Desiderius of Cahors is a good example: 75% of his correspondence with other bishops was prompted by *amicitia*.⁶ Also noticeable is that letters to or from men greatly outnumber those to or from women,

⁵ Examples are letters in the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* of both earlier and later date plus a sizeable number in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* of early date. The latter are essential, since they document the origins of the longstanding dispute between Arles and Vienne for primacy. The only other early example is Letter 23, dated to 475, in the *epistolae Austrasicae*.

⁶ This higher percentage is perhaps a more accurate gauge of reality between bishops, since the numbers are skewed somewhat by the weight of non-bishop Venantius Fortunatus' collection.

which comprise 22% of the total. Almost half of these involve queens, mainly Brunhild and Radegund, while most of the rest involve abbesses. The graphs at the end of this Introduction supply more detailed quantitative data.

Study of this corpus is desperately needed, for Merovingian epistolography has received scant attention in spite of its being highly significant primary source material. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, there is a tendency among scholars to regard historical epistolography with some suspicion as tendentious and subjective.⁷ Secondly, the Merovingian period is still regarded skeptically in some circles as a burlesque preliminary to the Carolingians. The result is that Merovingian epistolography is doubly damned and remains an under-utilized area of research, even though historians of Late Antique Gaul routinely lament the scarcity of their sources.⁸ To my knowledge, there is nothing even approaching a thorough study of this body of material and little or no dialogue, let alone consensus, among scholars as to a proper approach to the Merovingian letters and what they can demonstrate.⁹ We have not really moved far from the assessment of Franz Brunhölzl, who in his 1970's survey of early medieval Latin

⁷ Averil Cameron, "On defining the Holy Man," in *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Paul A. Hayward & James Howard-Johnston (Oxford: 1999), 27-43, believes, for example, that while letters may be promising in uncovering feelings and emotions in Late Antiquity, they are "too deeply conditioned by rhetorical tropes." Philip Rousseau, "Ascetics as mediators and teachers," in *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Paul A. Hayward & James Howard-Johnston (Oxford: 1999), 45-59, takes it a step further, arguing that the letters are "tendentious and subject to editorial and interpretative influence." Fortunately, others do not agree with this assessment: Albrecht Diem, "Monks, Kings, and the Transformation of Sanctity: Jonas of Bobbio and the End of the Holy Man," *Speculum* Vol. 82, No. 3 (July 2007) 524, asserts that the letters of Columbanus are part of the "reality" of the saint's world as opposed to the textual representation of his life in Jonas of Bobbio's *vita Columbani*.

⁸ For example, see Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: 450-751* (London: 1994), 2. Others simply ignore the letters. Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership & Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: 1985), 199, refers to some of the Merovingian letters in his discussion, but lists only Gregory of Tours, Caesarius of Arles, and Venantius Fortunatus as our sources of information for the sixth century.

⁹ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 24-7, 149, 241-2 gives a very brief and incomplete overview of some of the collections. The discussion is only marginally enlarged in Ian Wood, "Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul," in *The Uses of Literacy in Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge: 1990), 63-81.

literature slammed the *wackelnde* Latin of the letters as part and parcel of the *Niedergang* of the education system in general, which had rendered their authors unable even to differentiate between the ideal they were emulating and their own incompetence.¹⁰

Fortunately, the preservation of such outdated ideas does not mean that nothing has been accomplished in furthering our understanding of the Merovingian letters. As noted, the collections have been edited and await the early medievalist both in printed volumes and via the online digitalized *monumenta Germaniae historica*, with a handful scattered throughout other series and individual editions. Further, besides those representing special interests – letters concerning Clovis I for instance, which have been subjected to considerable scrutiny – some of the collections have been translated into various modern languages and studied. (For particulars on this topic please refer to the final section of this Introduction).

It is true that the study of historical epistolography is beset with difficulties, not all of which exist only in the minds of historians. To what extent, for instance, is medieval written correspondence merely an adjunct, and a feeble one at that, to the oral transmission of information? To one recent author the letter “could be almost anything except a private exchange of confidential information.”¹¹ This scholar bases this premise on his argument that the letter is merely the preamble to a verbal message, containing only greetings and general reflections on the issue at hand, with every detail of substance reserved for the bearer’s oral delivery. For anyone who is familiar with the Merovingian collections such a position is untenable, for even a cursory study of these reveals that while by no means absent, explicit notice of a verbal message of any sort accompanies

¹⁰ Franz Brunhölzl, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich: 1975), 116–8.

¹¹ This is the view of Julian Haseldine, “Epistolography,” in *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* ed. by F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: 1996), 650. It is striking that in spite of purportedly speaking for epistolography in a general medieval context, Haseldine does not discuss the Merovingian letters at all, sticking instead to Roman, Insular, and Carolingian offerings before leaping with evident relief to his specialty, the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

fewer than 10% of the letters, and in only a small handful is the letter merely an adjunct to it.

In spite of this easy rebuttal, however, the core argument represents a real concern: it is hazardous to take what seems to be private and personal information at face value without considering it carefully in the light of other evidence. The letters that comprise the latter half of the *epistolae Austrasicae* spring instantly to mind in this regard. As an accompaniment to Frankish embassies to Constantinople, these were designed to be read aloud in a court setting and are comprised almost entirely of diplomatic commonplaces. The Frankish Queen Brunhild was the ostensible author of five of these. Three of the five are indistinguishable from the formal missives written on the same occasion by her son, King Childebert II, but the contents of the other two are highly emotional. At first glance this emotionally-charged content appears to render the letters private and personal, but further examination reveals that the emotion they contain was staged and that these were no more personal than their more “public” counterparts. Apart from specialized circumstances of this nature, however, the bulk of Merovingian letters can be confidently classed as personal and private.

Another difficulty concerns the fact of the letter collections themselves, as scholars have been quick to point out.¹² At its most basic, a “letter collection” is simply a group of letters that someone in the past has copied into a single manuscript. Because there were any number of reasons for doing so, each collection has its own *raison d’être* that reflects the wishes of the compiler of the collection. This could be either the author of the letters or someone entirely different. The result could be a work of literature (*Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*), an exchange of obscenities (*additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium*), an archival dossier (*epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* and *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*), a formulary for the guidance of future letter writers (*epistolae Austrasicae*), a personal legacy (*epistolae Desiderii episcopi* and *epistolae Aviti*

¹² Haseldine, “Epistolography,” 651–2. Also Andrew Gillett, “Communication in Late Antiquity: use and reuse,” forthcoming. Cited by permission. Gillett approaches epistolography as a genre and focuses on diplomatic correspondence, although he also touches on the private letter.

Viennensis), or a grab bag of odds and ends (*epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*). Many times the criteria for collection remain a mystery. Collectors also routinely edited what they intended to publish, and felt no need to divulge information regarding their methodology. A letter in a collection, therefore, is set adrift from its moorings: it can lose its dating information, its salutation, its original formatting, and always its sequential place in an exchange of information. Rarely can we be party to a “conversation,” or cobble together a sequence of events with any certainty by studying the letters in a collection. Originally a piece of communication contributing to some kind of meaningful relationship, a letter in a collection has become instead an isolated particle embedded in a new body with a new function.

Yet another problem confronts us when we attempt to gain a sense of how the extant Merovingian collections relate to the actual total of letters that circulated in the Frankish kingdom during our time period. The letters themselves help somewhat in this regard, as about 20% indicate that they are replies to previous correspondence. Since the original letters that prompted these replies are almost always absent, we can class virtually all of these as *deperdita*, either through destruction at some point or as a function of the selection process. This figure is not very useful, however, since it supplies little aid in estimating anything like the total volume of correspondence circulating in the Frankish kingdom at a given time. In his recent monograph on political communication in the Late Antique West, for instance, Andrew Gillett remarks on the frequency and complexity of activity surrounding embassies in the provinces of the fifth century as implied by the *Chronicle* of Hydatius.¹³ Moreover, the weighty examples of the above-noted fifth-century bishops’ letter collections strongly suggest that there was equally prolific traffic in private communication during that time. There is little reason to believe that epistolographical activity of either sort diminished over the next two centuries. Epistolographical *deperdita*, therefore, must be so very much greater than what has survived that our bulky corpus of 600 plus letters becomes in reality only a minute

¹³ Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication*, 54, refers to this colourfully as a “cat’s cradle.”

portion of the correspondence that criss-crossed the Frankish kingdom during the sixth to eighth centuries.

Gaps inherent in our material reinforce this argument. For instance, we have only one collection of a bishop's correspondence from the seventh century, that of Desiderius of Cahors, yet we know from those very letters that many of his contemporaries were prolific letter writers. The same goes for the sixth century: the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* document the dispute between Arles and Vienne for episcopal primacy in Gaul and include epistolographical samples from many highly literate bishops of Arles. Yet only the personal collection of Caesarius survives, and that incompletely. Another type of *lacuna* is illustrated in the work of our most prolific author, Venantius Fortunatus, whose *opera poetica* unfortunately preserve only those missives composed by the poet himself, although several of his highly literate correspondents make cameo appearances and one, Felix of Nantes, is even quoted briefly. A major deficiency, as noted above, is also found in the area of women's letters and it is uncertain how closely this situation mirrors reality. Did women as a rule not write letters? or were their letters almost never preserved? We can pose the same questions in regard to those lower down on the social scale, whose letters, if they existed at all, are completely unattested.

So much for numbers. Given that we have before us only a small representation of what was actually produced, and that spread unevenly over three centuries, how can we effectively broach this corpus which, for all its shortcomings, adds significantly to our sparse sources for the Merovingian era? Although we cannot view the material as a clear window onto Merovingian affairs, many patterns, themes and trends can be teased out that can be used to topple previously held misconceptions, add weight to suggestions put forward by other scholars, and generally shine new light on the era. This is especially true when these are analyzed in conjunction with other source material. These patterns, themes and trends are reflected in the chapter titles of this work but also range widely within them to include literacy and language, liturgy, geography and travel, food, customs, relationships of all sorts, abuse and reproach, instruction, and theology, to name but a few.

Following is an outline of the letter collections used in this study, including information on context, manuscripts, editions, and modern translations. (Note: I do not include here the stray letters found in texts other than letter collections). It is not meant to be exhaustive, but to prepare and orient the reader for the discussion that follows. Please note that except for papal letters, dating is almost always uncertain, and further, that my inclusion of a letter or a collection is not an endorsement of its authenticity.

1. *additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium*

No. of Letters in Collection: 5

Letters Included in Study: 5

Date Range: 660-695

Manuscripts: Codex Parisinus 4627 (9th C); summaries in William of Malmesbury, *gesta pontificum*.

Editions: K. Zeumer, ed. MGH, *Leges, Formulae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi*, *Formulae Senonenses* (Berlin: 1886).

Translations: None

This small group of poetic epistles documents an exchange of abuse between two bishops, Importunus of Paris and Chrodobert of Tours. The poems were originally found in sequence with other material in a ninth-century formulary from the city of Sens, but their editor believed them inappropriately placed and relocated them as an *additamentum* in his edition of the formulary.

2. *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae*

No. of Letters in Collection: 13

Letters Included in Study: 3

Date Range: 670-706

Manuscripts: Codex Vindobonensis 751 (9th C).

Editions: R. Ehwald, ed. *Aldhelmi opera omnia*, MGH, AA, 15 (Berlin: 1919).

Translations: English: Michael Herren and Michael Lapidge, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge: 1979).

The Anglo-Saxon Aldhelm was Abbot of Malmesbury, Bishop of Sherborne, and a renowned poet and scholar who studied at the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian. It is likely that these surviving letters represent only a small portion of those actually exchanged between Aldhelm and his correspondents. The authenticity of one letter in the collection, number XIII, is in doubt. The above translation is the only one to date of the works of Aldhelm into any modern language.

3. *Columbani abbatis Luxovienses et Bobbiensis epistolae*

No. of Letters in Collection: 5

Letters Included in Study: 6¹⁴

Date Range: 600-613

Manuscripts: No medieval MSS have survived for Letters 1-5. Modern editions for these rely on two early editions which were in turn based on one, or possibly two, exemplars from Bobbio, now lost. The editions are: Patrick Fleming, *collectanea sacra* (Louvain: 1667), and a work of Judoc Metzler, also of the 17th C, which may have borrowed extensively from Fleming. I can find no further information on Metzler's work.

Editions: W. Gundlach, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.IV (Berlin: 1889), which, in addition to the standard six letters, includes one prose letter and four poetic epistles now considered dubious. The edition of choice is G.S.M. Walker, ed. *Sancti Columbani opera* (Dublin: 1957).

Translations: English: G.S.M. Walker

¹⁴ I have included the letter known as Epistola 6, addressed to a young disciple, which has been transmitted not with the rest of the *epistolae* but with the author's *instructiones* or sermons. Neil Wright, "Columbanus' Epistolae," in *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, ed. M. Lapidge (Woodbridge: 1997), 29–92, 58–9, considers it to have enough points of style and language in common with the other five letters that it may be tentatively, although not conclusively, attributed to Columbanus.

Irish monk and scholar Columbanus arrived in Merovingian Gaul in 590 or 591 accompanied by a following of twelve Irish monks. He immediately became embroiled in controversy: with the pope, with Gallic bishops, and with Merovingian rulers, notably Brunhild, who later had him exiled. The collection of five letters, all composed by Columbanus, is doubtless incomplete as it stands.

4. epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae

No. of Letters in Collection: 19

Letters Included in Study: 19

Date Range: 524-751

Manuscripts: various, see below.

Editions: W. Gundlach, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.VII (Berlin: 1892).

Translations: None

The above is a collection of unrelated letters from various manuscripts that have been gathered together by the nineteenth-century editor Wilhelm Gundlach into a single document. Included are letters to and from bishops, royalty, popes, and abbesses which are unique to this collection. To my knowledge, Gundlach has supplied us with no information regarding his motives and methodology of collection.

5. epistolae Arelatenses genuinae

No. of Letters in Collection: 56

Letters Included in Study: 56

Date Range: 417-557

Manuscripts: Codex Parisinus lat. 2777 (9th C); Codex Parisinus lat. 3849 (9th C); Codex Parisinus lat. 5537 (10th, 11th, 12th C); Codex Parisinus lat. 3880 (12th C). These represent the main MSS used by Gundlach in his MGH edition.

Editions: W. Gundlach, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.I (Berlin: 1888).

Translations: None

This collection is a major source for the dispute between the bishoprics of Arles and Vienne for primacy in Gaul. It was likely an early form of the *Liber privilegiorum ecclesiae Arelatensis* and was probably compiled by Sapaudus, bishop of Arles in the mid-sixth century, from the archives of his church.¹⁵ For the most part the collection documents privileges bestowed on Arles via papal authority from Zosimus to Pelagius I.¹⁶

6. *epistolae Austrasicae*

No. of Letters in Collection: 48

Letters Included in Study: 48

Date Range: 460-590

Manuscripts: preserved in a single manuscript: Vaticanus Palatinus lat. 869-1 (early 9th C), from the monastery of San Nazarius of Lorsch.

Editions: M. Freher, *Editio princeps* (1613), repr. A. Duchesne (1636); W. Gundlach, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.III (Berlin: 1888); Henri Rochais, ed. (with the emendations of B. Krusch), CCSL 117 (Turnhout: 1957); Elena Malaspina, *Il Liber epistolarum della Cancelleria Austrasica (sec. V-VI)* (Rome: 2001).

Translations: Italian: E. Malaspina

This collection, considered by scholars to have been compiled as a formulary for the use of the late sixth-century court of King Childebert II, contains letters gathered from the archives of Trier, Rheims, and Metz, cities belonging to the Frankish kingdom of Austrasia.¹⁷ The first half of the collection consists of correspondence between powerful ecclesiastical and lay figures in East Francia; topics touch on various aspects of literary culture and politics. The last half is made up of letters written to accompany two embassies to Constantinople during Childebert's reign.

¹⁵ Horst Fuhrmann and Detlev Jasper, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages*, (Washington, D.C.: 2001), 32.

¹⁶ Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Baltimore: 1989), 48 n. 26.

¹⁷ E. Malaspina, ed. *Epistolae Austrasicae: Il Liber epistolarum della cancelleria austrasica (sec. V-VI)* (Rome 2001), 7-9.

7. *epistolae Aviti Viennensis*

No. of Letters in Collection: approx. 96

Letters Included in Study: 1

Date Range: 494/6-518

Manuscripts: J. Sirmond, below, worked from an unknown manuscript. Other manuscripts that contain these letters either in whole or in part include Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 8913-14 (6th C) and Lyon, Bibliothèque de la Ville 618 (11th -12th C).

Editions: J. Sirmond, ed. *Sancti Aviti Archiepiscopi Viennensis opera* (Paris: 1643), repr. in *PL* 59; R. Peiper, ed. *Alcimi Ecdidi Aviti opera quae supersunt*, MGH, AA 6.2 (Berlin: 1883).

Translations: English: D. Shanzer and I. Wood, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool: 2002).

As noted above, the large letter collection of Avitus of Vienne is represented in this study by one letter from the bishop to King Clovis I, congratulating him upon his baptism. This text has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in connection with Clovis' apparent conversion to Christianity and its afterlife in Frankish affairs. (Avitus' Letter 11 to Caesarius of Arles is treated in the latter's collection, where it appears as No. 2).

8. *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis*

No. of Letters in Collection: 24

Letters Included in Study: 24

Date Range: 502-538

Manuscripts: There are no MSS that preserve the letters of Caesarius as a body. These have been gathered by Morin (below) from papal collections, the collections of other bishops with whom Caesarius corresponded, and collections of Gallic councils. Letter 21, which acted as a *regula* for Caesarius' monastery for women before his *regula virginum* was promulgated, is best preserved, according to Morin, in the 10th or 11th C. Codex Turonensis 617.

Editions: G. Morin, ed. *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis opera omnia nunc primum in unum collecta*, Vol. II: *opera varia* (Maredsous: 1942).

Translations: English: William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool: 1994).

Caesarius occupied the see of Arles for forty years until his death in 542. Over 250 of his sermons have survived, as has his *regula virginum*, written for his monastery of women at Arles. Caesarius' time in the episcopal office coincided with that of Avitus of Vienne above and one letter from Avitus to Caesarius is extant in the collection. Many of Caesarius' letters overlap with those of the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*, above. Only six letters in the letter collection were composed by Caesarius, with the rest sent to him from other individuals, mostly popes. Ennodius of Pavia, Avitus of Vienne, and Ruricius of Limoges are all represented in this letter collection.

9. *epistolae Desiderii Cadurcensis episcopi*

No. of Letters in Collection: 36

Letters Included in Study: 36

Date Range: 629-655

Manuscripts: preserved in a single MS: Sangallensis 190 (9th C).

Editions: W. Arndt, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.V (Berlin: 1875); Dag Norberg, ed. *Epistolae S. Desiderii Cadurcensis. Socii Seminarium Latini Stockholmiensis adiuvantibus edidit et commentario instruxit* (Stockholm: 1961).

Translations: None

The above is the correspondence of Bishop Desiderius of Cahors in two volumes. As there is no Preface, dedication, or other clues to signify that it was put together by the bishop, it was likely collected and published by friends or relatives after his death c. 655. Book I contains letters composed by Desiderius, while Book II contains those received by him from others. Included are exchanges between the bishop and the kings of the time, other bishops, and one abbess. Although no modern translation of the collection exists at

this time, the website of Ralph Mathisen indicates that one in English is forthcoming in collaboration with Danuta Shanzer.

10. *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*

No. of Letters in Collection: 30

Letters Included in Study: 30

Date Range: 140-1120

Manuscripts: Two MSS contain one letter each from this collection: Codex Parisinus lat. 2282 (12th C) and Codex Parisinus lat. 12768 (17th C). Two others, both of which Gundlach considers highly suspect, contain the whole collection: Veteris Floriacensis bibliothecae regiae laevum xyston (1605), compiled by Johannes Bosco, and a text called *Histoire de l'antiquité et sainteté de la cité de Vienne en la Gaule Celtique*, composed by Jean le Lièvre. Other printed texts, listed by Gundlach in the MGH, contain portions of these letters.

Editions: W. Gundlach, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.II (Berlin: 1888).

Translation: None

As the name suggests, the above editor believed that this collection was a wholesale fabrication of the early twelfth century for the sole purpose of demonstrating that the primary power in Gaul from the time of the apostles had been in the hands of the archbishop of Vienne rather than that of Arles. (See my comments under *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*). The supposed dates of some of the letters, which range widely from the middle of the second century to the early twelfth century, corroborate Gundlach's verdict. Further, some letters are found nowhere else, while still others are fragments of genuine letters with interpolations favourable to Vienne. A few that document papal privileges bestowed on Vienne at times when the bishop of Arles had disgraced himself, however, are likely authentic.

11. *epistolae Wisigoticae*

No of Letters in Collection: 20

Letters Included in Study: 3

Date Range: 586-652

Manuscripts: Codex Escorialensis b. III.14 (16th C.); Codex Bibliothecae Regiae
 Madridensis F.58 (17th C.); Codex Bibliothecae Capituli Toletani 27.24 T. I (16th
 C).

Editions: W. Gundlach, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.IX (Berlin: 1890).

Translations: None

The earliest letter in the collection is dated to the time shortly after the Visigoths under Reccared I converted from Arianism to orthodox Christianity.¹⁸ Letter writers represented include kings, bishops, and high-ranking nobility, while the concerns with which they were engaged reflect similar epistolographical activity in the Frankish kingdom. No letters to or from Visigothic women are present, however. Letters 11, 12 and 13, which can be dated to c. 610 and which document events in Spain shortly before the fall of Queen Brunhild and her progeny, have been translated into French by Bruno Dumézil, *La Reine Brunehaut* (Paris: 2008), 507-515.

12. *registrum Gregorii*

No. of Letters in Collection: 854

Letters Included in Study: 65

Date Range: 590-604

Manuscripts: These are numerous and I supply here a sampling only. 8th C: St.

Petersburg, Rossiiskaia Natsionalnaia Biblioteka, F.v.1.7; Cologne, erzbischöfliche Diözesan-und Dombibliothek, 92. 9th C: Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, B.79; Vatican City, biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 266; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11674. For complete manuscript information see Martyn, below, Vol. 1, viii.

Editions: P. de Goussainville, ed. *Sancti Gregorii papae primi cognomento magni opera*, 3 Vols. (Paris: 1675); Maurist ed. *S. Gregorii magni registrum epistolarum* (Paris:

¹⁸ Ana Maria Jorge, "Church and Culture in Lusitania in the 5th– 8th Centuries: A Late Roman Province at the Crossroads," in *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, ed. A. Ferreiro (Leiden: 1999), 99–122.

1705), repr. in *PLSL* 77; P. Ewald and L. Hartmann, eds. *Gregorii I papae registrum epistolarum* MGH, Epistolae, 1-2 (Berlin: 1887-1899); Dag Norberg, *S. Gregorii magni registrum epistolarum* CCSL, 140, 140A 2 Vols. (Turnhout: 1982).

Translations: French (partial): P. Minard, *Registre des lettres*, 2 Vols. (Paris: 1991); Italian: V. Recchia, *Lettere*, 4 Vols. (Rome: 1996-9). English: John R. C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 Vols. (Toronto: 2004). English (partial): James Barmby, *The Book of Pastoral Rule and Selected Letters of St. Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome* (London: 1895).

The letters of Pope Gregory I are grouped into fourteen volumes, each one covering one year of his pontificate. The collection is not complete, but is considered by John Martyn, recent translator of the work, to be almost so. The letters cover a wide range of addressees and topics and have been read and quoted extensively from shortly after the pope's death to the present day. Although James Barmby translated a selection of the letters into English in the late nineteenth century, the *registrum* has only recently received a complete translation into modern languages. The letters applicable to this study, written to individuals in Gaul, for the most part address the pope's concerns regarding his mission to the Anglo-Saxons, and what he saw as much-needed Gallic church reform.

13. *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*

No. of Letters in Collection: 150

Letters Included in Study: 137

Date Range: 716-786

Manuscripts: Six MSS are extant. Three have an independent tradition: München, Hof- und Staatsbibliothek, lat. 8112 (8th or 9th C); Karlsruhe, Großherzogliche Bädische Landesbibliothek, Rastatt 22 (9th C); Wien, Nationalbibliothek, lat. 751 (9th C). The other three were likely the work of the eleventh-century Abbot Otloh of St. Emmeram.¹⁹

¹⁹ This is the view of Tangl and is repeated in Fuhrmann and Jasper, *Papal Letters*, 97–8.

Editions: E. Dümmler, ed. MGH, *Epistolae*, 3.VI (Berlin: 1890); M. Tangl, ed. MGH, *Epistolae selectae, Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus* (Berlin: 1916).
 Translations: German: (partial) Reinhold Rau, *Briefe des Bonifatius: Willibalds Leben des Bonifatius* (Darmstadt: 1968). English: Ephraim Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York: 1940). Emerton's translation was reissued with a new Introduction by Thomas Noble in 2000.

The Anglo-Saxon Boniface, originally named Wynfrith, came to the continent under papal auspices as a missionary to the people of what is now Germany, specifically Hesse and Thuringia. His assistant and successor Lully initiated a collection of Boniface's letters after the latter's death,²⁰ although it is generally agreed that the collection as we see it today, which includes the letters of Lully and others, was compiled by Otloh of St. Emmeram, in Bavaria, three centuries later. The collection includes letters both written and received by Boniface and others, including a significantly higher percentage of women than is found in the other collections. Advice and instruction, requests for prayer, and expressions of *amicitia* form the bulk of the topics covered.

14. *Cassiodori variae epistolae*

No. of Letters in Collection: 468

Letters Included in Study: 20

Date: approx. 507 - approx. 537

Manuscripts: According to S.J.B. Barnish, while over one hundred manuscripts of this work are extant, the following two are preferred: Codex Leidensis Vulcanianus 46 (late 12th C), and Codex Bruxellensis 10018-10019 (12th C).

Editions: M. Accurius, *Editio princeps* (1533); Th. Mommsen, ed. *Cassiodori Senatoris variae* MGH, AA, 12 (Berlin: 1894); A. J. Fridh, ed. *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori variarum libri XII* CCSL 96 (Turnhout: 1973).

Translations: English: Thomas Hodgkin, *Letters of Cassiodorus* (London: 1886); also S.J.B. Barnish, *Selected Variae of Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator*, (Liverpool: 1992). The former contains abstracts and summaries of the entire

²⁰ Thomas Noble, "Introduction," in E. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, xxxiv.

corpus of the *variae*; the latter contains fully-translated letters but the selection amounts to less than a third of the whole. To date there has been no complete English translation of this work.

Cassiodorus, composer of the *variae epistolae*, was a Roman statesman who became the successor of Boethius as *magister officiorum* in the Ostrogothic administration of Italy. Cassiodorus wrote and collected twelve books of letters on behalf of the Ostrogothic administration of Italy, the majority in the name of King Theodoric, who ruled Italy from 493 to 526. The letters included in this study are mainly political communiqués to individuals of interest to Theodoric, i.e. Frankish and Burgundian kings and other figures involved in the administration of Gaul and surrounding territories.

15. *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*

No. of Letters in Collection: 261

Letters Included in Study: 153

Date: approx. 568-600

Manuscripts: These are numerous and I provide here only the earliest: Petropolitanus F XIV, 1 (8th C); Parisinus lat. 13048 (8th-9th C); Laudunensis B.M. 469 (8th-9th C); Parisinus lat. 14144 (9th C); Sangallensis 196 (9th C); Parisinus lat. 9347 (9th C); Vaticanus reginae 329 (9th C). For complete information see Reydellet's Introduction to his work, lxxi. The so-called *appendix carminum* is a separate collection found in MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 13048 (date unknown). Although less organized than the eleven books published by the author (or his friends after his death), the poems are considered genuine and are not found elsewhere.

Editions: Giacomo S. S. Murgitano, *Editio princeps* (Venice: 1578); C. Brower, ed. (Mayence: 1603, 1617, 1630); Michel A. Luchi, *opera omnia* (Rome: 1787, repr. in *PL* Vol. 88; F. Leo, *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati carminum epistolarum expositionum libri undecim* MGH, AA 4.1 (Berlin: 1881); Marc Reydellet, ed. & trans. *Venance Fortunat Poèmes* 3 Vols. (Paris: 1994). These editions also contain the *appendix carminum*.

Translations: French: Marc Reydellet, above; English (partial): Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool: 1995) and Joseph Pucci, *Venantius Fortunatus. Poems to Friends* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: 2010).

Venantius Fortunatus was an Italian poet who journeyed into Merovingian Gaul in the mid-560s and settled there. As well as various prose works, he composed many poetic epistles which he used to establish relationships of *amicitia* with bishops and high-ranking political figures. He developed particularly close ties with Gregory of Tours and wrote to him frequently; the same is true of his friendship with Radegund and Agnes at Holy Cross in Poitiers, where he later became bishop. The *opera poetica* are grouped in eleven books. These were probably published in three separate groups, the first two by the poet himself, the third more likely by friends after the poet's death. The *appendix carminum* contains thirty-one poetic epistles that were not published with the original collections; these, too, were likely published after Fortunatus' death. The corpus is still awaiting a complete translation into English.

The graphs on the following pages illustrate various quantitative aspects of the Merovingian letter collections. The first offers a breakdown of the types of individuals who sent and received letters in the Merovingian era; the second supplies an overview of the relative weight of each (sizeable) collection within the Merovingian epistolographical corpus; the third provides some idea of the chronology of the collections. Please keep in mind that *(a)* these are not instruments of precision and *(b)* their data, like this study, are wholly dependent upon the vicissitudes of survival.

Relative Weight of Individual Collections

Timeline of Letter Collections

	400	450	500	550	600	650	700	750	800
<i>epistolae Arelatenses geminae</i>	417 _____			556					
<i>epistolae Austrasicae</i>		460 _____			590				
<i>epistolae Auiti Viennensis</i>			494 ____ 518						
<i>epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis</i>			502 ____ 538						
<i>variae</i>			507 ____ 537						
<i>epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae</i>			524 _____					751	
<i>Venantii Fortunati opera</i>				568 ____ 600					
<i>epistolae Wisigothicae</i>				586 _____				652	
<i>registrum Gregorii</i>				590 ____ 604					
<i>Columbani abbatis Lugdunensis et Bobbiensis epistolae</i>				595 ____ 615					
<i>epistolae Desiderii Cadurcensis episcopi</i>					629 ____ 655				
<i>Additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium</i>						660 ____ 695			
<i>Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae</i>						670 ____ 706			
<i>S. Bonifacii et Lullii epistolae</i>							716 _____		786

Chapter 1

Women's Letters

Letters Referenced in this Chapter

epistolae Austrasicae:

26. Brunhild to Mauricius	30. Brunhild to Anastasia or Constantina
27. Brunhild to Athanagild	44. Brunhild to Anastasia or Constantina
29. Brunhild to Anastasia	

vita Desiderii:

- 9. Herchenefreda to Desiderius
- 10. as above
- 11. as above

S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae:

143. Berthgyth to Balthard	15. Bugga to Boniface
147. as above	29. Leobgytha to Boniface
148. as above	27. Boniface to Bugga
97. Cena to Boniface	

epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae:

- 11. Caesaria the Younger to Radegund and Agnes

Venantii Fortunati opera poetica:

8.1. to a group of people	11.10. to Radegund
8.5. to Radegund	11.13. as above
8.8. as above	11.14. as above
8.9. as above	11.18. as above
8.10. as above	11.19. as above
11.8. as above	11.20. as above

11.9. as above

appendix carminum

11. to Radegund and Agnes

13. to Radegund and Agnes

18. to Agnes

22. to Radegund

26. to Radegund and Agnes

28. to Radegund

30. to Radegund and Agnes

registrum Gregorii:

5.58. to Virgilius of Arles

6.5. to Brunhild

6.6. to Childebert II

6.10. to Candidus

6.51. to Theudebert and Theuderic

6.58. to Brunhild

8.4. to Brunhild

9.223. to Syagrius of Autun

9.221. to Desiderius of Vienne

9.215. to Syagrius of Autun

9.224. to Syagrius of Autun

9.214. to Brunhild

9.219. to Syagrius and others

9.223. to Syagrius of Autun

11.40. to Aetherius of Lyons

11.47. to Theuderic

11.50. to Theudebert

11.51. to Chlothar II

13.7. to Theuderic

Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae:

3. to Sabinian or Boniface III

4. to his monks

5. to Boniface IV

6. to Boniface IV

epistolae Wisigoticae:

11. from Bulgar to a Frankish bishop

12. as above

13. as above

As already noted, women are poorly represented overall in the Merovingian collections. Bishops' collections have traditionally tended to omit correspondence with women: that

of Sidonius Apollinaris, for example, contains one, that of Ruricius of Limoges two,¹ and that of Avitus of Vienne none at all.² The collection of Desiderius, bishop of Cahors a century and a half later, imitates those of his fifth-century predecessors by including only one letter to a woman, an Abbess Aspasia.³ A few letters to and from women are scattered throughout the *epistolae Austrasicae* – seven out of forty-eight – and the *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* – three out of nineteen. The somewhat higher percentage of female correspondence in this type of collection can perhaps be explained by the fact that these are not personal collections published for literary or social purposes, but rather compilations of epistles of widely-varying subject matter, dates, and authors. Lack of personal involvement and different motives for gathering the material together, combined with a lower commitment to detailed editing, all likely contributed to a “mixed bag” approach to collecting. In contrast, women are well represented in the collection of the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon missionaries Boniface and Lully, who corresponded with several abbesses and other religious women.⁴ An even higher ratio is documented in the *opera poetica* of the Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus, who addressed approximately one-third of his output to women.

The greatest scarcity is in the area of letters with female authors (as opposed to letters written to women by male writers), a total of only seventeen out of the more than six hundred extant Merovingian letters.⁵ This small group comprises Brunhild’s letters in the

¹ These rare letters are to female family members; in the case of Sidonius, the recipient is his wife, Papianilla (V.16).

² For Sidonius Apollinaris see W.B. Anderson, ed. and trans., *Sidonius: Poems and Letters* 2 Vols. (Cambridge: 1936, reprinted 1996); for Ruricius of Limoges: Ralph W. Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends: A Collection of Letters from Visigothic Gaul* (Liverpool: 1999); for Avitus: D. Shanzer & Ian Wood, *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool: 2002).

³ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.14.

⁴ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 10, 14, 15, 27, 29, 30, 35, 49, 65, 66, 67, 70, 94, 97, 98, 100.

⁵ For discussion of the literature on women writers in the early Middle Ages see Rosamund McKitterick, “Women and literacy in the early Middle Ages,” in *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th to 9th Centuries*, ed. R. McKitterick (Köln: 1991), 1–43; Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge:

epistolae Austrasicae, Herchenefreda's letters to her son Desiderius of Cahors – not in the bishop's collection but rather in the *vita Desiderii*, – letters of various women in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, a letter of Radegund to the bishops of Gaul, and a letter from Caesaria the Younger to Radegund and Agnes in the *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae*. Since some of these are striking for their highly-coloured emotional tone, I have divided the letters with female authors into two groups according to their emotional content. These are discussed separately in the first part of this chapter.

The last half of the chapter is taken up with a discussion of letters written to women by male authors. For this I focus on the letters of Boniface and Lully, the poetic epistles of Venantius Fortunatus to Radegund and Agnes, and the letters of Gregory of Great to Queen Brunhild. In many cases the men's letters are replies to communication from the women that has unfortunately been lost. For analysis and discussion of women's letters other than the above that are illustrative of bishops' dealings with abbesses, queens, and others, please refer to Chapter Three, "Bishops' Letters," Sections 3.1, 3.3, and 3.4.

1 Letters from Women

1.1 Emotional Letters Written by Women

The *epistolae Austrasicae* preserves five letters of Queen Brunhild, although it is unknown whether she had any personal input in these. The letters form part of the diplomatic correspondence that accompanied two separate embassies to Constantinople sometime between 585 and 593.⁶ The context of both embassies and letters is a proposed

1984), 26–35; Suzanne F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society* (Philadelphia: 1981), 175–187.

⁶ The Merovingian queen Brunhild was one of the more interesting figures to emerge from the turbulent years of the later sixth and early seventh centuries in Francia. A daughter of the Visigothic king Athanagild, she married Sigibert, son of Chlothar I, in 566 and outlived husband, son, grandsons, and great-grandsons until brutally but not undeservedly executed in 613 by her arch-enemy and nephew Chlothar II. See *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri IV*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 2 (1888), 42; English translations by J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London: 1960), and A.C. Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, (Peterborough: 2000), 447–490. According to

Frankish/Byzantine alliance ostensibly for the purpose of ridding Italy of the Lombards. An undercurrent running through the letters, however, concerns the queen's young grandson Athanagild, who was apparently being held hostage in Constantinople.⁷ While three of the letters are written in neutral language that is devoid of emotion, the other two, one to Athanagild and one to the Empress Constantina, display an outpouring of emotion that is quite astonishing, especially when we consider that the intended function of these was as diplomatic correspondence.⁸ In the letter attached to the first embassy, Brunhild greets her grandson *dulcissimo nepoti nominando ineffabili desederio* (sic) *cuius aspectum frequenter desidero*.⁹ In him, she says, her sweet daughter is recalled.¹⁰

Andrew Gillett, "Love and grief in post-imperial diplomacy: the letters of Brunhild," in *Power and Emotions in the Roman World and Late Antiquity*, ed. Danijel Dzino and Barbara Sidwell, (Piscataway: 2010), 127–165, the dating of the embassies cannot be pinpointed precisely, in spite of earlier attempts to do so, such as Elena Malaspina, *Il Liber epistolarum della cancelleria austrasica (sec. V–VI)*, (Rome: 2001), 12–13.

⁷ These letters supplement the accounts of Gregory of Tours (*LH* 5.38, 8.28, 9.16) and Paul the Deacon (*HL* 3.21). Both report that Brunhild and Sigibert's daughter Ingund (Childebert's sister) had been sent to Spain around the year 580 to marry Hermenegild, son of the Visigothic king Leuwigild. Not long after, father and son fell out, a conflict some sources attribute to Hermenegild's conversion from Arianism to Catholicism. (This is the view of Gregory the Great, who raises Hermenegild's execution to a martyrdom in his *Dialogues* 3.13; for a contrasting view see John of Biclaro, *Chronicle*, 55.) The forces of the then Emperor Tiberius II Constantinus, who were present in Spain at the time – invading it according to Gregory – became involved in the dispute and when Leuwigild gained the upper hand and exiled his son, Ingund and her baby were either turned over to or captured by the Greeks and sent under escort to Constantinople. (Paul the Deacon's version is that Ingund tried to escape with the child after her husband's death and while fleeing back to Gaul fell into the hands of Greek soldiers stationed at the border.) At the time the young prince could not have been more than a few years old, his mother, who died en route, still a teenager.

⁸ *epistolae Austrasicae* 27 and 44. Gillett, "Love and Grief," 1–30, discusses the role such emotion can play in diplomatic exchanges; cf. Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: 2006), *passim*, for a comprehensive discussion of emotions, their expression, and their social function. Also Barbara Rosenwein, "Writing and emotions in Gregory of Tours," in W. Pohl and P. Herold, eds., *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens: Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz* (Vienna: 2002a), 23–32 and "Worrying about emotions in history," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002) 821–845. Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge: 2007), 474–478 describes how public emotional displays can be an expression of ethnicity.

⁹ *ibid.*, 27. [...to my most sweet grandson that I yearn for with unutterable desire and whose face I often desire to see...]

Repeating her salutations *dulcissime celsitudini vestrae*, she advises the boy that she and his uncle Childebert II are sending an embassy to the emperor to secure his release. In her letter to the empress – which was written to accompany a second embassy¹¹ – the queen takes her emotional expression a great deal further. She laments that her grandson has been wandering in captivity since his earliest days and implores the empress to return that *dulce pignus* of her daughter; the queen has been tormented *de morte geniti*, but will be relieved by the speedy restoration of that daughter's offspring. She further expresses the hope that Constantina may never lose her son Theodosius by having him torn from her embrace.

Can we take these outpourings at face value? It is tempting to do so, if only because such appeals are appropriate to a woman who has lost both a daughter and a grandson under tragic circumstances. We must proceed with caution, however, for a closer look reveals the tell-tale signs of a staged performance. A major clue is that emotive language of this nature is not appropriate for diplomatic communication. The letters would have escaped censure, however, because they were packaged ostensibly for the consumption of another female and a young child. Since diplomatic correspondence was always declaimed orally at court, however, the queen's expressions of grief at Athanagild's plight would have reached a wide audience. Court members, as though eavesdroppers at the door of the women's quarters, would doubtless have felt it beneath their dignity to acknowledge the emotional content they were hearing, but behind the scenes may have felt compelled to act upon it.¹² Brunhild's grief-stricken display, therefore, was likely nothing more than manipulative posturing designed to convince the Greeks of the injustice of their actions, thus giving the Franks a psychological advantage over them in the upcoming

¹⁰ Gregory of Tours, *LH* 8.28, reports that Ingund died in Carthage; Paul the Deacon, *HL* 3.21, opts for Sicily.

¹¹ Gillett, "Love and Grief," 5–6.

¹² Gillett, "Love and Grief," 20–21, is convinced that these letters were "scripts for oral performance," rendering Brunhild's supposed grief a dramatisation only. Gillett also discusses the artifice of sending a letter to a child too young to read it. A letter was also sent by Childebert to Theodosius, son of the emperor, who was a child at the time.

negotiations.¹³ This likelihood increases when we consider the apparent ease with which Brunhild and Childebert later made peace with Leuwigild's son Reccared, brother of Hermenegild, even promising Childebert's other sister Chlodosind to him in marriage.¹⁴ In contrast, Childebert's uncle Guntram, king of Burgundy, refused to even receive Reccared's envoys because of the treatment Ingund had suffered at the hands of the Visigoths.¹⁵

Similar language and emotional expression can be seen in three mid-seventh century letters of Herchenefreda to her son Bishop Desiderius of Cahors. These are not found in the bishop's letter collection, but were inserted into the *vita Desiderii* by its unknown author.¹⁶ The first two were written while Desiderius was resident at the court of King Dagobert.¹⁷ There is great intensity in their expressions of affection. Desiderius is his mother's *dulcissimus atque amantissimus filius* in one and her *dulcissimus et desiderantissimus filius* in the other. She pleads for his prayers and longs for his success in passionate terms and since these were written for private consumption, we have little reason to doubt the genuine nature of her feelings, although the intense emotional tone still sounds excessive to modern ears. The third letter was written after the murder of Desiderius' brother Rusticus, his predecessor in the see of Cahors.¹⁸ Here the writer's emotion has increased almost to the point of hysterics. Calling herself *misera mater* and Desiderius *piissimum pignus*, Herchenefreda mourns the death of her husband and her other two sons and pleads with Desiderius to take every precaution not to rush *in*

¹³ Gillett, "Love and Grief," 12ff. argues the latter; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 115, assumes the former.

¹⁴ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 172 also points this out, but not in connection with the letters. The proposed marriage never took place.

¹⁵ *LH*, 9.16.

¹⁶ These letters form Chapters 9, 10, and 11 of the *vita Desiderii*, MGH, SRM, 4(II). XV. Cf. Dronke, *Women Writers*, 29–30; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 154–5.

¹⁷ Dagobert was the son of Chlothar II, above.

¹⁸ *vita Desiderii* 11. Desiderius' brother Syagrius had died previously, and the death of Rusticus left Herchenefreda with one son remaining out of three.

interitum.¹⁹ As for herself, she mourns, *ego prae nimio dolore vitam meam amittere suspicor*.²⁰

After the death of his older brother, Desiderius became his mother's closest, and maybe her only, male relative. He would thus be responsible for providing for her, a fact which would have intensified their relationship and possibly also altered the conventions in which it was expressed. It is noteworthy that none of these letters were included in her son's collection, nor do any letters survive that he sent to her.²¹ This does not mean that Desiderius did not correspond with his mother, or that he did not appreciate her letters to him, but it does suggest that cultural mores, combined with personal choice, dictated that such emotive expression, appropriate to the women in one's family, was best kept private.²²

The writer of the *vita Desiderii* had his own reasons for disregarding this convention. At the end of his description of the murder of Desiderius' older brother Rusticus and the grief to both Desiderius and his mother that resulted from it, the writer alludes to the frequent letters that Herchenefreda customarily sent to her youngest son. According to his own words, the author inserted these maternal letters, which he found in the archives *apud nos*, into the *vita* so that from them attention might be drawn to what kind of mother she was, and how she wished her son to conduct his life. The three letters, all written at different times and for different purposes, are thus lumped together and divorced from their original function as communication. At the same time, Herchenefreda's private and passionate outpourings to a family member are displayed publicly. This results in a significant distortion of their original purpose as they are integrated into a new text and become subject to the agenda of the author of the *vita*.

¹⁹ Herchenefreda's husband Salvius had died when Desiderius was quite young: *vita Desiderii* 3.

²⁰ *ibid.*, [I suppose that I will die from so much grief].

²¹ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 154–5.

²² For example, Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 68, argue that Avitus was squeamish regarding the circulation of matters he considered private family affairs, citing his Preface to the *de consolatoria castitatis laude*, in which he expresses this concern.

The final group of letters in the emotional category are to be found in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* and are from the woman Berthgyth to her brother Balthard.²³ According to Otloh of St. Emmeram, an eleventh-century Benedictine monk who composed a *vita* of St. Boniface, Berthgyth was a close relative of Lully who went with her mother Cynehild to Thuringia to join him in his work with the pagan Germans.²⁴ Near the end of her life, this woman wrote three emotionally-charged letters to her brother in which she recalls *quod a parentibus in iuventute derelicta fui et sola hic permansi*,²⁵ and begs that her brother either visit her or bring her back to England *ubi requiescunt corpora parentum nostrorum*.²⁶ Note that once again these emotional appeals are directed to a family member. Since in the same letter Berthgyth thanks Balthard for his letter and gifts, he must have sent a messenger to her at least once, but although appreciative of this attention, Berthgyth's intense longing is not satisfied. She wants to see her brother in person *quamvis unius diei spatium sit*.²⁷ Her distress permeates the letters so thoroughly that her style has been compared to that of Anglo-Saxon women's laments such as "Wulf and Eadwacer,"²⁸ and indeed her language brings this genre to mind by such sentiments as *quid est frater mi quod tam longum tempus intermisisti quod venire tardasti?* and *O frater o frater mi, cur potes mentem parvitatis meae adsiduo merore, fletu atque tristitia die noctuque caritatis tuae absentia adfligere?*²⁹ As these sentiments indicate, Berthgyth

²³ These are to be found in *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* as 143, 147, and 148; they have no clear chronological order and I treat them as a group.

²⁴ Otloh of St. Emmeram, *vita Bonifatii libri duo* ed. Wilhelm Levison, in MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, v. 57 (Hannover: 1905), 111–217; cf. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers*, 30–1; also Helen Damico and A.H. Olsen, *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Indianapolis: 1990), 37–9. According to MGH editor E. Dümmler, Cynehild was the abbess of a convent in Thuringia.

²⁵ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 148. [I was forsaken by my parents in my youth and remained here alone].

²⁶ *ibid.*, [where rest the bodies of our parents].

²⁷ *ibid.*, [if only for the space of a single day].

²⁸ Dronke, *Women Writers*, 30–1, who also comments that Berthgyth's heightened language goes beyond "any devices deployed by the women who wrote to Boniface."

²⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 143. [Why is it, my brother, that you have allowed such a long time to pass and are so late coming]? [Oh brother, oh my brother, why do you afflict my poor little mind with constant grief, tears and sadness day and night by the absence of Your Charity]?

moves beyond expressing her grief and despair to her brother and begins to reproach him for causing her pain by his neglect. *Iam ego certum teneo*, she ends the letter, *quod tibi cura non est de mea parvitate*.³⁰

Two of Berthgyth's letters have attached verses that combine Anglo-Saxon poetic elements such as alliteration and half-lines with Latin language and syntax. The following is an example of one of these:

<i>Pro me, quaero, oramina</i>	<i>precum: pudent precipua</i>
<i>Tua formosa famina,</i>	<i>tuae sophae.....entiae,</i>
<i>Ubi nova ac vetera</i>	<i>utens dira discrimina</i>
<i>Christus abolet crimina</i>	<i>cum inmensa clementia,</i>
<i>Ut armata, angelicis</i>	<i>vallata legionibus</i>
<i>Dextro adlever latere</i>	<i>dialique maiestate.</i>
<i>Have, care crucicola,</i>	<i>salutate a sorore:</i>
<i>Fine tenus feliciter</i>	<i>famam serva simpliciter.</i> ³¹

[I seek from you on my behalf	especial prayers. These will reveal
the lovely utterances	of your wisdom and craft.
Both old and new,	using dire judgment,
Christ will wipe out evil deeds	with his immense mercy.
So that armed and fortified	with angelic legions,
I may be lifted up to the right side	by the heavenly majesty.
Hail dear worshipper of the Cross	(now) greeted by your sister!
Joyfully and without guile	guard her reputation to the end].

The calm and reflective, even hopeful tone of the poem is in stark contrast to the histrionics of the letters. Berthgyth's second poem is also a calm and happy piece attached to a highly-emotional letter. This makes it difficult to discern her actual state of mind. We may be seeing here a caricature of female emotion that has little to do with real feelings, but that was carefully designed to gain attention from a withholding male family member on whom she was dependent. Because of the scarcity of the sources, we cannot tell if such window-dressing was a function of relationships between dependent females

³⁰ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 143. [I am certain that you don't care about me at all].

³¹ *ibid.*, 148. Such octosyllabic couplets are typical of those composed by Aldhelm and his students, see Michael Lapidge, "Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse," *Romanobarbarica* 10 (1988-89) 443-83, repr. in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (Oxford: 1996), 247-69; also Dronke, *Women Writers*, 32.

and their male relatives in general, or whether Berthgyth's was a special case. We also have no way of knowing what kind of impression her appeals made on her brother.

My argument that a high emotional tone was considered appropriate and even necessary to female epistolography in some cases is supported by two poetic epistles composed by Venantius Fortunatus.³² These are written in Radegund's voice to two of her male relatives in Constantinople: Amalfrid, who fled there when the Franks overthrew Thuringia, and when the news came back that he had died, another to Artachis, possibly his son.³³ The occasion was the request for a fragment of the True Cross from Emperor Justin and Empress Sophia. This relic was to be placed in Radegund's newly-established monastery at Poitiers, and the poems were crafted to establish Radegund's credentials with the Greeks.³⁴ In writing these, Fortunatus took on the role of a woman expressing herself to male family members, and since the poems are replete with the most exaggerated lamentations of pain and distress, clearly the poet felt these were appropriate to the situation. Like Berthgyth's, these letters bring to mind Anglo-Saxon women's laments.³⁵ Their performative aspects also bear close parallels to the above letters of Brunhild to the Byzantine court, in that Amalfrid and Artachis were in actuality not the

³² There is an ongoing debate over the authorship of these poems. Karen Cherewatuk, "Radegund and epistolary tradition," in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, ed. K. Cherewatuk & U. Wiethaus (Philadelphia: 1993), 20–45 argues they were composed by Radegund, as does Dronke, *Women Writers*, 27–8. F. Leo, editor of the works of Venantius Fortunatus in the MGH, believed they were the work of Fortunatus; George, *VF: Poems*, 116, agrees, as do I. I am not suggesting that Radegund had no input into her own letters, but that they were a collaborative effort between her and Fortunatus. Why would she not make use of his skill and expertise on such an important occasion?

³³ *Venantii Fortunati opera*, MGH, AA, 4.1 & 4.2. For French translation see Marc Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat Poèmes* (Paris, 1998); for a selection in English: Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool: 1995). *appendix carminum* 1 is addressed to Amalfrid; *app. carm.* 3 to Artachis.

³⁴ George, *VF: Poems*, 116 n. 21.

³⁵ for example, from *appendix carminum* 3 to Artachis: *omnibus extinctis, heu viscera dura dolentis / qui super unus eras, Amalfrid, iaces. Sic Radegundis enim post tempora longa requiror / pertulit haec triste pagina vestra loqui*. [Now you lie dead, Amalfrid, you who alone survived when all others died! Alas! the harsh suffering of the one left to mourn! For this they seek out Radegund after such a long time! This is what your mournful message has to tell me].

intended audience. During the oral delivery of the poems, members of the court would be invited to listen in, as it were, as the putative female author poured out her grief to her cousins over the destruction of their mutual homeland. Hopefully, this cultured and elegant performance would convince the hearers that Radegund was a serious candidate for the requested relics.³⁶

These letters as a whole have certain features in common that shed light on the use of emotional expression by women in an epistolographical setting. Firstly, the intense grief, passion, desperation, love, yearning, and so on belong to women's writing alone; there are no parallels in the letters written by men. This is clear, for example, when we contrast Brunhild's emotional letter to her grandson Athanagild with that sent by her son Childebert II to the same boy on the same occasion. Even though the child is his nephew, the king addresses him in formal and emotionless tones.³⁷ Secondly, our sources strongly suggest that women wrote letters with unrestrained emotional content only to other women and male family members. Thirdly, under normal circumstances letters of this nature seem to have been considered private and did not make their way into letter collections. This does not necessarily mean that they were destroyed, however, and the code of privacy could be disregarded by later writers, such as the author of the *vita Desiderii*, who wished to use them for their own purposes. Fourthly, as long as the appearance of the above conventions was observed, "designer" letters with staged emotion could be created for public display in order to manipulate others into action or persuade them to a perspective beneficial to the letter-writer. (That this last was general practice is suggested by the fact that both Radegund and Brunhild – good queen, bad queen – indulged in it to further their goals). Finally, the use of emotion was a choice, and the fact that women as widely separated as Brunhild, Herchenefreda, Berthgyth, and

³⁶ Whether Radegund herself composed the poems would likely not have mattered in the slightest to the audience at Constantinople. At any rate, the bid was successful, as reported by Gregory of Tours, *LH* 9.40.

³⁷ *epistolae austrasicae* 28. It opens formally as follows: *Praeentis oportunitatis relevamur compendio, per quam, quod parentillae redhibemus ex affectu, saltem epistolarum repraesentemus eloquio*. [We are pleased to take advantage of this opportunity to at least convey in the form of a letter what we owe through feelings of kinship].

Radegund took up this option at times when communicating by letter, suggests that such posturing was normative across boundaries of chronology, geography, and function.

Two letters in the Merovingian collections depart from the above norm in that they belong in the emotional category, yet are written from a woman to a man to whom, as far as we know, she is unrelated. Both are early letters in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*. The first is addressed to Wynfrith from an abbess Egburga.³⁸ The writer laments the death of her brother Oshere, whom she loved dearly. With Oshere's death, Boniface has become both father and brother to her. An even more bitter separation has come about by the pilgrimage of her sister Wethburga, who is now reported to be a recluse in Rome, while her grieving sibling can only wait behind in this vale of tears and mourn her loss. The abbess longs for one sight of her beloved friend; she is weighed down by her sins and in despair, and begs for his favour, his prayers, and the solace of a relic or at least a few written words.

The second exception is from an otherwise unknown Abbess Eangyth and her daughter Bugga to the missionary Boniface. In it the abbess recounts her difficulties in strongly plaintive terms:

*amantissime frater, ...tibi soli indicare volumus et Deus solus testis est nobis quas cernis interlitas lacrimis: quod multis miseriarum molibus velud gravissima sarcina aut pressura premente, depressi sumus et saecularium rerum tumultibus.... haut secus animarum nostrarum naviculae magnis miseriarum machinis et multifaria calamitatum quantitate quatiantur...*³⁹

[Most beloved brother...to you alone, as God is our witness, we desire to indicate by this tear-stained letter, with how many troubles and what great weight of pressures and worldly burdens we are oppressed...thus the fragile little boats of our souls are shaken by the grindings of our miseries and the multitude of our calamities...]

The author continues in this vein for some time before revealing that she and Bugga have been seeking a faithful friend to whom they can confide such matters. It is only near the end of the letter that Eangyth discloses her real reason for writing: she and Bugga wish to

³⁸ *S. Boniface et Lulli epistolae* 13.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 14. Note the frequent use of alliteration.

make a pilgrimage to Rome but there are those who are against this. Would Boniface lend his support to such a venture? We do not have Boniface's reply, but we do have his views on women's pilgrimages to Rome in general, which appear to have changed drastically over his lifetime. In a letter dated a few years later, Boniface replies to a certain Bugga, who has asked his advice on a pilgrimage to Rome.⁴⁰ At this point Boniface encourages the pilgrimage. Bugga is to prepare for the journey, but must wait for an invitation from a certain Wiethburga, who is living in Rome as a recluse; this will happen when the Saracen assaults in the area of Rome have subsided.⁴¹ Thirty years later, however, in a letter to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury, Boniface disparages women's pilgrimages to Rome in the strongest of terms.⁴² The parade of women travelling to Rome must cease, he states to Cuthbert, for many perish and most of the rest lose their virtue. There is hardly a town in Lombardy, Francia or Gaul without a courtesan of English stock.

The letters from these women to Boniface are indeed atypical, but several points serve to modify this. Firstly, Boniface and these women may indeed have been related, as was the case with many of his correspondents. Certainly the language of the letters is familial. Egburga, for instance, names Boniface *olim frater, nunc autem ambo pariter in Domino dominorum abba atque frater appellaris*.⁴³ On the other hand, the letter from Eangyth and her daughter seems to be carefully scripted in such a way as to gain Boniface's assent to a sort of adoption of him as a surrogate relative. These conditions would perhaps allow the writer to consider herself Boniface's dependent, and to express herself emotionally in a way appropriate to that relationship. The letters' familiarity could also be accounted for

⁴⁰ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 27. Ernest Dümmler, editor of the letters of Boniface in the MGH, tentatively dates it 725, while M. Tangl, later MGH editor of the same collection, dates it more tentatively as *ante* 738. It is not clear whether the recipient is the same Bugga as above. If it is, it would appear that the earlier pilgrimage never took place. Yet another Bugga was the recipient of a poem by Aldhelm; she may be the abbess that was given grants of land by Aethelred to build a monastery. The name is common and according to Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm*, 40, is likely a nickname derived from the very common name-ending *burg*.

⁴¹ This Wiethburga is probably Egburga's sister, above.

⁴² *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 78.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 13. [once brother, now may you be called both father and brother in the Lord of lords].

by Anglo-Saxon conventions between men and women. Since these seem to have allowed more freedom in expression between the two, regardless of relationship, the women perhaps felt free to address appeals to Boniface that were highly emotive. I discuss this last point further below.

1.2 Non-Emotional Letters Written by Women

As already noted, women did not always choose to express themselves in a high emotion tone when they composed letters. Besides the emotional ones of Brunhild in the *epistolae Austrasicae* above, for example, there are three in the same collection that contain not a trace of emotion. One of these, part of the group destined for the first embassy to Constantinople documented by this collection, is addressed to the empress Constantina, the same woman to whom Brunhild later sent the overwrought appeal discussed above. This earlier group also contains one from Brunhild to the emperor Mauricius and another to his mother-in-law the dowager empress Anastasia. These are without exception strictly formal and contain only generic greetings and diplomatic commonplaces; their main function appears to be simply to commend the embassy and accompany oral messages.

Another example without emotional content is Radegund's letter to the bishops of Gaul, which is not found in a collection, but is contained in Gregory of Tours' *Histories*.⁴⁴ It is impossible to say if she actually composed the letter herself, but its legal language suggests that she at least had help with it. One thing is certain: this time the writing was not done by Venantius Fortunatus, as he did not appear in Gaul until several years later. Although Gregory calls the text a letter, it goes beyond the bounds of what we would normally term such, being in actuality a legal instrument documenting the foundation, in the late 550s, of Radegund's monastery of Holy Cross at Poitiers.⁴⁵ It was also meant to be a form of protection for the community: Radegund requests that the letter be preserved

⁴⁴ LH 9.42. For discussion, cf. Jane Jeffrey, "Radegund and the letter of foundation," in *Women Writing Latin* Vol. 2, ed. L. J. Churchill et al (New York: 2002), 11–23.

⁴⁵ At the time of establishment the monastery was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

in the archives of the cathedral church and entreats the bishops and their successors *effusis cum lacrimis* to protect the community in time of trouble.⁴⁶

Interestingly, Gregory's narrative goes on to illustrate the letter fulfilling that very purpose thirty years after its composition. Some time after Radegund's death in 587, two nuns related to the ruling family led a revolt against the non-royal Leubovera, Agnes' successor as abbess, that caused a great deal of difficulty and damage.⁴⁷ Leubovera, who had doubtless been made aware of Radegund's letter and its contents, read it out publicly. She also sent copies of it to all the bishops in the Poitiers area. Leubovera's actions appropriated Radegund's earlier plea for protection from the bishops and applied it to her own time and situation – just as Radegund had designed it. It is not clear if these actions were efficacious in suppressing the revolt in any specific way, but we are able to see an epistolary petition designed for reuse that was actually put to that reuse after the death of the original writer. This is a situation very different from that of Herchenefreda's letters to Desiderius, which were intended to be private but which were later exposed in a much more public document, a *vita*.

Another woman's letter in the non-emotional category is contained in the *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* and is also related to the foundation of Radegund's community of nuns at Poitiers.⁴⁸ Radegund and Agnes had previously written to Caesaria the Younger, successor of her elder namesake, requesting that she send them a copy of the *regula virginum* that Bishop Caesarius of Arles (502-542) had drawn up for his sister Caesaria the Elder when he placed her over his monastery for women at Arles.⁴⁹ Along with the

⁴⁶ LH 9.42. [with profuse outpourings of tears]. Note that even here we cannot escape *effusis lacrimis*, although in this letter emotion does not predominate. Its presence, however, in what is otherwise a formal document, suggests that female emotion in written form was not only appropriate, but expected and required.

⁴⁷ LH 9.39–43 and 10.15–17 covers the revolt in detail. While it caused quite a stir, as reflected in Gregory's breathless account, the situation was handled firmly and resolved satisfactorily.

⁴⁸ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 11.

⁴⁹ Caesaria the Younger was probably the niece of Caesaria the Elder and Caesarius. For further information regarding Caesaria the Younger and a translation of her letter to

requested Rule, Caesaria sent a letter full of advice and instruction. In it she quotes extensively from a letter of Bishop Caesarius that served as a prototype Rule for the nuns before the actual *regula virginum* was promulgated. This letter remained popular even after it was superseded by the Rule and was cited by various authors up to the ninth century.⁵⁰ Caesaria does not cite or refer to Caesarius or his letter in any way in her own. Indeed from her tone, which parallels that of bishops admonishing and advising others, the abbess might almost be said to have taken on the role of bishop herself in her letter to Radegund and Agnes.⁵¹ We can only speculate as to whether she would have addressed a male recipient in such a fashion.

The younger Caesaria had had her hands full since Caesarius died in 542.⁵² The next bishop was the short-lived Auxanius, who languished due to a lack of royal support, but his successor was Aurelianus, a favourite of Childebert I, who together with the king and his queen Ultrogotha founded monasteries for both men and women in Arles that threatened to undermine the prestige of Caesarius' earlier foundations. Aurelianus even wrote Rules for these modelled on Caesarius' own.⁵³ By the time Caesaria wrote her letter to Radegund and Agnes, the bishopric had passed to Sapaudus, a highly respected and politically prominent ecclesiastic.⁵⁴ He was the bishop who compiled the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*, the collection that undergirded the privileges of the bishopric of

Radegund and Richild (Agnes), cf. Jo Ann McNamara et al., eds. *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: 1992), 112–118.

⁵⁰ See Appendix of Summaries for a summary of this letter of Caesarius, which is number 21 in *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae*; it is translated and discussed in William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool: 1994), 127–139.

⁵¹ Examples of bishops in this mode abound: Desiderius to Aspasia *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* Liber 1.14; Remigius of Rheims to Clovis I *epistolae Austrasicae* 1, 2; Troianus of Saintes to Eumerius of Nantes *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 2; Caesarius of Arles to the bishops of Gaul *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 35 and many more. I discuss these fully in Chapter 3, “Bishops’ Letters,” Section 3.

⁵² Caesaria the Elder had died many years before, probably around 525, according to W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: the Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Liverpool: 1994), 138.

⁵³ The letters pertaining to the election of these bishops: for Auxanius, *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 39, 40, 41, 42; for Aurelianus, 43, 44, 45; cf. W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 262–3.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 264–5.

Arles, an accomplishment that argues for his strong commitment to Arles in the ongoing controversy between the sees of Arles and Vienne for primacy in Gaul.⁵⁵ Sapaudus did not shrink from censuring even the pope: Pelagius I received a scathing letter from him for yielding to the Eastern bishops and condemning the Three Chapters.⁵⁶ At the Council of Arles in 554 this energetic bishop took steps to increase episcopal control of monasteries and particularly of abbesses. Pressure from these powerful bishops, whose interests and activities tended to threaten her own, may have contributed to a certain resentment or anxiety in the by now elderly Caesaria, who likely saw herself as the sole remaining inheritor not only of the family name, but also of the spiritual mantle of her uncle Caesarius.⁵⁷ This may explain the need she felt to assert her spiritual heritage in her letter. There is no way of knowing whether the recipients were aware that the letter they received with the Rule repeated much of what Caesarius wrote to his sister fifty years earlier.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Baltimore: 1989), 48 n. 26. The controversy is documented in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* and the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*. Cf. Chapter 3, “Bishops’ Letters,” Section 4.1.

⁵⁶ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 5.

⁵⁷ Caesaria’s only other relative of whom we are aware, the deacon Teridius, nephew of Caesarius and likely steward of the women’s monastery, was probably dead by this time, as he is not mentioned after 545. In his *Testamentum*, Chapter 11, Caesarius conferred on Caesaria the Younger a cloak that she had previously made for him; cf. Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Letters*, 76. Caesaria appears again in the Prologue to *liber 1* of the *vita Caesarii*. Here the writer claims to be writing in response to a request from the abbess, although Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Letters*, 4, believes this could be merely conventional.

⁵⁸ Venantius Fortunatus had evidently been told the tale of how Radegund had requested the Rule from Caesaria even though it all happened before his arrival in Gaul. He mentions the heritage in Poitiers of Caesarius and the two Caesarias in *appendix carminum* 13, addressed to Radegund and Agnes. The poem opens with: *sic vos Caesarii monitis honor ornet in orbe / atque ambas caro cum Patre Christus amet / sic hic Caesaria et praecelsa Caesaria surgat / ut per vos priscus hic reparetur honor*. [Thus may the honour of Caesarius equip you in this world by his teachings / and may Christ with his well-beloved Father cherish you both. / Thus may the renowned Caesaria and the other Caesaria rise up in this place / so that through you their former honour may be renewed]. Fortunatus also mentions Radegund’s life under the Rule in 8.1.60: *regula Caesarii linea nata sibi est* [The Rule of Caesarius is a lifeline formed for you]. Fortunatus nowhere seems to mention Caesaria’s letter, however.

There remains a final group of three letters in this category. These were composed by Anglo-Saxon women and addressed to the missionary Boniface.⁵⁹ Leobgytha or Lioba, who mentions in her letter that she studied poetry under Abbess Eadburga of Thanet, followed Boniface to the continent. He later created her abbess of Bischofsheim in Hesse. Bugga, possibly the daughter of Eangyth noted above, was an abbess somewhere in England. She did not join Boniface in his missionary endeavours, but kept in touch with him and exchanged gifts and books. The third correspondent, Cena, is unknown, but was possibly an abbess somewhere in Gaul.⁶⁰ These letters to Boniface express an *amicitia* in terms that are virtually indistinguishable from the letters of friendship and connection written by Boniface – and his successor Lully – back to the women.⁶¹ Encouragement, affection, and praise for the other's accomplishments are expressed; prayers are requested and gifts exchanged; sometimes verses are attached. These mutual and impartial exchanges between men and women have no parallels elsewhere in the Merovingian collections.

2 Letters to Women

2.1 The *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*

Neither Boniface nor Lully “dumb down” their style to accommodate their women friends. Indeed, in only one way do Boniface's letters of *amicitia* to men differ from those he wrote to women: he does not ask the latter for counsel on ecclesiastical issues. In the mid-730's, for example, Boniface became much concerned about a marriage that involved a man marrying his godson's mother. Boniface, who had assented to the union, learned to his horror that such a relationship of spiritual consanguinity was a serious offence. He questioned three male correspondents regarding the matter and requested the

⁵⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 29 from Leobgytha, 15 from Bugga, and 97 from Cena.

⁶⁰ This is the opinion of Ephraim Emerton, ed. and trans. *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York: 1976), 151, n. 1.

⁶¹ There are no letters in the collection from women to Lully, but there are several from himself to women, two of them the same abbesses with whom Boniface corresponded. *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 70 to Eadburga; 100 to Leobgytha; 98 to an unknown abbess and nun. Lully likely also composed 49, from himself and two others to the abbess Cuneburga.

canons governing it – an otherwise unknown Abbot Duddo, Bishop Pehthelm of Candida Casa (Whithorn Priory), and Nothelm, Archbishop of Canterbury.⁶² Although several letters to Abbess Eadburga of Thanet are dated around the same time, and although Boniface obviously had great respect for the abbess' ability – did he not ask her to produce an edition of St. Peter's epistles in gold lettering?⁶³ – he did not bring up this problem with her. This is all the more curious in the light of Leobgytha's comment to Boniface that her teacher Eadburga made a habit of pursuing the study of divine law.⁶⁴

What is responsible for the distinction between the letters of Boniface and Lully to women, which embody an *amicitia* similar in almost every respect to that between male correspondents, and that of other male writers, whose letters to women tend almost exclusively toward the instructional and advisory? Have circumstances of literacy and education improved so much for women by the mid-eighth century that they are now accepted into the inner sanctum of *amicitia* with male writers? And if so, should we be thanking the Pippinids for this development?⁶⁵ The answers are no and no. Evidence is non-existent for the former and as for the latter, the Carolingians moved rather in the opposite direction by separating women – even religious women – from association with male clerics, and limiting their participation in sacred rites.⁶⁶ Does Anglo-Saxon ethnicity make a difference? This seems the most likely answer, as there is scholarly consensus that Anglo-Saxon female religious enjoyed certain powers that were inaccessible to women in Francia, where there was already a long history of opposition from bishops to

⁶² *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 34, 32, and 33 respectively.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 35.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁵ The Boniface collection is almost Carolingian; not once is a Merovingian ruler even mentioned. When Boniface wished secular patronage he petitioned the Pippinids (48, 57, 60, 61, 93, 107). We have little idea of his political astuteness, although he was certainly aware of Pippin's status both before and after the latter deposed the last Merovingian king Childeric III in 751 or 752. Shortly after that date Boniface addressed Pippin as king for the first time (Letter 93).

⁶⁶ Suzanne F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society* (Philadelphia: 1981), 143, cites various charters documenting this.

the activities of female clerics.⁶⁷ This Anglo-Saxon convention seems to have extended to styles of written interaction, with a resultant blurring of boundaries between male and female clerical *amicitia* that is not present in the letters with Frankish authors. We will turn next to a writer who seems to have burst through the conventions of both.

2.2 Venantius Fortunatus, Food, and Abstinence at Holy Cross

As noted, Venantius Fortunatus addressed a large percentage of his poetic output to women. The vast majority is addressed to his close friends Radegund and Agnes, founder and abbess respectively of Holy Cross monastery at Poitiers, and a major portion of these involves food and food preparation. (In contrast, only two letters to his male correspondents relate to food: a petition to the court on behalf of Radegund in which barley bread and wheat bread are used as metaphors for rustic and refined speech,⁶⁸ and an occasional piece to Gogo thanking him for dinner).⁶⁹ Many times gifts of comestibles are sent back and forth between the three friends, while at other times copious meals are consumed. The verses documenting these exchanges show a lively interest in the subject of food along with a jocular approach to its consumption; further, they are full of information regarding both diet and customs of food preparation.

As Fortunatus describes them, dinners seem to have been veritable banquets served on decorated dishes of silver, marble, or glass.⁷⁰ Meats included chicken, beef, and goose; one platter was heaped with all of these and had a ring of seafood around the edge as well.⁷¹ Vegetables appear to have been eaten cooked rather than raw and were served with either a butter/oil or honey sauce; Fortunatus' sweet tooth made him particularly

⁶⁷ See Wemple, *Women*, 141 for Frankish women. For a sampling of works on women in Anglo-Saxon England see Doris Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (Boston: 1957); Carol Hough, "Women," in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Oxford: 1999); Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: 2008).

⁶⁸ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 10.3.1.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 7.2.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 11.10.

⁷¹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 11.9.9–11 describes such a platter; 7.2 to Gogo mentions these three meats.

fond of the latter.⁷² Milk could be served with the meal⁷³ but was sometimes sent as a gift,⁷⁴ as was cream⁷⁵ and on one occasion at Christmas, cheese.⁷⁶ Fruit was placed on the dinner table in decorated baskets but was also a popular gift along with nuts: the poet at various times sent sloes, mulberries, apples, and chestnuts to Radegund and Agnes.⁷⁷ According to the accompanying verses, the sloes and the chestnuts were uncultivated and gathered wild. As the poet urges the women not to be afraid to try these *silvestria poma*, as he terms the sloes, they must not have been a common food.⁷⁸ Fortunatus also records a gift of plums from the women accompanied by a batch of eggs – *candida et nigella* – with an order from Agnes to eat two of the eggs.⁷⁹ Fortunatus obliged her by eating four: *me geminis ovis iussistis sero cibari / vobis vera loquor: quattuor ipse bibi*.⁸⁰ Note that the verb *bibi* used here suggests that the eggs were sucked raw.

As neither oil nor butter is mentioned in the food poems, we cannot be certain whether the Poitiers region tended more to the butter-eating cuisine of the north or the Mediterranean olive oil-producing south. The poem that describes a vegetable dish as swimming *pingui* is unhelpful in this regard,⁸¹ but perhaps its very ambiguity is useful. It

⁷² *ibid.*, 11.10.4, 11.9.4.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 11.10.11.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 11.19.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 11.14. George, *VF: Poems*, 106, translates *crama* as butter; Michael Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor: 2009), 312, translates it as cream, which I believe is more correct. The problem is envisioning a cream that will hold its shape so the image makes sense. The cream the poet describes, thick enough to hold fingerprints together with an easily-broken crust, suggests a type of clotted cream such as has been popular in Devon and Cornwall for centuries, although I can find no evidence that such was ever made on the Continent. A type of *crème fraîche* or clabber is also possible, although these have no crust.

⁷⁶ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica appendix carminum* 11.3.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 11.13, 11.18, *app. carm.* 18 and 26. Sloes are the fruit of the blackthorn tree or *prunus spinosa*.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 11.18. [woody fruits]

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 11.20. [the white and the black]

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, [you have commanded too late that I eat two eggs / I say to you truly: I have consumed four]

⁸¹ 11.10.4 above. Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke, *Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: 1911), 6513, inclines to “butter,” but as the word is primarily an adjective meaning “fat, oily, rich,” we are no further ahead by its placement in this poem.

is possible that the writer himself was uncertain as to whether the sauce he was eating was oil or butter-based, an uncertainty that makes perfect sense geographically, for Poitiers is situated right at the latitude where we might expect a fusion of northern and southern cuisine. This argument is strengthened by reference to wine, mead and beer in the same sentence in Fortunatus' *vita Radegundis*; clearly there was also a fusion of Mediterranean and more northerly drinking habits. Wine is only rarely mentioned in the poems, once in a medicinal context and once, the Falernian, as a metaphor for eloquence.⁸² There is wine in abundance, however, in the *vitae Radegundis*, but always in the context of Radegund supplying wine to others.⁸³ According to Fortunatus, Radegund would touch no undiluted wine, mead or beer herself, but doled out undiluted sweet wine to paupers and lepers.⁸⁴ Baudonivia, bringing it closer to home, describes how a small cask of wine belonging to Radegund never ran dry, no matter how much was given out to the sisters. Her additional comment that a large number of jars and barrels of different vintages all ran dry before Radegund's small cask was used up suggests that a copious supply of wine was consumed by somebody at Holy Cross – if not by Radegund, then by others.⁸⁵

It is clear from these descriptions that nutrition at the women's monastery was more than adequate. Every food group is well represented in the poems with the exception of bread and grains, but this staple was likely ubiquitous and taken for granted, an argument supported by its usage as a metaphor for speech, above. It is also clear that food and drink were both plentiful and served up with warmth and affection in settings where a guilt-free

⁸² See *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 11.4, in which Fortunatus and Agnes plead with Radegund to accept wine for her illness, and 5.1, where the poet praises the qualities of Martin of Braga.

⁸³ Two *vitae* are extant: one by Baudonivia, a nun raised as a child by Radegund, and one by Venantius Fortunatus himself. They are found in MGH, SRM 2. These are both in English translation in McNamara et al, *Sainted Women*, 70–105; cf. Ruth Wehlau, "Literal and symbolic: the language of asceticism in two lives of St. Radegund," *Florilegium* 19 (2002) 75–89; Jan Crawford and Marie Anne Mayeski, "Reclaiming an ancient story: Baudonivia's life of St. Radegund," in *Women Saints in World Religions*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Albany: 2000), 71–106.

⁸⁴ Venantius Fortunatus, *vita Radegundis*, 14, 18, 19.

⁸⁵ Baudonivia, *vita Radegundis*, 10.

pleasure in consumption and socializing permeated the gathering.⁸⁶ While we cannot be certain, the focus on food seems to indicate that there was some arrangement in place for the monastery to supply the poet's meals, and if what he ate was what was being served to the sisters, as one of his poems suggests,⁸⁷ such abundance and variety present a puzzle, as they undercut the notion of Holy Cross as a place where abstinence was desired and practised.⁸⁸ Indeed, the *regula virginum* of Caesarius, which as noted above was the Rule in place at the monastery, emphasized simplicity of food and drink and little of it. Only two meals per day were allowed and less during periods of fasting. At all times the sisters were to abstain from meat, poultry and fine wine.⁸⁹

There is no doubt that Radegund herself had a strong reputation as an ascetic, a reputation that has continued to this day.⁹⁰ In the letter of Caesaria the Younger noted above, the abbess admonishes Radegund against an overly severe lifestyle, a comment that stands as a testimony to her perceived asceticism well before Venantius Fortunatus appeared on the scene.⁹¹ The *vita Radegundis* of Baudonivia stresses her subject's fondness for hair shirts,

⁸⁶ Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 196–8 discusses the fondness of the populace for *convivia* that Caesarius disparaged in his sermons, to no avail. Good cooks were also highly prized as evidenced by Gregory of Tours' lengthy story about his great-grandfather's cook Leo, who rescued his master's nephew from slavery by selling himself to a Frank and ingratiating himself with the man by cooking him meals fit for the royal palace, *LH* 3.15.

⁸⁷ *Venanti Fortunati opera poetica*, 11.8.3.

⁸⁸ McNamara et al, *Sainted Women*, 63, point out the contrast between Fortunatus' descriptions of life at Holy Cross in his *vita Radegundis* and that in his occasional poetry. They do not discuss the issue further however.

⁸⁹ *Regula virginum Caesarii Arelatensis* 30, 71. "Fine wine" is simply *vinum bonum* in the text, which was to be served only to the infirm or to those with delicate digestions. The *regula* is found in Germain Morin, ed. *Sancti Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis Opera Omnia*, II, *Opera Varia* (Maredsous: 1942), 99–124. For English translation see M. C. McCarthy, ed. and trans. *The Rule for Nuns of Caesarius of Arles* (Washington, D.C.: 1960).

⁹⁰ Radegund was an orphaned Thuringian princess who was captured by Chlothar I during his conquest of that country in 530. She became his wife, but after Chlothar executed her brother she fled and took up the religious life. In connection with her asceticism, a recent study, B. S. Bachrach and Jerome Kroll, *The Mystic Mind: The Psychology of Medieval Mystics and Ascetics* (Routledge: 2005), 129–145, examines the relationship between violence experienced in childhood and self-punishment later in life.

⁹¹ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 11.

vigils, and fasting.⁹² That of Fortunatus is no less emphatic; indeed, it adds a good deal more that is mentioned nowhere else, including quite revolting bodily punishments and deprivations.⁹³ The latter *vita* also describes the veneration of the populace, who lined the streets to watch her go into seclusion, climbing on the roofs to better catch a glimpse of her, and hailing her as an ascetic hero.⁹⁴ Moreover, Fortunatus often commends Radegund's abstinence in his *opera poetica*. In his little-studied piece entitled *ex nomine suo ad diversos*, for example, he compares her favourably to ascetic heroines of the past such as Eustochia, Paula, Thecla, Mary, Martha, and others,⁹⁵ while in a number of poems addressed directly to Radegund he praises her ascetic lifestyle as pleasing to the King of Heaven and indeed aiding his own entry into it.⁹⁶

Since Caesaria, Baudonivia, and Venantius Fortunatus all stress Radegund's asceticism in their work we need not seriously doubt her personal *vita apostolica*, but a few issues warrant comment. Firstly, while there is no evidence that Radegund actually joined the banquets that Fortunatus and Agnes enjoyed apart from gracing them with her presence, the overall tenor of the poems to her and Agnes and their focus on the pleasures of the table make it questionable that she fasted as continuously and severely as her *vitae* indicate. Moreover, her dietary abstinence is not without discrepancy. In his *vita Radegundis* Fortunatus states that from the time she was veiled, Radegund ate only coarse bread, legumes and green vegetables – no fruit, fish, or eggs.⁹⁷ Contrary to this, the poet's own verses report that he sent the women fruit and nuts and urged them both to partake, which he would hardly have done if Radegund's dietary restrictions precluded her eating them. On the other hand, the *regula virginum* does not forbid the eating of fruit, so we must remain uncertain as to whether Radegund broke some vow or other of

⁹² *vita Radegundis Baudoniviae*, 15 (hair shirt), 8 and 13 (vigils), 7 (fasting).

⁹³ *vita Radegundis Fortunati* 25 and 26 describes how Radegund bound her flesh with chains until the blood flowed, roasted her body with a heated brass plate, and then wore a hair shirt that scraped her skin further.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁵ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*, 8.1.41–6.

⁹⁶ For example, 8.5 and 8.8.13–4 in particular.

⁹⁷ *vita Radegundis Fortunati* 21.

her own, or whether we have caught Fortunatus in an error or deception, albeit a small one.

Many of Fortunatus' conflicted perspectives can be attributed to the hagiographical genre. This is evident when he supplies opposing interpretations of similar situations. In the *vita Radegundis*, for example, Fortunatus takes a position of breathless admiration when giving an account of Radegund's fasts. The first time she spent *quadragesima* enclosed in her cell, for example, she apparently ate nothing but herbs and greens and drank only two litres of water throughout the forty days.⁹⁸ On the other hand, there is no trace of such seriousness – or even much respect – as Fortunatus reacts with mock terror at the news of another fast at the monastery:

*Audivi fateor ieiunia longa parari
ad me si veniant, non toleranda gravant.
Expauesco famem quae iam vicina susurrat,
ne parietis iter transeat illa celer.
Mox quoque diffugiens vacuis me abscondo cavernis,
dum modo ieiuno non ego ventre domer.
Sed si nunc alios pietas et gratia pascit,
de me nulla mihi causa timoris erit.*⁹⁹

I have heard, I confess, that long fasts are prepared
if they come my way, their burden is not to be tolerated!
I fear the hunger that already whispers at my door,
hopefully it will pass by speedily and not jump over my wall!
Then I will run and hide myself in a deep cavern
so I will not be overcome by the hunger in my belly.
But if now piety and grace feed others
there is really no cause to fear for myself.

Another example so neatly reverses its perspective that we are tempted to believe Fortunatus borrowed the scenario from his own poem, tweaked it, and then inserted it into the *vita*. Radegund is working in the kitchen. In the *opera poetica*, the poet presents a lighthearted vignette of her performing her week of chores – a duty imposed as part of the Rule of Caesarius of Arles.¹⁰⁰ He rather cheekily pokes fun at her red-faced and

⁹⁸ *vita Radegundis Fortunati* 22.

⁹⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica appendix carminum* 30.

¹⁰⁰ McNamara et al, *Sainted Women*, 80 n. 69; *regula virginum* 14.

sweating appearance as she bustles about the kitchen while he sits idly by, his excuse being that he would not be much help because he is “*piger*.”¹⁰¹ In the *vita*, Radegund’s red face becomes excited fervour as she cheerfully scrubs vegetables, carries wood and water, and cleans up painstakingly afterward.¹⁰² The more intimate and humorous descriptions clearly belong to the private sphere, while the more formal are doubtless dressed up for public display.

At the end of the day, however, there is no getting around the fact that Caesarius’ *regula virginum* was not properly followed at Holy Cross in two major areas. One was in the area of dietary restrictions, which were clearly not obeyed by the community as a whole, and the other was the seemingly ubiquitous presence of Venantius Fortunatus himself, in spite of the many injunctions against consorting with men found in both the letter of Caesaria the Younger and in the Rule.¹⁰³ We can only speculate as to why Radegund did not hold herself and Agnes to the latter, and why she was either unwilling or unable to impose the recommended dietary strictures on the community of nuns and enforce them.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ [lazy, slow, dull] *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica appendix carminum* 28. In *appendix carminum* 22 the author unconvincingly describes the work he would do if only he wasn’t absent.

¹⁰² *vita Radegundis* 24.

¹⁰³ *regula virginum*, 36, 38. Only workmen and clergy or religious laymen who came to pray or celebrate Mass were permitted to enter the cloister; even then, they were not to associate with the sisters. Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow*, believes that Radegund and Agnes, bowing to pressure from the community, did at some point ban Fortunatus from the monastery. For this he cites 11.7 and App. Carm. 17 and 18. While this reading is possible, the wording remains ambiguous enough that I am not convinced by his arguments. This sort of debate arises when the poet’s language to the two women is given an erotic spin, which in turn prompts the belief that there was some illicit connection between them that was noticed by others. When placed in the tradition of amorous language between friends that is widespread in medieval epistolography, however, Fortunatus’ addresses to the women do not stand out as unusual in any way. A further point is that the poet would hardly have been elected as bishop of Poitiers in later life if he had been known to have seduced the founder and/or abbess of Holy Cross.

¹⁰⁴ Seasons of fasting such as Lent were observed at Holy Cross and these may have been strenuous (Fortunatus mourns Radegund’s absence during these in 8.8, 8.9, 8.10, 11.2); as noted above, however, the Rule orders a meager daily diet as well.

A final but separate point is that all the personal poems to the women are to be found in Book 11 and the *appendix carminum*. Most scholars agree that these were published last, after the deaths of the women, even though they were written much earlier. Due to some disorder in these last volumes, it has been argued that they were published by friends after the death of the poet himself.¹⁰⁵ This is a plausible argument in terms of the food poems and suggests that the poet, realizing the possible damage to Radegund's reputation that could result both from his presence with them and his descriptions of their meals together, held back the sensitive verses from publication during his lifetime.

2.3 Queen Brunhild and Pope Gregory the Great

Brunhild is documented by approximately twenty-five letters across several collections, including the *epistolae Austrasicae*, the *Venantii Fortunati opera*, the *epistolae Wisigoticae*, and the *registrum Gregorii*, that greatly enlarge our knowledge of her and her times when used in conjunction with Gregory of Tours' *libri historiarum decem* and the *chronicum Fredegaris*. Only a tiny portion, however, represent her own composition, and these are contributions to the web of diplomatic correspondence discussed above that allow few insights into the person herself. The poems of Fortunatus in which she appears are panegyrics to her and her husband Sigibert, while the few applicable *epistolae Wisigoticae* are about her but not to her. As far as the letters are concerned, therefore, she is best represented in the full flowering of her power and influence in her correspondence with Pope Gregory I, even though we are missing her side of the conversation and must depend solely on his replies to her letters. From the *registrum Gregorii* we are able to piece together the complex and symbiotic relationship that was forged between pope and queen.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford: 1992), 208–11 provides a full discussion of the publication of Fortunatus' work; it was W. Meyer, *Der Gelegenheitsdichter Fortunatus* (Berlin: 1901), 25–9, 108, who first advanced the argument that the last two books were published by friends after the poet's death. Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, lxx, agrees with this assessment.

¹⁰⁶ For a comparison of Gregory's letters to Brunhild with those to his other female correspondent see Walter J. Wilkins, "Submitting the neck of your mind: Gregory the Great and women of power," *The Catholic Historical Review* Vol. 77, No. 4 (Oct. 1991), 583–4. The writer's analysis is not exactly penetrating, however, and misses many of the

Gregory became pope in 590. Although he was the most prolific of letter writers, only a handful of the many extant epistles from the first five years of his pontificate are addressed to individuals in Gaul; whether this can be attributed to disinterest on the part of the pope, negligence or selection on the part of the compiler(s) of the *registrum*, or the vagaries of survival, is unclear.¹⁰⁷ The letters that do exist from those early years are mostly to do with the administration of the Roman estates in the Marseilles district. In August and September 595, however, the pope took it upon himself to clear up some unfinished business. A new bishop, Virgilius, had been appointed to the see of Arles in 588 and some time after, as was customary, letters reached the pope from both the bishop and the young Childebert II requesting that, according to tradition, Virgilius be confirmed as papal vicar and awarded the pallium.¹⁰⁸ Gregory sent off a cluster of letters to Gaul: a letter to Childebert's mother Brunhild requesting her patronage for Candidus, the administrator of the papal patrimony in Gaul, the pallium as requested to Virgilius, and a relic of St. Peter to Childebert.¹⁰⁹ Gregory was obviously aware of the simony that was rampant in the Gallic churches and in his letters he urged both Virgilius and Childebert to take action. Although the pope sang this refrain for the entire span of his pontificate, however, there is no evidence that he made any headway whatever.

By this time the mission to the Anglo-Saxons had become central in Gregory's mind. This is indicated by a letter also dated September 595 in which Gregory instructs Candidus to use the Gallic solidi from the patrimony, which were useless in Italy, to buy

unique features that characterize Gregory's relationship with Brunhild. From the perspective of church politics see Franca Ela Consolino, "Il papa et le regine: potere femminile e politica ecclesiastica nell'epistolario di Gregorio Magno," in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo, I: XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana in collaborazione con l'Ecole française de Rome* (Rome: 1990), 225–249.

¹⁰⁷ The *registrum Gregorii*, while large, is not complete. For English translation see John R.C. Martyn, ed. and trans. *The Letters of Gregory the Great* 3 Vols. (Toronto: 2004).

¹⁰⁸ Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 267, believes that the reason for the delay may be either that Virgilius lacked support from Childebert – he had originally been appointed by Childebert's uncle King Guntram – or that the pope was simply in no hurry.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 6.5 for the letter to Brunhild; 5.58 for the letter to Virgilius with the pallium; 6.6 for the letter to Childebert.

some young English captives.¹¹⁰ These were to be taken to Rome and trained as monks before being sent back to England to facilitate the upcoming mission.¹¹¹ About a year later – the summer of 596 – Augustine and the mission set out and Gregory sent a bundle of letters with the group commending them to various bishops along the route they needed to take through Gaul. Childebert II had died not long before and his young sons Theudebert and Theuderic had taken the thrones of Austrasia and Burgundy respectively; their grandmother remained in Metz with the older Theudebert.¹¹² The pope included with the bundle a joint letter to the boy-kings commending the missionaries to them.¹¹³ There is no record of any correspondence at that time between Gregory and the young Chlothar II, cousin of the boys and ruler of Neustria.¹¹⁴ Although this deficiency could be due to gaps in the *registrum*, a view of the pope's Gallic policy overall makes it more likely that Gregory was pursuing a policy of cooperation with Brunhild's regime, which necessitated cold-shouldering her enemies.¹¹⁵ Very close to the same time as the mission group arrived in Gaul, an event which is given no mention at all by Fredegar, Chlothar and his mother Fredegund mustered an army, occupied Paris, and decimated the army of Brunhild's grandsons.¹¹⁶ Given all this upheaval, it is not surprising that Brunhild sent a letter to Pope Gregory requesting relics of Sts. Peter and Paul, to which we have the pope's reply.¹¹⁷ Gregory mentions nothing of current political events, but commends the queen's piety and instructs her, rather warily it would seem, on the care to be taken for

¹¹⁰ *registrum Gregorii* 6.10.

¹¹¹ Martyn, *Letters of Gregory*, 409 n. 28; their usefulness consisted mainly in having English as their native language so they could explain the Gospel to their own people.

¹¹² Fred. 4.16. In *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (London: 1994), 130, Ian Wood states that Brunhild acted as regent for both kingdoms upon the death of Childebert; I can find no evidence for such a statement however, either in Fred. 4.16, to which Wood refers, or elsewhere.

¹¹³ *registrum Gregorii* 6.51.

¹¹⁴ Chlothar II was the son of Chilperic, brother of Sigibert, and his wife Fredegund, who, as can be seen by subsequent events, was Brunhild's bitterest enemy and rival.

¹¹⁵ N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: 1997), 76–7, also takes the view that the pope saw himself as firmly allied with Brunhild and her progeny.

¹¹⁶ Fred. 4.17. Higham, *The Convert Kings*, 77–8, believes that this move contributed a great deal to subsequent instability in the Frankish kingdom and was the event that prompted the return of Augustine to Rome to get new letters from Gregory.

¹¹⁷ *registrum Gregorii* 6.58.

the relics. These proved themselves most efficacious when Fredegund died the next year.¹¹⁸ The above events seem to have set the stage for the next several years between queen and pope. Brunhild believed she had won a spiritual patron whose connection with the Divine would ensure her political success and that of her progeny. Gregory believed he had the most powerful figure in Francia onside, one that would facilitate his mission to England and with any luck initiate and oversee Gallic church reform. Each seemed unconcerned that the other had radically differing goals, but at the same time each had a firm grasp of what was required to make the relationship work.

597 was a very good year for Brunhild. Besides the death of Fredegund, Pope Gregory agreed, at her request, to bestow the pallium on her protégé Bishop Syagrius of Autun. This was an astounding concession. No bishopric in Gaul had received this honour since Pope Symmachus had granted it to Caesarius of Arles almost a century earlier.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Syagrius was not even a metropolitan, but was a suffragan of the bishop of Lyons. Not only that, but the queen had ridden roughshod over proper procedure, for a pallium was never bestowed because some powerful layperson demanded it. As Gregory explained in his reply, protocol demanded that the one who wished to receive the pallium request it, that both his suffragan bishops and his secular ruler send letters of support, and that the candidate undergo examination as to his orthodoxy and worthiness.¹²⁰ But Gregory, ever the negotiator, wanted to keep the Gallic corridor open for the comings and goings of his mission;¹²¹ he was also intensifying his efforts toward Gallic ecclesiastical reform.¹²² If a pallium bestowed for all the wrong reasons was the price to pay, so be it. It

¹¹⁸ Fred. 4.17. Naturally I speak tongue-in-cheek, from Brunhild's perspective.

¹¹⁹ Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 130, 268.

¹²⁰ *registrum Gregorii* 8.4.

¹²¹ For the role of Francia in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons and in Gregory's mission see Rob Meens, "A background to Augustine's mission to Anglo-Saxon England," in *Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: 2007), 5–18; Ian Wood, "The mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English," *Speculum* 69 (1994) 1–17; for Gregory's concern that Frankish cooperation continue, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 130.

¹²² Gregory's letter to Brunhild regarding the requested pallium for Syagrius (8.4) devotes much space to the reforms the pope would like to see in the Gallic church: schismatics must be brought back to the fold; simony must be eradicated; no one from the

would not be sent directly however, as a letter to Syagrius made clear.¹²³ After the proper procedures were taken, the pallium would be sent to Syagrius via Candidus, and Autun would henceforth be second in rank after Lyons. That Gregory was primarily interested in accommodating Brunhild and not Gallic bishops in general is highlighted by a letter dated July 599.¹²⁴ This is a reply to bishop Desiderius of Vienne, who, not to be outdone by Autun, had cited ancient custom and requested the pallium for himself and his see. Gregory issued him a flat refusal, stating that the papal archives contained no evidence of this privilege. In June of 601 Gregory also refused certain privileges to Aetherius of Lyons – the primary see of Gaul – again giving as his reason that he could find nothing in the papal archives to support the claim.¹²⁵

This incident of Syagrius and the pallium opened a new chapter in relations between Rome and Gaul, Gregory and Brunhild. Over the next few years, with the centre of church power shifted north away from Arles toward Lyons, the previously obscure see of Autun became the new pipeline through which papal directives reached the rest of Gaul. When Ursinicus of Turin complained that in his parishes under Frankish rule another had been ordained in his place, Syagrius received a papal letter requesting that he deal with the problem;¹²⁶ when two recalcitrant bishops fled from Italy to Gaul to escape discipline, Syagrius must bring them to heel;¹²⁷ when the pope made a specific appeal to the bishops of Arles, Vienne, Lyons and Autun to assemble a synod, it was Syagrius who was to act

laity may be consecrated as bishop; further pagan customs of sacrifice and nature worship must cease in the general populace. As Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 131, points out, these urgings continue until 602, cf. 9.213, 11.46 and 49, 13.7.

¹²³ *registrum Gregorii* 9.223

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, 9.221. Martyn, *Letters of Gregory*, 690 n. 642 speaks of the rivalry between Vienne and Autun. This is an interesting comment, as the main rivalry between bishoprics in Gaul had traditionally been between Vienne and Arles, as documented in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* and the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*. See discussion in Chapter 3, “Bishops’ Letters,” Section 4.1.

¹²⁵ *registrum Gregorii* 11.40.

¹²⁶ *registrum Gregorii* 9.215. According to Martyn, *Letters of Gregory*, 678 n. 603, this was the diocese of St. Jean de Maurienne, which was established by Guntram and given its own bishop.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, 9.224.

as leader and mediator along with Gregory's agent Cyriacus.¹²⁸ Gregory was especially concerned about simony and precipitate lay promotion to church orders, and he believed a synod was the proper way to address these abuses. Although the pope ostensibly conceded the pallium to Syagrius because of the latter's aid to the English mission, letters discussing the pallium always included an order to assemble a synod, at one point even making the one contingent upon the other.¹²⁹ Despite this, there is no evidence that such a synod ever took place.

Although there is some dispute as to the exact year, sometime around the turn of the seventh century Brunhild was driven out of her elder grandson's kingdom of Austrasia, probably when he reached the age of majority.¹³⁰ She made her way to Burgundy and moved in with his half-brother Theuderic. Not one to forget a slight, she made it her business thereafter to set Theuderic against his brother, whom he eventually killed some

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 9.219.

¹²⁹ *registrum Gregorii* 9.223 to Syagrius: *quod tamen ita tibi dandum (the pallium) decrevimus, si prius per synodi definitionem emendari promiseris quae corrigenda mandavimus* [nonetheless we have decreed that it should be given to you, if you first promise to emend through the decisions of a synod those things we have ordered to be corrected]; also 9.214 to Brunhild regarding Syagrius: *cui fratri nostro pro eo, quod se in ea praedicatione quae in Anglorum gente auctore Domino facta est devotum vehementer exhibuit, pallium ad missarum sollemnia utendum transmisimus...* [We have sent the pallium for use in the celebration of the Mass to our brother because he showed ardent devotion to that preaching which has taken place among the English people with God's authority]. Earlier in the letter: *et ut nulla deinceps valeat occasione committi* (simoniacal heresy), *synodum fieri iussio vestra constituat*. [and so that hereafter no occasion might arise for it to be committed, let your command be that a synod take place..] There is no evidence that Syagrius did anything in particular to aid the English mission. Gregory's gratitude is a little suspect: he also thanked kings Theuderic (11.47), Theudebert (11.50) and Chlothar II (11.51) for their aid, although these were children at the time and in particular Chlothar's involvement is doubtful in the extreme.

¹³⁰ Fredegar reports Brunhild's exit under the year 599. Ian Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 131, claims this is erroneous since Gregory continues to urge her toward church reform in Austrasia until 602. Wood bases his argument on his belief that Gregory was well-informed about Francia and aware of Brunhild's movements, a belief which may or may not be true. A study of the letters as a whole reveals that Gregory knew by 601 that the brothers were divided yet he kept writing to Brunhild urging reform in general. He makes no mention of Austrasia specifically.

years later in 612.¹³¹ In the middle of 601, the pope sent a second group of monks to England accompanied by another bundle of letters. Included in this packet, for the first time, were separate letters to Theudebert and Theuderic, indicating that Gregory had become aware of the rift between the brothers.¹³² Curiously, Gregory also at that time sent a letter to Chlothar II, ruler of Neustria.¹³³ This rather belated communication thanks Chlothar for his aid with the mission, in which there is no evidence whatever that he participated.¹³⁴ We can only speculate as to what prompted the pope to contact Chlothar, Brunhild's archenemy, in 601, for in 602 it was business as usual. In that year the pope sent a letter to Theuderic, thanking him for his recent embassy and praising the king for his support of his grandmother's efforts to make peace with Byzantium.¹³⁵ This time there is no corresponding letter to Theudebert, suggesting that Gregory understood that Brunhild had teamed up with Theuderic and that he wished to preserve his ongoing relationship with the queen.¹³⁶

¹³¹ This is according to Fred. 4.19–38, an account hostile to Brunhild, whom the writer labelled “a second Jezebel.”

¹³² *registrum Gregorii* 11.47 and 11.50; Gregory had previously written to the brothers together, as in 6.51, 9.216; 9.227.

¹³³ *ibid.*, 11.51

¹³⁴ Up to this time, Gregory may have delayed acknowledging Chlothar so as not to offend Brunhild and her grandsons; further, his embassy, which avoided Neustria and landed in Kent, would have had to cross their territories to reach England. In 600 Theudebert and Theuderic – still allies in spite of their grandmother's efforts – had decimated Chlothar's army and diminished his kingdom, forcing him into a small region between the Loire, the Seine, and the ocean (Fred. 4.20). Why did Gregory choose this time – when Chlothar was less powerful and harder of access – to send him what was clearly an initial contact letter?

¹³⁵ *registrum Gregorii*, 13.7. An embassy from Theuderic to Constantinople at this time is mentioned by Byzantine historian Theophylact Simocatta. An alliance of Greeks and Franks against the Chagan, the leader of the Avars, was the subject of negotiation. See Michael & Mary Whitby, eds. and trans. *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* (Oxford: 1986), 161–2. Paul the Deacon (4.11) relates that Brunhild was forced to buy off the Avars in 596 when they engaged the Franks in Thuringia, so perhaps the alliance was a pre-emptive strike to ward off a similar situation. We have not heard the last of the Avars – see below.

¹³⁶ This is not merely an argument *e silentio*. Since Gregory had already shown that he was up to date on Frankish politics by sending separate letters to Theudebert and Theuderic, (n. 136), it is reasonable to assume that he knew of the rift between the brothers soon after it happened.

Pope Gregory wrote his last extant letters to Francia in November 602. These were in reply to Brunhild's request for privileges for her abbey church of St. Martin of Autun together with the hospice and convent of St. Mary attached to it. The pope's death in 604 ushered in a period of short-lived popes whose lives and deeds remain largely unknown. (The Irish monk Columbanus sent letters to two or three of these, setting them straight on points of orthodoxy).¹³⁷ It also left Brunhild high and dry. For her life at this time we are dependent on Fredegar and the *vita Columbani* of Jonas of Bobbio, from whom Fredegar took much of his account after 610.¹³⁸ These hostile accounts describe how Brunhild was rebuffed by the saint when she requested a blessing for her great-grandsons, the sons of Theuderic by a concubine. A conflict ensued that ended with Columbanus being banished from the kingdom.¹³⁹ We cannot really blame Brunhild. After those successful years with Gregory, she may have hoped for a similarly fruitful relationship with Columbanus and been severely disappointed when this did not materialize.¹⁴⁰

We must supplement our meager knowledge of the turbulent years 610-612 with three little-studied letters from the *epistolae Wisigoticae*.¹⁴¹ These are from one Bulgar, count of the Visigothic province of Septimania, to an unknown bishop in Francia.¹⁴² The writer

¹³⁷ *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 3, 5, 6.

¹³⁸ Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 460, preface. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 131, n. 85.

¹³⁹ *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 4 is the exhortation Columbanus wrote to his monks while waiting for the ship to be made ready that was to deport him. The *vita Columbani* 45-49 reports that he only got as far as Nantes before turning back and making his way to Chlothar's court, where he was welcomed with open arms.

¹⁴⁰ Janet Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian history," in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein & Lester K. Little (Malden: 1998), 240, points out correctly that it was only after some years of peaceful coexistence that the relationship fragmented. However, it is difficult to imagine the crusty Irishman warming up to Brunhild.

¹⁴¹ *epistolae Wisigoticae* 11, 12, 13.

¹⁴² For further information on Bulgar, who was the author of a total of six letters in the *epistolae Wisigoticae*, see *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, 251-2. Nelson, "Brunhild and Balthild," 237 n. 125, bases her subsequent argument on her belief that the unknown addressee was the bishop of Rodez but there is no basis for this. Rather, in Letter 12 Bulgar advises his recipient that he has given information to King Theudebert through Verus, likely of Rodez.

complains that Brunhild and Theuderic are stirring up the Avars against Theudebert, who in response to this threat has sent an embassy to King Gundemar of the Visigoths.¹⁴³ When Gundemar sent the legates back to Theudebert they were taken and imprisoned by Brunhild and Theuderic; in retaliation Bulgar has captured two southern cities belonging to Brunhild. He claims he will return nothing until the legates are freed. This forced involvement of Visigothic Spain in Brunhild's political machinations helps to explain Visigothic interest in Francia after Brunhild's death. It also sheds light on continued Visigothic hostility to the queen and her grandson, which has been somewhat of a puzzle to scholars. Gundemar's successor Sisebut, for example, used much of his *vita Desiderii* (*Viennensis*) as a vehicle to blacken the rule of Brunhild and Theuderic.¹⁴⁴ Granted, the queen had caused the death of Desiderius, and had repudiated Theuderic's Visigothic princess and packed her back to Spain, but that was in 607 and much had happened in the interim. The recent events reported by Bulgar, accompanied by the Avar threat, doubtless did much to reawaken and intensify the negative picture of Brunhild already held by the Visigoths.

In 613, Theuderic died: of dysentery according to Fredegar; in a fire according to Jonas of Bobbio.¹⁴⁵ Never one to give up, Brunhild joined forces with her eldest great-grandson Sigibert and continued the struggle against her nephew and rival Chlothar. The alliance was short-lived, for by that time she had lost all support from the *leudes*, who deserted

¹⁴³ Gundemar is an almost unknown Visigothic king who assassinated his predecessor Witteric and ruled from 610–612. Cf. Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings of the Goths*, in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, ed. and trans. K. B. Wolf (Liverpool: 1990), Chap. 59, p. 106. Isidore reports that Gundemar defeated the Basques and besieged the army of the Romans, i.e. the Byzantines.

¹⁴⁴ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 173 uses words like “surprising” and “intriguing,” but comes to the conclusion that the hostility to the old regime of Brunhild and Theuderic is a statement of solidarity with the new regime of Chlothar II, based on J. Fontaine, “King Sisebut's *vita Desiderii* and the political function of Visigothic hagiography,” in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. E. James (Oxford: 1980), 93–129. I tend to agree, but would add to that the pressure of the Avar threat.

¹⁴⁵ Fred. 4.39; *vita Columbani* 58. Theuderic had finally hunted down and killed his brother Theudebert the year before.

her for Chlothar. The new king of all Francia dispatched her great-grandsons and tied his elderly aunt to the tail of a wild horse, whose flying hooves quickly tore her to pieces.¹⁴⁶

3 Conclusion

Letters with women as sender and/or recipient, while a sparse subset of the Merovingian collections, nonetheless reveal insights that supplement in a valuable way the usual sources of the period. One of the most noteworthy is the convention of high emotional content in letters written by women, restricted in our collections to correspondence with other women or male relatives. Although we cannot state with absolute certainty that this restriction accurately reflects cultural norms, our material is wide-ranging enough that we can reasonably assume this to be the case. The restriction could be manipulated, however. It could be lifted out of context and reused in a different text with a wider readership, for example, or dramatized for a wider listening audience such as a court setting, as long as its ostensible recipient was another woman or a related man. That the use of emotion was a conscious choice is proven by the letters by women that are devoid of emotion, which are basically indistinguishable from those of male writers.

Although letters to women are one-sided conversations that tend to reveal more about the man writing the letter than about the woman he is addressing, these yield to careful analysis. Those from Venantius Fortunatus to Radegund are informational in the area of Merovingian food and nutrition. They also allow us to conclude that ascetic practice did not need to measure up to a perceived ideal to be effective and longstanding. The Merovingian letters in the *registrum Gregorii* illuminate not only the pope's two-pronged agenda of the Anglo-Saxon mission and Gallic ecclesiastical reforms, but his personal relationship with Brunhild. While Gregory's choice of Brunhild and her progeny as allies

¹⁴⁶ Fred. 4.42. Anyone considering the odds would have put their money on Brunhild's prolific line surviving Fredegund's. The latter had lost all her older sons and her son Chlothar was a baby when his father Chilperic was assassinated. Fredegund herself died when Chlothar was just a young boy. But at the end of the day he was the sole survivor, becoming the first king of all the Franks since his grandfather and namesake Chlothar I.

may simply indicate political expediency in the face of geographical realities, his persistence in this choice also suggests that he, like perhaps many of his contemporaries, had decided to cast his vote with her line as the one likely to outlast that of her sister-in-law and nephew. Gregory died before he could realize his mistake.

The women's letters in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* reveal differences between Frankish and Anglo-Saxon practice. In this collection, the expression of *amicitia* between men and women is indistinguishable from that between men. While we cannot read too much into this convention, it appears that Anglo-Saxon sensibilities allowed for a more equitable expression of friendship between the sexes, at least in an epistolographical setting.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ This equitable *amicitia* can be seen also in Aldhelm's epistolary preface to the nuns of Barking in the prose *de virginitate*. See M. Herren & M Lapidge, eds. *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge: 1979), 59-60.

Chapter 2

Venantius Fortunatus and his Correspondents: A Study in Language, Literacy, and *romanitas*

Letters Referenced in this Chapter

epistolae Austrasicae:

16. Gogo to Trasericus of Toul

Venantii Fortunati opera poetica:

9.1 to King Chilperic	9.11 to Abbot Droctoveus
6.5 on Galswinth	7.17 to Gunduarius, estate administrator
3.1 to Eufronius of Tours	7.21 to Sigismund & Alagisle
3.11 to Nicetius of Trier	7.22 to Boso, Sigibert's referendary
3.13 to Vilicus of Metz	7.25 to Galactorius, count of Bordeaux
3.14 to Carentinus of Cologne	10.16 to Count Sigoald
9.8 to Baudoald of Meaux	
6.9 to Dynamius, rector of Provence	7.1 to Gogo, councillor of Sigibert
6.10 as above	7.2 as above
7.11 to Iovinus, patrician	7.3 as above
7.12 as above	7.4 as above
7.8 to Lupus, duke of Champagne	
7.9 as above	
3.4 to Felix of Nantes	5.5 to Gregory of Tours
3.5 as above	5.11 as above
3.8 as above	8.1 as above
3.9 as above	8.13 as above
3.10 as above	8.18 as above
5.7 as above	9.6 as above
5.1 to Martin of Braga	9.7 as above

5.2 as above

3.30 to Deacon Sindulfus

5.6 & 5.6a to Syagrius of Autun

appendix carminum 19 to Radegund and Agnes

The *opera poetica* of Venantius Fortunatus dominate Merovingian poetry. And since over half of this corpus is addressed directly to individuals and can therefore be classed as verse epistles, they also dominate Merovingian epistolography.¹ Verse epistles form a genre all their own, for they combine attributes of poetry, panegyric, and personal correspondence, and the divisions between these are not always clearcut.² In Fortunatus' hands a fourth dimension is added, for he did not enter Gaul in a position of strength. As a stranger with no familial resources behind him, he took up his pen upon arrival for the purpose of patronage. Simply put, his *opera poetica* were his bread and butter, and his ruthlessness in this regard has received many a scathing comment in the past.³

By the mid-twentieth century this view gave way to more favourable reviews which have acted as a useful counter-weight to the earlier dismissals,⁴ but at times the unqualified

¹ This comprises a total of about 150 poems, all of which are summarized in the Appendix of Summaries.

² Earlier examples of verse epistles include those of the fifth-century Sidonius Apollinaris and, around the same time, one of Auspicius of Toul (see *epistolae Austrasicae* 23).

³ Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London: 1926), 333–4 names him “venal flatterer,” his skill “perverted,” caring only for “ignorant applause and sensual ease;” M.L.W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe 500–900* (Ithaca: 1931), 128–9, calls his prose works “negligible as literature” and his poetry little better, reserving praise only for his hymns; R. Koebner, *Venantius Fortunatus: Seine Persönlichkeit und seine Stellung in der geistigen Kultur des Merowingerreiches* (Leipzig: 1915), 2, coined the pejorative term *poésie d'ameublement* for Fortunatus' work.

⁴ Peter Godman, *Poets and Emperors* (Oxford: 1987), 37, waxes indignant in his rebuttal of the poet's detractors, claiming that he has been judged “unsympathetically” due to a “complicated skein of preconceptions” on the part of his analysts; Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford: 1992), 2–3, has nothing but effusive praise for the poet and his work; cf. 56–7 in connection with the poet's controversial panegyric to King Chilperic. Also see Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool: 1995); recent author Michael Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: the Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor: 2009), 320, names the corpus “a watershed in Latin literary history.” For a more balanced view see Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*, trans. John J. Contreni

enthusiasm of some of these is equally unhelpful. Unpalatable as the notion is to the modern mind, Fortunatus had designs on his audience that were both intense and prolonged and that seemed not to diminish throughout his life, even though we might expect a relaxation of his predations as his Gallic star rose. Or did it? A poet depending on his literary output for survival leads a precarious existence. He and his work are subject to the whims and dubious generosity of others, and he is unable to complain lest he drive away those “friends” he has. So while he was doubtless a popular figure, Fortunatus was likely unable to relax his quest for the necessities of life until he became bishop of Poitiers in the last decade of his life.⁵ Book 9 of his poems, which was published as late as 587 yet contains as many examples of encomia as the earlier books, combined with the fact that no poetic output appears to exist from the period of his episcopate, supports this conclusion. An awareness of this situation solves the dilemma of

(Columbia: 1976), passim; the most up to date work I have been able to find is Joseph Pucci, *Poems to Friends*, (Indianapolis: 2010), in which is translated about one-third of the poet’s work with historical context. The most current, thorough, and balanced view in my opinion is supplied by Marc Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat: Poèmes* (Paris: 1994), a work in three volumes which contains all the *opera poetica* translated into French side by side with the Latin, plus commentary and context. For smaller-scale studies see Brian Brennan, “The image of the Merovingian bishop in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus,” *Journal of Medieval History* 18 (1992), 115–139; Simon Coates, “Venantius Fortunatus and the image of episcopal authority in late antique and early Merovingian Gaul,” *English Historical Review* Vol. 115 No. 466 (November 2000), 1109–37; for images of kingship see Brian Brennan, “The image of the Frankish kings in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus,” *Journal of Medieval History* 10 (1985), 1–11; Marc Reydellet, *La Royauté dans la Littérature Latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville* (Rome: 1981), 297–343. For a sampling of the debate over the authorship of the poems in the corpus that many would love to attribute to Radegund, see Peter Dronke, *Women Writers in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: 1984), 27–8, who simply assumes these were written by Radegund; Karen Cherewatuk, “Radegund and the epistolary tradition,” in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, ed. K. Cherewatuk & U. Wiethaus (Philadelphia: 1993) argues for Radegund’s authorship; George, *VF: Poems*, 116 n.22, suggests they were written by Fortunatus on Radegund’s behalf. The MGH editor of Venantius Fortunatus’ *opera poetica*, Friedrich Leo, concurs. The decision of Fortunatus to publish only his own material inclines me more than any other piece of evidence to agreement with George and Leo. Alternatively, a collaboration between Radegund and Fortunatus where the former wrote part of the piece is a possibility. The little-known poem 10.3 from Fortunatus to the “lords and clergy of the land” on Radegund’s behalf is further evidence that the two collaborated when necessary.

⁵ The fact that Fortunatus remained unmarried throughout his life is also suggestive of his slim means.

his “unusual consistency” in adopting “intense affective language” that gives Roberts pause in his recent study and which he attributes, rather shortsightedly I believe, to Fortunatus’ position as an outsider in Merovingian society.⁶

Certainly our poet’s indiscriminate use of panegyric is startling at times. On one occasion, Gregory of Tours had been summoned to a synod at the royal villa at Berny-Rivière to answer a charge of malicious slander against Chilperic’s queen Fredegund.⁷ If such a charge stuck, Gregory could be exiled or executed. But the situation was doubly dangerous for the bishop because it was threatening to the king: if Gregory was cleared, the royal couple could be excommunicated for bringing a false charge against a bishop. Chilperic was thus motivated to convict Gregory.⁸ In spite of this, Fortunatus delivered a panegyric to Chilperic at the synod, declaring him the sum of all virtues, that makes no mention of his friend Gregory of Tours nor of the case for which he was being tried.⁹ This has caused somewhat of a commotion in scholarly circles, as some castigate the poet for his flagrant disregard of his friend’s danger while others see in it support for his precarious situation coupled with a misunderstanding of the praise poem genre itself on the part of its critics.¹⁰ The fact that Gregory reports the incident in detail in his *histories* without once mentioning the role played by Fortunatus’ panegyric to Chilperic tends to support the argument that it had little or no effect in Gregory’s favour; otherwise, why would the bishop not give credit where credit was due?

⁶ Roberts, *Humblest Sparrow*, 325. Being an “outsider” is part of the problem, but it by no means tells the whole story. It is difficult to dismiss the suspicion that Fortunatus’ patrons became wearied by his relentless versifying and arranged the bishopric in order to provide him with a living.

⁷ The date was 580; Gregory was accused of initiating a rumour that Fredegund was committing adultery with Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux.

⁸ *LH* 5.49.. In the end the bishop was let go after agreeing to perform Masses at three different altars and issue a sworn statement.

⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 9.1.

¹⁰ Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul*, 333–4, condemns the panegyric, as does Koebner, *Venantius Fortunatus*, 95. George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 48–57, argues instead that the poet is presenting to the king an image of the ideal ruler, reminding him of his need for episcopal support, and encouraging him to choose the right course of action, thereby winning both earthly and heavenly approval; Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 28–37, argues that the panegyric genre is supposed to evoke an ideal through flattery; further, that we too easily take up Gregory of Tours’ hostile picture of Chilperic as reality.

Fortunatus' tasteless *consolatio* on the death of Galswinth, an earlier work than the above, has also puzzled scholars. This older sister of Brunhild was brought from Spain to marry Chilperic, but when she would not accept her husband's concubine Fredegund, the king had her strangled.¹¹ In a long elegy, Fortunatus bemoans the girl's fate and implies her martyrdom while attributing her death to circumstances beyond the king's control.¹² George argues that the *consolatio* was an early, less skilled work written on behalf of Radegund as part of her attempts at peace-keeping.¹³ Apart from the fact that he was writing other pieces for Radegund around the same time, however, there is no evidence for this. While Gregory of Tours tells us bluntly that Chilperic ordered his wife's death, he provides no details on how that death was presented to the court at the time it occurred. Officially, therefore, it may have been an "accident," but Gregory does inform us that Chilperic's own brothers suspected so strongly he had a hand in it that they temporarily drove him out of his kingdom. Either the newcomer Fortunatus was not privy to the rumours of murder that must have occupied the court, or he disregarded them in favour of Chilperic's innocence.

This is not to castigate the poet and his work in the terms of moral outrage expressed by Dill and Laistner. Nor is it to say that Fortunatus was incapable of true friendship, a suggestion which is belied by his relationships with Radegund, Agnes, and Gregory of Tours – in spite of the panegyric to Chilperic. But we need to recognize that first and foremost his goal was reliable patrons and that such required relentless deployment of the language of *amicitia* on all possible occasions. We can only speculate on the actual number of individuals who responded to his missives, because for all his praise of others' written offerings, Fortunatus did not preserve any that he received.¹⁴ There is evidence,

¹¹ *LH* 4.28

¹² *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 6.5.

¹³ George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 96–101.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the collection process of this author's material see George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 208–11. Unlike the collected letters of Ruricius of Limoges and Avitus of Vienne earlier in the sixth century as well as those of Desiderius of Cahors a few decades into the seventh, which contain correspondence both to and from these bishops, Fortunatus' collection includes only pieces written by himself. Sidonius Apollinaris is another individual who published only his own letters.

however, that he took care to tailor his style to match that of correspondents he did hear back from; this subtle bonding technique served to create a common world shared by both and was doubtless instrumental in advancing his relationship with what he hoped was a new patron. Fortunately for our purposes, it allows us to gain insight into the rhetorical style of some individual Merovingians that would otherwise be hidden from us. As might be expected, there were gradations of style and complexity even among the highly-educated and skilled.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is not so much to examine the poet's work as an end in itself, but to use it as a lens through which to view aspects of Gallic literate culture. We will also examine in some detail the poet's *carmen figuratum* to Syagrius of Autun, which is accompanied by a prose letter, but which functions as both letter and gift in its own right.¹⁵ I have included a diagram and translation of this, plus other acrostics and unusual poems by Fortunatus, in an Appendix at the end of the chapter.

1 Venantius Fortunatus and Merovingian Literacy

Pierre Riché has written extensively on the topic of Merovingian literacy and includes observations on many of the poems of Fortunatus in his survey on education in Gaul.¹⁶ At one point the author supplies the reader with a map that he labels "Roman Gaul and Barbarian Gaul."¹⁷ On this map there is a line that begins on the coast northwest of Nantes, extends eastward to Paris, and continues through Langres south toward Italy. This line borders a shaded area that delineates the civilized southern part of Gaul from the rustic north. The differences between the two are many and profound, Riché claims, with the most important being an urban civilization based on the written word in the

¹⁵ I discuss the poet and gift-giving in Chapter 4, "Bearers and Gifts," Section 7.

¹⁶ Riché, *Education and Culture*. See Chapter 6 for lay education and Chapter 7 for clerical education in Gaul. Probably due to the broad scope of his work, the author glosses over certain aspects of his material in his analyses; further, he is sometimes in error. He states on page 202, for example, that Gregory of Tours wrote no poetry, though Fortunatus directly thanks the bishop for his verses more than once: 5.8b, 8.19, and likely 8.21, although this is not directly stated. The Merovingian collections themselves, of course, speak directly to Merovingian literacy, as do extant formulae and legal material.

¹⁷ Riché, *Education and Culture*, 180.

south that was largely lacking in the north. The south felt itself to be Roman while the north was under Frankish influence, which “eradicated the imprint of Roman civilization.”¹⁸ The author bases this conclusion on the hard evidence of towns, document production, and Christian inscriptions, but is it anywhere reflected in Fortunatus’ work?

We know that the poet’s first experience of Gaul was its northern regions as he travelled from Ravenna to Metz via Mainz, Trier, and the Moselle.¹⁹ Subsequently, people as far apart as Marseilles in the south, Cologne in the northeast, and Nantes in the west all received poetic epistles, some through bearers, and others likely hand-delivered by the poet in his travels around Gaul. If we consider “north” and “south” à la Riché, and plot on a map of Gaul the cities of bishops and magnates with whom we are certain he corresponded, the resultant pattern, while numerically favouring the south,²⁰ does not match Riché’s map of “Roman Gaul and Barbarian Gaul,” which according to his criteria is a virtual wasteland north of Paris and Langres. Instead, we can trace an impressive line of *civitates* including Rheims, Verdun, Metz, Trier, Mainz, and Cologne that stretches from Paris along the Marne river, crosses eastward as far as the Rhine and follows the river north. There may be more that are not traceable from our limited sources. These centres, in the view of our poet at least, contained literate individuals whom it was worth cultivating and from whom he hoped for a reply. There is no evidence that the poet limited himself to the Romanized southern regions due to a perceived lack of literate

¹⁸ Riché, *Education and Culture*, 177–183. A. C. Murray, “Review Article: The new MGH edition of the charters of the Merovingian kings,” *The Journal of Medieval Latin* Vol. 15 (2005) 246–278, p. 252, comments on the scarcity of charter evidence south of the Loire for the seventh and eighth centuries (there is none for the sixth), an observation that does nothing for Riché’s argument, or his map.

¹⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica, Praefatio* sec. 4; *Vita Martini* 4, 630–80, as in George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 24. The poet presented a panegyric at the spring wedding (566) of Sigibert and Brunhild, a resounding success that launched his career in Gaul. George believes the poet arrived in Gaul in the spring, but that would mean crossing the Alps in the winter; it is more likely that he arrived in the fall of 565 and wintered in Metz.

²⁰ It appears at first glance that Fortunatus corresponded with about twice as many people in the south as in the north, even when Gregory of Tours and Radegund are left out of the equation. But many individuals, unlike bishops or counts, were not connected to a city so we cannot assign them a position north or south of the line. To complicate matters further, by the sixth century a person’s name was by no means a sure indication of their ethnic background so we cannot easily tell “Roman” from “barbarian” either.

culture further north.²¹ Fortunatus' verse epistles are therefore valuable evidence for continuity in literacy, both north and south, throughout the Merovingian period.²²

2 Clerical and Lay Correspondents

Although Fortunatus does not distinguish between Romanized south and barbarian north in his choice of correspondents, he does make other quite clear distinctions. One of the most noticeable is between clerical and secular figures. Every bishop or deacon to whom he wrote received a generic poem, individualized to be sure, on the theme of pastoral care. These were designed to introduce the poet and form a bond of *amicitia*. There are numerous examples. Vilicus of Metz is the shepherd of his flock;²³ Eufronius of Tours exhibits the qualities of his predecessor St. Martin;²⁴ Nicetius of Trier feeds the hungry and receives the exile;²⁵ Carentinus of Cologne encourages the sorrowing with his words;²⁶ Baudoald bishop of Meaux nurtures piety and studies sacred law;²⁷ Abbot

²¹ According to *opera poetica* 3.4.6: *illud itaque quod dixistis in ultimo orbis angulo quasi vestram habitare praesentiam...* [so when you claim that you inhabit the furthestmost corner of the earth...] and 3.8.3 *ultima quamvis sit regio Armoricus in orbe...* [although the Armorican region may be the uttermost end of the earth...], both addressed to Felix of Nantes, there seemed to be only one place in Gaul that its inhabitants considered impossibly barbarous and that was Brittany. Gregory of Tours recounts some of Felix' interactions with the unruly Britons who lived not far outside Nantes and who were continually encroaching on its territory (*LH* 4.4 and 5.31). Cf. Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, 92, n. 26 on the same topic.

²² For discussions of Merovingian literacy see Riché, *Education and Culture*, 177–236; also Ian Wood, "Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge: 1990), 63–81.

²³ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 3.13.22 and 26: *pastoris lacrimis laetificantur oves; te custode gregis nil ibi praedo nocet*. [the sheep rejoice from the tears of their shepherd; with you as guardian of the flock, there the fierce plunderer does no violence].

²⁴ *ibid.*, 3.1.3: *ego vero gratulor in corde domni Eufroonii dilectionem domni mei sensisse Martini*. [for my part, I rejoice that I have sensed in the heart of lord Eufronius the affection of my lord Martin].

²⁵ *ibid.*, 3.11.13: *hic habet exul opem, ieiunans invenit escas*. [in your presence, the exile has assistance, the hungry finds nourishment].

²⁶ *ibid.*, 3.14.17–18: *pectora cunctorum reficis dulcedine verbi / laetificas vultu tristia corda tuo*. [you refresh the hearts of all with the sweetness of your words, / you cause sad souls to rejoice by your countenance].

²⁷ *ibid.*, 9.8.3–5: *officiis venerande sacris, pietatis alumne / pignore amicitiae corde tenende meae / florens in studiis et sacra in lege fidelis*. [venerable by your sacred duties,

Droctoveus despises the world and desires the heavens.²⁸ Fortunatus is here constructing an idealized Christian image of these bishops and their status, as scholars have pointed out.²⁹ It is noteworthy that there is no detectible differentiation here between Frank and Roman, north and south.

What about secular figures? Most of these have Germanic names, although this is an unreliable guide to an individual's ethnic background. Again Fortunatus seems to make no geographical distinctions in his choice of addressee, but at the onset of the relationship his commendation of these laymen is in very different terms than that with which he extols the clerics. Gunduarius, for example, is praised for his good governance of the queen's patrimony,³⁰ Sigismund and Alagisle, officials of Sigibert, that their honour is increased by the king,³¹ Boso, Sigibert's referendary, is accompanied by his king's favour;³² the count of Bordeaux, Galactorius, has been given honours and acknowledgement from King Guntram,³³ the newly-created count Sigoald is increased by King Childebert and feeds the poor in the king's name.³⁴ These men are praised for their

nursling of piety / to be held as a token of friendship in my heart / flourishing in your studies and faithful to the sacred law].

²⁸ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 9.11.6: *despicis hic mundum, dum cupis ire polo*. [here you despise the world while you desire to go to the heavens].

²⁹ see above n.3.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 7.17.13–14: *reginae egregiae patrimonia celsa gubernas / quae tibi commisit sensit ubique fidem*. [you govern the rich patrimony of a noble queen. / She has committed this to you, having everywhere proven your faithfulness]. The queen was probably Brunhild per Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 2, 115, n. 99.

³¹ *ibid.*, 7.21.13–14: *qui mihi festivae diei duplicastis honorem / sic vester crescat munere regis honor*. [you have doubled for me the honour of this festive day / thus may your own honour increase by the king's gifts].

³² *ibid.*, 7.22.7–8: *sic te longaevi comitetur gratia regis / et florente illo gaudia fixa metas*. [thus may the favour of a long-lived king go with you / and may you reap immovable joys while he flourishes].

³³ *ibid.*, 7.25.10–12: *care Galactori, sedula cura mihi / cui rite excellens rex Guntheramnus honores / maius adhuc debet, qui tibi magna dedit*. [dear Galactorius, object of my attentive care / on whom the excellent King Guntram rightly bestows honours. / He has given you great things; may he give you still more].

³⁴ *ibid.*, 10.16.11–12: *rex Childeberthus crescens te crescere cogat / qui modo dat comitis, det tibi dona ducis*. [As he increases, King Childebert causes you to increase also. / May he who has now given you the designation "count," give to you the honour of

good governance: the people under them are happy, prosperous and quiet, and they are rewarded by the king. In short, the qualities Fortunatus commends in them belong to the world of politics. Under his pen, they are followers of the king whom they serve and their status and wealth are derived directly from him.

3 Highly-Literate Correspondents

3.1 The Provençal Literary Circle: Dynamius and Iovinus

In an article on Symmachus the Younger, M. Vitiello discusses what it meant to be Roman at the turn of the sixth century in Italy. Exalting the Roman past in one's writing, properly balancing the traditional Roman ideals of *otium* and *negotium* in one's daily life, exhibiting *imitatio* of one's ancestors and such great figures as Cato and yet at the same time surpassing them by one's devotion to the Christian religion, were all hallmarks of Late Roman elite identity.³⁵ The sixth-century Italian Fortunatus would have been well aware of this convention and its nuances. As the following examples to certain correspondents illustrate, his deployment of elevated language and a generous seasoning of Roman cultural *topoi* suggests not only that he had assessed their literary expertise and sensibilities and had adapted his own style to match theirs, but that such Roman identifiers were still a valued commodity in Gaul several generations after Symmachus. Indeed, Fortunatus banked on such for his first Gallic undertaking – the panegyric given at the wedding of Sigibert and Brunhild, which George calls “a resplendent Latin *epithalamium* in true classical tradition.”³⁶ The occasion would hardly been so successful

“duke]! 10.17: the poem is headed *ad Sigoaldum comitem, quod pauperes pro rege pauerit*. [to Count Sigoald, because he has fed paupers for the king].

³⁵ Massimiliano Vitiello, “Last of the Catones, a profile of Symmachus the younger,” *Antiquité Tardive* 16 (2008), 297–315.

³⁶ George, *VF: Poems*, 25, n.1. This piece, 6.1, is not in this inventory. The *epithalamium* in Greek tradition was a song of praise sung at weddings; see Georg Wissowa et al., *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: 1949). Authors such as Sidonius Apollinaris carried the tradition into Late Antiquity. In a literary sense, the tradition has lasted into modern times as shown by the examples of the *Epithalamion* of Edmund Spenser (1595) and the *Epithalamion* of E.E. Cummings (1923).

for the poet if his audience had been indifferent to Roman literary culture and its expression.³⁷

Two poems to Dynamius, a noble of Marseilles who later became Rector of Provence, are extant in the *opera poetica*.³⁸ One of these is short and contains routine protestations of affection. The other is more developed; here the poet adopts the conceit that even though he has had himself bled because of the extreme heat, and needs rest, his affection for Dynamius compels him to put pen to paper and neglect his own health.³⁹ We also learn that Dynamius had earlier sent Fortunatus some poetry under a pseudonym – a disguise that the poet was easily able to penetrate, as was no doubt intended. Fortunatus' prolix and florid reply is full of allusions to Roman myth: the figures of Erato, the Muse of lyric poetry, and Camena, a Roman goddess of wells and fountains, make their appearance along with Ajax, who is referred to as "the one begotten of Telamon."⁴⁰ This is very different from the style Fortunatus used to address the above laymen and suggests an awareness of Dynamius' Roman background and stake in Roman culture. Toward the end of the epistle, the poet names and greets a number of powerful Provençal figures:

³⁷ According to A.C. Murray, *romanitas* is impossible to pin down and there is no scholarly agreement on its definition. Textually, however, it seems to have importance to the participants and this is the case here. It was not to everybody's taste, however: Gregory of Tours (*LH* 6.9) reports how the future bishop of Le Mans, Domnolus, begged Chlothar I not to make him bishop of Avignon, where he would be subjected to the boredom of sophisticated arguments and philosophic discussions by old senatorial families.

³⁸ Two letters composed by Dynamius are found in the *epistolae Austrasicae*, one to Vilicus of Metz and one to "a friend," who could well be Fortunatus (*ep. Aus.* 12 and 17). In both of these the style is flowery but comes across as rather trite due the author's relentless use of timeworn commonplaces throughout. There is no detectible *romanitas* present. We must be wary of forming an opinion of the man's literary competence from two short epistles, however. For further information on Dynamius, see *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, s.v. Dynamius 1, 429–30. For his literary activity see Dag Norberg, "Dyname Patrice de Marseille," *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991) 46–51. Note that this is unlikely to be the same Dynamius who was married to Aureliana and with her founded a monastery in Marseilles dedicated to St. Cassian, see *reg. Gregorii* 7.12 and 7.33. Norberg conflates the two in his article, however, without clarification.

³⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 6.10. The shorter poem to Dynamius is 6.9.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 6.10.43–4: *visibus atque tuis issem velocius ac si / ad patris amplexus de Telamone satus*. [I had run more quickly to see you than / he begotten of Telamon to the embrace of his father].

Iovinus, Dynamius' predecessor as Rector, Theodore of Marseilles, Sapaudus of Arles, Albinus, another ex-Rector of Provence and later bishop of Uzès, Felix, a member of a senatorial family, and the otherwise unknown Helias.

Besides his appearance in the poem above to Dynamius, there are addressed to Iovinus himself two poems full of complaints, reproaches, and pleas for a return letter.⁴¹ The longer and more highly-coloured poem, probably written when the simpler offering produced no results, begins in tragic mode, mourning the inevitability of death: the Greek heroes Hector, Achilles, Ajax, and Ulysses have all perished and Orpheus lies buried along with his lyre. The same is true of the poets Menander, Homer, and others, as well as statesmen and philosophers: Plato, Cato, Crysippus, Pythagoras. (Curiously, the poet mentions in his lineup only one Roman – Cato; all the rest are Greek). Abruptly, however, the second half of the poem changes and extols the salvation of God, whose saints – in stark contrast to the Greek and Roman figures of antiquity – will return to life and who meanwhile breathe out sweet odours from their tombs. This transcendence of the virtues of the ancients through Christian conversion is a means by which a pagan and philosophical past is not eradicated, but improved upon in the new age.⁴² Again, by identifying with Iovinus' perceived interest in and knowledge of both Roman and Greek literature while praising his Christian *conversatio*, Fortunatus enters the world of his correspondent and advances his own *amicitia* network.

The group that included Dynamius, Iovinus, and the others greeted by Fortunatus has been interpreted as a Provençal literary circle.⁴³ The group lacked cohesion, however, and seems to have done more fighting than writing. Under Sigibert I, for example, Iovinus

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 7.11 and 7.12. It is possible that Iovinus did send a reply at some point that is missing from the collection.

⁴² Vitiello, *Symmachus*, 17; the poem is 7.12.

⁴³ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 6.10. George, *VF: Poems*, 55; see also Riché, *Education and Culture*, 186, who speaks of it as an “Austraso-Provençal literary circle” per Rudolf Buchner, *Die Provence in merowingischer Zeit: Verfassung, Wirtschaft, Kultur* (Stuttgart: 1933), 77; The group was comprised of bureaucrats of Provence in the service of the Austrasian kings. Dynamius and Fortunatus exchanged poetry and possibly the others did as well.

lost the office of Rector of Provence to Albinus, a situation that, reports Gregory of Tours, caused great enmity to arise between them.⁴⁴ Later under Sigibert's son Childebert II, further instability resulted when Dynamius backed Albinus as bishop of Uzès without the support of the king.⁴⁵ When Albinus died after only three months in office, Dynamius backed Marcellus, son of Felix, against Childebert's choice Iovinus; Iovinus then attacked Marcellus. Although turbulence of this nature does not absolutely preclude a well-established group *amicitia* that expressed itself in a literary epistolography, it is clear that concerns of a political nature, when they arose, overrode any notions of group cohesion. Moreover, because the *opera poetica* preserve only letters to Dynamius and Iovinus, Fortunatus' connection to the group as a whole is also uncertain. Was he accepted as part of the "circle" by its members? Or was he simply trying to make inroads, with limited success, into an already-established community of letter writers?

3.2 Austrasia: Lupus and Gogo

Lupus, who became duke of Champagne under either Sigibert or his son Childebert, received a total of three poems from Fortunatus.⁴⁶ These consist of two letters and a short panegyric upon his promotion to duke.⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, the opening lines of the panegyric energetically proclaim the duke's virtues. These, according to the poet, encompass all of those embodied in Scipio, Cato, and Pompey, under whom Rome shone in splendour; under Lupus, Rome has returned anew.⁴⁸ These sentiments then give way to extravagant praise of the subject's eloquence that defeats the cunning of foreign ambassadors, dispenses justice freely and fairly, and wins for Lupus the honour of

⁴⁴ LH 4.43.

⁴⁵ LH 6.7.

⁴⁶ Riché, *Education and Culture*, 187, mentions "the Provençal circle of Duke Lupus" and refers us to *opera poetica* 7.7, giving no further information. There is no reference in this panegyric to the literary circle or anyone in it, however, nor is there any other evidence that I can find for Lupus' connection to it. Gregory of Tours locates him in the north.

⁴⁷ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 7.7, 7.8, 7.9. The panegyric is not in this inventory, but is included here in the discussion for its sense of *romanitas*. The shorter of the two poems, 7.9, contains none of the extravagant praise language of the others, but sends thanks for a previously-received letter in a very simple style.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 7.7.3–6.

cingula celsa from the king.⁴⁹ The poet then proceeds to laud in great detail the duke's generalship in an otherwise unrecorded battle against the Saxons and Danes.⁵⁰ A main theme running throughout this panegyric is the dual nature of both Lupus' abilities and his popularity. He is described as *qui geminis rebus fulges in utroque paratus / quicquid corde capis prodere lingua potest*,⁵¹ which suggests a facility in both Latin and the Germanic language of the Franks, and *antiquos animos romanae stirpis adeptus / bella moves armis, iura quiete regis*,⁵² a familiar imperial motif in the late empire.

The longer of the two poems seems to have been composed in response to the resolution of some crisis or other that involved the duke. Fortunatus describes the good news in terms of a traveller, exhausted by the extreme heat of the day, suddenly coming upon a grove of shady trees by a limpid stream. In his delight he recites the poetry of Homer or Virgil, or the Psalms of King David, or plays on his lyre or flute. Fortunatus then brings to mind Lupus' gracious reception of him when he first entered "Germania,"⁵³ declaring himself unable to do justice to the duke's kindness and excellent qualities. He finally calls on all ethnic groups to compete in their praise of the man: *Romanusque lyra, plaudat tibi Barbarus harpa / Graecus Achilliaca, crotta Britanna canat / illi te fortem referant, hi iure potentem / ille armis agilem praedicet, iste libris*,⁵⁴ finishing this line of

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 7.7.39: According to George, *VF: Poems*, 60, n. 17, Merovingian kings gave out 'noble belts' with ornamented buckles as a sign of their favour. Cf. E. James, "The Merovingian archaeology of south-west Gaul," *British Archaeological Reports*, Suppl. Ser. 2/5, i and ii (Oxford: 1980), 100.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 7.7.49–50.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 7.7.17–8. [equipped on both sides, you shine forth with double skill / whatever you conceive in your heart, your tongue is able to produce]. Lupus' bilingualism follows an argument of George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 81.

⁵² *ibid.*, 7.7.45–6. [inheriting your time-honoured virtues from your Roman parentage, you wage war with arms, you govern with law in times of peace].

⁵³ This is Fortunatus' term; he doubtless means the kingdom of the Franks.

⁵⁴ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 7.8.63–6. [Let the Roman with the lyre, the barbarian with the harp praise you; the Greek with epic lyre, the Briton with the crwth. Let these proclaim your strength, those your power in justice; the one your fleetness in battle, the other your facility in learning].

thought with the comment: *nos tibi versiculos, dent barbara carmina leudos*.⁵⁵ In these two texts, therefore, Fortunatus presents Lupus as superseding the ancients not due to his Christian belief, as in the case of Iovinus, but because he is equally beloved of all cultures in the Frankish kingdom.

Such references to ethnicity are unusual enough in the poet's work to warrant some comment here.⁵⁶ Fortunatus could have been simply employing creative flattery to a powerful figure who fancied himself the object of popular affection, but there are further clues in the poems, as well as in other sources, that suggest otherwise. The poet's statement that Lupus was Roman is one of these and can probably be taken at face value; in self-interest, Fortunatus would have done his homework. Set beside this Roman background is a family fondness for Frankish names: Lupus' brother was named Magnulfus, his son Romulfus, and he married his daughter to Godegisel.⁵⁷ This in itself is not a reliable indicator of ethnicity, but it does suggest a family that embraced cultural mixing. This family predilection, in conjunction with the poet's remark above regarding Lupus' doubled verbal skill, together with the emphasis on his acceptability to Roman, barbarian, Greek, and Briton, suggests that the duke spoke at least two languages and had either mixed parentage or a mixed marriage or both.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 7.8.69. [I give little verses to you; let barbarian songs also offer you their lays]. George, *VF: Poems*, 64, n. 42, takes this as marking Lupus' acceptability to both main ethnic groups. *Leodus* is a Frankish term related to the modern German *Lied*, song.

⁵⁶ To my knowledge, there are only two other instances. These are 6.2, a panegyric to King Charibert, lines 7–8: *hinc cui barbaries, illinc Romania plaudit / diversis linguis laus sonat una viri* [barbarian lands applaud him on one side and Romania on the other / praise sounds for one man in diverse tongues] and lines 97–100: *cum sis progenitus clara de gente Sigamber / floret in eloquio lingua latina tuo* [although you are a son of the noble race of Sigamber / the Latin tongue flourishes in your eloquence]. The other instance is the panegyric to King Chilperic composed on the occasion of the synod at Berny–Rivière and the trial of Gregory of Tours i.e. 9.1.3–4: *discernens varias sub nullo interprete voces / et generum linguas unica lingua refert* [understanding different languages without the aid of an interpreter / a single tongue speaks out in the languages of all peoples].

⁵⁷ Magnulfus received a poem in which he is named brother of Lupus (7.10); Gregory of Tours names Romulfus as son of Lupus (*LH* 10.19) and reports the marriage to Godegisel (*LH* 9.12). See also *PLRE*, Vol. 3b, 798–9, s.v. Lupus 1; the man's ethnicity is not discussed here, however.

We turn next to the complex epistolary relationship that Fortunatus had with Gogo, who was one of Sigibert's counsellors and who later became tutor of the king's son Childebert II. This relationship is unique because it provides the only hint in the sources that Fortunatus' arrival in Gaul was perhaps not always hailed with enthusiasm. Gogo was highly educated, having been taught by Parthenius, grandson of Ruricius of Limoges, whom he alludes to in a florid letter that has been preserved in the *epistolae Austrasicae*.⁵⁸ In this letter, which is a reply to an earlier one sent to him by Trasericus, bishop of Toul, Gogo voices his agreement with the bishop's position that there is no need to resort *ad alienos vates* when their own region housed good poets; indeed, the learned *doctor* Trasericus is inspiration for such, Gogo flatteringly suggests.⁵⁹ What and who is he talking about? Elena Malaspina, in her translation and commentary on the *epistolae Austrasicae*, refers us to Koebner, Riché, and George for the answers to these questions.⁶⁰ Riché is convinced that Gogo's allusion to *alienos vates* and *doctorem* both refer to Fortunatus.⁶¹ The former makes a great deal of sense, as Fortunatus was active in Gaul at the time. But as George rightly points out, *doctor* can only refer to Trasericus, as the sentence makes no sense otherwise.⁶² The corollary of this argument, which George overlooks, is that if *doctor* refers to Trasericus, then Gogo must be criticizing Fortunatus. Koebner argues that Gogo did indeed express jealousy and xenophobia toward Fortunatus

⁵⁸ *epistolae austrasicae* 16; others by Gogo in the *ep. aus.* are 13 and 22.

⁵⁹ The passage in question is as follows: *Est itaque, Divinitate propitia, minime necessarium, secundum quod scribitis, ad alienos requirere quod per proprios vates aliis possumus fenerare, quoniam poetis datur indutia peregrinis prudentiam monstrari insignem, cum te incola regio nostra unicum meruit habere doctorem*. [And therefore, with God's favour and according to what you write, it is by no means necessary to seek from foreign poets what we are able to lend with interest to others through our own. For a reprieve has been given to our poets during which they get to display a really splendid culture to those foreigners, since when you took up residence here our region has had the privilege of possessing a singularly learned doctor].

⁶⁰ Elena Malaspina, *Il Liber epistolarum della cancelleria austrasica*, (Rome: 2001), n. 422.

⁶¹ Riché, *Education and Culture*, 222.

⁶² George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 14. Pucci, *Poems*, xxii, seems to have misunderstood the passage entirely. He believes both that Fortunatus, the foreign poet, has been given a post at Sigibert's court, and that Gogo is referring to him as a learned doctor there. Pucci then uses this argument to explain Fortunatus' prolonged sojourn at Metz.

in this letter, but that these were overcome in time by the latter's esteem and friendship.⁶³ This is certainly possible. Alternatively, Gogo's remarks to Trasericus may have sprung from a disagreement between himself and Fortunatus that is documented in the following six-line poem:

*Quas mihi porrexit modo pagina missa querellas
 immunem culpa me loquor esse tuae.
 Nam causam remur tua plus praesentia laesit
 quo vos peccastis crimine culpor ego.
 Non tamen ex tali titulo dulcedo peribit.
 fructus amicitiae corde colente manet.*⁶⁴

Regarding those complaints that your letter recently brought to me,
 I say I am not responsible – you are to blame.
 For I believe you yourself greatly harmed your cause;
 you have been at fault and I am blamed for it.
 But our relationship will not perish from such a trifle,
 For the fruit of friendship remains in the heart that cultivates it.

In spite of these bumps along the way, Fortunatus wrote a number of friendly and lengthy missives to Gogo. He even dined at the man's house, where he wrote a poem to commemorate the meal in which he calls Gogo his Cicero who feeds him with words and his Apicius who feeds him with food.⁶⁵ Elsewhere Fortunatus paints a picture of his friend fishing, hunting, and cultivating his estates on the one hand, and dispensing justice and wise counsel at court on the other – a flattering reference to the Roman virtue of *otium* and *negotium*.⁶⁶ In a panegyric written soon after Gogo's return from Spain with

⁶³ Koebner, *Venantius Fortunatus*, 23. George believes that Koebner is reading too much into the text here; I am inclined to agree with his view, however.

⁶⁴ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 7.3. According to Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, vol. 2, p. 182–3, n.10, the *quas querellas* is not to be taken as a regular noun with relative pronoun, as the phrase forms no link between lines 1 and 2. Rather, the correct sense is *en ce qui concerne*, which I have rendered into English as “regarding.” There is also some confusion to do with line 3 and the word I have rendered *remur* (we believe, from *reor*), which is *remus* in the MS. F. Leo suggested that due to confusion by this time in handling deponent verbs, either Fortunatus or a later scribe changed the form from the passive *remur* to the active *remus*. Rheims is another possibility, as is a proper name. This puzzle does not alter the fact that there was disagreement at some point between Fortunatus and Gogo.

⁶⁵ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 7.2.3–4: Apicius was a first century Roman gourmet. Other poems to Gogo are 7.1, 7.3 (above), and 7.4.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 7.4. The whole poem is given over to this dual image.

Brunhild, the bride-to-be of Sigibert, Fortunatus set the stage by comparing his subject's captivating influence over men to that of Orpheus over the wild beasts, again a familiar image to anyone educated in the works of Virgil and Ovid.⁶⁷ Godman points out that Fortunatus was here "ascribing Roman literary skills to a Frankish magnate whom we know, from his florid epistles, to have prized them highly."⁶⁸

What Godman and others do not take into account, however, is the suppleness with which Fortunatus varied his style from person to person. His ability to detect nuances and adjust his discourse accordingly was apparently limitless and goes a long way toward explaining his resounding success as a poet in Merovingian society.⁶⁹ Gogo the Frankish magnate, Dynamius, Rector of Provence, Iovinus his predecessor, and the popular Lupus all received personalized letters and panegyrics from Fortunatus that represented them as erudite and benevolent participants in classical culture. In short, he assures them that they are not barbarians. The florid style in which he addresses them, however, pales in comparison with the correspondence we will consider next.

4 Exceptionally-Literate Correspondents

4.1 Felix of Nantes

Felix bishop of Nantes sprang from an aristocratic family that had long lived in Aquitaine.⁷⁰ In the *opera poetica*, the number of addresses to Felix exceeds that to any other bishop apart from Gregory of Tours, indicating a deeply-rooted *amicitia* that goes hand in hand with the elevated style utilized by each. Representations of their correspondence include, among others, an acrostic poem on Fortunatus' own name, an Easter poem considered by Reydellet to be Fortunatus' best, an acceptance of an

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 7.1.1–14.

⁶⁸ Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 16.

⁶⁹ As already noted, this literary success did not necessarily translate into financial security.

⁷⁰ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 3.8: *nam quicumque potens Aquitanica rura subegit / extitit ille tuo sanguine luciparens*. [for each powerful figure who has held Aquitaine / is of your blood and contributes to your greatness]. For further information on Felix of Nantes, see *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, s.v. Felix 5, 481–2.

invitation to visit one of the bishop's estates on the Loire, and congratulations to the bishop for deflecting a river for more effective crop irrigation.⁷¹ Several times Fortunatus specifically mentions receiving a letter from Felix, an example of which is the invitation noted above.⁷² Once in a while he quotes Felix' letters directly. *Opera poetica* 3.4, for instance, which consists of thirteen prose paragraphs with an attached four-line verse at the end, contains three direct quotes of Felix. The Latin exchange is so convoluted as to be almost unintelligible while at the same time indulging in the most excessive and self-conscious flowerings of Christianized *romanitas*:

Felix: *si Ligerem vobiscum ascendissem, secundis fluctibus Namnetas occurrissem.*

If I had gone up the Loire with you, I could have gone as far as Nantes with favourable waters.

Fortunatus: *novi quidem te mihi Canobo cherucis⁷³ adcersientibus mioparonem praepetem, catus arte armoniaca tutus inter symplegadas se mordentes exissem, et si res exigeret plausu creperegico Oetam Thirintiacum Pindo respirante pulsassem.*

For I know that with you as my Canopus [captain of Menelaus' ship on his quest to retrieve Helen], and with the ropes fetching my swift boat, being skilled in the art of harmony I would have emerged safely (even) midst the self-devouring Symplegades [rocks on the Bosphorus that clash randomly together]. And if the occasion demanded, I would have strummed upon Tiryntean [Herculean] Oeta [the mountain where Hercules/Herakles died] with a violent beat, with the Pindus [mountain range of which the Oeta is an offshoot] giving back the echo.

Felix: *nec si Vulsci venissent in solacio, me vobis abripere valuissent.*

Not even if the Volsci [dangerous enemies of classical Rome] came with an army in support could they have prevailed to wrest me from you.

Fortunatus: *credite, quantum meus animus inspicit, ipsa vix Roma tantum mihi dare ad auxilia poterat quantum praestitistis in verba.*⁷⁴

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 3.5, 3.9, 3.10, 5.7. See the acrostic 3.5 at the end of the chapter with translation.

⁷² *ibid.*, 5.7.5–6a: *cur humilem me, summe, vocas loca visere blanda / quae te, care, tenent?* [Why, great lord, have you invited me to visit those charming places that you, dear one, hold in possession]?

⁷³ *ibid.*, 3.4.9. The word *cheruci* has traditionally been translated in this context as *Cherusci*, a Germanic tribe from the Rhine area that was later absorbed into the Franks, see e.g. Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, vol. 1, 89. However, the home territory of the *Cherusci* was a long way from Nantes, so unless this word was being applied to the local Britons, or some other people unknown, the idea seems farfetched. Perhaps a more sensible solution is based on the work of Charles du Fresne, sieur Ducange et al, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, (Paris: 1678), who defines *cheruci* as the ropes on the mast of a boat. The result is the pleasing image of a sailboat with sails billowing and ropes straining.

⁷⁴ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 3.4.10.

Believe me, as far as I tell, Rome herself could scarce offer me as much support as you have given me with your words.

Felix: *nisi sollicitatus laudibus rusticus calamus non turnasset.*

Unless incited by your praises, my rustic pen had not formed the verses.

Fortunatus: *licet talis cultor Christicola feracissima iugera saepius exaravit, attamen nuper illum, id est vos, confiteor ludos itifalicos Amphioneo barbato reboasse.*⁷⁵

Yet a certain cultivator has often ploughed the prolific acres of Christ and he – it is you I’m talking about – recently trumpeted back playful ithyphalics on the lyre of Amphion [a son of Zeus who with his brother Zethos built a wall].

The rest of the letter is in the same vein, from a comment on how Felix’ very presence improves the climate in Nantes:

*Denique non Cecaumene rabida nec ursae situs frigoribus intertextus respirat, sed per vos mutatis sedibus assiduo Favoni sibilo modulante vernatur,*⁷⁶

Finally, your region does not so exhale the rabid Cecaumen [wind] of the torrid zone nor is it permeated with the cold of the She-Bear [far north] but that thanks to you moving from place to place it blooms with the melody of the constantly whistling Favonus [zephyr].

to extravagant, and to the modern ear rather odd, praise of the bishop’s eloquence:

*Credebam enim quasi sofo pindarico compactus tetraastrophos pedestri glutine suggillatus et ac si enthymematum parturiens catenatum vinculum fecunda fluxisset oratio spiris intertexta sofismate peregrino.*⁷⁷

For I believed I had been crushed with a paste of prose and, in regard to those four-verse poems, it was as if I had been bombarded with pindaric skill, and as if your fecund eloquence, giving birth to a linked chain of clever arguments, had flowed out in spirals interwoven with foreign (Greek) sophisms.

Noticeable at once is the preponderance of Greek mythical allusions and the sprinkling of Greek vocabulary. Strictly speaking, this is not a new element, since we encountered references to Greek figures in the above poem to Iovinus. What is different here is the number and variety of Greek allusions, how Fortunatus develops and personalizes them,

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 3.4.11.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 3.4.6.

⁷⁷ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 3.4.3. Reydellet takes *suggillatus* as related to *suggero*, and translates as *j’avais en effet l’impression d’un poème...* for the opening words of this sentence. He then proceeds to a reading that describes Felix’ verses as “compacted” and “crushed,” rather than applying those participles to Fortunatus. Not only does such a translation not fit the grammar (*compactus* is nominative and cannot go with *tetraastrophos*), but it comes across as impossibly pejorative, a problem Reydellet acknowledges. See *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, 87, n. 11.

and the flamboyant way he draws attention to them. Besides the above examples, the letter contains references to Homer – whom the poet calls the “prophetic spring of the Smyrnian fount” – and his tale of Castor and Pollux,⁷⁸ as well as the reefs of the Echinades, a group of islands in the Ionian Sea off the coast of Greece. In case Felix missed the point, Fortunatus attached at the end a four-line verse that specifically draws attention to the bilingual nature of this piece:

*Si veniant linguae pariter graeca atque latina
pro meritis nequeunt soluere cuncta tuis.
Laudibus obsessus, uotis venerandus haberis,
Felix, qui sensus luce perennis eris.*

Were both Greek and Latin tongues available in equal measure,
even they are not able to weigh out what is owed to your merits.
Surrounded by praises, you are held venerated by your holy vows,
Felix, you whom the light of understanding will make eternal.

Sometimes these allusions seem rather forced. In the above passage describing the imagined voyage, for example, the poet lumps together figures from the Trojan War (Canopus), the story of the Argonauts (the Symplegades), and the death-place of Herakles, none of which have any connection with each other.⁷⁹ Further, his references are not always accurate, as the example above of Felix and the “lyre of Amphion” demonstrates (see n. 73).

Although Venantius Fortunatus was educated in Ravenna, a western Byzantine capital, any knowledge he had of the Greek language remains an uncertainty.⁸⁰ Usage of Greek vocabulary is common in Latin texts and does not necessarily indicate a familiarity with spoken or written Greek as a whole. Further, the little verse at the end of the above letter is too obviously an attention-grabber to be taken seriously as an indication of bilingualism. Graecisms are relatively rare throughout Fortunatus’ work; virtually none exists, for example, in the letters to Dynamius et al. discussed above. And although eight

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 3.4.5.

⁷⁹ Herakles and Orpheus are related via the *Argonautica*, however.

⁸⁰ While architecturally Byzantine – the city’s main churches, with their Byzantine-style mosaic decoration, had been constructed about two decades earlier – it is unknown what other aspects of Greek culture existed in Ravenna at that time (c. 560) and to what degree.

poems survive to Felix, only this one is dressed up as Greek. Although we would not want to rule out a facility in Greek on the part of our poet, the above observations suggest that the Greek emphasis in the letter was a performance rather than an effortless outpouring.

At the end of the day, the Greek in this letter is more about Felix of Nantes than about Venantius Fortunatus. Through the lens of the poet's verbal skill Felix is cast into relief as an individual whose *romanitas* included a large helping of Greek culture and perhaps Greek language, although there is no other evidence for this in our scanty sources. We can also assume that in order to appreciate Fortunatus' efforts and reply to them in kind, he must have been capable of a vocabulary and style so mannered that it matched anything produced by his fifth-century literary forbears. Stuck in Nantes, which the bishop described as *in ultimo orbis angulo*,⁸¹ and subject to the depredations of the Britons, Felix must have been thrilled to find in Fortunatus, as he thought, another old school Roman with whom to communicate in the manner to which he was accustomed and which he enjoyed. Unfortunately it is likely, as George suggests, that the association between the two was broken by 580, when the hostility between Felix and Gregory of Tours reached its height and made it impossible for the poet to keep close contact with both.⁸² Felix died two years later of the plague.⁸³

4.2 Martin of Braga

Another individual who received letters from Fortunatus in equally elevated language is Bishop Martin of Braga.⁸⁴ This should not come as a surprise, as Gregory of Tours notes

⁸¹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 3.4.6. This phrase, meaning "the ultimate corner of the globe," or we might say "the ends of the earth," is another example of Fortunatus quoting Felix in his reply. See n. 20.

⁸² George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 123.

⁸³ *LH* 6.15.

⁸⁴ Braga is in Galicia, modern northern Portugal. The bishop had close connections with St. Martin and Tours because a portion of St. Martin's relics were translated from Tours to Galicia at the same time as the bishop's arrival in the city. This is reported by Gregory in his *virtutes Martini*.

that Martin was accounted second to none in learning.⁸⁵ He was the author of several works, mainly moral treatises. His *de correctione rusticorum* remained well-known a century after his death; he also, according to Gregory, composed the verses over the southern portal of the church of St. Martin at Tours.⁸⁶ He was also well enough versed in Greek to translate the *apophthegmata patrum* into Latin, as well as collecting and translating a series of Greek canons: *collectio orientalium canonum, seu capitula Martini*.⁸⁷ He may also have taught Greek.⁸⁸ The *opera poetica* contain two epistles to Martin, one a panegyric in poetic form, and the other a prose letter.⁸⁹ While toward the end of both of these Fortunatus commends Radegund and Agnes to the bishop and requests his protection and patronage for them, the women are by no means the focus of the works, nor is there any indication that either was written by the poet on Radegund's behalf, as one scholar has argued.⁹⁰

The prose letter is replete with the most overblown rhetoric imaginable – extended metaphors, theological and classical allusions, wordplay, and praise for the recipient's merits alongside the most abject self-abasement. It opens as follows:

Felici propulsa flatu recreabilis opinionis vestrae nostras aures aura demulsit et molli blandita lapsu, sibilo crepitante paradisiaci horti odorama saburrans, suavium florum nuntia nares ipsas aromate respirante suffivit, admodulanter indicans, sicut ad orientem

⁸⁵ LH 5.37. *in tantum se litteris imbuat ut nulli secundus sui temporis haberetur*. [He immersed himself so much in the study of letters that he was held second to none of his time]. This is further confirmation that Fortunatus correctly read his correspondents' literary ability and replied in kind.

⁸⁶ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.37; See J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 400–1000* (London: 1952, repr. 1977), 118–119; for further information on Martin cf. George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 67–8.

⁸⁷ R.B. Dobson, ed. *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 2, “Apophthegmata,” (Cambridge: 2000), 83. Also “Martin of Braga,” 916..

⁸⁸ George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 68, states this without citing her sources.

⁸⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.1 and 5.2.

⁹⁰ George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 67, believes the panegyric is really from Radegund to Martin, and because the letter mentions the adoption of the Rule of Caesarius by Holy Cross, this author argues that this also formed a main theme in the correspondence between Fortunatus and Martin. There is no basis for either of these arguments; the above are side issues only. Although I do not discuss this point, Fortunatus also mentions Radegund in the letter to Felix of Nantes, above. Again, this comes near the end of the letter and is by no means a focal point.

Eden a principio, ita decurso saeculo alterum ad occasum Deus plantasset Elisium, in quo fortior Adam, id est Martius Martinus, inexpugnabilis accola, Christi fide ditior viveret perpetuo servante mandato; quem non tam ad auram Dominus reuisendum post meridiem pergeret, quam ipse vir factus paradisi inter perspicui cordis zmaragdinas plateas et vernantis operis inumbrantes chorymbos – non quod ficus tegetet, sed fructus ornaret – inambulantis in se beati Redemptoris adhaesura vestigia coherceret fide figente. Unde nec ad momentum pii conditoris laberetur praesentia quia nec in athomo plasma notaretur in culpa, sed per illas beatitudines velut odori nemoris inlectus deliciis et vernulam Dominus et verna Dominum possideret; utpote cum alternante sibi concatenati dulcedine, nec iste fugaretur admissio nec ille frudaretur amplexu.⁹¹

Propelled by a happy breeze, the refreshing wind of your renown has wafted its way to our ears and, charming us with a gentle glide and exhaling in a whisper the odours of the garden of Paradise, this announcer of sweet flowers has suffused my nostrils with an aromatic scent. It has indicated to me in its modulations that just as in the beginning God planted Eden in the East, so in the course of time he has in our Western regions planted a second, an Elysium, in which an unassailable tenant, a stronger Adam, that is the Martial Martin, lives more richly in the faith of Christ by the guarantee of His perpetual dispensation. No sooner had the Lord come to visit him in the cool of the afternoon, than the man – who himself was a Paradise between the emerald green pathways of his limpid heart and the shadowed clusters of his fruitful labour and who is not covered by a fig leaf, but is instead adorned with the fruit of good works – with fixed faith placed his feet in the tracks imprinted by the blessed Redeemer as he walked, as if they were his own. And the presence of the pious Creator did not vanish in a moment after seeing what he had formed fall into sin, but enticed by those blessed qualities as though by piney forest scent, the Lord took possession of his servant and the servant took hold of his Lord; bound to each other by a mutual friendship, one was not driven away nor the other deprived of this embrace.

While the language is as ornate and the imagery as fanciful as in Fortunatus' letters to Felix of Nantes, the emphasis is quite different. Here cultural attributes are more restrained in favour of Martin's spiritual qualities and Christian *conversatio* because, as the poet states further on, Martin receives pleasure more by a pattern of good works than the pompous display of erudition.⁹² This does not prevent the poet from indulging in the latter at every opportunity, however. Fortunatus had evidently received a letter from the bishop and its eloquence, says the poet, compares favourably to that of Virgil and Cicero: *quid loquar de perihodis, epichirematibus, inthymemis syllogismisque perplexis?... quod*

⁹¹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.1.1. Fortunatus is speaking here about St. Martin, whom he names a new and better Adam in a Western Paradise. This Adam did not fall into sin as the old Adam did, says the poet, but remained in good standing with God. The implication is that St. Martin is the spiritual Father of Martin of Braga.

⁹² *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.1.7.

*apud illos est profundum, hic profluum, quod illic difficillimum, hic in promptu.*⁹³ It was like a fine Falernian, he goes on to say, and like a rustic guest at a banquet who is unaccustomed to such richness, he is both attracted and apprehensive; finally, he gives in to its sweetness.⁹⁴

In his letter Martin had evidently commented on Fortunatus' erudition, saying that after Stoic and Aristotelian philosophy the poet is surrendering himself to the beginnings of theological speculation.⁹⁵ In reply Fortunatus modestly remarks on his relative unfamiliarity with both: *nam Plato, Aristotelis, Crysippus vel Pittacus cum mihi vix opinione noti sint nec legenti; Hilarius, Gregorius, Ambrosius, Augustinusque vel si visione noti fierent, dormitanti.*⁹⁶ An allusion to the Stoic school of philosophy – *unde procul dubio caelestium clientela factus es Cleantarum* – is found in the same paragraph.⁹⁷ It is difficult to know how to evaluate this letter's Greek elements, which are a definite presence but which do not predominate. Unlike the letter to Iovinus, they do not exist to demonstrate the superiority of Christian belief, nor is their purpose to draw attention to the author's "bilingualism," as in the above letter to Felix of Nantes. Moreover, we only have two examples of Fortunatus' communication with Martin, far too few to accurately gauge their relationship. Clearly, Fortunatus is aware of Martin's Greek learning. His remark regarding Cleanthes suggests his awareness also of the

⁹³ *ibid.*, 5.1.6. [What can I say about your periods, your arguments, your syllogisms, your reasoning? What at their hands (i.e. Virgil and Cicero) is buried deeply, here streams forth; what there is strained, here comes easily].

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 5.1.3.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 5.1.7.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 5.1.7. [For Plato, Aristotle, Crysippus, and Pittacus are known to me by reputation only without having read them; Hilary, Gregory, Ambrose, and Augustine as if I came to know them in a vision while sleeping]. Fortunatus does not specify to which Gregory he is referring. Pittacus (7th C. BC), known as one of the Seven Sages of Greece, is attested only in the work of other authors.

⁹⁷ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.1.7: [...so doubtless you have been accepted as a client of the heavenly Cleanthes]. Cleanthes succeeded Zenon as head of the Stoic school.

bishop's Stoic leanings, and is possibly an attempt to signal to the bishop his own knowledge of and interest in this philosophy.⁹⁸

The position of self-abasement that Fortunatus adopts in this letter is much more pronounced than in that to Felix. This renders the letter more formal and suggests that the relationship between the two was in the beginning stages when the letter was composed. (We can only speculate as to whether it continued – Braga was a long way from Poitiers!) It is also possible, although not likely given the poet's self-assuredness in other situations, that Fortunatus was intimidated by Martin's erudition and gave a rather subdued account of himself as a result.

5 Gregory of Tours

At the other end of the literary spectrum lie Fortunatus' more than two dozen extant verses to Gregory of Tours. For example, upon arriving home after a visit:

*Iugiter opto libens, sacer amplectende Gregori,
cernere vos oculis, quaerere litterulis.
Dulce videre mihi, at si desit copia cerni,
spes erit oranti vel dare verba patri.
Nuper ab aspectu decedens concite vestro
per glaciem vitreas me loquor isse vias.
Sed crucis auxilio, Martino operante patrono,
perveni ad matres saluus, opime pater.
Quae vos multiplici veneranter honore salutant
ast ego pro reditu vota salutis ago.*⁹⁹

I desire freely and continually, holy and embraceable Gregory,
to see you with my eyes, to seek you out with my little epistles.
To see you is sweet to me, but if the opportunity is not permitted,
there is hope for this suppliant at least to send words to his father.
Recently departing from your sight with haste
I tell you – on ice I traversed glassy roads.

⁹⁸ Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 2, 12, n.16, comments that Fortunatus is marking Martin's Stoic traits of character by a "jeu de mots." Which wordplay is not clear: does he mean *clientela* and *Cleantarum*?

⁹⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.11. The *si desit copia* in line 3 is here the equivalent of *si non licet*, while the passive infinitive *cerni* is the equivalent of the gerundive *cernendi* per Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, vol. 2, 37 n. 113. The sense, however, is active.

But with the aid of the cross and with Martin as my patron,
 I reached our mothers safely, splendid father.
 They greet you many times reverently and with honour:
 but for my part, I give you goodwill greetings for my return.

Another to the bishop of Tours in greeting:

*Gurgitis in morem si lingua fluenta rigaret,
 turbine torrentis vel raperetur aquis,
 ad tua praecipue praeconia summa, Gregori,
 dum non explerem flumine, gutta forem.
 Munificumque patrem aequaret nec musa Maronis,
 fers, bone, quanta mihi quis valet ore loqui?
 Hac breuitate, sacer, famulum commendo subactum
 me Fortunatum; sit veniale, precor.¹⁰⁰*

If my tongue could pour out water like a whirlpool,
 or could be carried away by a spiral of raging waters,
 to do justice to your excellent praises, Gregory,
 not only had I not filled up a stream, I had been a droplet.
 Not even Virgil's Muse would have been equal to this generous father;
 tell me, good friend, who is able to say how much you have done for me?
 With this brief verse, holy one, I commend myself, Fortunatus, as your lowly servant.
 May it meet with your favour, I pray.

Yet another in thanks:

*Officiis generose piis, sacer arce Gregori,
 absens fis praesens munere, summe pater,
 qui mihi transmittis propria cum prole parentes,
 insita cum fructu: surcula, poma simul.
 Det Deus omnipotens, meritorum fruge repletus
 mala legas auide quae paradisos habet.¹⁰¹*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 8.18. This little verse is rather ambiguous. The sense depends on whether one translates the word *praeconia* as "Gregory's proclamations," in which case the whole piece is in praise of Gregory's eloquence, (per George, *VF: Poems*, 71) or as "praises attributable to Gregory," in which case the poet means he is unable to praise the bishop properly (per Reydellet, *Venance Fortunatu*, vol. 2, 159). I have retained the ambiguity, which was perhaps placed there on purpose by the poet, by translating *praeconia* as simply "praises." Another puzzle is the phrase *sit veniale* in the last line. Both Reydellet and George translate the phrase as referring to Fortunatus himself: "pardonnez-moi" and "have mercy upon me" respectively, although the fact that *veniale* is neuter seems to preclude this. For this reason I have translated it as referring to the *poema* or *carmen* itself, both neuter words, the antecedent being *hac breuitate* in the previous line.

¹⁰¹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.13.

Gregory, noble in your godly duties and holy in your high office,
 though absent you are present through your gift, highest father,
 who sends me the parents with their own offspring:
 the plants with the fruit; the grafting slips along with the apples.
 May the omnipotent God grant that you be replete with the fruit of your merits,
 and avidly collect the fruits that Paradise offers.

Virtually all extant correspondence between Fortunatus and Gregory consists of short and simple pieces of this nature, without a trace of the mannered style and classical allusions that the poet often used with others. The only exceptions to this unadorned style are poems that Fortunatus wrote to Gregory upon request, for instance the verses in Sapphic meter,¹⁰² and the poem on the conversion of the Jews by Avitus of Clermont.¹⁰³ Even in these, the language is not more difficult, although the pieces are longer than usual and there are a few references to classical figures in the Sapphic verses.¹⁰⁴ Besides brevity and straightforward language, Fortunatus' verses to Gregory are characterized by three qualities: epithets of reverence – and his own subordination – with which the poet addresses the bishop, praise for Gregory's merits, and everyday subject matter. The first of these is a convention of the patron-client relationship that Fortunatus maintained with all his addressees, similar to the valedictory “your most humble and obedient servant” and just as meaningless. It does not necessarily indicate that both Gregory and Fortunatus “[saw] the relationship as one between unequals,” as one scholar has recently argued.¹⁰⁵ The posturing of inequality is offset by the large volume of correspondence between the two and the language of real friendship and affection that is evident within it.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 9.6 and 9.7.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 5.5a and b.

¹⁰⁴ Fortunatus mentions Dione, consort of Zeus at Dodona; the Greek poet Pindar, the Roman poet Horace, and Mopsus, a rustic figure in Virgil's *Eclogues*. This last is a self-reference.

¹⁰⁵ Roberts, *Humblest Sparrow*, 271. We have no way whatever of knowing what Gregory's thoughts were on his relationship with the poet. None of the bishop's letters to Fortunatus survive and he gives the poet only the briefest of mentions in his *Histories*. (5.8, in connection with Fortunatus' *vita Germani*.).

¹⁰⁶ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 271. I take issue with Roberts' argument that a distinction in status is “particularly marked” in the case of Gregory and is accompanied by “an unusual reticence” in expressions of affection. On the contrary, the poems to the bishop are strongly marked by affection: 5.8.3: *amplectende mihi semper* [always to be embraced by me]; 5.8a.7–8: *pagina si brevis est, non est brevis ardor amantis / nam plus*

Praising the merits of one's correspondent is also a time-honoured convention that is consistent in Fortunatus' work. Gregory is lauded by the poet in generous terms: *culmen honoratum, decus alnum, lumen opimum / pastor apostolicae sedis amore placens / amplectende mihi semper, sacer arce Gregori / nec divulse animo, vir venerande meo*, begins one poem addressed to the bishop after a journey.¹⁰⁷ In another commending a woman: *summe pater patriae, specimen pietatis opimae / dulce caput Turonis, religionis apex / iugiter alta sequens, clementi corde Gregori / unde animae decus est huc ratione petens*.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to this steady stream of praise for Gregory's qualities as a good bishop and worthy successor to St. Martin, Fortunatus only rarely praises Gregory's eloquence. Besides the ambiguous poem above (5.8), the interpretation of which is uncertain, there exists only one case of extravagant praise: *egregio compacta situ falerata rotatu / atque Sophocleo pagina fulta sopho / me arentem vestro madefecit opima rigatu / fecit et eloquio quod loquor esse tuo*¹⁰⁹ and another that is more lukewarm: *qui inlustrans populos spargeris ore pharus*.¹¹⁰ Fortunatus does, however, twice mention receiving verses from Gregory, once in 8.19: *tramite munifico celebravit pagina cursum / carmine dulcifluo quam tuus edit amor*¹¹¹ and again in 5.8b: *carmina diva legens proprioque e*

corda colunt quam mea verba canunt [if my page is brief, the ardour of my affection is not / for the sentiments of my heart adore you more than my verses sing]; 9.6.14: *quae cape tu voto quo tibi dictat amor* (speaking of the Sapphic verses) [take them up in the spirit in which love wrote them for you]; 5.11.1–2: *iugiter opto libens, sacer amplectende Gregori / cernere vos oculis, quaerere litterulis* [I constantly wish with all my heart, holy Gregory whom I love to embrace, to see you with my eyes and to search you out with my little messages]. These are only a few examples of many.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 5.8.1–4. [honoured pinnacle, ornament of nurture, lamp of abundance / shepherd pleasing in love of the apostolic see / always to be embraced by me, holy citadel Gregory / never sundered from my soul, venerable man].

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 5.10.1–4. [eminent father of the land, model of abundant piety / delightful head of Tours, pinnacle of religion / always following after the heights, Gregory merciful in heart, / through reason reaching toward what is the beauty of the spirit]. Reydellet translates the last line as: “vous dont la raison tend toujours vers ce qui fait la beauté de l'âme.”

¹⁰⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 8.21.1–4. [knit together with outstanding skill and ornamented all round / supported with Sophoclean wisdom / your writing irrigated my aridity with richness / and makes my own words soak up your eloquence].

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 8.15.3. [you are a lighthouse, casting forth your voice, illuminating the people].

¹¹¹ [your letter has celebrated its course with bountiful track / with a melodious poem that your affection has put forth].

*pectore condens / participans aliis fit tibi palma, parens.*¹¹² It is difficult, therefore, to draw any firm conclusions regarding Gregory's literary competence from the language of the *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*.¹¹³

What is more telling about Fortunatus' verses to Gregory, because it bypasses the above conventions, is that their contents rarely stray outside greetings and expressions of affection, thanks for gifts, invitations, and journeys. No literary, theological, or philosophical topic is introduced or discussed; virtually no allusions are made to Greek or Roman figures or myths; no literary devices are deployed; there is no development of themes. In other words, Fortunatus' letters to Gregory are not "literature" and have more in common with modern email exchanges than, say, with the letters of Avitus of Vienne and his associates and successors. Recognizing how Fortunatus adapted his writing to that of his correspondents, we cannot escape the conclusion that the poet's transparent style and mundane content quite likely reflected Gregory's own talents and interests. If this is the case, the poet's remarks above regarding Gregory's eloquence can be safely consigned to the category of outrageous flattery.¹¹⁴

The style in which Fortunatus addressed his verses to Gregory is very similar to that he employed with Radegund and Agnes, to whom he sent forty-five extant letters – almost double the amount to Gregory. For the most part he avoids allusions and rhetorical devices and again the subject matter is everyday: flowers, food, journeys, greetings, gifts. Moreover, only with Gregory, Radegund, and Agnes is there a record of the poet exchanging small, inexpensive gifts such as foodstuffs and homemade items.¹¹⁵ The frequency of communication, the commonplace topics, and the intimacy of the gift

¹¹² [reading divine poems and composing them from your own heart / participating with others the palm comes to you, my parent].

¹¹³ Roberts, *Humblest Sparrow*. 278–9. This scholar uses Fortunatus' praise, I believe wrongly, as an argument against the bishop's profession of his own *rusticitas*.

¹¹⁴ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 8.21 above. Gregory's own remark regarding his rustic style may be more than just a humility *topos*.

¹¹⁵ For example, 11.13 in which the poet sends chestnuts in a basket made with his own hands. This was a common Roman custom between intimate friends, cf. Ralph W. Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends: A Collection of Letters from Visigothic Gaul* (Liverpool: 1999), 53.

exchange support the traditional view that these three were Fortunatus' closest friends. The lack of literary sophistication in his poems to them suggests in addition that Fortunatus lumped these friends together in terms of what he saw as their capabilities in that area.

6 Syagrius of Autun and the *carmen figuratum*

Many of Fortunatus' unusual poetic offerings have not received the attention given to his other works.¹¹⁶ The most remarkable of these, in my opinion, are his multiple acrostic poems, or *carmina figurata*. Fortunatus wrote four of these in total.¹¹⁷ Three (2.4, 2.5, 2.5a; the last two are unfinished) take as their subject the Holy Cross, and may have been written in connection with Radegund's search for a relic of the Holy Cross for her monastery. The fourth and most complex, containing entirely different subject matter, is addressed to Bishop Syagrius of Autun. It is the only surviving poem Fortunatus sent to this bishop.¹¹⁸ Fortunately for our purposes, it is undeniably a letter: not only does the poet directly address his recipient in the final four lines of the acrostic, but he complements the work with seventeen prose paragraphs explaining his motive for writing

¹¹⁶ For example, 3.30 to a Deacon Sindulfus, 8.2 on a voyage (not in this inventory), and *appendix carminum* 19 to Radegund/Agnes are built upon a curious echo effect. George, *VF: Poems*, 69, n. 1, describes the musical and beautiful result rather pejoratively as "each couplet seesawing between two phrases identical in weight and force;" Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, n. 138, names it, equally pejoratively, as an "exercice précieux" and refers us to the work of A. Loyen, *Sidoine Apollinaire et l'esprit précieux en Gaule*, (Paris: 1943), 104–5. 1.16 to Leontius of Bordeaux (not in this inventory), 9.5 to Dagobert (an epitaph not in this inventory), 3.5 to Felix of Nantes, and 8.5 to Radegund are examples of simple acrostics. I have reproduced some of these poems with translations at the end of this chapter.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion and analysis of these from a literary and linguistic standpoint see Margaret Graver, "Quaelibet audendi: Fortunatus and the acrostic," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993), 219–245. For a thorough study of the history of figured poems in general see Ulrich Ernest, *Carmen figuratum: Geschichte des Figurengedichtes von den antiken Ursprüngen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Cologne: 1991).

¹¹⁸ This is the same Syagrius who received the pallium from Gregory the Great under the patronage of Queen Brunhild, although as this did not take place until at least twenty years after he received the poem from Fortunatus, the two events are not connected in any way. For further details on the career of this bishop see Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 2.3.

the acrostic and the writing process itself.¹¹⁹ This exposition is scarcely less of a virtuoso display than the *carmen figuratum*. In keeping with conclusions drawn earlier, this remarkable piece strongly supports the notion that Syagrius was a highly-educated and literate bishop.

We learn in the prose exposition that a grieving father, in great distress over the captivity of his son, has approached the poet for help, naming Syagrius as the individual with the authority to negotiate the release of the captive. This would involve payment of the ransom by the bishop, and the protocol of patronage demanded that Syagrius be reimbursed for his pains and his outlay of funds; the poem is that payment. Since Christ is the ultimate Redeemer of captives, Fortunatus decided to weave a gift poem hung on a structure of thirty-three letters – the span of the Saviour’s life. The result is a *carmen figuratum* with thirty-three letters across and thirty-three lines down with concealed texts within the poem. These *versus intexti* descend two on each side, two diagonally, and one vertically through the middle.¹²⁰ (See my reproduction at the end of this chapter). In the exact centre he placed the letter M, the midway point of the Latin alphabet.¹²¹

The first line of the acrostic begins with the Genesis story of the Creation and the Fall, proceeds through the Virgin Birth and culminates in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The last four lines are praise for the virtues of Syagrius. The triumph of such a piece is not in its poetic content, which tends to be stilted and unsatisfying, but in the fact that the poet has managed to produce recognizable verse of any sort that stays within his own self-imposed bounds. The evident labour this requires is intended to form part of the “payment” to Syagrius for his aid.¹²² It also forms the basis of the seventeen paragraphs of prose, which become a staged revelation of the writing process designed to advertise the poet’s struggles and his expertise in overcoming them.

¹¹⁹ 5.6 is the explanatory prose portion; 5.6a is the *carmen figuratum*.

¹²⁰ Thirty-three letters to a line presents its own challenge, as hexameter lines are usually thirty-five or thirty-seven letters. See Fortunatus’ poems to the Holy Cross, 2.4 and 2.5, which each contain thirty-five; also Graver, *Quaelibet audendi*, 230.

¹²¹ Again, this is a major stricture, especially as the poet decided to surround the “M” with vowels.

¹²² Graver, *Quaelibet audendi*, 223–4.

In some ways the accompanying prose is a direct reversal of the *carmen figuratum*, for its brilliance lies not in its restraint, but in its luxuriant imagery and energy. Its style brings to mind Fortunatus' letter to Felix of Nantes, above. The performance begins in the first paragraph as the poet describes in colourful terms his state of intoxication when the grieving father approached him. It is unclear whether he was really drunk, or groggy from napping in the sun, but he raises his lethargy to an art form with his opening remarks:

*Torpore vecordis otii, quo mens ebria desipit diutina tabe morbescente brutiscens, et velut ignavi soporis hebetante marcere suffectus, negotii indulti nulla mordente cura dormitans, cum videretur scilicet tam lectio neglegi quam lusus abuti, neque nancisceretur quicquam occasionis ex themate quod digereretur in poesi, et, ut ita dictum sit, nihil velleretur ex vellere quod carminaretur in carmine, intra me quodammodo me ipsum silentio sarcofagante sepeliens, et cum nulla canerem, obsoleto linguae plectro aeruginavissem...*¹²³

I was in the torpor of a witless idleness, in which the intoxicated mind, dulled by a long and sickly languor, has no rational thought; it is infested by the sluggish decay of oblivious sleep, and sleeping is roused by no concern of business uncompleted. In this state it seems that reading is neglected as much as sport is misused, neither is any occasion stumbled upon that lends itself to poetry, and so to say, nothing could be plucked from the fleece that could be carded into a poem. I and my poetry were shrouded in a sepulchral silence and as I sang nothing I grew rusty, the plectrum of my tongue having fallen out of use...

The sense of drama builds with the poet's description of the father's lamentations and continues as he protests his mental turmoil as he puzzled over how his *modicitas* could accomplish the means of rewarding Syagrius for his help. The eureka moment comes with the words of Flaccus Pindaricus: *pictoribus atque poetis / quaelibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas*.¹²⁴ At this point we know that all will be well: the poet released from his state of writer's block, the *carmen figuratum* released to Syagrius, and the captive boy released to his father.

Fortunatus follows this beginning with a description of the crafting of the poem.

Metaphors of captivity proliferate: *frenante, aragnea arte, ligari, me catena*

¹²³ Please note that this is only a portion of the opening sentence of 5.6.1.

¹²⁴ That is, Horace, *Ars Poetica* 9–10: [Painters and poets always have the freedom of daring to produce whatever they like].

constringo.¹²⁵ At one point the tapestry of the poem becomes a snare and the poet a bird caught in it:

*Itaque cum penderet haec tela versibus laqueata, ut si duo transirem, adhuc tria non fugerem, ego incautus passer quasi mentita per nubila incurri pantheram, quia, quod cavere volebam, huc pinna ligabar, aut magis ut dictum sit, velut plumis inlitis, quinquifida viscata tendebat; inter haec illud me commovens, quod tale non solum feceram, sed nec exemplo simili trahente ducebar.*¹²⁶

Therefore when this lacy web was hung with verses, so that if I got through two of them, I could not escape three, I, incautious sparrow that I am, flew as if through deceitful shadows right into the net and got my feathers pinned – which was just what I wished to avoid. Or rather you might say my plumes were glued together with birdlime: I was splayed out in five sticky directions. And I had to move among these, which not only I had never done before, but I had no model to guide me.

Uncertainty almost makes the poet give up, we learn, but the bishop's affection conquers him, so that the task did not. The poet hoists his sails, and becomes a sailor set free by the wind of love:

*Ut hoc pararem commercii, per incertum pelagi rudis nauta vela suspendi; affectu raptus deferor per fluctus et scopulos. Urguis me praecipitem per ignota transire; quid est quod non obtineas? Sicut amas, sic imperas.*¹²⁷

To prepare my commodity, I, an unskilled sailor, set sail upon an uncertain sea; raptured by affection, I am carried through rough waves and boulders. At your urging I rush headlong through unknown waters: it there anything you cannot get me to do? As you love, so you command.

The poet's remark that he had no model for such a text is intriguing. It is difficult to know exactly what he means. Certainly the *carmen figuratum* in its various forms had a long history as a genre even at that time and it is hard to believe Fortunatus was unaware of this. Examples of simple acrostics can be found in the Bible in the books of Psalms and Proverbs; Greek figured poems had been invented in Hellenistic times; and acrostic *argumenta*, whose initial letters form the names of the plays to which they are attached, existed for all the comedies of Plautus.¹²⁸ Moreover, as noted above, Fortunatus himself

¹²⁵ [bridled], [the spider's art], [tied up], [bound with fetters].

¹²⁶ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.6.11.

¹²⁷ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.6.13.

¹²⁸ See Psalm 119, for example, which devotes eight verses to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with each line starting with that letter. For the comedies see Titus Maccius

occasionally wrote verses in the form of simple acrostics. One poem to Leontius of Bordeaux, for example, used all the letters of the Latin alphabet in turn to begin its lines, while another to Radegund used the letters of her name.¹²⁹

Perhaps an even greater stumbling-block to the poet's claim for originality is connected with the *carmina figurata* of Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius, an early fourth century poet and official who created a series of visually dazzling but poetically empty pieces for the purpose of obtaining his own recall from exile from the Emperor Constantine, an attempt which was ultimately successful.¹³⁰ Some of these bear a close resemblance to Fortunatus' poem to Syagrius of Autun, although Porphyrius never used other than thirty-five letters for his lines – an indication that Fortunatus' innovation of thirty-three letters is at least his own.¹³¹ There is no certainty that Fortunatus was familiar with the work of Porphyrius, however, and in paragraph seventeen of the exposition he begs Syagrius to have the poem painted on the wall of his entry hall – a potentially embarrassing situation if he was being less than ingenuous and had actually “borrowed” the format of his *carmen figuratum* from Porphyrius.¹³²

Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, ed. Mason Hammond, (Cambridge: 1970), 22. For a discussion of Hellenistic figured poems see M. Fantuzzi and R. L. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge: 2004), 40–1. These last took various shapes: egg, altar, wings, and axe, among others.

¹²⁹ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 1.16 (not in this inventory) and 8.5 respectively. For others see n. 114.

¹³⁰ For discussion of his work see W. Levitan, “Dancing at the end of a rope: Optatian Porphyry and the field of Roman verse,” *TAPA* 115: 245–69; for the poems themselves see G. Polara, ed. *Publili Optatiani Porphyrii Carmina*, Vol. 2 (Turin: 1973).

¹³¹ Graver, *Quaelibet audendi*, 219, n. 2. Carmen XVIII of Porphyrius is the closest in form to Fortunatus 5.6, It consists of four conjoined squares that match Fortunatus' one, with *versus intexti* in each square.

¹³² Ernest, *Carmen figuratum*, 155, believes that Fortunatus must have known the work of Porphyrius, although he admits that the poet never refers to him.

7 The Legacy of Venantius Fortunatus

Fortunatus made a significant impression on writers who came after him.¹³³ For example, Paul the Deacon, writing in the later eighth century, tells the story of Fortunatus' journey to Gaul as he must have read it in the poet's own work. He praises his verses and *conversatio*, and reports how he himself made a journey to the poet's grave at Poitiers, where he was invited to compose an epitaph to be inscribed on his tomb.¹³⁴ Other poets of the Carolingian age also considered Fortunatus an honoured intermediary between themselves and the ancient world.¹³⁵ In his poem describing the books he read in his youth, for example, the Visigothic Theodulf of Orléans, a younger contemporary of Alcuin, gives Fortunatus a place among the Christian Latin poets Sedulius, Paulinus, Arator, Avitus, and Juvencus.¹³⁶ Alcuin himself catalogues a similar but more extensive list of authors in his poetic historical narrative *versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*, where we find Fortunatus rubbing shoulders with the likes of Boethius, Pliny, Bede, and Aldhelm.¹³⁷

The Carolingian poets also wrote *carmina figurata*, which due to their challenging and technical nature were well-suited to fan the flames of poetic competition and display that were a main feature at Charlemagne's court. Alcuin, who was responsible for their

¹³³ I am able to alight only briefly here on this very large topic. For Fortunatus' influence on Carolingian poetry see *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH II (Berlin: 1884), 687-701 and the list by M. Manitius attached to *Fortunati opera pedestria*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH, AA 4.2 (Berlin: 1885), 137-44.

¹³⁴ The writer repeats the epitaph for the reader, see *HL* 2.13. An Abbot Aper requested the epitaph.

¹³⁵ Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, (London: 1985), 8.

¹³⁶ Godman, *Poetry*, 169, Theodulf poem no. 18.

¹³⁷ Godman, *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* (Oxford: 1982), 124.

Michael Lapidge, in his Appendix attached to R. W. Hunt, "Manuscript evidence for knowledge of the poems of Venantius Fortunatus in late Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* Vol. 8 (1978) 279-295, argues both that the *versus* above was composed in England and that the entire poetic corpus of Fortunatus was "available at York in the late eighth century." It was unevenly known in England, however: while the works of Aldhelm and Bede show evidence of familiarity with Fortunatus, those of Boniface and Lully do not.

revival, himself composed both religious and secular versions.¹³⁸ The latter, including many panegyrics to Charlemagne, are considered by scholars to be modelled on the works of Optatianus Porphyrius, a manuscript of whose work Alcuin likely introduced at court.¹³⁹ Alcuin's *de santa cruce*, however, which is constructed as a square with seven *versus intexti*,¹⁴⁰ is clearly modelled on Fortunatus' Holy Cross poems. The same is true of the poems *de laudibus sanctae crucis* of Alcuin's prolific pupil Hrabanus Maurus, with a collection of twenty-eight such *carmina figurata* to his credit.¹⁴¹ The *carmen figuratum* to Syagrius of Autun is more difficult both to categorize and to establish for it a line of influence. While containing elements of praise for the recipient, it is not a panegyric, and although based on a religious theme, it has little in common with the poems *de santa cruce*. Its function as payment on behalf of a hapless third party also sets it apart from the work of the Carolingian poets as well as Porphyrius, all of whom derived their inspiration from purely personal motives.¹⁴² The *carmen* is therefore a fusion of diverse elements and perhaps this very complexity is what Fortunatus meant when he remarked that he had no model. At the very least, this work establishes Fortunatus as a major figure in the tradition of figured poems and we cannot rule out the possibility that, like the poet's Holy Cross poems, it had a significant influence on Carolingian *carmina figurata*.

¹³⁸ Godman, *Poetry*, 19–20; also Mary Garrison, "The emergence of Carolingian Latin literature and the court of Charlemagne (780–814)," in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. McKitterick, 111–140. (Cambridge: 1994), 122; for an exhaustive discussion of Carolingian acrostics and their relation to Porphyrius, see D. Schaller, "Die karolingischen Figurengedichte des Cod. Bern. 212," in *Medium Aevum Vivum: Festschrift für Walther Bulst*, ed. H. Jaus and D. Schaller. (Heidelberg: 1960), 22–47. Charlemagne consciously modelled himself after Constantine and the pairing of Porphyrius/Constantine and Alcuin/Charlemagne would not have been lost on the court. While some of the above scholars acknowledge a debt to Fortunatus, they overwhelmingly credit Porphyrius as the model for Carolingian secular *carmina figurata*.

¹³⁹ Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 56; Garrison, "The emergence of Carolingian Latin literature," 22.

¹⁴⁰ Godman, *Poetry*, 138–143 translates this poem. Alcuin uses thirty-seven letters across and the same number of lines down.

¹⁴¹ Godman, *Poetry*, 43.

¹⁴² This was not the only time Fortunatus used his poetry to aid others in distress: see 5.14 asking Gregory of Tours to aid parents whose daughter was sold into slavery; 10.13 to a group of bishops that seeks help for a traveller from Italy who is new to Gaul; 10.12 to four influential people, including Gregory, on behalf of a girl taken captive by Jews.

8 Conclusion

After making his *début* with an *epithalamium* at the wedding of Brunhild and Sigibert in the spring of 566, the Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus began a quest for patronage that spanned the whole of the Frankish kingdom and lasted until he was elected bishop of Poitiers in the last decade of his life. Because he did not discriminate between what has traditionally been labelled the barbarian north and the Roman south, his work supplies a strong argument for a continuing tradition of literacy throughout all parts of the Merovingian kingdom.

In order to advance his relationships of *amicitia*, Fortunatus was careful to tailor his poems to his correspondents' office, style, and interests. Bishops were praised as shepherds of their flock and leaders of their community, secular figures held up as good governors and prized members of the king's retinue. When the poet received a reply from an individual, the *amicitia*, and the correspondence, became more personal, as Fortunatus replied according to how he evaluated the individual's level of literary expertise. This has resulted in many levels of language and style in the *opera poetica*, from short and straightforward verses to Gregory of Tours, Radegund, and Agnes at one end of the spectrum, to highly ornate and lengthy epistles to bishops Felix of Nantes and Martin of Braga at the other. These differences allow us to form an idea not only of the literacy level and education of a number of Gallic individuals but of their special skills and interests as well. Graecisms present in one letter to Felix of Nantes, for example, speak to the bishop's knowledge in that area and suggest that education in Greek was available in the Frankish kingdom.

Fortunatus' poetic innovations have received little scholarly attention. One of the most notable, a *carmen figuratum* created for Syagrius of Autun, is similar to earlier creations by the fourth-century poet Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius. Also remarkable is the letter accompanying the poem, which outlines the process of its composition. The *carmen figuratum* has been illustrated and translated at the end of this chapter. Also translated is a simple acrostic to Felix of Nantes, and two poems containing an attractive echo effect

achieved by taking the first hemistich of the hexameter (odd-numbered) lines and reusing it as the second hemistich of the pentameter (even-numbered) lines.¹⁴³

9 Appendix: Translations and Diagrams of Unusual Poems and *carmina figurata*

3.5: simple acrostic to Felix of Nantes

Fida salus patriae Felix spe nomine corde,
 Ordo sacerdotum quo radiante micat,
 Restituis terris quod publica iura petebant,
 Temporibus nostris gaudia prisca ferens.
 Vox procerum lumen generis defensio plebis,
 Naufragium prohibes hic ubi portus ades.
 Actor apostolicus qui iura britannica vincens,
 Tutus in adversis spe crucis arma fugas.
 Vive decus patriae fidei lux auctor honoris,
 Splendor pontificum noster et orbis amor.

Felix, faithful salvation of the homeland in hope, in name, in heart,
 Order of bishops shines by your light,
 Restoring to the lands what public laws demand,
 Translating ancient joys to our own times.
 Voice of princes, light of your race, defender of the people,
 No shipwreck here where you stand as haven.
 Apostolic orator who overcomes the claims of the Britons,
 Trusting in the cross, safe in adverse times, you put to flight their forces.
 Viva the glory of the homeland, light of faith, and source of honour,
 Shining light among bishops; you are our love and that of the world.

3.30: *versus serpentinus* to Sindulf, deacon.

Frater amore Dei, digno memorabilis actu,
 pectore fixe meo frater amore Dei,
 Carpe libenter iter quod ducit ad aetheris aulam,

¹⁴³I am indebted to Michael Dewar for pointing out to me that Ovid was particularly fond of this *versus serpentinus*; forty-four of Martial's epigrams also employ the device. See Peter E. Knox, *Ovid. Heroides. Select Epistles* (Cambridge: 1995), 162ff. A later example of the scheme appears in a two-line verse at the end of the so-called *epistola Ermentarii*, an addendum to the *vita Filiberti abbatis Gemeticensis et Heriensis* found in MGH, SRM, 5 (III). Ermentarius was a monk at Noirmoutier in the first half of the ninth century who composed the *miracula S. Filiberti*; the latter was a late seventh-century Frankish abbot whose relics were translated due to Viking raids during Ermentarius' time.

altius ut surgas carpe libenter iter.
 Fer patienter onus neque te pia sarcina lasset,
 unde manet requies, fer patienter onus.
 Subdere colla decet, quia sunt iuga dulcia Christi,
 quo mereamur opem subdere colla decet.
 Qui sua rura colit solet horrea plena tenere
 nec ieiunus erit qui sua rura colit.
 Per mare nauta volat quo multa pecunia crescat,
 mercibus ut placeat per mare nauta volat.
 Non timet ille necem rabie turbante procellae,
 ut lucretur opes non timet ille necem.
 Miles ad arma venit quaerens per vulnera palmam,
 ut redeat victor miles ad arma venit.
 Proelia sume libens mihi tu quoque care sodalis,
 unde triumphus erit proelia sume libens.
 Quisquis amore venit nescit se ferre laborem,
 nemo labore iacet quisquis amore venit.
 Carmina parva ferens tibi debita reddo salutis,
 des meliora, precor, carmina parva ferens.

Brother in the love of God, memorable by your worthy deeds,
 fixed in my heart, brother in the love of God,
 Seize with joy the path that leads to the courts of heaven,
 that you may rise up higher seize with joy the path.
 Bear patiently your load nor let the burden weary you,
 so that peace remain, bear patiently your load.
 It is right to bend your neck, since the yokes of Christ are sweet,
 so we might deserve his help, it is right to bend your neck.
 Who cultivates his fields will have abundant crops
 nor will he suffer hunger who cultivates his fields.
 The sailor flies over the sea to increase his wealth,
 for pleasing reward the sailor flies over the sea.
 He does not fear death by wild turbulence of ocean,
 That riches be gained he does not fear death.
 The soldier takes to arms and seeks the palm through wounds,
 so he might return a victor the soldier takes to arms.
 With a will take up the struggle for me also, dear friend,
 For triumph to come, with a will take up the struggle.
 Who acts in love knows not that he bears hard labour,
 no one is overcome by labour who acts in love.
 Bearing little verses I render to you debts of greeting
 may you give me better back, I pray, bearing little verses.

appendix carminum 19: versus serpentinus to Radegund or Agnes

Haec mihi festa dies longos superinstet in annos,
 gaudia magna ferens haec mihi festa dies.
 Praestet amore Deus tam prospera vota per aevum,
 Martini meritis praestet amore Deus.
 Participata mihi vobiscum haec gaudia Christus
 servet in orbe diu participata mihi.
 Mitis in aure sonus suavi dulcedine tinnit,
 organa vocis habens mitis in aure sonus.
 Blandior esca favis vestra de fauce rigavit
 et nova mella dedit blandior esca favis.
 Huc variante choro vox inde rotata cucurrit,
 sensibus angelicis huc variante choro.¹⁴⁴
 Carmina sancta diu vox illa ministret ab ore
 et recreent animas carmina sancta diu.

This day for me so festal, may it hover over me through long years
 bringing great joys, this day for me so festal.
 May God fulfill in love such favourable vows throughout eternity,
 these by the merits of Martin may God fulfill in love.
 May Christ preserve these joys that I shared with you,
 through endless ages in the world, may Christ preserve these joys.
 Gentle in the ear rings out a sound with pleasant sweetness,
 the music of the voice gentle in the ear rings out.
 Sustenance sweeter than honeycombs pours forth from your throat;
 new honey is given, sustenance sweeter than honeycombs.
 Now with varied chorus, then with tropes the voice swirls round
 with angelic expression, now with varied chorus.

¹⁴⁴ It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what Fortunatus is describing musically in the previous five lines. *organa vocis* could either mean the instrument of the voice, i.e. the voice itself, or as Reydellet suggests, *Venance Fortunat* vol. 3, p. 196, n. 101, an instrument that sounds like the human voice, such as an organ or flute, that provides an instrumental prelude (lines 7–8). The female voice then enters (lines 9–10) – Reydellet believes more than one due to the *vestra* in line 9 – although this could just as easily mean Radegund’s (or Agnes’) voice alone, with the poet using the more formal form of the personal pronoun – and finally a chorus of celebrants joins in and introduces a variation on what has just been played and sung. All this is pure speculation, however, as we have no idea of performance practice before the Carolingian era. Because of the poet’s focus on Radegund/Agnes in the poem, and his regular usage of “honey” to describe the sweetness of her words, I am inclined to disagree with Reydellet and argue that she alone is performing the main line of the chant, although it is possible that she is joined at some point by a chorus of nuns, which could be the *variante choro*. Cf. *opera poetica* 2.9, directed to the clergy of Paris and Bishop Germanus, which describes the music of the Mass as the poet experienced it in that city in the winter of 556–7.

Sacred songs for long ages may your voice administer
refreshing our spirits, sacred songs for long ages.

5.6: *carmen figuratum* to Syagrius bishop of Autun¹⁴⁵

AUGUSTIDUNENSISOPUSTIBISOLVOSYAGRI

1 DIUSAPEXADAMVTFECDATSONNIAADONEC
AVvlsacostaplasmAtaesteveaneecinpaAR
FeLicespariterdyPloidelvcisopeRtI
OreCorvscantesinTerpiaarvraivgAleS
5 RipaEiocvndaenarIgrataavrareDibabT
TvrisDeliciaesatVrabantvberEflatU
VnafovEnsambosflOrosasedevOlvpptaS
NotabonIsregiopascebattemPebeatoS
AtcumtamMagnopolLerentmaIushonorE
10 TotahominVmmirepArebatteErradvorumM
OccvltusmenDaxmoXexeriTarmavenenI
SerpenselataVszelAtorlArvevshostisS
AtroxinnocuoSeviNcenSfellenocentI
ConlissitsuasusQuoSgrAtiadiwabearaT
15 EthomodeleterratVmDeNvodeciditillliC
ReptantisqdoloeeOOIsexcluditurortV
HacnatiomorimurdaMnatilegeparentumM
AtdeusexcellensAIEetdelvmineelvmenN
EcaelisolliodvmMvNeRaprovideetvlttrO
20 CastaecarnervDivIvaXintroiitagnvS
ProdiitindesAlvsMatvTinivelvcernA
IntactaeparTulvxErviitExcitamvndvM
ApatreivredShomoDehincCarnevsalvO
VtnoseripEretvilIse detrAhitavctoR
25 OregisveNalecapvTqvoddecRvcefixiT
TelovocEmanvmalfActvsvverbErefelleE
ActvhaCsolviscapTivossorteCreatoR
SerovErodataestvItalissempitiOmorteE
YmnoSvndedeoloqvOrabsolventerReatV
30 AtvOsaeternaesvfFvlttilavdecorOnaE
GaLlorvmradiivobIsqvofvlgeatetNoX
RVmpiteloraivgisEtsvmittisarmadiEI
IPSAVELIBERTASVOSLIBERATATQBEABIT

To you, Syagrius of Autun, I release this work.

When the highest divinity made Adam he plunged him into sleep until

¹⁴⁵ It will be noted that Fortunatus did not get away without a small amount of cheating, notably in line 23, where he placed an abbreviation *ds* for *deus*, and line 33, where *atque* is abbreviated to *atq.*

He had plucked a rib and formed Eve, equal in every way.
 They were both happy, and clothed equally in a mantle of light.
 The faces of the couple were shining in the friendly countryside;
 From the merry riverside a pleasant breeze reached the nose,
 The delights of incense borne by the breeze richly saturated the air,
 One pleasure warming both in a flowery abode.
 The Tempé region, noted for its virtues, nourished the blessed ones.
 But when at the height of power with such great honour –
 For the whole earth was marvelously obeying the two humans¹⁴⁶ –
 The hidden liar soon brandished the weapons of his venom,
 The proud and jealous serpent, the masked enemy,
 The savage one, overcoming the innocents with deadly poison,
 He crushed with persuasion those whom divine grace had blessed.
 Man, arisen from the earth, sank down to it afresh,
 By a trick of the creeping enemy Aurora, the East, has been closed to him.
 By this law of our parents we are born and die damned,
 But the preeminent God, ever light from light,
 Came from the heights of his celestial throne to provide us with His benefits,
 The living Lamb entered the flesh of a virgin.
 Thus came salvation and the light of morning,
 By a Virgin giving birth a Living Light roused the world,
 By right of his Father He is God, but a man of flesh from his mother,:
 To rescue us the Creator humbly abased himself.
 O kingly head, put up for sale, that hung on the cross
 By spear, insults, blows, lash, and gall abused,
 By this act the Creator set free captives.
 Lately, by his death, the authentic ransom of life is given us.
 For this reason, absolved from guilt, I sing hymns to God.
 But you, sustained by the glory of a crown eternal,
 Beacon of the Gauls who makes the night itself resplendent,
 Tear apart the reins of the yoke and seize the arms of day,¹⁴⁷
 Liberty itself liberates and blesses you.

The descending lines – one on each side, one in the middle, and two diagonals criss-crossing the puzzle – are also part of the poem as follows:

1. give to Fortunatus this pious vow, holy Syagrius.
2. releasing captives, you become a meditation to the Lord.
3. Christ sent himself when he brought us back from death.
4. gentle is the gift of God whose recompense will crown you, dear friend.
5. the precious piety of God allows the soul to be released from death.

¹⁴⁶ The Latin is *tota hominum mire parebat terra duorum* and is an odd case of the genitive being substituted for the dative to complement the verb *pareo*.

¹⁴⁷ Although *rumpite* (tear apart, destroy) is imperative and *sumitis* (take up, seize) is indicative, the meaning clearly requires both to be translated as imperatives.

Chapter 3

Bishops' Letters

Letters Referenced in this Chapter

epistolae Desiderii episcopi:

1.3. Desiderius to Sigibert III	2.5. Sulpicius of Bourges to Verus of Rodez
1.4. as above	
1.5. Desiderius to Dagobert I	2.9. Sigibert III to Desiderius
1.9. Desiderius to Abbo of Metz	2.11. Paul of Verdun to Desiderius
1.10. Desiderius to Dado of Rouen	2.12. as above
1.11. Desiderius to Paul of Verdun	2.13. Abbo of Metz to Desiderius
2.2. Abbot Bertegysle to Desiderius	2.14. Chaenulf to Desiderius
2.4. Constantius & Dado to Desiderius	2.17. Sigibert III to Desiderius

vita Desiderii:

- 13. King Dagobert to Sulpicius of Bourges
- 14. Dagobert to the people

epistolae Austrasicae:

2. Remigius of Rheims to Clovis I	9. Germanus of Paris to Queen Brunhild
5. Abbot Florianus to Nicetius of Trier	10. Aurelianus of Arles to Theudebert I
6. as above	21. Rufus of Turin to Nicetius of Trier
8. Nicetius of Trier to Queen Chlodosind	

epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae:

2. Troainus to Eumerius	13. Boniface IV to Theuderic II
3. Leo of Sens to Childebert I	14. Warnechar to Ceraunius of Paris
7. Aunarius of Auxerre to Stephanus	15. a bishop to a young king
8. Stephanus to Aunarius of Auxerre	16. Chrodobert of Tours to Abbess Boba
12. Pope Boniface IV to Florianus of Arles	17. Leudegar of Autun to Sigrada

epistolae Arelatenses

1. Pope Zosimus to the Gallic bishops	13. Pope Leo to Gallic bishops
2. Zosimus to all bishops	48. Pope Pelagius I to Childebert I
3. Zosimus to Hilarus of Narbonne I	49. Pelagius I to Sapaudus of Arles
12. Gallic bishops to Pope Leo I	

epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis

6. Pope Symmachus to Gallic bishops
 8b. Symmachus to Caesarius
 10. Pope Hormisdas to Caesarius

epistolae Aviti Viennensis

41. Avitus of Vienne to Pope Hormisdas
 42. Hormisdas to Avitus

registrum Gregorii

5.58. Gregory to Virgilius of Arles	9.217. Gregory to Virgilius of Arles
5.59. Gregory to Gallic bishops	9.223. Gregory to Syagrius of Autun
6.54. Gregory to Virgilius of Arles	
6.56. Gregory to Protasius of Aix-en-Provence	

S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae

12. Pope Gregory II to Boniface	93. Boniface to Abbot Fulrad
24. as above	106. Boniface to Optatus
26. as above	108. Boniface to Pope Stephen II
28. Pope Gregory III to Boniface	109. as above
45. as above	114. Cineheard to Lully
50. Boniface to Pope Zacharias	121. Alhred & Osgifu to Lully
51. Zacharias to Boniface	122. Aeadulf to Lully
58. as above	125. Lully to Coena (Ethelbert)
60. as above	133. Doto to Lully

80. as above	138. Wigbert to Lully
81. Aelfwald to Boniface	139. Cynewulf & his bishops to Lully
86. Boniface to Zacharias	150. unknown monks to unknown monks
87. Zacharias to Boniface	

additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium

1. Chrodoberth of Tours to Importunus of Paris
2. Importunus to Chrodoberth
3. as above
4. Chrodoberth to Importunus
5. as above

Bishops wrote and/or received the majority of the letters in the Merovingian collections, and most of these were communications between ecclesiastics, usually other bishops. These missives primarily showcase relational aspects of the episcopal office. In other words, bishops expended a great deal of epistolographical energy maintaining the bonds of *amicitia*, a relationship of friendship heavily-laced with patron/client associations. Much of this activity is not necessarily indicative of the episcopal milieu per se, but rather of the common aristocratic pool of communication culture out of which such bishops were drawn. By the same token, bishops did not normally correspond with their social inferiors and only rarely do we catch a glimpse of such people in the letters of their betters.¹

¹ There is an extensive literature on Merovingian bishops. For various aspects of episcopal authority and identity and their relationship to Merovingian culture see M. Heinzlmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien* (Munich: 1976); G. Scheibelreiter, *Der Bischof in merowingischer Zeit* (Vienna: 1983); for a recent dissertation: Kirsten M. Devries, "Episcopal Identity in Merovingian Gaul, 397–700" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2009); Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms* (London: 1994), 71–87, also "The Ecclesiastical politics of Merovingian Clermont," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: 1983), 34–57; Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London: 1926), 476–503; Edward James, "'Beati Pacifici': Bishops and the Law in Sixth-Century Gaul," in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge: 1983), 25–45, also *The Origins of France* (London: 1982), passim; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*,

For those closely connected with the court, like Desiderius of Cahors, letters brought social connection and patronage, resources for one's church, and one of the most important commodities – news and information. This was crucial, for without it a bishop could not update his social circle. He needed to know, for example, who had died, who had succeeded them in office, and who was in or out of favour. Death and dispute could interrupt the most carefully-choreographed patronage network and require a speedy and tactful adjustment to new social realities.

As carriers and teachers of Christian culture, bishops took it upon themselves to admonish and instruct each other and those around them. This is especially clear in their letters to women. Queens were not exempt from this instruction, although when a queen received a letter from a bishop the intended target was usually an erring king, who was to be encouraged toward good behaviour by his royal spouse. When not enlisting the help of the queen, bishops generally instructed kings delicately and at arm's length by the use of mini-panegyrics and what we would label “mirrors for princes.”

For the most part Merovingian bishops approached popes as dispensers of privilege and some, more opportunistic than others, managed to influence popes to favour their see. This set the stage for future prosperity, since a pope's successors hesitated to overturn precedent. In turn, popes initiated and maintained the tradition of the vicariate in order to create at least the illusion of some control over Gallic affairs. In reality, however, there was little a pope could do to enforce his agenda in the Frankish kingdom. Even Gregory the Great, using all his considerable powers of negotiation and persuasion, was unable to do so. This dynamic seemed to change by the time of Boniface, who worked hand-in-glove with each pope who ascended the throne of Peter during his lifetime, to their mutual benefit. In this chapter we will examine these roles and relationships as they appear in an epistological setting.

(Oxford: 1983); Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: 1985); Friedrich Prinz, “Die bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich von 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 217 (1973) 1–35; Paul Fouracre, “Why were so many bishops killed in Merovingian Francia?” in Natalie Fryde and Dirk Reitz, eds., *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter* (Göttingen: 2003), 13–36.

1 *epistolae Desiderii episcopi*

The letter collection of Desiderius, bishop of Cahors in Aquitaine from approximately 630-655,² is unique in the Merovingian collections. Not only is it the only surviving intact collection of a Merovingian bishop,³ it is also the only substantial witness in that corpus to the grossly underrepresented seventh century.⁴ For these reasons we will examine it as a separate entity. The collection is preserved in a single manuscript, the late eighth or early ninth century Codex Sangallensis 190, in which are also preserved unique witnesses to the letters of Bishop Ruricius of Limoges and Bishop Faustus of Riez.⁵ There is also extant a *vita Desiderii*, composed by an unknown individual – probably a monk at the monastery Desiderius founded – sometime during the reign of Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne.⁶ As the letters are short on biographical details, it is to the *vita* that we must turn for these.⁷

² There is a discrepancy with this dating that has never been resolved. According to Chapter 13 of the *vita*, Desiderius was elected bishop on the 6th Ides of April in the eighth year of Dagobert's reign, i.e. 630. Fred. 4.75 reports that Dagobert's son Sigibert III began to reign in the eleventh year of Dagobert, i.e. *a.* 633. Chapter 35 of the *vita*, however, also states that Desiderius died in the seventeenth year of Sigibert (*a.* 650), but names this the twenty-sixth year of his episcopate (*a.* 655).

³ Gregory of Tours (*LH* 6.7) mentions a Bishop Ferreolus of Uzès who composed some volumes of letters *quasi Sidonium secutus*; these, however, have not survived. It is also unclear from Gregory's statement whether Ferreolus "followed Sidonius" in writing style, or simply by the fact of his forming a letter collection.

⁴ There is not a great deal of current literature on Desiderius of Cahors but see Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms* (London: 1994), 149–52, 241–2 and *passim*, also by the same author "Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: 1990), 63–81; R. Rey, "Un grand bâtisseur au temps du roi Dagobert: S. Didier, évêque de Cahors," *Annales du Midi* Tome LXV (1953) 287–293; Jean Durliat, "Les attributions civiles des évêques Mérovingiens: l'exemple de Didier, évêque de Cahors (630–655)," *Annales du Midi* Tome XCI (1979) 237–254.

⁵ For how these collections may have been assembled and preserved in the same manuscript, see R. Mathisen, "The Codex Sangallensis 190 and the transmission of the classical tradition," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 5 (1998) 163–194.

⁶ This is according to B. Krusch, MGH editor of the *vita*. W. Arndt, editor of the letter collection, believes that the *vita* was written not long after the bishop's death. Due to the former's cogent arguments in his preamble to the *vita*, I incline to Krusch's conclusion. The *vita Desiderii* is found in MGH, SRM, 4(II).XV.

⁷ We met this text in connection with the letters to Desiderius from his mother Herchenefreda. See Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 1.1.

1.1 Biography of the Bishop

Desiderius was born around 580 to a noble Aquitanian family with possessions in the territory of Albi. His boyhood and that of his older brothers Rusticus and Syagrius were spent in the palace of Chlothar II,⁸ where young aristocrats were raised as part of the king's retinue and groomed for later high secular and ecclesiastical office. Desiderius' mother Herchenefreda's succinctly-phrased advice to him at this time – *regi sis fidelis, contubernales diligas*⁹ – summed up the recipe for success for a young noble of the early seventh century. Her sons understood this and did their job well. Syagrius became Count of Albi and Prefect of Marseille, while Rusticus was elected bishop of Cahors. Desiderius himself was appointed king's treasurer, a position of high honour. In the years 629-30, however, both of his brothers died. Syagrius succumbed to illness, and a short while later Rusticus was murdered *a perfidis et scelestis incolis*.¹⁰ Desiderius was elected in his brother's place as bishop of Cahors, a position he took up with energy and commitment. He seems to have taken a particular interest in building and expended a great deal of effort toward the construction of both secular and sacred structures, including a monastery dedicated to St. Amantius and basilicas both inside and outside the walls of the city. (The *vita* adds the interesting detail that rather than building these in the usual Gallic style, he used hewn and squared stone blocks *more antiquorum*.¹¹)

He also devoted much of his energy to augmenting the possessions of the church of Cahors and urged anybody with riches or property to leave them to the church in their wills. His *vita* contains a long list of these benefactors. One in particular, a noble woman named Bobila, bestowed so much wealth on the church of Cahors that she was permitted to be buried near the bishop in the same basilica. Near the end of his life Desiderius took his own advice and wrote a Testament conferring on his church everything he had

⁸ Chlothar II was the king who vanquished Brunhild and her progeny in 613 and became ruler of all Francia. He was the sole surviving son of Chilperic and Fredegund, who figure largely in the *libri historiarum decem* of Gregory of Tours.

⁹ [be faithful to the king, respect your peers]. This letter is found in *vita* 9.

¹⁰ *vita Desiderii* 8. [by faithless and criminal inhabitants of his diocese].

¹¹ *ibid.*, 31. [in the style of antiquity] This comment by the author could represent a Carolingian perspective.

acquired from parental inheritance, royal gift, or personal arrangement. Not long after, he died of a fever while visiting one of his estates and his body was brought back to Cahors by his followers and buried in the monastery he had constructed. A major part of the *vita* is then given over to posthumous miracles at his tomb, which centred around a liquor made by distilling the bishop's walking stick in water and applying or drinking the contents, a potion that the text's nineteenth-century editor B. Krusch termed *potus ille luridus*.¹² It undoubtedly served to fill the coffers of the monastery, however, as sufferers were expected to offer substantial gifts with their prayers.¹³

1.2 Quantifying the Collection

The bishop's letter collection comprises a total of thirty-six letters in two *libri*: Book 1 contains fifteen letters addressed from Desiderius to others, while Book 2 contains twenty-one from others to him. It is unknown whether the bishop himself published the collection or whether associates or relatives took this task upon themselves after his death. There is little indication of what process of selection took place although the collection is clearly not complete as it stands. Many times we are party to one-half of a conversation when a reply is set adrift from its original communication; other times, as in the legal cases discussed below, we labour in vain to piece together a coherent narrative – criteria obviously of little significance to the compiler of the collection.¹⁴ All the letters are short and simple in structure. Since the easy flow of the language rebuts the notion of abridgement by the editor of the collection, we are left to wonder the reason for this. Did the editor decide for some reason to publish no long or complex letters from the bishop's archives? Or did none exist and why?

¹² [that ghastly drink].

¹³ *vita Desiderii* 51: for instance, one man who was healed by drinking the potion *munera votiva deferens, sanitatis suae auctorem proflue magnificeque honoravit*. [offering votive gifts, he profusely and magnificently honoured the author of his health]. The text in the MGH has *profluae* for *proflue*. This must be an error, however: as the enclitic *que* indicates, *proflue* is clearly an adverb designed to be paired with *magnifice*. My thanks to Michael Dewar for pointing this out.

¹⁴ Another example is the quarrel that prompted a nasty letter from Felix of Limoges to Desiderius. Felix' letter is missing and we have only Desiderius' civil reply (1.15) and a later apology from Felix (2.21), giving us no idea what the quarrel was about in the first place.

The longest letter, which is still quite short, is to the one woman represented in the collection, an Abbess Aspasia. Her original request for consolation, while mentioned in the bishop's reply to her, is a *deperditum*; the letter she received bears a conventional message of instruction and admonishment. While the main theme running throughout the majority of the letters is the maintenance of *amicitia* relationships, reference is occasionally made to events or topics that represent the *conversatio* of a "good bishop," such as invitations and visits,¹⁵ building and dedicating a basilica,¹⁶ the fulfillment of civic duties,¹⁷ and the pursuit of legal cases.¹⁸ This suggests that the compiler took pains to showcase Desiderius as worthily fulfilling the duties required of a good bishop, and since eight of the letters – 25% of the total – have to do with legal cases and their outcome, we can safely assume that either he or she had a special interest in the law, or that Desiderius did. Because of this emphasis, I devote Section 4 below to discussing aspects of these cases.

Dating is as a rule imprecise for this collection. Three of the letters are set during Desiderius' sojourn at court and can safely be assigned to his earlier years as a layman, i.e. before 630. Four coincide with his episcopate and refer to Chlothar's son Dagobert, so can be dated between 630 and 639, the year of Dagobert's death. Letters exchanged with Dagobert's son Sigibert III, who was born in 630, are more uncertain: some can be assigned by their contents to the years after Dagobert's death, while others could have been written earlier, as Sigibert's father set him over Austrasia from the age of three.¹⁹ Others letters are dependent for dating on outside events and the deaths of Desiderius' correspondents as recorded in Fredegar and various *vitae*; the bishop's correspondence with Grimoald, mayor of the Austrasian palace, and with Sulpicius of Bourges, Desiderius' metropolitan, are examples of these.

¹⁵ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.15, 2.1, 2.14,

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 1.11.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 1.13, laying pipes to improve the water supply; 2.20, keeping plague out of Cahors.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 2.5, 2.2, 1.5, 2.13, 2.11, 2.7, 2.18, 2.4.

¹⁹ Fred. 4.59 and 4.75.

It has been rightly pointed out that the survival of this letter collection is evidence for the continuation into the seventh century of a Gallic tradition of epistolography that began with Sidonius Apollinaris in the late fifth century and continued through the extensive early sixth-century collections of Ruricius of Limoges and Avitus of Vienne.²⁰ The primary theme in all these letter collections is the pursuit and maintenance of *amicitia* – the exercise of cultivating, not just simple friendships as we might translate the term, but patronage networks that one could call on in future time of need.²¹ In Desiderius' case the extent of this network is restricted to Frankish territory but is still impressive, ranging from Trier, Metz, and Verdun in the northeast to Rouen in the northwest, Valence in the southeast, and Limoges, Clermont, and Bourges in central Gaul. So although it seems that Desiderius' world has shrunk in comparison to Sidonius and notably Avitus, who corresponded with Popes Hormisdas and Symmachus, the emperor Anastasius and the patriarch of Constantinople, as well as the bishops of Milan and Pavia,²² it is not dissimilar to that of Ruricius, whose collected correspondence is restricted to Visigothic Gaul.²³ There are significant differences, however, between our bishop's corpus of letters and those of his epistological forbears.

²⁰ Ian Wood, "Administration, Law and Culture," 66–7. For English translations of these collections see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems and Letters*, ed. and trans. W.B. Anderson (London: 1936); Ralph W. Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends: A Collection of Letters from Visigothic Gaul* (Liverpool: 1999); Avitus of Vienne, *Letters and Selected Prose*, trans. D. Shanzer and I. Wood (Liverpool: 2002). According to Mathisen, *Ruricius*, 71–3, there is evidence that Desiderius had some family connection to Ruricius and Sidonius. Ennodius of Pavia is another early sixth-century Gallic native with an extensive letter collection, although his bishopric was in Italy.

²¹ Individual examples of letters of *amicitia* are also found in the *epistolae Austrasicae*: 5 and 6 from Abbot Florianus to Nicetius of Trier, 12 from Dynamius Rector of Provence to an unknown friend, 14 from Mapinius of Rheims to Vilicus of Metz, 17 from Dynamius to Vilicus, 21 from Rufus of Turin to Nicetius; and in the *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae*: 7 from Aunarius of Auxerre to a priest Stephanus and 8 in reply to this, 14 from Warnachar mayor of the palace to Ceraunius of Paris. I discuss many of these below.

²² Avitus of Vienne, *epistolae*. 41, 42, 29, 34, 78, 93, 94, 9, 10 and 12 respectively.

²³ Mathisen, *Ruricius*, 31. We cannot discount the possibility that letters between Desiderius and others outside the Frankish kingdom have simply not survived, although it is unlikely that all have been lost, especially if the bishop had carried on a regular correspondence with these.

Besides the brevity and simplicity of the letters in Desiderius' circle, which sets them apart from the correspondence of Ruricius et al., any sense of *romanitas* is greatly diminished. Although Desiderius became bishop of Cahors only one generation after the death of that ultimate Roman, Venantius Fortunatus, allusions in the bishop's letters to classical myths or texts are restricted to one example only, with one other found in the letters addressed to him from others.²⁴ Instead of a common Roman past, whose adherents recognized each other through mutual reference to its literature, ideals, and outstanding figures, Desiderius and his associates occupied a different thought world that depended for its cohesion on memories of a common past at the king's court.

The groundwork for Desiderius' *amicitia* networks, therefore, was laid by his court upbringing as he rubbed shoulders with those who would one day become the leaders of the kingdom. Once he left the palace to become bishop of Cahors, letters became his lifeline to his former palace associates and to the court itself, and his discourse often lays great stress on the mutual experience of those early days. In a letter to Abbo of Metz on behalf of a third party, for example, Desiderius reminds his recipient of the days with other young men at the court of Chlothar II, where they amused themselves by telling stories;²⁵ in another to Paul of Verdun inviting him to the dedication of his basilica, he remarks that he looks forward to conversation about the pleasurable past when they were all together;²⁶ and in yet another, when seeking to renew his friendship with Dado of Rouen, he underscores their mutual experience, along with Eligius of Noyon, as youths at the court of Chlothar.²⁷ While shared memories of the court were the glue that held them

²⁴ These examples are (a) 1.15 to Felix of Limoges: *...ut aures vestras viperina venena ac velut Serenarum cantu letalis sibilus non infundat*. [...so that the snakelike venom and deadly hissing as though from the Sirens' song may not pour into your ears]; (b) 2.12 from Paul of Verdun: *...nec si lingua clamet ferrea, ud (sic) quidam poeta ait, aut centena sonent spiramina...* [neither if an iron tongue proclaimed – as a certain poet said – or a hundred voices sounded...] (Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 625-626).

²⁵ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi*, 1.9.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 1.11.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 1.10 Dado is another name for Audoin, who became bishop of Rouen in 640. He, along with Chrodobert, bishop of Paris, and Ebroin, Mayor of the Neustrian Palace, were the major political figures in the kingdom by the late 650s. Through a letter in the *vita Eligii*, we know that Dado wrote this work after the latter's death, a practice that may

together, the *diaspora* of this loyal brotherhood all over Gaul, and their resultant epistolography, would have supplied an invaluable and ongoing resource to the ruling king in the form of information-gathering.

1.3 Bishop, King, and Court

Because of his background as an intimate of the king, the rulers of the kingdom loomed large in Desiderius' thought world and his correspondence. Desiderius was an associate of three kings during his lifetime: Chlothar II (b. 584-d. 629), his son Dagobert I (r. 623-d. 639), and Dagobert's elder son Sigibert III (b. 630-d. 655?) (Dagobert's younger son Clovis II ruled Neustria and Desiderius had little to do with him).²⁸ Chlothar and Desiderius were contemporaries at court, with the latter likely a few years older than the king. There are no letters between Desiderius and Chlothar, but even without the likelihood of gaps in the collection, this would not be surprising, as Chlothar died the year before Desiderius left the palace. Dagobert's date of birth is unknown, but the evidence of the letters and the *vita Desiderii* supports the impression of a rather easy-going avuncular relationship that developed between Desiderius and Dagobert, who as king of Austrasia from 623, and future king of all Gaul, was doubtless cultivated intensely from an early age by all of Chlothar's followers.

This paid off for Desiderius, for when Chlothar died in 629 and Dagobert took over the kingdom, he kept Desiderius on as his own treasurer. At the same time, Dagobert ceded part of Aquitaine, including Cahors, to his little-known younger brother Charibert II.²⁹ When Desiderius' consecration as bishop took place in 630 we might have expected

have been common among this tightly-knit group. For more information on this letter, see Appendix of Summaries under "Letters in *vitae* and other texts."

²⁸ Chlothar's capital was Paris; Dagobert, who had been given rule over Austrasia from an early age by his father, moved his capital from Metz to Paris in the eighth year of his reign (Fred. 4.59–60); Sigibert was raised up as king of Austrasia at the age of three by his father. This does not mean that the king and his retinue spent all, or even most of their time in these "capitals." The court would be where the king was residing at the time.

²⁹ Fred. 4.56 does not speak well of Charibert, labelling him simple-minded: *sed eius voluntas pro simplicitate parum sortitur effectum*. [but his simplemindedness caused his will to have little effect.]. This comment refers to Charibert's ineffective attempt to seize the kingdom upon his father's death.

Charibert to play some part in it, since Cahors was under his jurisdiction. Instead, Dagobert presided over the occasion, sending a letter of commendation for the new bishop to his metropolitan, Sulpicius of Bourges, and a letter of declaration to the general population.³⁰ In the latter, the king acknowledges his early relationship with Desiderius, stating that he has served him faithfully *ab adolescentiae suae tempore*.³¹ It appears that Desiderius successfully maintained this familiarity with the king after he left the court. He kept tabs on Dagobert's whereabouts³² and at one point took issue with the king over a legal case that had turned out unfavourably for the church of Cahors. The bishop urged the king to reconsider his decision, hinting that his eternal reward depended on it.³³ This is the only hint we receive in the letters to support Fredegar's insistence that shortly after Chlothar died, Dagobert began to act acquisitively and to fill his coffers with property seized from churches and even from his own *leudes*.³⁴ There is no trace of this in the *vita*.

Life became more difficult for Desiderius when Dagobert died in 639 and the kingdom was divided between his two sons Sigibert III and Clovis II. Charibert had died in 631 and his Aquitanian territories, along with Gascony, had reverted to Dagobert. Two years later Dagobert set the three-year-old Sigibert over Austrasia and the year after, on the advice of his Neustrian *leudes*, willed Neustria and Burgundy to his newborn son Clovis.³⁵ Fredegar does not mention the fate of Charibert's former possessions in Aquitaine, but the fact that Desiderius corresponded with Sigibert and not Clovis

³⁰ *vita Desiderii* 13 and 14. Charibert is not mentioned either in the letters or the *vita* and clearly had no real power. Fred. 4.56 describes Charibert's "rulership" over a handful of districts (Toulouse, Cahors, Agen, Périgueux, Saintes) as *ad instar privato habeto*, i.e. like that of a private individual, although he took a capital, Toulouse, and a few years later conquered Gascony with an army.

³¹ [from the time of his (Dagobert's) youth].

³² See *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.12 from Paul of Verdun, who informed Desiderius that Dagobert had been to Verdun, would be spending Christmas at Rheims, and then travelling to the Rhine; also 2.15 from Constantius of Albi, who told him that the king was staying at Mainz.

³³ *ibid.*, 1.5.

³⁴ Fred. 4.60.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 4.68, 75, 76.

suggests that Cahors at least was ruled by the former.³⁶ We are aware of three letters that Desiderius wrote to the young king. One, a *deperditum*, apparently asked after his health and the prosperity of his kingdom; this survives only in the young king's reply, which states that the people are obeying him and living in peace with one another.³⁷ In another sent to Sigibert shortly after Dagobert's death, the bishop reminds the king, who was still under ten years of age, that along with his own followers he must also show favour to those his father nurtured.³⁸ In still another, Desiderius makes the request that he be taken up with the same favour and familiarity that he enjoyed under Sigibert's father Dagobert.³⁹ We cannot help but feel sympathy for the by now elderly bishop, who must transfer the precious bond of *amicitia* from a known and well-loved ruler to a young and unknown boy that he had probably never seen.

It is not clear if the transition was successfully negotiated: under royal multiples even the best of efforts did not always allow a bishop to avoid pitfalls. In the mid-640s, for example, the teenage Sigibert learned through the court grapevine that Desiderius had been summoned to a synod by his metropolitan Vulfoleud of Bourges, successor to Sulpicius. The king was angered because he had not been informed of this ahead of time, and in what seems a fit of petulance, sent a letter to Desiderius forbidding him and any others under his jurisdiction to attend.⁴⁰ The king's reaction can be explained by the fact that while Cahors was in Aquitaine and therefore under his own jurisdiction, its metropolitan bishopric, Bourges, was in Burgundy and under that of his brother Clovis.

³⁶ One sentence in Fred. 4.76 (a.634) may corroborate this: *quicquid ad regnum Aostrasiorum iam olem(sic) pertenerat, hoc Sigybertus rex suae dicione rigendum recipere et perpetuo dominandum haberit...* What had "formerly pertained to Austrasia" may refer to Charibert's Aquitaine before Dagobert ceded it to him; the sentence is to vague, however, for a firm conclusion to be drawn. Cahors had been traditionally been regarded as belonging to Austrasia since the time of the Treaty of Andelot (a.587). At that time Brunhild received it as part of her deceased sister Galswinth's *morgengabe* (LH 9.20).

³⁷ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.9.

³⁸ *ibid.*, I.3.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 1.4. Desiderius sent a similar letter (I.6) to Grimoald, who became mayor of the palace after the death of his father Pippin, asking that he embrace him with the same affection as had his father.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 2.17.

Desiderius, who was likely trying to keep faith with both his secular and his ecclesiastical overlords, ended up being caught in the middle, angering his king and possibly his metropolitan as well.

1.4 Desiderius and the Law

This collection documents several legal cases and their modes of resolution, although the information contained in the letters is at times extremely sketchy. Typically, disputes between an ecclesiastic and a layperson were arbitrated in the king's court, as documented in a letter addressed to Desiderius by an Abbot Bertegysle; it is dated 629-30, i.e. after Chlothar's death but while Desiderius was still treasurer at the palace. In the letter the abbot requests the treasurer's influence at court on his behalf in a case he is pursuing against the patrician Philippus, who is apparently delaying the proceedings.⁴¹ This request underscores the involvement of court personnel in the legal cases tried there and illustrates how Desiderius' prestigious position encouraged his contemporaries to view him as able to influence and expedite dispute resolution.

Another example centres around a dispute involving clerics only. This is a case where several letters were clearly exchanged around the matter, but only one is extant. Apparently a deacon of Rodez named Perricius had at some point perpetuated *iniuria* on Desiderius' people in one of his parishes. The bishop took up the matter with Verus, bishop of Rodez, and a *placitum*, or day appointed for judgment, was decided upon. Desiderius had also notified Sulpicius, metropolitan of both Cahors and Rodez, and it is Sulpicius' communication with Verus that survives in the collection.⁴² Sulpicius advises Verus that if Perricius delays to obey and emend his fault to Desiderius' satisfaction, then Verus is to arrange for him to appear before Sulpicius himself. Sureties to guarantee his appearance and a record of proceedings must also be provided. Probably due to Perricius being a deacon and not a bishop, the entire incident was handled locally. No synod was convoked, nor were Desiderius or Sulpicius required to attend a hearing; as noted, the

⁴¹ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.2.

⁴² *ibid.*, 2.5. This letter, the only one extant that pertains to this case, is the one from Sulpicius to Verus advising him of Desiderius' complaint.

metropolitan would become directly involved only if the deacon refused to bow to Bishop Verus' judgment.

The most complex case recorded in the collection involved a transfer of property. It is the subject of three letters, although many more were doubtless written on the issue at the time. Again, it is necessary to piece events together using imperfectly recorded material. The property is a villa in the area of Metz named Rotovollo that was formerly owned by the father of the noblewoman Bobila.⁴³ It appears that the estate had been turned over to King Dagobert by Bobila's husband Severus, since deceased. Bobila now wishes to repossess it and hand it over to the church of Cahors with her other goods. Doubtless because of the potential benefit to his church, Desiderius has contacted Bishops Abbo of Metz, Paul of Verdun, Constantius of Albi, and Dado of Rouen in connection with this case and their updates on their progress are extant in the collection.⁴⁴ (Unfortunately for our purposes, Paul sent most of his information in a verbal message). The letter from Abbo to Desiderius is the most forthcoming with details, probably because of his proximity to the villa. The bishop informs Desiderius that Dagobert has assigned any income from the villa beyond 500 *solidi* to provide lighting for the basilicas of Metz.⁴⁵ Abbo also provides the information that Bobila's father sold the estate to Verus of Rodez before her husband redeemed it and conveyed it to the king. We are not told whether Bobila and Desiderius were successful in recovering Rotovollo from Dagobert. Indeed, it is possible that the strongly-worded letter from Desiderius to the king, above, is an appeal against the latter's decision regarding this very villa.⁴⁶ On the other hand, those early days at court may have swung the balance in Desiderius' favour: *vos enim*, opined Abbo to the bishop of Cahors, *et in palacio regis, ubi inutriti fuistis, bene cogniti estis*.⁴⁷

⁴³ This is the same Bobila we met above who left all her wealth to the church of Cahors and was allowed to be buried near Desiderius due to her generosity.

⁴⁴ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.13, 2.4, 2.11 respectively. (2.4 is addressed from Constantius and Dado together).

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 2.13.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 1.5.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 2.13. [for you are well-known also in the king's palace, where you were raised].

2 Bishops as *Amici*

Besides those in the *epistolae Desiderii episcopi*, there are many individual bishops' letters sprinkled throughout the other collections that were written for the purpose of *amicitia*. The broad scope of these helps to flesh out the multi-faceted nature of Late Antique relationships and shed light on how they functioned on a day to day basis, while their wide range in date serves to reinforce a sense of continuity over the two and a half centuries of existing Merovingian epistolography. These letters are almost always between bishops and their social equals: bishops, other clerics, and highly-placed laymen. Discussion of a illustrative selection of these follows.

2.1 Patronage Networks

Our first example, which outlines the establishment of a patronage network, is an obsequious mid-sixth-century letter from Florianus, abbot of the monastery of Romain-Moûtier, to Nicetius of Trier.⁴⁸ With many protestations of affection, the abbot implores the bishop to act as mediator between himself and other, more powerful figures: Ennodius of Pavia, his *pater ex lavacro*;⁴⁹ Caesarius of Arles, who taught him Latin, and his own predecessor Theodatus, who had raised him from youth. At first glance this is not an unusual request. In this case, however, all three figures are deceased and the network is a celestial one. Florianus' ultimate goal was that the confessor Ambrose, bishop of Milan (374-397), take him up as his special client, but in the abbot's mind *amicitia* networks functioned in heaven as they did on earth. Ambrose, therefore, could not be approached directly. Florianus believes he might be moved, however, via the prayers of three well-known holy men, all of whom had died in recent decades. Since Florianus understands Nicetius to be an *amicus* of Ennodius and Caesarius, he wishes to enlist his help in approaching these three, who will then hopefully approach Ambrose on his behalf.

⁴⁸ *epistolae Austrasicae*, 5. The location of this monastery is in modern Switzerland.

⁴⁹ [father from the font]

Two points stand out. Firstly, the concept of the saint as patron is not a new one⁵⁰ but this case is particularly interesting in its clearly laid out image of an entire heavenly patronage network that reflects the earthly not only in its hierarchy but also in its protocol of approach. Moreover, these heavenly and earthly networks were not separate in the abbot's mind; rather, the celestial chain of command could be broached by the living, and one's own network could span both realms at the same time. Secondly, in envisioning the successful outcome of his plans, Florianus saw himself being taken up by Ambrose as his *peculiaris famulus*, *proprius civis*, and *familiaris alumnus*: three descriptors of relationship that shed light on the abbot's perceptions of how the patronage aspect of *amicitia* functioned once this level was achieved.⁵¹ The abbot clearly does not mean it to be a relationship between equals. On the contrary, his choice of words stresses subjection and dependency on the part of the client (himself), and ownership and protection on the part of the patron (Ambrose), in a relationship bound by affection and intimacy. Unfortunately, although Florianus requests that Nicetius reply as to his willingness to embark on this project, we do not have the bishop's response. As a result, it is difficult to judge how Florianus' plan would have been viewed by his contemporaries.

⁵⁰ Peter Brown's seminal article, "The rise and function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity" *The Journal of Roman Studies* Vol. 61 (1971) 80–101, changed the way everybody thought about saints and holy figures; also Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: 1981), especially Chapter 3, "The Invisible Companion," explores further the idea of holy figures, even deceased ones, as patrons. Examples are Paulinus of Nola's connection to the long-dead St. Felix and that of Sulpicius Severus to St. Martin. For a comprehensive discussion of many facets of this question see Paul A. Hayward & J. D. Howard-Johnston, eds. *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: 1999); also John H. Corbett, "The saint as patron in the work of Gregory of Tours," *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 7 Iss. 1 (March 1981) 1–13. For another example in these collections, see *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.8 to Chlodulf, in which Desiderius refers to St. Stephen as *patronus vester beatus*. Chlodulf succeeded his father as bishop of Metz in 656 and enriched the Cathedral of St. Stephen in that city.

⁵¹ Definitions as in *MLLM*: particular household servant/slave; citizen, especially one subject to a city's bishop; dependent client or protégé, respectively.

2.2 Sharing Artisans

Another aspect of *amicitia* – the supplying of aid in the form of personnel – is illustrated in a letter to Nicetius of Trier from Rufus of Turin that is also dated around the mid-sixth century. After expressing his affection in extravagant terms, the writer reports that after gathering them from different parts of Italy, he is sending the Italian artisans that the bishop had requested.⁵² The artisans, he states, are under the care of the priest Amabilis, who is accompanying them to Gaul and will present them to the bishop. Although we are not told what task they are to perform, it is quite possible these artisans were imported to aid with either the rebuilding of the cathedral church of Trier, or Nicetius' fortified estate on the Moselle, both of which are mentioned by Venantius Fortunatus.⁵³ A century later, Desiderius of Cahors made a similar request of Caesarius of Clermont. Concerned because of the scanty water supply in Cahors, the bishop conceived the idea of bringing water into the city using underground wooden pipes and sent to Caesarius for artisans with the necessary expertise.⁵⁴

A letter dated to the mid-eighth century also makes a request for artisans, this time to be sent to northern England from the Continent. Cuthbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, begs Lully to send him a man skilled in making glass vessels, if he knows of one either in his parish or beyond his boundaries.⁵⁵ Claiming that they are completely ignorant of this art in England, he promises that if Lully manages to find such an individual and send him north, Cuthbert in return will take the man under his protection *vita comite*.⁵⁶ In the same letter Cuthbert requests a player on the harp known as a *rotta*, remarking that he has the

⁵² *epistolae Austrasicae* 21.

⁵³ *opera poetica Venantii Fortunati*, 3.12.

⁵⁴ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.13.

⁵⁵ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 116. See Chapter 4, “Bearers and Gifts,” Section 10 for some implications of Lully's access to luxury goods such as glass and silk.

⁵⁶ The sentence is *cum benigna mansuetudine, vita comite, illum suscipio*. [I take him up with benign clemency as a *comes* for life]. It is not entirely clear what dignity Cuthbert intends for his putative worker in glass. Although the word *comes* has official overtones, the *MLLM* definition of it in this period as “an assessor in the palatial law-court” is surely not applicable here. The abbot may have in mind simply an attendant in his household who will be provided with lifelong support.

instrument, but not the musician. Unfortunately, we do not have Lully's reply to these requests.

2.3 Copying Texts

Five letters from the late sixth to the early seventh century illustrate a spirit of *amicitia* that centres around a shared interest in the composing and copying of texts, specifically saints' *vitae*. Two of these record correspondence between Aunarius of Auxerre and the priest Stephanus in which the bishop commissions the latter to compose a *vita* of Germanus in verse and another of Amator in prose.⁵⁷ He goes on to say that he hopes this request will be not onerous to him, but honourable. (In Latin this creates a rather neat little pun on the words *oneris* and *honoris*). Stephanus responds with a humility *topos*: how will his weak talent, that is daily growing more sluggish, be able to succeed in such a task, requiring as it does polished speech to set out the deeds of such holy men? Does not the unskilled who assumes a task beyond his resources end up impaling himself on the hook of inexperience?⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, in the end he bows to *paterna auctoritas* and accepts the commission.

The persons Stephanus – whom we know as Stephanus Africanus – was to write about were Aunarius' predecessors as bishops of Auxerre: Amator, who was in office from *c.* 388 - *c.* 418 and Germanus, who followed Amator in the see until his death *c.* 448. The latter became the most renowned bishop of the see and was the first bishop, and the first local, to achieve sainthood.⁵⁹ The metrical *vita* of Germanus that Aunarius requested was either never written or has not survived, although six other *vitae Germani* are extant,

⁵⁷ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 7 and 8.

⁵⁸ The Latin phrase is *imperitie (sic) hamo inscinditur*.

⁵⁹ Constance Bouchard, "Episcopal *Gesta* and the creation of a useful past in ninth-century Auxerre," *Speculum* Vol. 84 No. 1 (Jan 2009) 1-35, states (p. 16) that sainthood was not bestowed on Germanus' predecessors in the see of Auxerre until much later. For a discussion of Auxerre, its saints, and its sanctoral cycle see Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, 481–751* (Leiden: 1995), 97–100, who states (p. 97) that "few saints were venerated in Auxerre before the episcopacy of Germanus, and none of them can be identified as local."

three of which are from the Merovingian era.⁶⁰ The earliest was composed in the late fifth century by Constantius of Lyons, while the other two were written around the same time as this letter containing Aunarius' commission, i.e. 573-603. One of these is in Gregory of Tours' *liber in gloria confessorum*, which is usually dated *circa* 590, while the other is known as the "interpolated version" because it contains the complete text of Constantius plus extra material; it has also been dated to the late sixth century. One scholar has suggested that this interpolated version was actually written by Stephanus Africanus, perhaps as preparatory work for the metrical *vita*.⁶¹ The remaining *vitae Germani* are from the ninth century.⁶²

Stephanus' prose *vita Amatoris* is extant in a ninth-century collection of saints' lives from Auxerre and was later used as the basis for a shorter *vita Amatoris* in the *gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium*.⁶³ Interestingly, although the ninth-century authors of the *gesta* clearly considered Germanus to be a much more important figure than Amator,⁶⁴ we get no sense of this imbalance in the sixth-century letter from Aunarius to Stephanus. This suggests that Germanus' cult did not predominate until some centuries later and that his preeminence perhaps had much to do with the survival of multiple *vitae Germani*. In the letter Aunarius claims to have already composed a number of *vitae* of (probably Burgundian) *confessores*. None of these has survived, however. If they had, we, and the authors of the *gesta*, might have gained an entirely different picture of who was who in fifth-century Auxerre.

⁶⁰ Bouchard, "Episcopal *Gesta*," 16-17 and n. 72.

⁶¹ Bouchard, "Episcopal *Gesta*," 18.

⁶² *ibid.*, 17.

⁶³ The *vita* is contained in Montpellier, MS 154 fols. 1v-15r, ed. L.M. Duru, *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne*, 1 (Auxerre: 1850), 136-58; for the *gesta*, the same volume pp. 309-509. For a French translation of the latter with Latin alongside see Michel Sot, ed. *Les Gestes des Évêques d'Auxerre*, Vol. 1 in the series *Les Classiques de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 2002). The *vita* is also in the *Acta Sanctorum* under May 1.

⁶⁴ Bouchard, "Episcopal *Gesta*," 15-6.

Aunarius of Auxerre also corresponded with Pope Pelagius II in the 580s and two of these letters appear in the *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*.⁶⁵ One of these was copied into the *gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium* as part of Aunarius' own *vita*. The letter accompanied relics that Aunarius had requested from the apostolic see and commends the bishop for the new churches that abound in his region. Although Bouchard states in her recent article that this letter also contains praise for the commissioning of the *vitae* of Germanus and Amator, I am unable to find any mention of this in the letter.⁶⁶

The third of this group of text-centred letters is from Warnechar, Mayor of the Palace of Burgundy (613-617), to Ceraunius bishop of Paris.⁶⁷ Warnechar is known to us from the work of Fredegar as the leader whose attempted assassination by Brunhild motivated him to transfer his allegiance to Chlothar II. In the process he took the majority of Brunhild's *leudes* with him and became a major factor in her subsequent downfall. After eliminating Brunhild and her great-grandsons, Chlothar made Warnechar Mayor of the Palace of Burgundy, with a promise that he would hold it for his lifetime.⁶⁸

The letter is a florid reply to one of Ceraunius, who is apparently collecting the deeds of the saints and who has now turned his attention to those of Burgundy. As a result he has entreated Warnechar to send him the deeds of the holy triplets Speusippus, Eleusippus, and Meleusippus.⁶⁹ Warnechar unhesitatingly agrees to supply the *gesta*, and adds those of the martyr Bishop Desiderius of Langres, who was killed in the early fifth century

⁶⁵ These are 9 and 10 in the collection.

⁶⁶ Sot, ed., *Les Gestes*, 68–70. The pope's letter is copied word for word as it appears in the MGH *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 10. Germanus and Amator do not appear there.

⁶⁷ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 14.

⁶⁸ Fred. 40–45.

⁶⁹ At the time these were believed to have been martyred in the environs of the city of Langres during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. In 490 their relics were purportedly deposited in the Langres Cathedral before being translated centuries later to Swabia. See Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and other Principal Saints* Vol. 1 (London: 1812), 220–1. According to the legend they were martyred in Cappadocia. They are often confusingly referred to as the Holy Twins.

during a Vandal raid of the town.⁷⁰ This suggests that Warnechar, as Mayor of the Palace, had access to archives that contained the *gesta* or *vitae* of Burgundy's holy figures. These were likely in Lyons, which at that time held the honour of primary archbishopric of Gaul.⁷¹ An individual interested in composing a new *vita* or restructuring an already-existing one would therefore need to be aware of the location of the different archives and which *gesta* were kept where. Even more important would have been good relations with individuals, like Warnechar, who had both access to these and the necessary authority to allow them to be copied.

The final two examples in this group are found in the *vita Eligii* and consist of an exchange between Dado of Rouen, the composer of the *vita*, and Chrodobert, bishop either of Tours or Paris.⁷² In the first, Dado sends Chrodobert a copy of the newly-composed *vita* and begs him in formal language to critique and emend the text, leaving aside other duties if need be in order to fulfill this request. Chrodobert's reply is also very formal. He finds nothing that warrants correction, he states, adding that Dado has captured a complete image of the departed Eligius and refreshed the reader's spirit in the process. After making copies of the *vita*, Chrodobert then returns the volume intact to the author.

It is to be noted that both Dado and Eligius corresponded with Desiderius of Cahors.⁷³ All three have extant *vitae*, as does Sulpicius of Bourges, Desiderius' metropolitan.⁷⁴ In the

⁷⁰ Butler, *Lives of the Fathers*, 300.

⁷¹ This had recently been assigned to Lyons by Pope Gregory I, see Chapter 1, Section 2.3.

⁷² *vita Elegii* 2.81. The sees of both Tours and Paris were occupied in the mid-seventh century by individuals named Chrodobert or Frodebert. In his MGH edition of the *vita Eligii*, B. Krusch remarks on the debate as to which of these composed the letter, although in a very recent work, D. Shanzer, "The tale of Frodebert's tail," in *Colloquial and Literary Latin*, ed. E. Dickey & A. Chahoud (Cambridge: 2010), 377–405, assumes without discussion that Chrodobert of Tours is the author. If she is correct, this brings the total to five letters extant from that bishop. See this chapter, Section 3.1, for discussion of his letter *ad Bobam* and Section 5 for some observations on his heated exchange over rotten grain with Importunus of Paris.

⁷³ Note that there is no extant correspondence between Desiderius and Chrodobert, either of Tours or Paris.

light of these two letters, it is hard to escape the conclusion that one aspect of the *amicitia* among this tightly-knit group was a duty to preserve and enhance each other's memory after death by means of *vitae*. These two letters are exceptional: as already noted, it is very rare to find letters attached to surviving *vitae*. While it is reasonable to assume that a small flurry of epistolography was generated around the composition of each *vita*, such letters, if they did exist, have almost never been transmitted with the *vita* itself.

2.4 Solving Problems

Amicitia relationships also provided for a very basic need: the opportunity to consult others when outside expertise was needed to solve a problem. This is illustrated in an early sixth-century letter between Bishops Troianus and Eumerius that provides some incidental but intriguing detail regarding both Late Antique medical practice and understanding, and baptismal customs and protocol.⁷⁵ Eumerius had consulted Troianus regarding a slave who was uncertain as to whether he had been baptized or not. The *puer* remembers only that his head was at one point wrapped with linen, as is done, said Eumerius, with those who are recovering from illness lest the head become cold and a relapse occur. Troianus replies that according to the statutes of their predecessors, a person in such a situation should be baptized without delay, lest his soul be required of the one who neglected to baptize him.

Two points in this short letter stand out. One is that although infant baptism was well-established throughout Christendom from at least the third century,⁷⁶ it was evidently not universally applied and therefore could not be depended upon when a person's history

⁷⁴ For Dado see MGH, SRM, V(III); for Sulpicius see MGH, SRM, 4(II); for Desiderius: MGH, SRM, 4(II).

⁷⁵ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 2. The bishoprics of the correspondents are uncertain, but according to the MGH are possibly Saintes and Nantes respectively.

⁷⁶ Origen: *Homilies on Leviticus* 8.3.11, *Commentary on Romans* 5.9, *Homily on Luke* 14.5; Tertullian: *On Baptism* 18; *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome*: 21.4–5; Augustine's views on this matter changed over his lifetime. In his *A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed*, par. 16, he emphasizes the absolute necessity for baptism, since at the time of writing he believed that even infants that died unbaptized would suffer eternal damnation, but in the *City of God* Book 13.7 and Book 20.8 he softens this view considerably.

was unknown due to external factors. Moreover, customs differed from place to place. Although Easter had long been the preferred date for baptism, this was not normally a requirement. However, the canons of a synod convoked by the above-noted Aunarius of Auxerre stressed that except for those who were dying, baptisms could only take place at Easter, nor was one permitted to take one's newborn to another diocese so that the child might receive the rite at another time of year.⁷⁷ Even without the transience associated with captivity and subsequent slavery, such multiplicity of traditions coupled with a child's hazy memory of its early years would require the collective memory of its community to corroborate the experience, since registers of baptisms are not known to have been kept until almost a millennium later. A second point concerns the linen head wrapping. This apparently formed part of the baptismal robes and was used in order to keep the chrism, or consecrated oil, in place.⁷⁸ Under normal circumstances, it was kept until the mother's churching, at which point it was given back to the church. The confusion in the slave's mind underscores its similarity to head coverings used in convalescent care, which in turn reveals some understanding of the head and heat loss in relation to illness.

3 Bishops as Teachers

The instructional letter, while far behind the *amicitia* letter in numbers, is the second most prevalent category of bishop's letter. The urge to instruct others seems to have been a dominant feature of the personalities of many bishops as we see them in the letter collections. Today many of these individuals might have gravitated towards schoolteaching, but in the Merovingian era they had to content themselves with pontificating through epistolography to people who, in the episcopal mind at least, needed guidance. Many times this was other bishops, who received many a hortatory remark worked into what was otherwise a routine epistle. Women fell easily into this category as well, and the following discussion contains several examples of bishops

⁷⁷ Bouchard, "Episcopal gesta," 27.

⁷⁸ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children*, (New Haven: 2001), 29, discusses the function of the head wrapping in relation to infant baptism in late-medieval England, but this is unlikely to be much different from that in 6th century Gaul.

admonishing and advising abbesses and queens.⁷⁹ Also included is a letter purportedly written by Bishop Leudegar of Autun to his mother. I devote as well a section to advisory letters from bishops to kings.

3.1 Abbesses

Chrodoberth was a bishop of Tours in the second half of the seventh century. Sometime during his episcopate he directed a reply to an unknown abbess Boba which found its way into a ninth-century formulary.⁸⁰ The abbess had asked the bishop for help in dealing with a nun caught in adultery and had requested that he search the canons for a judgment on the matter. The bishop responds that he cannot find information on this problem in the canons of the synods of Nicaea, Chalcedon, Ephesus, and Constantinople, but that there is a judgment from the synod of Orléans. He forwards the applicable canon with the letter.⁸¹ Chrodoberth stresses that the nun must repent with tears, fasting, and trials of obedience; through such vigils her sin will be driven out and God's grace will be restored to her. He also emphasizes, after giving many examples from Holy Writ of sinners who repented, that the erring nun must not repeat her offence.⁸²

The letter of advice and instruction from Desiderius of Cahors to Abbess Aspasia that I mention above is very similar in tone and content to this letter from Chrodoberth to Boba. In the case of Aspasia, however, it is the abbess herself who seems to have committed some fault. As with the nun polluted by adultery, Aspasia is strongly admonished not to revert to her former sinful state, advice which in both letters takes a prominent position. The bishop also urges on her as many fasts, prayers, and vigils as she can perform and

⁷⁹ As these letters are more illustrative of bishops' dealings with women than the reverse, I have included them here instead of in Chapter 1, "Women's Letters."

⁸⁰ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 16. The letter is found in the ninth-century formulary MS Leiden BPL 114; see Alice Rio, *Legal Practice and the Written Word in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2009), 48–9.

⁸¹ The canon is no longer with the letter. There were several councils held at Orléans and it is not clear to which the bishop is referring. Editor W. Gundlach suggests Orléans V canon 16, Orléans III canon 19, or Orléans II canon 17.

⁸² For an analysis of biblical usage in this letter, see Chapter 5, "The Merovingians and the Bible," 2.2.

still maintain her health, and promises that through this she will merit the hope of salvation.

Besides these two examples from the seventh century of bishops advising individual abbesses on private concerns, there exist two more in the eighth-century *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae*. These are both addressed to Abbess Bugga and are replies to letters from the abbess to Boniface. In one of them Boniface advises Bugga against taking a pilgrimage to Rome until the attacks from the Saracens subside,⁸³ and in the other he consoles her for some unknown trouble by reminding her that tribulations teach patience.⁸⁴

Because of the scarcity in the collections of letters of this type to abbesses, we cannot draw any firm conclusions other than to say that during the seventh and eighth centuries abbesses at times initiated contact with bishops and expected – and received – compassionate and competent pastoral care in return. The fact that Chrodoberht's letter was later copied into a formulary suggests that this was a widely-accepted norm that bishops were encouraged to emulate. It is difficult, if not impossible, to compare the response of the Anglo-Saxon Boniface in this regard to that of his Frankish predecessors. It seems certain, however, that relationships of mutual respect were desired and practised between bishops and abbesses on both sides of the Channel; certainly the Merovingian collections contain no example in which a bishop treats an abbess rudely or dismissively.

3.2 Kings

In their self-appointed role as keepers of the kingdom's morals, bishops often found it necessary to curb the bad behaviour of kings. As we shall see, they attempted to do this in various creative ways that included praising what the kings did right, holding up an ideal of kingship for them to follow, locking horns with them, and sometimes sidestepping them altogether and haranguing their queens.

⁸³ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 27.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 94.

The collections contain several letters that we can class as early “mirrors for princes.” Our first example of this type is tentatively dated to 486 and is from Remigius of Rheims to Clovis I upon the latter’s acquisition of Belgica Secunda, the former Roman province in northeast Gaul.⁸⁵ The bishop congratulates the king and advises him how to rule successfully: to attach wise counselors to himself, to be honest and virtuous, to defer to his priests, build up his citizens, and relieve the afflicted, the poor, widows and orphans. He ought also to liberate captives, take care of the needs of strangers, and make judgments with justice. Furthermore, his palace must have an open-door policy so that anybody with a problem may approach him – an interesting comment on the ideal of common access to royal justice and the king’s person. Finally, Remigius advises the king to joke around with the young and hold discussions with the old. If, as W. Gundlach has argued, Clovis’ acquisition of new territory included Rheims, it explains the considerable involvement Remigius seems to have had in political affairs at this time.⁸⁶ Besides the above “mirror,” he wrote a letter of consolation to the king upon the death of his sister Albofled, the opening of which is quoted by Gregory of Tours.⁸⁷ According to tradition, Remigius was also the bishop responsible for Clovis’ conversion to the Christian faith and subsequent baptism.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *epistolae Austrasicae* 2. Gundlach, editor of the letter in the MGH, has supplied the date. Remigius was considered a great stylist by Sidonius Apollinaris, who addressed a letter to him praising some of his works (Book 9.7). Sidonius’ remark in this letter that *omnium assensu pronuntiatum pauca nunc posse similia dictari* [all agreed that few works like it are written these days], suggests that skill in this area was not what it had been in the recent past.

⁸⁶ Gundlach dates this letter to 486, the fifth year of Clovis’ rule, because of confusion in the first sentence of the letter – *rumor ad nos magnus pervenit, administrationem vos secundum bellice suscepisse*. Gundlach changes *secundum bellice* to *secundae Belgicae* in his MGH edition of the letter and in “Die Sammlung der *Epistolae Austrasicae*,” *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* XIII (1888) 380–1, expounds his conclusion that the letter was written soon after Clovis defeated the Roman general Syagrius and took over his territories around Soissons, as described by Gregory of Tours (*LH* 2.27). As a result Remigius, bishop of nearby Rheims and ecclesiastical head of the province, came under a new ruler, hence his motivation for the letter. I find Gundlach’s argument persuasive.

⁸⁷ *epistolae Austrasicae* 1, quoted in *LH* 2.31.

⁸⁸ *LH* 2.31. *epistolae Aviti Viennensis* 46 congratulates Clovis on his baptism which took place on Christmas Day. Neither Gregory nor Avitus specifies the year, however, which has led to ongoing debate; proposals range from 496 to 508. A letter from Pope

Another letter along the same lines is addressed from an unknown bishop to an unknown young king.⁸⁹ Dating is uncertain, ranging from the 580s to the 650s depending on which king one believes is being addressed.⁹⁰ Although the qualities emphasized are the same as the above letter to Clovis: listening to wise counsellors and priests, judging with justice, assisting the poor, and fearing and loving God, the later “mirror” is much more lengthy, and the writer goes into a great deal more detail as he spells out the behaviour appropriate to a “good” king. Examples from Scripture such as David and Solomon are made use of, and the author stresses the outstanding deeds and qualities of ancestors whom the young king is encouraged to emulate.⁹¹ Gundlach notes that this letter has many similarities to one written to the young Charlemagne by the otherwise unknown Cathuulf; it is possible, therefore, that it may have been used as a source.⁹² Many of the sentiments expressed also bear a resemblance to the *de duodecim abusivis saeculi*, an anonymous but popular treatise on kingship and social and political morality that was written, it is believed, sometime in the seventh century, and that had a major influence on Carolingian wisdom literature.⁹³

Hormisdas commending Remigius on his accomplishment and elevating him to metropolitan status is found in the *vita Remigii episcopi Remensis auctore Hincmaro*, see Appendix of Summaries.

⁸⁹ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 15.

⁹⁰ Although both sender and recipient are unnamed, MGH editor W. Gundlach believed the addressee was one of the sons of Dagobert, i.e. Sigibert III or Clovis II. Other possible candidates are Childebert II or Chlothar II, see Paul Kirn, “Die mittelalterliche Staatsverwaltung als geistes-geschichtliches Problem,” *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 27 (1932) 523–48.

⁹¹ The writer – or copyist – names Chlothar I as the father of Clovis, Childebert, and Chlodomer when in actuality – as ought to have been well-known – Clovis was the father, and that of four sons. Clovis’ eldest son by his first wife, Theuderic I, ruler of Austrasia, is omitted entirely.

⁹² The letter to Charlemagne is found in MGH, *Epistolae* 4, ed. E. Dümmler (Berlin: 1895), 501–5. Nothing apart from this letter is known about Cathuulf, who styled himself *Cathuulfus ultimus vester seruulus*. Cf. Mary Garrison, “Letters to a king and biblical exempla: the examples of Cathuulf and Clemens Peregrinus,” *Early Medieval Europe* Vol. 7 Iss. 3 (26 Feb. 2003) 305–328.

⁹³ S. Hellmann, ed. “Pseudo-Cyprianus de xii abusivis saeculi,” in *Texte und Untersuchungen zur altchristlichen Literatur* 34 (Leipzig: 1909); Hans Hubert Anton, “Pseudo-Cyprian. *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* und sein Einfluß auf dem Kontinent, insbesondere auf die karolingischen Fürstenspiegel,” in *Die Iren und Europa in frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Heinz Löwe, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: 1982), ii, 568–617.

A more subtle approach is taken by Aurelianus bishop of Arles in a mid-sixth century letter to King Theudebert I, the son of Clovis I's oldest son Theuderic I.⁹⁴ Unlike the above "mirrors" in which the writer focuses on an ideal of righteous behaviour that he urges the ruler to emulate, here the bishop recognizes and extols those same virtues and kingly qualities as already present in Theudebert. Along the way, however, he does not neglect to insert a few admonitions toward generosity, either because he saw this as a general failing in this ruler, or more probably, to encourage the king to grant some petition previously submitted. Although as with the above "mirrors" we do not know what prompted this letter, there are two reasons why we might safely assume that it at least expressed genuine feeling. Firstly, as Aurelianus' correspondence with Pope Vigilius indicates, this bishop was not one to mince words or avoid difficult topics,⁹⁵ so if the king had needed correction we would expect him to supply such. Secondly, Gregory of Tours, who had no qualms about criticizing the faults of those in power, assigned to Theudebert the same virtues, praising his liberality to the churches, his respect for bishops, his relief for the poor, and his piety and goodwill.⁹⁶ Gregory reports that this king even restored the fortunes of Desiderius of Verdun and those of its citizens after his father Theuderic had made them destitute.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *epistolae Austrasicae* 10. Roger Collins, "Theodebert I: Rex Magnus Francorum," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* ed. P. Wormald et al (Oxford: 1983), 7–33, argues that the Aurelianus who wrote this letter was not the bishop of Arles, but another bishop of the same name whose see is unknown but who was a relative of Ennodius of Pavia. Collins' arguments are based on chronology and style but I do not find them convincing. It was MGH editor W. Gundlach who designated the writer as the bishop of Arles.

⁹⁵ Aurelianus had written to the pope asking him to allay fears that his faith was suspect. See *epistolae Arelatenses* 45.

⁹⁶ Marius of Avenches labels Theudebert *rex magnus Francorum* in *Marii episcopi Aventicensis chronica*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH, AA XI, 236. This is reproduced with French translation by Justin Favrod, *La chronique de Marius d'Avenches (455–581)* (Lausanne: 1991). Collins, "Theodebert I," 7, points out that no other ruler in Marius' chronicle is assigned the epithet *magnus*.

⁹⁷ *LH* 3.25 and 34.

Scholars have long noted a development in the direction of a more intensely Christian concept of kingship in the seventh century in the Merovingian kingdoms.⁹⁸ If this were true we might expect to see some evidence of this progression in these letters from bishops to kings. The letter above with unknown correspondents could be interpreted along these lines due to its greater length, complexity, and use of biblical models in comparison with the other “mirror” letters, but only if it were indeed intended for Chlothar II (d. 629) or one of his grandsons and therefore able to be dated to the seventh century. If its recipient was Childebert II (d. 596), as one scholar suggests,⁹⁹ then we are left without a seventh-century example; the uncertainty surrounding the letter’s particulars, therefore, renders it unsuitable for endorsing the above argument.¹⁰⁰ The earlier letters, if anything, undermine the argument, because they suggest that pressing a Christian model of kingship on a Frankish ruler had been a preoccupation of bishops from the very beginning of the Merovingian era. Nor was this a new development: the *epistolae Austrasicae* contains a poetic epistle dated to c. 460 that expresses similar sentiments, although this time to a count, not a king. The piece is from Auspicius of Toul

⁹⁸ The latest scholar to endorse this view, Jamie Kreiner, “About the bishop: the episcopal entourage and the economy of government in post-Roman Gaul,” *Speculum* Vol. 86 No. 2 (April 2011) 321–360, characterizes this development *passim* in terms of an increasing interest on the part of rulers and bishops to fulfill obligations of care and alms-giving to the populace, specifically *pauperes*. See also Yitzhak Hen, “The uses of the Bible and the perception of kingship in Merovingian Gaul,” *Early Medieval Europe* Vol. 7 Iss. 3 (1998) 277–290; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford: 1971), 47. Examples of documents seen as indicating a change in the perception of kingship from a Roman imperial model to a biblical model include: *Gunthramni regis edictum* (585 Nov. 10), MGH, *capitularia regis Francorum I*, ed. A. Boretius (Hanover: 1883), no. 5, pp. 10–12; *Concilium Clippiacense* (626/7), ed. and trans. J. Gaudemet and B. Basdevant, *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens (VIe–VIIe siècles)*, SC 353–4 (Paris: 1989), preface, 528–9; *LHF* 42 refers to Dagobert I as a new Solomon.

⁹⁹ see n. 87.

¹⁰⁰ Hen, “The uses of the Bible,” 284–5 does not take this uncertainty into account, but builds his argument on the letter in question being addressed to the mid-seventh century king Clovis II; Hen thus misleadingly sees the earlier letters to Clovis I and Theudebert as “embryonic” forms of the later letter.

to count-elect Arbogast of Trier.¹⁰¹ The bishop lauds his addressee's grandfather and namesake – a general who fought with the Roman military in the late fourth century – but emphasizes that whereas the earlier Arbogast died a pagan, the younger Arbogast surpasses the elder because he invokes the name of Christ. Auspicius urges the count to avoid greed, open his heart with alms to the poor, judge wisely, and seize nothing illegally.

Although a firm conclusion cannot be drawn due to the paucity of surviving examples, the “mirrors for princes” in the Merovingian collections supply no evidence for an intensifying Christian concept of kingship at the approach of the seventh century. Rather, it was business as usual: even before the birth of Clovis I bishops busied themselves with defining a Christian image of rulership and pressing that image onto kings and others in power in the form of epistolography. This continued throughout the Merovingian era.

As noted above, bishops did not always praise kings, and a letter dated *circa* 540 from Leo bishop of Sens to King Childebert I illustrates this.¹⁰² The city of Melun, probably because of small size and/or population, was not an episcopal see and the king had petitioned Leo, who was its metropolitan, to either ordain a bishop for the city or allow another to do so. Leo took great issue with this request for three reasons: first, Melun was under his own jurisdiction and he was still living; second, such a move was forbidden by the canons; third, his own overlord, Theudebert I, had not given his consent for it. The language used is very strong and while a certain respect is maintained toward the king, Leo holds little back.¹⁰³ He is astonished that the king would seek to generate such an injury to the episcopal order in his time, and he will not stand by slothful and neglectful

¹⁰¹ *epistolae Austrasicae* 23. A letter (Bk. 4.17) is also extant from Sidonius Apollinaris to Arbogast. The latter had requested some exegesis on certain Scriptures; Sidonius, however, refers the count to bishop Auspicius, the author of the above letter.

¹⁰² *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 3. Sens was the archbishopric for the province of Lugdunensis Senonia; Melun, the city that was the subject of the letter, was a suffragan bishopric of Sens. Childebert I was a son of Clovis I and uncle to the above *rex magnus* Theudebert I.

¹⁰³ Note that Leo is not addressing his own king here, making criticism easier by eliminating repercussions; he was doubtless being supported by his own king, Theudebert.

of all his duties and let it happen. Anyone convicted of ordaining a new bishop contrary to the statutes of the Fathers is guilty of illicit presumption. Any prince worth their salt would not listen for a minute to such a scandalous request, which would destroy the peace that is dear to the heart of God. Finally, unless he hears differently from the pope or from a properly-organized synod, any and all who become involved in such an ordination will be cut off from his communion. We have no doubt that he includes Childebert in his threat.

Some context for this situation can be gained from Gregory of Tours' *Histories*. As might be expected, politics – and particularly political relationships between family members – take centre stage. Theudebert's father Theuderic was born of Clovis' concubine, making the latter's sons by Queen Chlothild Theudebert's half-uncles. Upon Theuderic's death in 533, his two remaining half-brothers Childebert I and Chlothar I joined forces and tried to prevent Theudebert from taking possession of his father's part of the kingdom. This was unsuccessful, and Gregory of Tours reports that sometime later Childebert gave gifts to Theudebert and adopted him as his own son; the two then ganged up on Chlothar.¹⁰⁴ (According to Gregory, the years of the mid-sixth century were dominated by the constantly-shifting sands of the alliances formed and reformed among the four sons of Clovis I as they angled for land and power. It was obviously crucial for bishops to keep themselves updated on such matters).¹⁰⁵ Leo draws Childebert's attention to the latter's relationship with his nephew by referring to the [*iussus*] *gloriosissimi domni principis nostri filii vestri Theudoberthi*.¹⁰⁶ The two kings' division of the kingdom seems to have left something to be desired, however: Childebert, with capital at Paris, was evidently ruler of Melun, while Melun looked to nearby Sens for its bishop, who was a subject of Theudebert. (We saw a similar situation above with Bishop Desiderius, whose see of

¹⁰⁴ LH 3.24 and 28. Later in the century King Guntram similarly adopted his nephew Childebert II, son of Sigibert and Brunhild.

¹⁰⁵ LH 3.18–31. Chlothar I won in the end. He outlived his brothers, his nephew Theudebert, and the latter's son, the short-lived Theudebald I. He also produced four sons who ruled the Frankish kingdom: Charibert I, Guntram, Sigibert I, and Chilperic I.

¹⁰⁶ Gundlach labels this an error, but I believe rather that Leo is referring to a political reality.

Cahors was ruled by Sigibert III but whose metropolitan see of Bourges was ruled by Sigibert's brother Clovis II).

Childebert's "adoption" of Theudebert would have been no guarantee of continued good relations between the two, and at the time of the letter from Leo Childebert may have been attempting to make Melun independent of Sens – and Theudebert – by providing it with its own bishop. It is also possible that the people of Melun had petitioned Childebert directly for a bishop of their own. Leo himself admits that the populace of Melun had been neglected due to *interclusis itineribus* which, he claims, have prevented him from coming to the town himself or sending a Visitor in his place. Melun is very close to Sens, however, and the roads cannot have been impassable all year round, although quarrels between the kings may have exacerbated the problem. The real reason for the neglect of Melun may be Leo's description of himself as *senex aut infirmi* (sic), and his sharp words may cover wounded pride and feelings of inadequacy. The incident serves to give us a sense of the problem, which must have been common, of elderly bishops with physical limitations being unable to provide proper pastoral care over a wide area. Besides lack of care, this must have contributed to a haphazard dissemination of Christian culture in outlying town and villages. The overlap between secular and ecclesiastical overlordship, and Leo's response, did nothing to relieve Melun's problems. The town remained without a bishop of its own throughout the Merovingian period.

3.3 Queens

Bishops sometimes chose to deal indirectly with kings through their queens, who were imbued with a significant psychological advantage in the minds of those around them. Gregory of Tours, for example, narrates at length the story of how Queen Chlothild, wife of Clovis I, persisted in influencing her husband toward the Christian faith. With the help of Remigius of Rheims, this apparently led to the king's baptism and that of several thousand of his army.¹⁰⁷ While we cannot take all the details of the story at face value, the

¹⁰⁷ *LH* 2.28–31. So Gregory of Tours, who reports that during a battle with the Alemanni that was going badly for the Franks, Clovis promised to convert to the Christian faith if God gave him victory. Belief in Chlothild's role in his conversion was widespread;

persistence of the notion that a king could let himself be ruled by his queen's powers of persuasion is further borne out by the following two letters in the *epistolae Austrasicae*. Around the middle of the sixth century, Nicetius of Trier made use of returning Lombard legates to send a letter to Chlodosind, daughter of Clovis' youngest son Chlothar and sister of Guntram, Sigibert, and Chilperic.¹⁰⁸ She had been given in marriage to the Lombard king Alboin before he emigrated to Italy with his people in 568.¹⁰⁹ Chlodosind died not long after the move to Italy, and it is not certain if the letter from Nicetius was composed before or after the emigration; Gundlach suggests the former. It has come to Nicetius' attention that Alboin is receiving Arian Goths at court, and the bishop draws the natural conclusion that the king is flirting with Arianism. He therefore urges the queen to deflect her husband from this path and persuade him to Catholic belief. Comparing Chlodosind's task to that of her grandmother Chlothild in the conversion of Clovis, the bishop stresses three points: the foolishness of a king who celebrates his earthly success but does not worry about the health of his soul; the indications in Scripture that Arian belief is in error; and the many miracles performed at the tombs of Catholic, as opposed to Arian, saints. These last two subjects take up the bulk of the letter, which is replete with Scripture quotations, examples of both biblical and Merovingian holy figures, and detailed descriptions of miraculous events.

Lombard religious belief itself has been a subject of much debate. Beginning with Hodgkin, scholars have traditionally asserted that when they entered Italy in 568, the Lombards were Arians, like many other Germanic peoples in the Roman Empire.¹¹⁰ This view has been questioned in recent decades, but there is as yet no consensus as to Lombard Christianity or its lack before the seventh century.¹¹¹ According to Procopius,

Nicetius of Trier also believed the "legend" of Chlothild and the conversion of Clovis, see below.

¹⁰⁸ *epistolae Austrasicae*, 8.

¹⁰⁹ *LH* 4.3 and 4.41.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, 5 (Oxford: 1885), 157.

¹¹¹ Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy, Central Power and Local Society 400–1000* (Ann Arbor: 1981), 29–30, believes along with the Italian school of G.P. Bognetti, *L'Età Longobarda*, 4 Vols. (Milan: 1966–8), that the Lombards were Catholics who converted to Arianism *circa* 565 in order to gain the support of the Arian Goths in Italy. Steven C.

the Lombards called themselves Catholics when seeking Byzantine help against the Gepids in 548.¹¹² The Frankish and Italian sources of the time, however, indicate that the Lombards as a whole were pagans when they invaded Italy and for some time after. A letter securely dated to the fall of 580 from Pelagius II to Aunarius of Auxerre, for instance, labels them *gentiles* and *idolatries*,¹¹³ while two decades later Pope Gregory the Great describes them sacrificing to a goat's head, evidently believing them to be pagan.¹¹⁴ Paul the Deacon also twice refers to the Lombards as unbelievers up to the end of the sixth century.¹¹⁵ Gregory of Tours makes no mention of the Lombards' religious alignment, something he would surely do if they were Arian, since the bishop could not abide Arians and was fond of recounting the misfortunes that befell them due to their lack of orthodoxy.¹¹⁶ Individual Lombards known to Gregory are as a rule presented by him as having no prior knowledge of Christianity. The one exception is the Lombard Vulfoaic, whom Gregory met in the town of Carignan and who had been a Stylite and a disciple of St. Martin from an early age.¹¹⁷

Fanning, "Lombard Arianism Reconsidered," *Speculum* Vol. 56 No. 2 (April 1981) 241–258, disagrees, arguing that the Lombards were pagans when they invaded Italy, pp. 246–250; Walter Pohl, "Deliberate Ambiguity: the Lombards and Christianity," in *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. G. Armstrong and I. Wood (Turnhout: 2000), 47–58, comments that "Lombard religious history is rich in paradox," and that it was both affirmed and obscured at different times by shifting political loyalties. Pohl argues that this situation likely reflects a reality of blurred boundaries that resists categorization.

¹¹² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, ed. H.B. Dewing (Boston: 1953), 7.34.

¹¹³ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 9.

¹¹⁴ Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, ed. U. Moricca (Rome: 1924), 3.28; cf. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 34; Pohl, "Deliberate Ambiguity," 50–1, argues that the pope's notions regarding goat sacrifice were probably taken from the Old Testament and had little to do with Lombard behaviour.

¹¹⁵ *HL* 4.6, 4.29.

¹¹⁶ *LH* 3.1, 2.3. Gregory engages in a dispute with the Arian Agilan in 5.43.

¹¹⁷ *LH* 6.6 for the Lombards who witnessed the miracle of Hospitius of Nice; 8.15 for Vulfoaic and his devotion to St. Martin. For a thorough discussion of Gregory and his Lombard connections see Walter Pohl, "Gregory of Tours and contemporary perceptions of Lombard Italy," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. K. Mitchell and I. Wood (Leiden: 2002), 131–144.

The letter to Chlodosind does little to clarify the situation. Clearly the bishop does not believe that the king had already been Arian for some time, as Gundlach apparently did if we are to believe his summary of the letter in the MGH. Near the beginning, for example, Nicetius states that the king is *animae remedium non festinus requirit* and he marvels that *de regno Dei et animae suae salute nihil investigare studet*.¹¹⁸ Further on he asks rhetorically *...talis vir, qualis Alboenus rex esse dicitur...quare non convertitur aut quare tardus ad requirendum viam salutis apparet?*¹¹⁹ These remarks suggest that at the time of the letter, Alboin was unconverted to any form of Christianity, i.e. that he was still a pagan. Other of the bishop's comments, however, indicate that Alboin was at least familiar with the tenets of orthodox Christian belief. Speaking of the Arian *Gothi* Nicetius queries: *quid est, quod nihil ibidem praesumere audent...cum illos suos fideles rex Alboinus ibidem mittat et ad domni Petri, Pauli, Iohannis vel reliquorum sanctorum limina perducant?*¹²⁰ The bishop goes on to encourage the king to send his followers to the festival of St. Martin at Tours, where they will see proper Christian miracles. These comments suggest some sort of tug-of-war at the Lombard court between Catholicism and Arianism.

While we cannot rule out the possibility that Nicetius was as much in the dark as modern scholars as to Alboin's actual religious stance, the letter to Chlodosind records Nicetius' contemporary belief that the Lombard king was considering conversion to Arianism before the move to Italy – from what, we do not know. The bishop's mention of the *Gothi* lends weight to the idea that such a "conversion" was a tactical move on the part of the Lombards to gain the support of the Arians already inhabiting the peninsula. We must keep in mind as well that Nicetius' letter addresses the religious sensibilities of Alboin only, although the bishop doubtless took for granted that the Lombard people, or at least the king's followers, would adopt his choice of religion. Given the confusion surrounding

¹¹⁸ as above *epistolae Austrasicae* 8. [in no hurry to seek a remedy for his soul]; [he makes no effort to learn about the kingdom of God and the salvation of his soul].

¹¹⁹ [such a man as King Alboin is said to be – why has he not converted? and why is he so slow in seeking the way of salvation?]

¹²⁰ [why is it that they (the Goths) dare not perform their rites there, although Alboin sends his followers there and leads them to the threshold of the lords Peter, Paul, John, and their holy relics?]

the issue from that day to this, there is a distinct possibility that the religious beliefs of the Lombards – at least those of the king and his *fideles* – were fluid and subject to political expediency, and that religious alignment held little relevance in Lombard culture and politics.¹²¹ It is also possible that the Lombard people as a whole had little to do with the fluctuations of belief experienced by their leaders, with the result that the bulk of them entered Italy as recognizable pagans, remaining in that state until their conversion to Catholic Christianity some time in the seventh century.

A letter written about fifty years later also touches on the subject of Lombard religious belief. This is Letter 5 of the *Columbani abbatibus Luxoviensibus et Bobbiensibus epistolae*. In it Columbanus, at the behest of the Lombard king Agilulf and his Catholic queen Theodelinda, questions the orthodoxy of his addressee, Pope Boniface IV, in relation to the Three Chapters Controversy and the pope's stance on the council that condemned the Chapters.¹²² Columbanus' accusations present numerous ambiguities and contradictions – that the pope adheres to both Nestorius and Eutyches, for example – that have led many scholars to believe that he was either ill-informed or confused regarding the theological issues involved.¹²³ In any event, Columbanus' letter implies that by the early seventh century, the Lombard king Agilulf was an Arian Christian who, to the writer's astonishment, wished to see an end to theological schism. Columbanus hints that a favourable response from Boniface may bring about a conversion to Catholicism on the part of the king.¹²⁴

¹²¹ This is an argument of both Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, 36, and Fanning, "Lombard Arianism," 256–8, and is one of the few things they agree upon.

¹²² This is the Fifth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 553. Boniface IV is one of the poorly-documented and short-lived successors of Gregory the Great. He reigned as pope from 608 until his death in 615.

¹²³ Patrick T.R. Gray & Michael W. Herren, "Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy – a new approach," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 45.1 (Apr. 1994) 160–70, attempt to reconcile these discrepancies in their article. As with Columbanus and Boniface IV, the letter from Nicetius to Justinian (*ep. Aus.* 7) curiously accuses the emperor of following the mutually exclusive Nestorius and Eutyches.

¹²⁴ Gray and Herren, "Columbanus and the Three Chapters," 170, believe Columbanus is hinting this, although it is not stated clearly. Columbanus' letter was not the first to accuse the pope of heresy in the aftermath of the Three Chapters controversy. Pope Pelagius I was compelled in the years 556–7 to send a number of letters to the Frankish

A second admonitory letter from a bishop to a queen is from Germanus of Paris to Queen Brunhild.¹²⁵ MGH editor W. Gundlach has dated it to 575, during an outbreak of civil war involving Chlodowig's brothers Kings Guntram, Chilperic, and Sigibert, Brunhild's husband.¹²⁶ Ever since 561, when King Chlothar I died and his kingdom passed to his four sons, the family squabbles that tended to dominate Merovingian politics had escalated, with first one brother then another forming alliances and instigating takeovers of the others' territories. In the latest conflict, Chilperic and Guntram had allied themselves against Sigibert, who marched to meet Chilperic at Paris.¹²⁷ The area around the city had already been devastated the year before by the brothers, with many villages burnt to the ground.¹²⁸ Because Sigibert seemed to be coming out on top in the conflict, the Franks subject to his older brother Chilperic sent an embassy to Sigibert declaring that they would make him their king. Sigibert then hurried to march against his brother, who had fled to Tournai, but Gregory of Tours reports that Germanus predicted disaster to Sigibert if he did not spare Chilperic in the ensuing battle. Sigibert paid no attention and was subsequently assassinated by two men loyal to Chilperic's queen Fredegund. From Gregory's perspective, the incident was a judgment on Sigibert's sinfulness according to Proverbs 26:27: "Whoso diggeth a pit for his brother shall fall therein."

The letter, sent to the young Brunhild a short time before Sigibert's assassination, is evidence that Gregory did not simply fabricate Germanus' involvement for dramatic effect. The letter begins by reporting a rumour: *vulgi verba iterantes* indicate that she and Sigibert are working as a team and that it is by Brunhild's counsel, will, and instigation that Sigibert is devastating the country. Germanus pretends he does not believe this for a moment, which allows him to proceed in routine fashion as though urging a "good" queen to reform a "bad" king. He encourages Brunhild to take on the role of the biblical

kingdom in order to quell rumours that his faith was suspect (*ep. Aus* 48, 54, 56; *ep. aevi Mer. coll.* 5). In *ep. Aus.* 48, Pelagius calmed fears regarding Justinian's orthodoxy by blaming Theodora for all the trouble. (The empress had died eight years previously).

¹²⁵ *epistolae Austrasicae*, 9. For an analysis of biblical usage in this letter, see Chapter 5, "The Merovingians and the Bible," Section 2.1.

¹²⁶ See *LH* 4.47–51.

¹²⁷ The fourth brother, Charibert, had died in 567.

¹²⁸ *LH* 4.49.

Esther, who saved her people, and to mitigate her husband's violence so that these rumours, which will generate danger for herself, will cease. (It is not clear whether Germanus means by this physical danger or the pressure of negative public opinion). He also reminds the queen of the hollowness of victory in civil war and gives examples from Scripture of violence between brothers and the divine judgment that followed.

As can be seen, the approach of Germanus' letter is qualitatively different from that of Nicetius to Chlodosind. While Nicetius' letter casts Chlodosind as an innocent bystander, Germanus makes use of smoke and mirrors: while seeming to follow the time-honoured method of influencing a wayward king through a pliant and upright queen, Germanus is in fact castigating Brunhild as a willing participant in Sigibert's violence. The civil conflict did not cease upon the death of Sigibert and the accession of his five-year-old son Childebert II. Violence between the Merovingian kings did not settle back to normal levels until almost a decade later, after Chilperic was assassinated in turn in 584.¹²⁹ After that event, only King Guntram remained of the four sons of Chlothar I.

3.4 Mother

Our final example of an instructional letter from a bishop is unique in the Merovingian collections in that it was authored by a son for his mother. This text is contained in the *epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae*, that grab bag of epistolographical odds and ends compiled by one of the nineteenth-century editors of the letters in the MGH, William Gundlach.¹³⁰ It is found in two manuscripts: the tenth-century Vaticanus inter Christinae codices 272, and the eleventh-century Parisinus latinus 2077. The letter was purportedly composed by Bishop Leudegar of Autun to his mother Sigrada, who was residing, likely a prisoner, in the monastery of S. Mary of Soissons.¹³¹ Although Sigrada's name is found

¹²⁹ LH 6.46.

¹³⁰ The letter is number 17 in this collection.

¹³¹ Ebroin, his wife Leutrade, and his son Bovo constructed this monastery for virgins. A charter of 666/667 drawn up by Drauscus of Soissons names Aetheria as abbess and privileges the nuns to be governed by the Rule of Benedict and the monastery of Luxeuil. Editions of the charter can be found in Pardessus 355, Vol. 2, pp 138–141 and *Patrologia Latina* lxxxviii.1186. Interestingly, Leudegar is one of the signatories of the charter, indicating that in 666/667 he was at least posing as a supporter of Ebroin, the man who later became his mortal enemy.

only in this letter and the bishop's *Testamentum*, which is considered spurious by scholars,¹³² she is memorialized in the calendar of S. Mary of Soissons, where her feast day is the eighth of August.¹³³

Leudegar was bishop of Autun in Burgundy from 662 to 676, having been appointed to this position by Queen Balthild.¹³⁴ With his brother Gaerinus he became part of the faction that ejected from office Ebroin, Neustrian mayor of the palace, and supported the appointment of Leudesius, son of Erchinoald, who had been predecessor to Ebroin.¹³⁵ Ebroin did not stay ousted, but returned with renewed vigour and devastated Leudegar's faction, killing Gaerinus and imprisoning, torturing, and eventually executing Leudegar in 678 or 679. A series of posthumous miracles quickly rendered his execution a martyrdom. Today there are fifty-three towns in France named St. Léger in his honour, plus more in Belgium, Switzerland, and southern Germany. In the city of Lucerne, Switzerland, of which he is the patron saint, the cathedral St. Leudegar im Hof is dedicated to him; here he can be seen in relief to the left of the main door, holding the drill that was supposedly used to blind him. The popularity of the bishop's cult is also shown in the relatively large number and variety of sources that bear witness to his life and dramatic death. Besides the letter and the *testamentum*, these include the *liber historiae Francorum*, two *passiones*, a ninth-century metrical *vita*, and a tenth-century Romance poem.¹³⁶

¹³² See Krusch, MGH, SSRM, V, p. 254; also Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 197 and 208.

¹³³ B. Krusch, preamble to the *passio Leudegarii I*; M. Bunson et al, eds. *Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia of Saints* (Huntington: 2003), 753. According to both Orthodox and Catholic websites, St. Sigrada is venerated to this day in these churches.

¹³⁴ For a foundational article on Leudegar see Joseph-Claude Poulin, "Saint Léger et ses premiers biographes," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de L'Ouest et des Musées de Poitiers* 4e série – tome XIV (3e trimestre de 1977) 167–200..

¹³⁵ Late seventh-century Frankish politics are as violent as they are obscure. The *LHF* 45 reports that Leudegar and Gaerinus supported Leudesius' election as mayor, while the *passio Leudegarii* 4–7 emphasizes the enmity between Leudegar and Ebroin from the beginning. The *passio* also places Leudegar at the scene of Ebroin's capture by having him plead for his enemy's life.

¹³⁶ Paul Fouracre, "Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography," *Past and Present* 127 (May 1990) 15. For the *LHF*, see *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch,

The writer's overarching point in the letter is that temporal trials bring eternal reward. To support this he quotes a great deal of Scripture, mostly from the Pauline epistles. Faith is tested like gold in the fire and Christians must be patient under mistreatment. Sigrada is commended that her entrance into the monastery has released her from the chains of household duties. She is encouraged to rejoice that her sons have been snatched from this world and given hope of eternal life; gratitude must be offered to God for this. The letter also enlarges on the struggle to which God calls his soldiers, and Sigrada is reminded that she must love both her enemies and those of her son. The example of Martha's sister Mary is held before her, she who chose the better way by listening to the Lord instead of serving in the kitchen. This is akin to living under a Rule, says the writer, because it opens the door to a life of contemplation rather than busyness. It is not until the end of his lengthy communication that the author becomes somewhat more personal. He reminds Sigrada that she has acquired holy brothers in place of servants and holy sisters in place of handmaidens; a quiet life instead of toil; for the loss of parents, the venerable Abbess Aetheria; and in exchange for material goods, divine Scripture, holy meditation, and assiduous prayer.

Reservations have been expressed regarding the letter's authenticity.¹³⁷ The *passio Leudegarii* I reports that after being blinded, the bishop's enemies inflicted a number of facial mutilations on him as well. Since these happened at the same time as his brother

in *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica*, MGH SRM 2 (1888) 215–328, part of which is translated in A. C. Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader* (Toronto: 2000), 491–498; for the *Passiones* see *passio Leudegarii episcopi Augustodunensis I* and II, ed. Bruno Krusch, in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merowingici*, MGH SRM 5 (1896–1919), 282–332, the first of which is translated in Murray, 509–526, and P. Fouracre and R. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France* (Manchester: 1996), 193–253; for the metrical *vita*: *vita beati Leudegarii martyris*, ed. L. Traube, in *Poetae Latini aevi carolini* iii (Berlin: 1886), 5–37; for the Romance poem: *vie et passion de saint Léger*, ed. M. Champollion-Figéac, in *Documents historiques inédits tirés des collections manuscrites de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, IV (Paris: 1848), 446–56. The *Testamentum* is found in CCSL 117, (Turnhout: 1957), 513–516; as noted, the letter is numbered 17 in *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae*, ed. W. Gundlach, MGH, Epistolae, 3.1.VII.

¹³⁷ Opinion is divided: W. Gundlach, editor of the letter in the MGH, expresses no opinion; Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society* (Philadelphia: 1981), 162–3, accepts the letter at face value without discussion; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 242, suspects it is spurious. I cast my vote with Wood.

was killed, he must have composed the letter while suffering from these physical limitations. None of these are mentioned in the letter, however. Also unmentioned is Leudegar's brother Gaerinus, for whose death the writer is supposedly consoling his mother. Besides these factual problems, the tone of the letter is jarring: Scripture quotations follow relentlessly one upon the other, and we search in vain for any emotional warmth or expressions of affection between mother and son. These qualities do not prove that the text is spurious, however, and the last point simply reinforces what we have found in other letters of the period – that highly emotional epistolography was a convention used by female writers only, and then only under certain conditions. If the letter is spurious, it retains value because it demonstrates what was deemed an appropriate style of communication by a bishop to a female relative under the circumstances in which Leudegar found himself. If it was indeed composed by Leudegar, it is, as Wood states, “both a demonstration of his biblical knowledge and a remarkable example of Christian stoicism.”¹³⁸

4 Bishops and Popes

Scholars have traditionally agreed that papal influence during the Merovingian period ranged from little to none as the integration of the Gallic church into the new kingdoms continued and intensified.¹³⁹ The Merovingian letter collections do not support this view,

¹³⁸ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 242.

¹³⁹ M.L.W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe AD 500–900* (Ithaca: 1931), 181, agrees with and quotes W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford: 1946), 89, to the effect that up until the time of Boniface the pope had had “almost negligible” impact on the Merovingian Church; Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: the Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge: 1994), 68–9, argues that by the last half of the fifth century the pope did not matter much anymore, as “barbarian” kings established kingdoms in Gaul that determined both political and ecclesiastical boundaries, and involved themselves personally in convening councils. He refers to the Council of Agde held in 506 over which Caesarius of Arles presided, but which King Alaric the Visigoth initiated and sponsored. Ralph Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, D.C.: 1989), xiii–xiv, remarks that while Gallic bishops often had an interest in gaining papal support to serve their own purposes, the popes themselves had little interest in Gaul. Thomas Noble, “Gregory of Tours and the Roman Church,” in *The*

however, and when studied as a whole are a useful tool in gauging not only the amount, but also the nature of papal interaction throughout this time.

There are approximately two hundred letters in the collections with a pope as sender or recipient. This amounts to about one-third of the total inventory, a sum that is not insignificant. These are almost totally accounted for in three collections: the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*, in which fifty-four out of fifty-six letters involve popes, the sixty-five letters pertaining to Merovingian affairs in the *registrum Gregorii epistolarum*, and the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, which contains thirty-four.¹⁴⁰ We will examine each of these in turn.

World of Gregory of Tours, ed. K. Mitchell and I. Wood (Leiden: 2002), 145-162, discusses the almost non-existent references to papal activity in the *libri historiarum decem*. Noble does, however, argue for a more active connection between Rome and Gaul on the basis of papal letters to the region throughout the Merovingian period, blaming the scarcity of these on a poor survival rate rather than lack of interest on the part of the pope.

¹⁴⁰All thirty-one letters in the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* are also papal with dates ranging from the mid-second to the early twelfth century. Nobody cites these letters, however, probably because their nineteenth century editor W. Gundlach, after reviewing their extremely suspect provenance, labelled them a wholesale forgery of the twelfth century in the preface to his 1888 edition of them in the MGH. The first six letters with their early dates and attribution to popes about whom virtually nothing is known are easy to dismiss as spurious. The seventh letter dated Oct. 1, 417 which “concedes the power of old to Simplicius of Vienne” is also suspect. The *Patrologia Latina* with some hesitation attributes authorship to Pope Zosimus, but this is a problem because it is well known that Zosimus worked closely with the outspoken bishop Patroclus to promote the primacy of Arles. A comparison with the letters of Zosimus in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* reveals, for example, that at the end of September 417 the pope wrote a series of three letters reinforcing the authority of Arles; the last one, dated just two days before the supposed letter to Simplicius, is written to the bishops of Vienne and Narbonne II rebuking that same Simplicius for improperly ordaining bishops. The letter from Zosimus to Simplicius in the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*, therefore, must be a forgery. Letter number eight is of uncertain authorship according to the *PL*, although in the MGH it is attributed to Pope Leo I. Number nine is a duplicate of *epistolae Arelatenses* 25 (also *epistolae Caesarii* 6) that was sent from Pope Symmachus to the Gallic bishops. In the *epistolae Viennenses*, however, it is a fragment that reiterates the privileges accruing to Vienne while neatly stopping just short of those designated to Arles. Curiously, there follows a gap of almost two hundred years and then four letters dated 680 to 719 appear that are unattested elsewhere. Two of these are precisely dated and sound genuine, but are not found in the corresponding papal collections in the *PL*. About half of the remaining

4.1 Arles vs. Vienne

The *epistolae Arelatenses* begin in 417 and document the struggle for primacy between the bishoprics of Arles and Vienne.¹⁴¹ The competition had actually begun as early as 398 after the Praetorian Prefecture was transferred to Arles from Trier, whereupon the bishop of Arles began to claim metropolitan primacy over Vienne.¹⁴² That same year a council that was convened at Turin attempted to settle the dispute that arose from this claim, which gained momentum when Patroclus was elected bishop of Arles under suspicious circumstances in 412.¹⁴³ This energetic bishop happened to be in Rome when Zosimus was ordained pope and he made a point of cultivating his friendship. Zosimus responded by granting Patroclus and the see of Arles unprecedented rights and privileges.¹⁴⁴ These were expressed in letters sent to bishops in both Gaul and Africa and included the placement of the provinces of Vienne, Narbonne I and II, and Alpes Maritimae plus all the parishes held by Arles in ancient times under its jurisdiction. With this privilege came the right to ordain bishops in these territories,¹⁴⁵ the responsibility for

eighteen letters appear genuine and are accepted as is in the *PL*; these are all dated from the ninth to the twelfth century.

¹⁴¹ For a detailed discussion see Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 44–68. Cf. Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: from Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: 2003), 446–464; also Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 65–71, 127–132, 262–9.

¹⁴² Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 65.

¹⁴³ Prosper of Aquitaine, *Epitoma Chronicon*, 1247, states *eodem tempore Heros vir sanctus et beati Martini discipulus cum Arelatensi oppido episcopus praesideret, a populo eiusdem civitatis insons et nulli insimulationi obnoxius pulsus est inque eius locum Patroclus ordinatus amicus et familiaris Constantii magistri militum, cuius per ipsum gratia quaerebatur, eaque res inter episcopos regionis illius magnarum discordiarum materia fuit*. [at that time when the blessed man Heros, a disciple of St. Martin, presided as bishop over the city of Arles, although harmless and guilty of no deceit or crime, he was driven out by the populace of that city and in his place was ordained Patroclus, a friend and familiar of Constantius the Master of the Soldiers, by whose favour he obtained it. This matter was a cause of great discord among the bishops in those regions]. The *Chronicon* has been edited by T. Mommsen in MGH, *Chronica minora* (Berlin: 1892); Prosper's complete works are found in *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 51.

¹⁴⁴ *epistolae Arelatenses* 1 and 2.

¹⁴⁵ Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 66–7 points out that this action “trampled on the rights of bishops in at least four other cities that claimed metropolitan status in these provinces.”

all ecclesiastical legal cases in the above regions, and the requirement of a letter of recommendation from the bishop of Arles for any bishop who wished to travel outside his own area.

Unsurprisingly, this generated a flurry of protest from the other bishoprics. Hilarus, a bishop in Narbonne I, complained to the pope that priests and bishops in his own province ought not to be ordained by someone in another province, i.e. Arles. Zosimus replied with what he had been skillfully fed by Patroclus: that Arles had this right from the holy Trophimus, first bishop of Arles, who had been sent by the apostolic see as missionary to Gaul.¹⁴⁶ Bishop Proculus of Marseilles, which was part of Narbonne II, refused to comply with the new regulations and continued to ordain bishops in his own province. He was joined in his protest by Simplicius of Vienne, and the two demanded their rights of ordination at the Council of Turin in September 417, six months after the pope had first granted these wide privileges to Arles. As this availed nothing but a rebuke from Zosimus, Proculus continued with impunity to ordain whomever he pleased; much to the pope's frustration, Patroclus seemed powerless to stop him.¹⁴⁷

These events set the stage for the Gallic primacy of Arles, a situation that endured past the middle of the sixth century. Although the popes succeeding Zosimus – Boniface I and Celestine I – decreed that Arles' right to ordain bishops was to be limited to its own territory plus the province of Vienne, Patroclus' successors still aspired to the old ruling put forth by Zosimus. Hilarius, a bishop of Arles in the mid-fifth century who had a great deal of local support, was especially ambitious in this regard.¹⁴⁸ As a result, *merito nimiae praesumptionis*, Pope Leo I (d. 461) stripped him of his metropolitan rights over all provinces but Arles. Hilarius' successor Ravennius inherited the local support enjoyed by his predecessor and upon his election to the see of Arles, his suffragan bishops directed a letter to Leo, requesting that he reestablish all privileges that had belonged to Arles as per the ruling of Pope Zosimus. It has come to their attention, they complained, that Vienne

¹⁴⁶ *epistolae Arelatenses* 3. Cf. Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 66.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 67, notes that Hilarius had become the most powerful bishop in southern Gaul.

has impudently requested primacy for itself. (As support for the antiquity of Arles, they trot out the rather threadbare legend of St. Trophimus but by this time the legend had grown, for the bishops claim that Trophimus had been sent to Arles by the blessed apostle Peter himself).¹⁴⁹ Leo replied with another letter stating that the bishop of Vienne had already complained in writing that the bishop of Arles had overstepped his bounds in ordaining a bishop for the city of Vaison. In the interest of ecclesiastical justice, therefore, Leo assigned Valence, Grenoble, Geneva, and Tarantaise to Vienne and *reliquae civitates eiusdem provinciae sub Arelatensis antistetis autoritate*.¹⁵⁰ By not defining more precisely what he meant by *reliquae civitates eiusdem provinciae*, Leo left a loophole that allowed future bishops of Arles to claim rights over the disputed territories of Narbonne I and II and Alpes Maritimae, and actually encouraged the controversy to continue for another century.¹⁵¹

In the 470s Arles came under the control of the Visigoths and by the end of the decade its dioceses north of the Durance River had been taken by the Burgundians. As a result the bishopric of Vienne gained *de facto* control over a number of dioceses that had belonged to Arles. The Ostrogothic takeover of 508 did nothing to change this. By this time the bishop of Arles was the powerful Caesarius (502-542), who in 513 traveled to Rome in an attempt to wrest back his metropolitan rights over his Burgundian dioceses from the

¹⁴⁹ *epistolae Arelatenses* 12: It is possible that the bishops used St. Peter's name to stand for the see of Rome, but the wording here seems rather to apply to the apostle himself. While Zosimus was convinced, doubtless by Patroclus, that Trophimus was solely responsible for the Christianization of Gaul, (see *ep. Arel.* 1), we are given no clues as to his belief regarding Trophimus' origin or identity. In this letter to Pope Leo later in the century, there seems to be a conflation of Trophimus of Arles with a companion of St. Paul of the same name who is mentioned in the Book of Acts. It is possible that the bishops were exaggerating the importance of their founder for dramatic effect. To Gregory of Tours a century and a half later, Trophimus was simply one of the Seven Bishops sent by the bishop of Rome to Gaul in the time of Emperor Decius (c. 201–251), *LH* 1.30.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 13. [the rest of the cities of the same province under the authority of the bishop of Arles].

¹⁵¹ So argues Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 68.

equally powerful Avitus of Vienne (490-518), who had been usurping them since 490.¹⁵² In response, Pope Symmachus defined these in the same terms as did Leo to Ravennius in 450, which gave Caesarius the opportunity to define his rights as widely as he saw fit.¹⁵³ The pope also granted Caesarius the right to wear the pallium, the first time this vestment had been bestowed on a Gallic bishop.¹⁵⁴ The next year, the bishop of Arles requested and received jurisdiction over Narbonne II; at the same time Symmachus made him papal vicar for Gaul and Septimania.¹⁵⁵ It was all over for Vienne.

Although the authority accompanying these privileges often found itself checked by the reality of political boundaries, this was a major coup for Arles psychologically, and when shortly afterward Symmachus died and Hormisdas became pope, he automatically took up the custom of corresponding with one Gallic bishop only – Caesarius of Arles. The focus of Hormisdas’ papacy was putting an end to the Acacian Schism and in 515 he wrote Caesarius a letter outlining Eastern problems that was to be circulated to various bishoprics.¹⁵⁶ As a result, even Avitus had to be content with receiving this vital information through the Arles pipeline. Avitus himself sent a letter to Hormisdas in 517 seeking further information on progress in the East and received a prompt reply in return;

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 127ff. *vita Caesarii* 1.42 describes the trip to Rome. The one letter extant between the two bishops – *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 2 (*epistolae Aviti Viennensis* 11) – gives no hint of any dispute.

¹⁵³ *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 6 (*epistolae Arelatenses* 25); i.e. he assigned the four cities named above to Vienne and “the rest” to Arles, without clarifying what that entailed.

¹⁵⁴ No other bishop in Gaul received the pallium until 597, when Gregory the Great granted it to Syagrius of Autun; see Chapter 1, “Women’s Letters” Section 2.3.

¹⁵⁵ *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 8b. The custom of the vicariate first came about at the beginning of the fifth century in response to certain dioceses in Illyricum being transferred to the eastern emperor, and papal fears of increased power falling to the Patriarch of Constantinople as a result. At that time Pope Innocent conferred the vicariate on Rufus of Thessalonica and his successors. A similar situation arose later in the same century in Visigothic Spain, and then in the early sixth century in Gaul, a territory seen to be under “barbarian” control. This action was of mutual benefit: the pope gained some sort of control, in the form of information, agency, and legitimization, over territories where he otherwise would have had none, and the “vicar” gained primacy, prestige, and privileges, at least on paper. For full discussion see Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 130-1.

¹⁵⁶ *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 10.

besides one letter to Symmachus seeking relics, however, this is the only recorded correspondence that took place between Avitus and the apostolic see.¹⁵⁷ In contrast, Caesarius corresponded with no fewer than seven popes during his long episcopate.¹⁵⁸

Sapaudus, the bishop of Arles (551-586) who collected and published the *epistolae Arelatenses*,¹⁵⁹ was another powerful pontiff who kept up a regular correspondence with a pope, this time Pelagius I. Although not officially papal vicar until 557 due to Vigilius' troubles and the Three Chapters controversy, Sapaudus acted in that capacity from the commencement of his episcopate. When King Childebert I asked Pelagius I for relics, for example, the latter sent them to Sapaudus to be forwarded to the king.¹⁶⁰ The pope also gave Sapaudus the task of ensuring that the rents from the papal estates in Gaul were forwarded to Rome. This revenue had apparently been collected but not remitted by Placidus, a patrician who was the administrator of these estates.¹⁶¹ Sapaudus was given the additional responsibility of purchasing clothing – cloaks, tunics, hoods, and undergarments – with part of the money and shipping it to Italy to be given to the poor. The pope remarks that the estates in Italy are desolate to the point of no recovery: *quia Italiae praedia ita desolata sunt, ut ad recuperationem earum nemo sufficiat*. This letter is dated December 556; by April 557 no clothing had yet arrived in Rome, so the pope reminded Sapaudus in yet another letter of the need for it.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ The two letters are found in *epistolae Aviti Viennensis* 41 and 42. It is intriguing to note that popes are almost as scarce as women in the correspondence of the major letter writers of the fifth century: the collections of Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricius of Limoges contain none, while as noted Avitus wrote two and received one. This situation is not satisfactorily explained by selection methods, as a papal letter would surely be too important to be edited out of a collection.

¹⁵⁸ These are Symmachus, Hormisdas, Felix IV, John II, Agapitus, Vigilius, and Boniface II. There is a great deal of overlap between the *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* and the *epistolae Arelatenses*.

¹⁵⁹ Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 48 n.26. Rather strangely, the last letter in the collection is dated 557 although Sapaudus lived until 586. We met Sapaudus in Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 1.2, in connection with Caesaria and the monastery for women at Arles.

¹⁶⁰ *epistolae Arelatenses* 48 and 49.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, 53. The destitution in Italy was doubtless because of the Gothic wars.

Sapaudus was also politically astute. Gregory of Tours describes how he tricked King Sigibert when he and his brother Guntram were fighting over the city of Arles in the late 560s, a move that enabled Guntram to regain the city he had earlier lost to his brother.¹⁶³ In spite of Sapaudus' energy and enterprise, Arles as a political and ecclesiastical centre began to lose ground during his pontificate. This was mainly due to the establishment of Marseilles as a provincial capital by Sigibert, a situation that was maintained under his son and heir Childebert II.¹⁶⁴ Further evidence for the decline in the importance of Arles lies in two letters from Pelagius II to Aunarius of Auxerre that are dated to the 580s. The pope, bypassing Sapaudus or his successor at Arles, asks Aunarius to plead with the Frankish kings to rid Italy of the Lombards.¹⁶⁵

The ambitious Patroclus back in the early fifth century had set in motion a papal policy, formerly nonexistent, that gave Arles primacy in Gaul for almost two centuries. It was bishop-driven and dependent upon a positive papal reaction to appeals by episcopal factions that supported Arles' claims.¹⁶⁶ It was also relational, since those factions were headed by capable and energetic bishops who took the time to form a personal relationship with the pope in order to engage him in the affairs of his see. Sometimes it took a visit to Rome to achieve this. The result, even at the outset, bore a strong resemblance to the later vicariate and it provided benefits to both sides: Arles gained episcopal primacy with its accompanying privileges, while the pope gained a loyal agent and at least the semblance of some control in an area where he otherwise had none.

¹⁶³ When Chlothar I died in 561, his kingdom was split among his four sons. Provence was divided between Sigibert and Guntram, which resulted in a tug-of-war as Sigibert tried to take over the part ruled by Guntram.

¹⁶⁴ Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 266–7. *LH* 4.43 reports that Sigibert had appointed a governor in Marseille to rule his possessions in Provence, thereby making the city a regional capital. Although Sapaudus had helped Guntram get Arles back from Sigibert, the latter's son Childebert II received it back once again upon the death of Guntram, who had "adopted" his nephew and bequeathed his territories to him.

¹⁶⁵ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 9 and 10. Aunarius is the bishop who commissioned the *vitae* from Stephanus Africanus, see above.

¹⁶⁶ Such as documented by *epistolae Arelatenses* 12 and 13, see also Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 44–68; and Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 127.

At the end of the day, Vienne lost out to Arles because the latter, over time, produced more bishops with the energy, commitment, and persuasive power to forge the necessary papal bond. The system seems to have broken down only once – under Bishop Hilarius, who as described above, overstepped his bounds to the point where Pope Leo I felt the need to prune back his power. This exception serves to prove the rule, however. Leo was an exceptionally proactive pope who was resistant to the manipulations of ambitious bishops. It is doubtful that the two would have locked horns, with the resultant setback for Arles, if the throne of St. Peter had been occupied by a weaker personality.

4.2 Gregory I and Virgilius

Sapaudus died in 586. Gregory of Tours reports that he was succeeded by Licerius, who had been King Guntram's referendary.¹⁶⁷ Licerius died after only two years in office and was replaced by Virgilius (588-610), whom Gregory describes as an abbot in Autun; he was backed by Syagrius, bishop of that same city.¹⁶⁸ Besides the decline in importance of the city of Arles due to political changes, Sapaudus' successors seem to have lacked the right combination of personality and circumstances to maintain a powerful profile with Rome. At the same time, Virgilius' opposite on the chessboard was the proactive Gregory I who became pope in 590, two years after Virgilius became bishop of Arles. Like his predecessor Leo I, Gregory was firmly in charge of his episcopal relationships. It was not a good match.

Gregory's earliest surviving letter to the Frankish kingdom, dated 591, is addressed to Virgilius jointly with Theodore of Marseilles, rebuking them for forcibly baptizing Jews.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, although Virgilius became bishop in 588, it was not until 595 that Gregory bestowed the pallium and the vicariate on the bishop.¹⁷⁰ Relations between bishop and pope did not warm up even after Gregory sent Augustine and his monks

¹⁶⁷ *LH* 8.39.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 9.23. Syagrius is the bishop to whom Pope Gregory I gave the pallium at the request of Brunhild.

¹⁶⁹ *registrum Gregorii* 1.45.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 5.58 to Virgilius, 5.59 to the bishops of Gaul, and 5.60 to Childebert II.

through Arles on their missionary journey to the Anglo-Saxons. In the very letter commending the missionaries to the bishop of Arles in 596, Gregory acidly adds the observation that certain revenues from the papal patrimony in Gaul that had been collected by Virgilius' predecessor were still being held in Arles, even though they were supposed to have been remitted to the Roman church.¹⁷¹ Since the pope states that the revenues had been held back *per annos plurimos*, we know he was not referring to the short-lived Licerius, whose existence he may not have been unaware of, but the high-profile Sapaudus.¹⁷² The pope even sent a letter in the same bundle to Protasius of Aix-en-Provence, requesting that he put pressure on Virgilius to forward the funds.¹⁷³ This situation harks back to the year 556 and the letter from Pope Pelagius I to Sapaudus ordering him to ensure that the revenues from the papal estates be remitted to Rome by their administrator, the patrician Placidus.¹⁷⁴ It may not have been entirely Sapaudus' fault that the revenues never reached Rome, but this failure of Arles to comply, and Gregory's belief that its bishops continued to retain the funds, would have done nothing to enhance the bishopric's status in the pope's estimation. A few years later, in 599, Virgilius seems to have been interfering in some way with the monastery of the Holy Apostles founded by Childebert II, and Gregory found it necessary to send a letter instructing him that its rights not be disturbed.¹⁷⁵ These incidents did not prevent the bishop of Arles from being part of the pope's Gallic epistolographical circle, but they undoubtedly undercut his already weakening position and hastened the demise of his see's primacy. Certainly by the time Gregory bestowed the pallium on Syagrius of Autun in 597 and named his see second in Gaul to that of Lyons,¹⁷⁶ the vicariate he had granted to Virgilius only two years previously must have meant very little.

¹⁷¹ *registrum Gregorii* 6.54. These must have been revenues from some years earlier, since in 593 in a letter to Dynamius, Gregory mentions having received the patrimonial rents, presumably for that year.

¹⁷² Please note that the "archbishop of Arles" whose letter from Gregory Bede quotes in *HE* 1.24 is actually Aetherius bishop of Lyons.

¹⁷³ *registrum Gregorii* 6.56.

¹⁷⁴ This is *epistolae Arelatenses* 49, see Section 4.1 above.

¹⁷⁵ *registrum Gregorii* 9.217. This letter must have been prompted by a complaint, likely in person, by a representative of the monks in question.

¹⁷⁶ I treat this topic in Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 2.3.

There does not seem to have been a bishop in any region of Gaul during Gregory's pontificate who was both willing and able to effectively carry out the reforms the pope wished for. The pope clearly did not see Virgilius of Arles as a suitable candidate. In addition, Gregory had conceived the idea of delegating his own priest Candidus as governor of the papal estates in the Marseilles district, a plan which came to fruition in late 595.¹⁷⁷ Judging by the number of letters in which Candidus makes an appearance, the two seem to have kept in close touch.¹⁷⁸ Without much support from the Gallic bishops, and with the biddable Candidus filling the *de facto* role of papal vicar, Gregory tended more and more to bypass the episcopal office and instead correspond directly with Merovingian royalty for his two-pronged Gallic agenda: a secure corridor for his mission to the Anglo-Saxons, and Gallic church reform. Episcopal primacy, now expressed through royal patronage, shifted north to Lyons and Autun.¹⁷⁹

After Gregory the Great died in 604, Rome saw a series of short-lived popes about whose reigns little is known. Two letters, both dated precisely to August 23, 613, document an event in the shadowy decade after Gregory's death. Both concern the bishopric of Arles.¹⁸⁰ One is addressed from Pope Boniface IV (608-615) to Brunhild's sole surviving grandson Theuderic and confirms the election of one Florianus as bishop of Arles; the other is to Florianus himself and includes his pallium.¹⁸¹ There is no mention made in the letter of further privileges or of the vicariate, however, which clearly indicates that the

¹⁷⁷ A number of letters of commendation and instruction were borne by Candidus: *registrum Gregorii* 6.5, 6.6, 6.10. Gregory had promised to send Candidus in an earlier letter dated April 595, but the plan was delayed by the winter. Dynamius, Rector of Provence (d. 595), had previously administered the papal patrimony; Gregory remarks in 6.6 that Dynamius was no longer able to fill the position. Gregory did not engage the next Rector, Arigius (see 5.31, dated 595), as governor of the patrimony, preferring to employ his own trusted agent, Candidus. See *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, s.v. "Dynamius" and "Arigius."

¹⁷⁸ There are eighteen of these in the *registrum*. Candidus was still going strong by the pontificate of Boniface IV, third successor to Gregory, as indicated by a nineteenth letter: *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 12. This is dated 613; Candidus is still named as the pope's representative in Gaul.

¹⁷⁹ See *registrum Gregorii* 9.223, also Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 2.3 for further discussion and political context.

¹⁸⁰ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 12 and 13.

¹⁸¹ There is no discernible connection between this Florianus and the Florianus above who corresponded with Nicetius of Trier.

old primacy of Arles is a thing of the past.¹⁸² What Boniface didn't know is that affairs in the Frankish kingdom were about to change drastically; indeed, they may already have done so by the time this letter was written. It was in 613 that Theuderic died and his grandmother Brunhild seized control through her great-grandson Sigibert II. The queen was overthrown later that year when her nephew, Chlothar II, defeated her army and executed her and her progeny. In doing so Chlothar became the sole ruler of all Francia for the first time since his grandfather and namesake Chlothar I held that position half a century earlier.¹⁸³

After this there is a silence in our letters of almost one hundred years between Rome and the Frankish kingdom which cannot be fully explained by the normal vicissitudes of survival.¹⁸⁴ This matches the poor representation of the seventh century in all our sources. From the papal perspective, it likely had to do with the turbulence caused by the Lombard invasion of the previous century and its repercussions throughout the Italian peninsula.¹⁸⁵ From the Frankish end, we sense a pulling back from Rome and the fostering of a new focus towards the Frankish court under Chlothar II and his successors. This is illustrated in the letter collection of Desiderius of Cahors, whose correspondence falls in the middle of that century of silence. If popes and Gallic bishops did continue to exchange correspondence during that time, conditions in both Italy and the Frankish kingdom have not allowed its preservation.

4.3 Boniface and Rome

The silence is broken by the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, but we detect a profound change in the nature of the relationship between bishop and pope as the Carolingian age is ushered in. Although Boniface was appointed archbishop in the early 730s by Gregory

¹⁸² Klingshirn, *Caesarius: Christian Community*, 269, draws the same conclusion.

¹⁸³ See Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 2.3, for further details.

¹⁸⁴ I am discounting three letters from the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* which cannot be authenticated.

¹⁸⁵ This was also true throughout Gregory the Great's reign as well, yet the *registrum* is extensive. Contributing factors may be that (a) many of Gregory's successors were short-lived and (b) in the latter half of the seventh century, most of the popes were of Greek or Syrian extraction, which perhaps drew their attention eastwards rather than westwards.

III, he never had a fixed see so the struggle for primacy that occupied bishops in the fifth and sixth centuries was now moot.¹⁸⁶ Consequently, when Pope Zacharias confirmed Boniface as his papal vicar for the whole province of Gaul, this privilege did not devolve on a particular see, but was rather attached to the person of Boniface.¹⁸⁷ As far as I can tell Boniface seems to have had no epistolographical contact with any other Gallic bishops except those he himself created.

Boniface activated relationships with four popes – Gregory II and III, Zacharias, and Stephen II – and undertook his mission under their auspices.¹⁸⁸ He maintained these relationships in three main ways. First, he reported back to them on a regular basis and updated them on his missionary work;¹⁸⁹ second, he asked the popes for advice and encouraged them to instruct him;¹⁹⁰ and third, he involved them in settling disputes.¹⁹¹ By thus working hand-in-glove with a pope at every turn, he managed to bring the Frankish and the Roman churches closer together than they had ever been before.¹⁹²

Neither did Boniface neglect the secular arm, and this created a powerful triangle of bishop, pope, and ruler that set the stage for the future. In a letter dated December 723, for instance, Gregory II commended Boniface, missionary to the Germans, to Charles Martel and shortly after, Charles took up Boniface as his client.¹⁹³ Over time letters were sent from Boniface to Grifo, Charles Martel's son, from Carlomann to everybody, from

¹⁸⁶ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 28.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 58.

¹⁸⁸ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 12, for example, is Boniface's commissioning letter from Gregory II.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 24 to Gregory II, 45 to Gregory III, 50, 60, 86 to Zacharias, 108 to Stephen II.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 26 to Gregory II, 28 and 45 to Gregory III, 51, 80, 87 to Zacharias.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, 109 to Stephen II. The dispute is between Boniface and the bishop of Cologne over the see of Utrecht, which was given to the then bishop of Cologne by King Dagobert I on the condition that he convert the Frisians, which Boniface claims never took place. He argued that the see, therefore, ought to be his.

¹⁹² This may have had to do with the fact that Boniface was Anglo-Saxon. The Anglo-Saxons looked to Pope Gregory as the founder of their Christian faith and this gave them close connections with Rome right from the beginning.

¹⁹³ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 20.

Boniface to Pippin the Short, and from Pippin to Lully, successor to Boniface.¹⁹⁴ By the mid-eighth century the political scene was ripe for Pippin to send a delegation that obtained Pope Zacharias' approval for the deposition of Childeric III, the last Merovingian king, and with the pope's sanction Pippin became king in 751/2.¹⁹⁵ Boniface likely performed the anointing.¹⁹⁶ (The *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* do not record the event, but Letter 93 is the first in the collection to address Pippin as king). Two years later, shortly before Boniface's death, Pope Stephen II travelled to Paris and successfully sought help from Pippin against the Lombards.¹⁹⁷ The age of the Merovingian kings was over.

Boniface's relationship with one Roman pontiff, the Syrian Gregory III, is worthy of further comment, since it appears to have resulted in a small but enduring Byzantine addition to Western liturgy. This is first noticeable in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* as a proliferation of letters that concern themselves with the commemoration of names in the celebration of the Mass. Typically, the sender of the letter forwards a list of names of friends and relatives, both living and dead, with the request that the recipient of the letter commemorate these in his prayers. Several times this is the only motive of the letter.¹⁹⁸ In a missive dated c. 750, for example, Boniface suggests to Abbot Optatus of Monte Cassino that they begin mutual prayers and Masses for the living and the dead.¹⁹⁹ Somewhat later, the abbot and monks of St. Peter's abbey at Luxeuil entreat Lully not only to pray for them personally, but to send their names to all his friends so they may pray for the congregation at St. Peter's as well. In return they request a similar list from Lully.²⁰⁰ This request is echoed by an unknown group of monks who entreat another group, also unknown, to remember in their sacred prayers the names of their fellows who

¹⁹⁴ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 48, 56, 107, 118 respectively.

¹⁹⁵ *Annales regni Francorum* s.a. 749; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 292.

¹⁹⁶ Ian Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 292.

¹⁹⁷ These events are described in the *Annales laureshamenses* s.a. 749, 750/1 and 753 in Oliver J. Thatcher and Edgar H. McNeal, eds. and trans. *A Source Book for Medieval History* (New York: 1905), 37–8.

¹⁹⁸ For example, *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 133, 139, 150.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 106.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 133.

have died. They ask in addition that their addressees pass on the list to other monasteries, remarking that this is what they do when they receive lists of names from others.²⁰¹ With another letter to Lully, King Alhred and Queen Osgifu of Northumberland append a list of their friends and relations they wish to have commemorated, assuring Lully that they will do the same for the list of names Lully has sent them.²⁰² (Unfortunately, the royal list of names is now lost). In yet another, Lully requests prayer from Coena bishop of York for a list of his friends and brothers who have died.²⁰³ Again, the list has not survived.

A possible source of this custom, which by the middle years of the eighth century begins to show a remarkable resemblance to the modern chain letter, can be found in a letter sent from pope Gregory III to Boniface in the early 730s. Although we do not have Boniface's original letter, we are in possession of Gregory's replies to the bishop's many questions regarding canonical behaviour and its application to the wilds of Germany.²⁰⁴ Boniface had evidently questioned the pope about prayers for the dead, because the pope replied that anyone is permitted *oblaciones offerre pro suis mortuis vere christianis, non tamen pro impiis*.²⁰⁵ Priests especially ought to remember the faithful dead and make intercession for them, states the pope, but again only *pro mortuis vere christianis*. Now this is all a little peculiar, because Boniface surely knew that prayers for the dead had been part of Christian practice from the beginning;²⁰⁶ why then did he ask the pope if

²⁰¹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 150.

²⁰² *ibid.*, 121.

²⁰³ *ibid.*, 125. Coena was also called Ethelbert.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 28.

²⁰⁵ [...to offer prayers for his dead that are true Christians, but not, however, for the impious].

²⁰⁶ Tertullian taught that prayer for the dead was a duty: Tertullian, *de monogamia*, X in R. Oehler, ed. *Tertulliani opera omnia* (Leipzig: 1853), 761–787; W.P. Le Saint, *Tertullian: Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage*, Ancient Christian Writers 13 (Westminster: 1951), 70–108; Augustine poured out a prayer for his dead mother Monica at the end of the ninth book of his *Confessions*: Augustine, *Confessionum Libri*, IX.34–7; Henry Chadwick, ed. and trans. *St. Augustine Confessions* (Oxford: 1991), 176–8; St. Basil prayed for the dead in his *Third Kneeling Prayer*: Isabel Hapgood, *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox–Catholic Apostolic Church* (Englewood: 1975, 5th edition), 255; Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4.57, emphasized that the Eucharist brought great benefit to souls even after death.

prayers for the dead were permitted? We must turn to the subject of diptychs and their role in Christian liturgy for a possible answer to this question.²⁰⁷

A diptych, as the name implies, consists of two tablets joined together, often with carved outer faces. In Late Antiquity diptychs were routinely commissioned by a new consul upon his election to office and distributed as a reward and memento to those who had helped him attain his position.²⁰⁸ Ecclesiastical or liturgical diptychs, modelled on the earlier consular tradition, were used to commemorate the names of individuals in the Mass, the names of the living on one side and those of the dead on the other. In some places “diptychs of the living” took on the nature of baptismal registries because of their local flavour, while in other areas only the names of illustrious individuals were recorded. The “diptychs of the dead” could contain the names of the Virgin, martyrs, and saints, plus ordinary folk who had died in the communion of the faithful. Because the inclusion of a name meant that the individual was in communion with the Church, the striking of a name from the diptychs was a grave penalty. The diptychs thus became a social, political, and ecclesiastical weapon, especially in the East, where names even of the emperor and the patriarchs could be struck from the diptychs by disgruntled parties at any time.²⁰⁹

In reality, the use of the “diptychs” – which term came to be used for the naming of lists of the living and dead at the Eucharist, regardless of whether physical diptychs were used

²⁰⁷ As a guide to the following discussion see the foundational studies on Christian liturgy: Edmund Bishop, *Liturgica Historica: Papers on the Liturgy and Religious Life of the Western Church* (Oxford: 1918), esp. 96–103; Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, (Glasgow: 1945), esp. 498–526. The chapter entitled “The Medieval Development” is especially useful; for a short synthesis taken mainly from the above sources cf. Andrew Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes* (Lanham: 2007), 162 and 184 n. 40 and 41.

²⁰⁸ Alan Cameron, “The Probus Diptych and Christian apologetic,” in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. H. Amirav et al (Leuven: 2007), 191–202 discusses the titular oldest surviving consular diptych; Kim Bowes, “Ivory lists: consular diptychs, Christian appropriation and polemics of time in Late Antiquity,” *Art History* Vol. 24, Iss. 3 (Dec. 2003) 338–357 examines the connection between the consular lists once held within the consular diptychs and later Christian lists of saints and bishops on liturgical diptychs.

²⁰⁹ Dix, *Liturgy*, 498–511; Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome*, 162.

or not – was a complex issue that differed from place to place. The custom also evolved over time but by no means evenly, as each region, or even each community, altered and updated – or did not update – its practice. By the early fifth century in Constantinople, lists were officially compiled to include only the eminent dead and living, thus displacing the ordinary dead and the needy living such as the sick. In Syria, the “diptychs of the living” contained as a rule categories of people rather than individual names, while the “diptychs of the dead” consisted of immensely long lists of names from Old Testament patriarchs to individual villagers.²¹⁰ Early practice in Africa seems to have consisted of no naming at all of living individuals while the naming of the dead may have been confined to a general commemoration.²¹¹

Western liturgy developed a practice of diptych usage that was very different in character from that in the East. In Rome, for example, there was no “diptychs of the dead” in the regular public Sunday Mass until the ninth or tenth century; earlier than this, the rite belonged to the Mass for the Dead.²¹² Spain was similar to Rome in that the only names commemorated in the Mass were those of the living.²¹³ The Anglo-Saxon church also followed this custom, having adopted the Roman rite in every detail.²¹⁴ Further, these lists of the living never took on an official character as in the East, but instead consisted of names of purely local interest. Gaul was different, however. By the seventh century the naming of the dead was a prominent feature of the regular Sunday Mass, and these were not saints or martyrs from the past, but recently-deceased friends and relatives of the congregation, known to all.²¹⁵

This brings us back full circle to the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* and their preoccupation with prayers for the dead. Boniface, an Anglo-Saxon arriving on the Continent from England, was doubtless fully familiar with the Roman rite, which as noted only included

²¹⁰ Dix, *Liturgy*, 504–5.

²¹¹ *ibid.*, 499 is uncertain about this, as he finds Augustine’s text on this topic, *de cura gerenda pro mortuis*, particularly difficult to interpret.

²¹² Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, (Oxford: 1918), 98–9.

²¹³ Dix, *Liturgy*, 501.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, 576–8.

²¹⁵ Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 100.

the naming of the living in the regular Mass. When he arrived in Gaul he must have encountered the Gallican rite that included “diptychs for the dead” and so added this to his list of concerns when he wrote to Pope Gregory in the early 730s. At that time in Rome the period known as the Byzantine Papacy was in full swing. We learn from A. Ekonomou that between 701 and 750 Greek clergy in Rome outnumbered Latins three to one, while a large majority of popes were of Greek extraction.²¹⁶ As one scholar puts it, by this time “Greek-speakers dominated the clerical culture of Rome, providing its theological brains, its administrative talent, and much of its visual, musical, and liturgical culture.”²¹⁷ In 732, the very year Gregory III, himself a Syrian, wrote the above reply to Boniface, a synod of the Roman church was held at which more than 90% of the attendees were ethnic Easterners.²¹⁸ Gregory’s instructions to Boniface – that prayer for the dead was appropriate as long as it was not offered *pro impiis* – did not reflect the Roman position because the regular Roman canon did not contain such prayer. The pope could have been affirming an already-existing Gallican practice, but it is more likely that as a Syrian he was simply answering Boniface out of his own background and preference. And the Syrian tradition, as we have discovered, had for centuries enthusiastically embraced “diptychs for the dead.”

Boniface appears to have taken the pope’s word seriously and notified everyone of importance. Aelfwald, king of the East Angles 747-9, wrote to Boniface assuring him that his instructions regarding the celebration of Mass were being carried out: among other things, that the names of the dead were being published in public prayers.²¹⁹ Lully, Boniface’s successor, took up the new custom with gusto. Besides those mentioned above, Bishop Cineheard of Winchester, the priest Wigbert, King Cynewulf of the West Saxons, Bishop Aeadulf of Rochester, and King Aeadvulf of Kent all agreed with Lully to exchange lists of friends and brothers, both living and dead, for inclusion in the

²¹⁶ Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome*, passim. Cf. the *Liber Pontificalis*, the best edition of which is still acknowledged to be that of Louis Duchesne. For an English translation see Raymond Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs* (Liverpool: 1989).

²¹⁷ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (Yale: 1997), 66.

²¹⁸ Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome*, 245–6.

²¹⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 81.

Mass.²²⁰ It would appear, therefore, that with the aid of a Syrian pope, Boniface unwittingly invented and spread to his homeland a liturgical innovation that was a fusion of Gallican, Roman, and Byzantine rites.

4.4 Summary of Bishops and Popes

The Merovingian letters highlight a significant pattern of interaction between the papacy and the Frankish kingdom from the early fifth to the mid-eighth century. The nature of the pattern did not remain static throughout this period, however, but changed over the course of time. Three stages can be traced. The earliest was set in motion by the opportunistic Patroclus of Arles, who by striking up a connection with Pope Zosimus and gaining his support, set the stage for the primacy of Arles. This primacy lasted for almost two centuries. There were two keys to the longevity of this undertaking. One was a preponderance of ambitious Arelatensian bishops partnered with a series of weak or harried popes; the other, the papal habit of clinging to antique custom and being loath to alter in any way the rulings of predecessors. When Gregory I became pope in 590, this pattern was altered rather abruptly. By this time the city of Arles had already lost much of its importance, but its demise as primary see was hastened by the new pope, who did not allow himself to be manipulated by powerful bishops, but preferred to engage with the Frankish kingdom via its rulers. He also had his own agenda and much of Gregory's communication with the Merovingians must be read in the context of his concern for a safe corridor through Gaul for his mission to the Anglo-Saxons. After Gregory's death and almost a century of silence in the letter collections between Italy and Francia, Boniface ushered in a third type of papal partnership centred around his own missionary activity. Once again, papal interaction was bishop-driven. Rather than seeking privileges, however, Boniface placed himself under papal auspices and maintained at least the appearance of doing nothing without papal sanction. He also took steps to include the secular arm in the partnership. This type of teamwork was taken up by the Carolingians and their successors, who defended papal interests and received in turn spiritual validation of their political authority.

²²⁰ *ibid.*, 114, 138, 139, 122 respectively.

5 Bishops in Conflict: Chrodobert of Tours and Importunus of Paris

Chrodobert of Tours makes a renewed appearance in a curious exchange of five epistles between himself and Bishop Importunus of Paris.²²¹ Their original ninth-century manuscript, Paris BnF lat. 4627, contains a legal formulary from the city of Sens in which they are embedded, but their MGH editor Karl Zeumer found them so offensive, and so unlike his idea of what *formulae* should be, that he banished them to the *additamenta* section of his edition of the *formulae Senonenses*.²²² Gerardus Walstra published a fresh edition of the letters in his 1962 monograph, along with a French translation and thorough commentary.

In many ways these texts strike the reader as schoolboy pranks rather than exchanges between bishops, and not surprisingly, opinion is divided as to their authenticity. Most scholars, however, seem to accept them as genuine.²²³ The dispute begins over a

²²¹ (See this Chapter, Section 3.1, for discussion of Chrodobert's letter *ad Bobam*). Besides K. Zeumer's edition of these texts in the MGH, I make use here of the book-length edition and commentary of G. J. J. Walstra, *Les cinq épîtres rimées dans l'appendice des formulas de Sens. La querelle des évêques Frodobert et Importun (an 665/666)* (Leiden: 1962), as well as the recent article of Danuta Shanzer, "The tale of Frodebert's tail," in *Colloquial and Literary Latin*, ed. E. Dickey & A. Chahoud (Cambridge: 2010), 377–405. It will be noted that in the MGH edition of these epistles by K. Zeumer, Chrodobert's name is rendered as Frodebertus. Per Walstra, above, 17–18, Frodebertus is the latinised form of the germanic Chrodobertus. Walstra adds that there exist many examples of the fluidity between the Latin *fr-* and the germanic *chr-* and *hr-*.

²²² For comments see Alice Rio, *Legal Practice and the Written Word in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2009), 51–2.

²²³ Shanzer, "Frodebert's tail," while remaining firmly on the fence, points out (rightly) that while "genuine" means "what they purport to be," "fictive" is more complex. A third party's intent could have been either defamation, mockery, or humorous parody. Or the participants themselves could be carrying out an elaborate *jeu d'esprit* for their own amusement. For those who see the texts as genuine: Y. Hen, "Changing places: Chrodobert, Boba, and the wife of Grimoald," (forthcoming), 13–14, (I am grateful to Professor Hen for allowing me to read his article before publication); G. J. J. Walstra, *Les cinq épîtres*; Michael Banniard, *Viva voce, Communication écrite et communication orale du IV^e au IX^e siècle en Occident latin* (Paris: 1992), 292–5; Rio, *Legal Practice*, 51–2; Niermeyer, *Lexicon Minus*, 85 s.v. *baro* who cites line 61 of Letter 4. One firmly dissenting voice is George Scheibelreiter, *Der Bischof im merowingischer Zeit* (Köln: 1983), 75, who describes the letters as *wahrscheinliche fiktive*.

shipment of rotten grain and escalates into a ritualized exchange of stock abuse complete with insinuations of sexual misconduct, name calling, accusations, and insults aimed at the opponent's religion, parents, and morals. These are dished up with a great deal of scatological content in a colloquial, and at times almost indecipherable, Latin. Because of certain allusions to historical events known from other sources, however, they are worthy of further investigation. I begin by discussing points of dating, language, and context. Because of the confusing nature of the texts, and the difficulty of presenting them clearly to the reader, I have included them in full in the form of a working edition along with apparatus, commentary, and translation.

Chrodober't's episcopate cannot be dated with precision, but he is traditionally believed to have occupied the see of Tours in the third quarter of the seventh century.²²⁴ He is first mentioned as a contemporary in the *passio Praiecti*, whose subject was bishop during the reign of Childeric II, ca. 662-76.²²⁵ The dates of Importunus' episopate in Paris are unknown. However, a convenient gap of three years or so in the sources between the death of Bishop Sigobrand in 664-5 and the accession of Bishop Agilbert in 668 may very well account for Importunus' time in office, especially as there are no other candidates for bishop of Paris during those years.²²⁶ Importunus' signature is also found

²²⁴ W. Gundlach, MGH editor of Chrodober't's letter to Boba (above), places his episcopate, without explanation, between the years c. 653 and 674.

²²⁵ *Passio Praiecti episcopi et martyris Arverni*, ed B. Krusch, MGH SRM V (Hannover: 1910): *cumque his et aliis miraculis polleret, audiens hec (sic) Chrodober'tus Turonice urbis episcopus, diaconem suum cum eulogiis causam visitationis ad ipsum direxit*. [and since he had performed these and other miracles, hearing this, Bishop Chrodober't of Tours sent his deacon, laden with gifts, to visit him].

²²⁶ Agilbert and Sigobrand are both well attested. Sigobrand: the *vita Balthildis* (10) records that the queen favoured Sigobrand and implies that she appointed him to the see of Paris, which he took up shortly before Balthild's retirement to the monastery of Chelles in 664-5. Sigobrand was not popular at court, however, and occupied his office only briefly before he was murdered by the Neustrians for "haughtiness among the Franks." Agilbert: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. L. Sherley-Price (London: 1955), 3.7, reports that Agilbert was a Gaul who came to the kingdom of the West Saxons after studying the scriptures in Ireland. The king offered him a bishopric and he attended the Synod of Whitby c. 664. When he later fell out with the king, Agilbert returned to Gaul and took up the see of Paris, which he occupied from 668-690.

on a charter, dated 666 or 667, in favour of a monastery in Soissons.²²⁷ Unfortunately, this evidence is flawed because the bishop styles himself *Importunus, acsi peccator episcopus subscripsi* without naming a see. Making do with these rather meager offerings, therefore, we may tentatively date the five letters we are about to examine to the years 665 to 668.

It will be immediately apparent that the language used in these texts differs a great deal from classical Latin. While this may reflect development in the language, scribal error, or a combination thereof, it may also be that these texts are offering a rare glimpse of written colloquial Latin.²²⁸ General features are as follows. (a) The vowels of some inflections have changed, e.g.: es>is, us>os, us>is, e>i, i>e, i>u, e>ae, and ae>e. (b) Some inflections have been dropped entirely, e.g. the feminine singular accusative *m* and the accusative singulars *em* and *um*. (c) Consonants have shifted: t>d, d>t, p>b, c>g. (d) The infinitive of a verb is sometimes used as an imperative. (e) On many occasions a preposition normally requiring the ablative is used with the accusative and vice versa. (f) One time *s* is added to form the plural.

A number of Frankish words make an appearance in the text. *Alodis*, found in Letter 4, line 18 is inherited property; *trapa*, in the same letter at line 52, is a trap or snare. Several times Chrodobert calls Importunus a *bracco*, which was a term used at the time for a young fox, wolf, or bear and which later developed into the German *Bracke* and the French *braque*, both of which refer to a breed of hunting dog.

²²⁷ Henry H. Howorth, *The Golden Days of the Early English Church* (New York: 1917), 325 n.6, states that Importunus signed a document as bishop of Paris in 666; Krusch, MGH editor, says 667 in the preamble to his edition of the *passiones Leudegarii episcopi et martyris Augustodunensis*. Editions of the charter can be found in Pardessus 355, Vol. 2, pp 138–141 and *Patrologia Latina* lxxxviii.1186. The charter was issued by Bishop Drauscus of Soissons in favour of St. Mary's, a new monastery for women that was founded by Ebroin, Mayor of the Palace of Neustria.

²²⁸ A detailed discussion of the language of these texts can be found in Dag Norberg, *Manuel Pratique de Latin Médiéval* (Stockholm: 1958) and "A quelle époque a-t-on cessé de parler Latin en Gaule?" *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* Vol. 21 Iss. 2 (1966) 346–56; see also Shanzer, "Frodebert's tail."

Letters 2 (lines 5ff.) and 3 (lines 26-35) allude to events that had taken place some years earlier when the Pippinid Grimoald held the position of Mayor of the Palace under Sigibert III, king of Austrasia.²²⁹ The *liber historiae Francorum* reports that upon Sigibert's death, Grimoald tonsured the king's young son Dagobert and sent him into exile to Ireland. Grimoald subsequently placed his own son, known to posterity as Childebert the Adopted, on the throne. In this he was assisted by Dido of Poitiers, uncle of Leudegar of Autun.²³⁰ Angered by this interference in the Austrasian succession, the Neustrians seized Grimoald, brought him to Paris, and had him executed by Sigibert's brother King Clovis II (d. 657). Since the chronology of the *LHF* is not always reliable, however, Grimoald may not have been executed until the reign of Clovis' son Chlothar III (657-73). It is also curious that there is no mention made of Childebert *adoptivus* being executed along with Grimoald; his fate, therefore, may not have been co-terminous with that of his father. What we do know for certain is that the year 662, with the accession of Childeric II to the throne of Austrasia, marks the *terminus ante quem* for both Grimoald and his son.

It is clear that the writer of Letters 2 and 3 felt that what happened to Grimoald was a miscarriage of justice. Moreover, he accuses Chrodobert of complicity in Grimoald's downfall in that he brought the latter's wife to Tours, placed her in a monastery, and took up an illicit relationship with her. The quarrel between the two suggests that Chrodobert and Importunus were on opposing sides in the factionalism that overtook Merovingian politics in the latter half of the seventh century. Further, the specificity of the political information that is brought to light in the second and third letters is a departure from the stock abuse prevalent in much of these texts and its presence lends weight to the

²²⁹ That is, *circa* the mid-650s. See *LHF* 43 in Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 492-3. This Sigibert was son of Dagobert and grandson of Chlothar II, who executed Queen Brunhild in 613. Sigibert's brother Clovis II ruled Neustria and Burgundy.

²³⁰ It is not clear whether the boy was Grimoald's biological son or one he himself adopted, perhaps a relative. Leudegar was martyred in 679 and his *passio* has been preserved. We met this bishop above: Leudegar is the putative author of a letter to his mother Sigrada found in *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 17. For discussion see this Chapter, Section 3.4.

argument for the authenticity of the correspondence. Finally, the connection these letters make between Chrodobert of Tours and the events surrounding Grimoald's downfall and execution in Paris is found nowhere else and has generated a proposal, first put forward by G. J. J. Walstra in his 1962 edition of the five letters, that Chrodobert of Tours is the same individual as Chrodobert of Paris, bishop of that city from the mid-650s till *circa* 662. This position has since been endorsed by several scholars.²³¹

Following is a working edition of the five letters, with English translation. The Latin is taken mainly from Zeumer's MGH version but at times follows Walstra. A textual apparatus is to be found at the end of each letter with notes listed by line number. Emendations are noted as follows: MS = the single extant manuscript, Z = the edition of Karl Zeumer as found in the MGH, W = the 1962 edition of G. Walstra, and S = the edition of D. Shanzer. I have not listed the alternative readings of all scholars nor every discrepancy between the editions of Zeumer and Walstra. Shanzer usually follows the latter. Suggestions for lacunae in the text are taken from either Zeumer or Walstra and are shown in square brackets. There are not many of these, as I have left blank those where I feel the above scholars have introduced overly-speculative material. The reader must bear in mind that a definitive rendition of these texts will doubtless remain an impossibility barring the discovery of new material.

²³¹ There is nothing in the sources that precludes this argument. Besides Walstra, *Les cinq épîtres*, 16–18, supporters of this argument are Hen, "Changing Places," 8–26, and Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 149, n. 100. Shanzer, "Frodebert's Tail," 378, n. 7, does not seem to be averse to this possibility. Indeed, Shanzer conflates the two bishops unwittingly in discussing a letter from Chrodobert to Dado of Rouen in the *vita Eligii* ("Frodebert's tail," 382–3). Although Shanzer assumes without discussion that the composer of the letter is Chrodobert of Tours, it is far more likely to be Chrodobert of Paris, since he and Dado are named along with Ebroin in the *vita domnae Balthildis* (5) as the magnates who together ruled Neustria during the minority of Chlothar III. If the two Chrodoberts are indeed the same person, it is, of course, a moot point.

Letter 1. Chrodobert of Tours to Importunus of Paris.

Importunus had sent a shipment of grain to Tours to be distributed by Chrodobert. The grain, however, was found to be rotten and inedible, prompting Chrodobert to send back a loaf of bad bread and the following verses outlining his complaints.

Sanctorum meritis beatificando domno et fratri Importune.

[To my lord and brother Importunus, blessed by the merits of the saints].

<p>1 <i>Domne dulcissime</i>
<i>Et frater carissime</i>
<i>Inportune: quod recepisti</i>
<i>tam dura. Estimasti</i></p>	<p>Most sweet lord
and most dear brother
Importunus: concerning the very hard
bread you have received. You thought</p>
<p>5 <i>Nos iam vicina morte de fame perire</i>
<i>Quando talem annonam voluisti largire.</i>
<i>Nec ad pretium nec ad donum</i>
<i>Non cupimus tale anona.</i>
<i>Fecimus inde comestum –</i></p>	<p>that we had almost perished from hunger
when you tried to give us such grain.
Neither at a price or as a gift
do we wish such grain.
So we made a meal of it –</p>
<p>10 <i>Si Dominus imbolat frumentum!</i>
<i>A foris turpis est crusta,</i>
<i>Ab intus miga nimis est fusca,</i>
<i>Aspera est in palato,</i>
<i>Amara et fetius odoratus.</i></p>	<p>If the Lord would remove this bread!
The outside crust is disgusting,
the crumb inside is black.
It's harsh on the palate,
bitter, and rotten in odour.</p>
<p>15 <i>Mixta vetus apud novella</i>
<i>Faciunt inde oblata non bella.</i>
<i>Semper habeas gratum,</i>
<i>Qui tam larga manu voluisti donatum,</i>
<i>Dum Deus servat tua potestate,</i></p>	<p>Old (flour) mixed with new
does not make for a nice gift!
May you always have favour,
you who has given with so generous a hand,
while God preserves your authority,</p>
<p>20 <i>In qua cognovimus tam grande</i>
<i>largitatis.</i>
<i>Vos vidistis in domo</i>
<i>Quod de fame nobiscum morimur.</i>
<i>Homo,</i>
<i>Satis te presumo salutare</i>
<i>Et rogo, ut pro nobis dignetis orare.</i></p>	<p>in which we recognize such great
generosity.
You have noticed in your palace
that we are dying of hunger.
My man,
I presume I greet you satisfactorily?
and I ask that you deign to pray for us.</p>
<p>25 <i>Transmisimus tibi de illo pane;</i>
<i>Probato, si inde potis manducare.</i>
<i>Quamdiu vivimus, plane</i>
<i>Liberat nos Deus de tale pane!</i>
<i>Congregatio puellare sancta</i></p>	<p>We have sent you some of that bread;
try it, see if you can chew it.
As long as we live, liberate us
from such bread, Oh God!
The holy congregation of nuns</p>
<p>30 <i>Refudat tale pasta.</i>
<i>Nostra privata stultitia</i>
<i>Ad te in summa amicitia.</i>
<i>Obto, te semper valere</i></p>	<p>repudiates such dough.
We send our personal foolishness
to you in loftiest friendship.
I hope that you remain well</p>

Et caritatis tue iuro tenere.

and that you receive the recompense due
your charity.

Letter 1 – ⁴Chrodoberth is referring to the loaf that he has sent Importunus with this letter, also mentioned in lines 25-6. ⁸*tale anonae* = *talem annonam* ⁹*comentum* MS, Z; *comestum* W from *comedere* ¹⁰*si* MS, Z; *sed* W. *imbolat* = *involet*. *formentum* MS; *fermentum* W, who translates the line as *le Seigneur en a enlevé la faculté fermentative*. S follows W. A more obvious and reasonable solution is surely *formentum* = *frumentum*. ¹²*miga* = *mica* ¹⁶S translates this as “eucharistic wafers” ¹⁹*tua potestate* = *tuam potestatem*; W suggests the vocative for *tua potestate*, as in “while God preserves Your Authority.” S follows W with “Your Power.” ²⁰*grande largitatis* = *grandes largitates*. *largitatis* = *largitate* Z. ²⁸*liberat* = *liberet* ²⁹*puellare* = *puellaris* ³⁰*refudat* = *refutat*. *tale pasta* = *talem pastam* ³³*obto* = *opto* ³⁴*iuro* = *iura*

Letter 2. Importunus of Paris to Chrodoberth of Tours.

This is the first of Importunus’ responses to Letter 1 above.

Beatificando domno et fratre Frodeberto pape.

[To my blessed lord and brother bishop Frodebert].

<p>1 <i>Domne Frodeberto, audivimus,</i>
<i>Quod noster fromentus vobis non fuit acceptus.</i>
<i>De vestra gesta volumus intimare,</i></p> <p><i>Ut de vestros pares numquam delectet</i></p> <p><i>iogo tale referre.</i></p> <p>5 <i>Illud enim non fuit condignum,</i>
<i>Quod egisti in Segeberto regnum</i>
<i>De Grimaldo maiorem domus,</i>
<i>Quia ei sustulisti sua unica ove, sua uxore,</i></p> <p><i>Unde postea in regno numquam habuit honore.</i></p> <p>10 <i>Et cum gentes venientes in Toronica regione</i></p> <p><i>Misisti ipsa in sancta congregatione,</i></p> <p><i>[In] monasterio puellarum,</i>
<i>Qui est constructus in honor[e].....</i>
<i>Non ibidem lectiones divinis legistis,</i></p> <p>15 <i>Sed.....nis inter vos habuistis.</i></p> | <p>Lord Chrodoberth, we have heard
that our grain did not suit you.
We wish to relate some of your
deeds
so that it might never please you
again
to make such mockery of your peers.
For instance, it was not proper
what you did in Sigibert’s kingdom
to Grimoald the Mayor of the Palace;
you took from him his one lamb,
his wife,
so that never again was he held in
honour in the kingdom.
And when (her? your?) people came
into the Tours region,
you sent her into the holy
congregation
in the monastery for women
that was built in honour of.....
There you did not read divine
lessons,
but had.....between the two of
you.</p> |
|---|--|

	<i>Oportet satis obse.....</i>	
	<i>.....conlocutione,</i>	
	<i>Quem nec est a Deo apta</i>	
	<i>.....ta</i>	
20	<i>Sic est ab hominibus vestra sapientia</i>	Thus is your wisdom that of men...
	<i>.....[pru]dentiae</i>	
	<i>Sed qualem faciebatis in</i>	But such you have done in....
	<i>Monasterio puellarum pro pane.....</i>	a monastery of women for bread...
	<i>.....[in] monasterio fuisti</i>	You were begotten in a monastery...
25	<i>Generatus domn.....perdidisti.</i>	and have lost your [lord?].
	<i>Indulge ista pauca verba.....</i>	Allow these few words.....
	<i>Inportunus de Parisiaga terra.</i>	Importunus of Paris.

Letter 2 – ²*fromentus* = *frumentum* ⁴*iogo* = *ioco* ⁸*quem* MS, S; *quia* W, Z. *sua unica ove, sua uxore* = *suam unican ovem, suam uxorem*; cf. 2 Sam. 12: 1-4. ¹⁰The *cum* can be interpreted either as a preposition with the accusative, of which there are many examples in Merovingian Latin, or as a conjunction. The *gentes venientes* could refer either to Grimoald's wife's retainers or to Chrodobert acting as escort. *Gentes* can also mean hired soldiers. ¹¹*ipsa* = *ipsam* ¹⁴*divinis* = *divines* ¹⁵*...congressionis* Z; *sermone libidinis* W, S. The meaning is nonetheless clear. ²⁷This is the only evidence in the letters that Importunus is bishop of Paris.

Letter 3. Importunus of Paris to Chrodobert of Tours

This is the second of Importunus' responses to Letter 1. Although the salutation is to Chrodobert alone, the letter was likely intended for a wider audience that included the king, see lines 57-9.

Domno meo Frodeberto, sine Deo.
[To my lord Frodebert, without God].

1	<i>Nec sancto nec episcopo,</i>	To one neither holy nor bishop,
	<i>Nec saeculare clerico,</i>	nor secular cleric,
	<i>Ubi regnat antiquus</i>	over whom the ancient enemy of
	<i>Hominum inimicus</i>	mankind has full sway.
5	<i>Qui mihi minime credit</i>	Anyone who doesn't believe me
	<i>Facta tua vidit.</i>	can observe your deeds.
	<i>Illum tibi necesse desiderio,</i>	God must needs be as a loss to you,
	<i>Quare non amas Deo nec credis Dei Filio.</i>	since you don't love God or believe
		in the Son of God.
	<i>Semper fecisti malum.</i>	You have always done what is evil.
10	<i>Contra adversarium,</i>	You think your counsel is
	<i>Consilio satis te putas sapiente,</i>	wise enough against the Adversary,
	<i>Sed credimus quod mentis.</i>	but we believe you are full of lies.

- Vere non times Christo nec tibi consentit*
- Cui amas, per omnia*
- 15 *Eius facis opera.*
Nec genitoris tui diligebant Christum
Quando in monasterio fecerunt temetipsum.
- Tuos pater, cum domno,*
Non fecit sancta opera.
- 20 *Propterea domnus digido,*
Relaxavit te vivo,
- Docuit et nutri[vit]*
Unde se postea penitavit.
Non sequis scriptura
- 25 *Nec rendis [nisi in]iqua.*
Memores, Grimaldo
Qualem fecisti damnum
.....um et Deo non oblituit
De bona, que tibi fecit,
- 30 *Quid inde.....?*
[M]uliere sua habuisti,
Conscientia nuda nec.....,
.....norum peracta, sed contra canonica..
.....ea de sancta congregatione aput..
- 35 *.....non ex devotione, sed cum gran.....*

.....cur nos scimus damnas nimis....

...tollis eis aurum et argentum et honoris

liberat per has regiones.
Cur te presumis tantum
- 40 *Dampnare suum thesaurum?*
Quod, ut alibi, ubi eum rogas
Per tua malafacta
Quod non sunt apta
Amas puella bella
- 45 *De qualibet terra,*
Pro nulla bonitate
Nec sancta caritate.
Bonus numquam eris,
Dum tale via tenes
- 50 *Per tua cauta longa – satis est vel non est?*
- Truly you do not fear Christ nor does
He approve you;
you always do the works of him
whom you love (again, the devil).
Nor did your parents love Christ
when they conceived you in a
monastery.
Your father, in his lord's service,
did not do holy works.
Because of this, the lord
released you, while living, with his
finger.
He taught and nurtured you
but afterwards regretted it.
You do not follow Scripture;
you return only evil.
Remember the injury to Grimoald
that you have done;
.....and it is not concealed from God,
But the good that he has done for
you,
what then.....?
You had his wife,
with no pure conscience....
...?, but against the canons
...from the sacred congregation at...
....not from devotion to God, but
with.....
..because/why we know you
(despoil?) ladies...
....you remove their gold, silver,
honour,
liberates throughout these regions.
Why do you make so bold
as to do violence to their treasure?
In this, as elsewhere, you claim it
through your evil deeds
which are not seemly.
You love pretty girls
from whatever land,
not for the sake of goodness,
nor for holy charity.
You will never be righteous
while you stick to such a path.
By your long dick – is it (long)
enough or not? –

<i>Per omnia iube te castrare, Ut non pereas per talis,</i>	by all means: get yourself castrated, so that you may not perish through such behaviours,
<i>Quia fornicatoris Deus iudicabit De culpas tuas alias te posso contristare</i>	since God will judge fornicators. I can afflict you with your other crimes,
55 <i>Sed tu iubis mihi exinde aliquid remandare</i>	but you order me to keep some things to myself
<i>Ut in quale nobis retinet in tua caritate.</i>	so that I am retained somewhat in your affection (at least).
<i>Exeant istas exemplarias Per multas patrias. Ipso Domino hoc reliquo,</i>	Let copies of these letters go out through many regions. This one I leave for the Lord himself.
60 <i>Si vidis amico Qui te hoc nuntiat et donet consilium verum Si te placit, lege et pliga in pectore reponere</i>	If you see (in me) a friend who conveys this to you and gives true counsel, please read it, fold it, and take it to heart;
<i>Sin autem non vis, in butte include.</i>	but if you don't want to, stick it in your wine cask? your butt?

Letter 3 – ⁷*desidero* MS, Z; *desiderio* W, S ⁸*Deo* = *Deum* ¹²*mentis* = *mentiris* ¹⁶*genetoris* = *genitores* ¹⁸*tuos* = *tuus*. *domno*: Walstra takes the “lord” to be Grimoald; S emends to *domna*, and translates as “your father did not do sacred work with the lady;” in other words, Chrodobert’s father engendered him by wrongful intercourse with a nun. ²⁰*propter* MS, S; *propterea* Z, W. *digido* = *digito*; according to Z, *relaxavit digito* is a form of manumission that is elsewhere unattested ²³*penetivit* = *penituit* ²⁵*rendis* = *reddis* ³⁰Zeumer believes the sense to be “what have you done in return?” ³¹*muliere sua* = *mulierem suam* ³²*nua* MS; *mea* Z; *nuda* W; *nulla* S ³⁶*damnas* = *dominas* ³⁷*honoris* = *honores* ⁴⁴*puella bella* = *puellas bellas* ⁴⁹*via* = *viam* ⁵⁰*cauta* = *cauda*; example of *per* with ablative. ⁵³*fornicatoris* = *fornicatores* ⁵⁴example of *de* with accusative. ⁵⁵*iubis* = *iubes* or better, *iubeas* ⁵⁶*in quale* can mean “somewhat” or “to a degree.” I have not followed W, who suggests *quale* = *equale*, i.e. “kept as before in your affection.” *retenit* MS; *retenis* W, S; *retineas* Z. I cannot see any of these working with *nobis*, however, so have retained the impersonal form. ⁵⁷*istas exemplarias* = *ista exemplaria*; example of *s* for plural ⁵⁹*reliquo* = *relinquo* W believes the *domino* refers to the king; S suggests that it refers periphrastically to Chrodobert. ⁶⁰*se* MS, Z, S; *si* W. *amico* = *amicum* ⁶²*sed* MS, S; *si* Z, W ⁶³*butte*: so Z; also W, who mentions a *rasura* but seems confident that *butte* was the word erased; S follows W. Given the tone of the letter, and its neatness as a parting shot, I would argue for the more metaphorical use of the term.

Letter 4. Chrodobert of Tours to Importunus of Paris and others.

While there is no salutation attached to this letter, it is clearly a response by Chrodobert to Letters 2 and 3. Importunus is addressed directly in lines 63ff. but lines 42ff. suggest a broader audience.

Incipiunt verba per similitudinem iuncta de fide vacua, dolo pleno falsatore.

[Here begin words added in the form of a parable on empty faith and a liar full of deceit].

<p>1 <i>Agios Salomon per sapientia</i>
 <i>Bene scripsit hanc sententia,</i>
 <i>Ut ne similis fias stulto,</i>
 <i>Numquam respondes ei in multo.</i>
 <i>Et retractavi tam in multum,</i>
 5 <i>Sic respondere iussi stulto,</i>
 <i>Ut confundatur stulti grado [et]</i>
 <i>Numquam presumat gloriare.</i>
 <i>Responde dixi de falsatore,</i>
 <i>Nec ei parcas in sermone,</i>
 10 <i>Qui se plantatum ex robore</i>
 <i>Qui non pepercit suo ore,</i>
 <i>Vaneloquio susorrone,</i>
 <i>Verborum vulnera murone</i>
 <i>Qui sui obl[itus] adiutoris</i>
 15 <i>Inmemor est nutritoris,</i>
 <i>Calcavit iur[a] et.....</i>
 <i>Qui fei date et prioris</i>
 <i>Alodis sui reparatoris</i>
 <i>Sordidas vomit putores.</i>
 20 <i>Incredulas dicit loquellas et improbas.</i>
 <i>Quoinquinat et conscientias.</i>
 <i>Bonum merito conquesitas,</i>
 <i>Mundas, sanctas et antiquas,</i>
 <i>Pulchras, firmissimas et pulitas,</i>
 25 <i>Meas rumpit amititias.</i>
 <i>Verba dicit,</i>
 <i>Que numquam vidit;</i>
 <i>Ea scribit,</i>
 <i>Que animus fecit.</i>
 30 <i>Parcat qui eum credit!</i>
 <i>Et si loquestem</i>
 <i>Non stringit furorem –</i>
 <i>Latro fraudolentus –</i>
 <i>Homicidum est reus certus,</i>
 35 <i>Adulter, raptor est manifestus.</i></p> | <p>The holy Solomon, in his wisdom,
 has well written that saying,
 that lest you become like the foolish man,
 never answer him with many words.
 So I have held back a great deal.
 Thus I ordered that it be replied to this fool,
 so he might be confounded and
 never dare to glory in his fool's status.
 Respond, I said, regarding the deceiver,
 may you not spare him a tongue lashing,
 he who thinks himself so strongly placed,
 who has not spared his tongue
 from empty whispers,
 the wounding words of a fool
 who has forgotten those who helped him,
 who is heedless of the one who raised him,
 who has trampled underfoot right and ...
 who, having pledged his faith,
 spews a foul stench on the person
 who restored his earlier inheritance.
 He spouts false and unproven tales and
 pollutes consciences.
 He destroys my friendships –
 pure, holy, and ancient,
 lovely, strong, and religious –
 earned by my own good merit.
 He speaks words
 of what he has never seen;
 he writes things
 that he makes up in his head.
 Let anyone who trusts him beware!
 And if he doesn't restrain
 his frenzied babblings –
 this lying brigand –
 he is certainly guilty of murder,
 clearly an adulterer and a ravager.</p> |
|--|--|

- Innumerus fecit excessus,
Errando vadit quasi caecus,
Fuscare temptat meum decus.
A Deo dispectus et desertus,*
40 *Ab inimico est perversus,
Et per lingua et per pectus.
Nolite, domne, nolite, fortis,
Nolite credere tantas sordes!
Per Deum iuro et sacras fontis,*
45 *Per Sion et Sinai montis,
Falsator est ille factus,
Excogitator est defamatus.
Deformato vultu est deformatus;
Qualis est animus, talis et status.*
50 *Non est homo hic miser talis.
Latrat [vulpis], sed [non] ut canis.
Psallat de trapa ut linguaris dilator:*
- Maior nullis talis falsator.
Grunnit post talone,*
55 *Buccas inflat in rudore,
Crebat et currit in sudore,
Fleummas iactat in pudore.
Nullum vero facit pavore,
Qui non habet adiutorem*
60 *Super secundum meum tutorem.
Non movit bracco tale baronem,
Non....bracco contra insontem,
Non cessare bracco
Ab exaperto sacco,*
65 *.....[b]racco,
Et salte degrassante
Non timere falco.
Non perdas illo loco:
Non vales uno cocco.*
70 *Non simulas tuo patre
Vere nec tua matre.
Non gaudeas de dentes!
Deformas tuos parentes:
Ad tua falsatura*
75 *Talis decet corona.*
- He has committed innumerable sins,
he wanders about as though blind,
he tries to blacken my shining reputation.
He is rejected and abandoned by God,
led astray by the Enemy,
both through his tongue and his heart.
Do not, lords, do not, magnates,
do not believe such filth!
I swear by God and all holy springs,
by Zion and by Mount Sinai,
this man has become a deceiver,
an infamous inventor of falsehood.
He is deformed, with a disfigured face;
as his spirit is, so is his outward appearance.
One so wretched is not a man.
The fox barks, but not like the dog.
He sings from the trap like a yapping
informer:
there is no greater deceiver.
He grunts at the ankle,
he inflates his cheeks and howls,
he farts and runs around in a sweat,
he spits out stinking phlegm.
But he frightens no one,
because he does not have a supporter
superior to my protector.
A hound does not move a great man (me)
a hound does not against the innocent.
Hound, do not draw back
from the opened sack,
.....hound,
And do not fear the falcon
in its sudden attack.
May you not lose your (lowly) position,
you are not worth a cock.
You don't resemble your father,
nor even your mother.
May you have no pleasure from your teeth!
You dishonour your parents:
Such a crown
is fitting to your false nature!

Letter 4 – ¹agino MS; agios Z, W. *per sapientia*: example of *per* with ablative ²*sententia* = *sententiam*; cf. Prov. 26:4 ³*fiat* MS; *fias* Z, W, S ⁴*mutto* MS, W, S; *multo* Z ⁶*confundantur* MS; *confundatur* Z, W. *stultum* MS, Z; *stulti* W ⁸*respon-di* MS, Z, S; *responde* W ¹⁰Z believes *credit*

may have been omitted ¹¹*ore* = *ori* ¹³*murone* = *morione* per MLLM ¹⁵*inmemores* MS; *inmemor* est Z; *inmemor et* W, S ¹⁷*fei* = *fidei* ¹⁸*alodis* is inherited property; *reparatoris* = *reparatori* ¹⁹*pudoris* MS, S; *putores* Z, W ²⁹*fecit animus* MS; Z reversed the order to preserve the rhyme in the next line. ³⁰*credere* omitted per W, who translates the line as “qu’il prenne garde de la croire, celui qui a foi en lui.” ³¹*loquestem* MS; *loquestrem* W, S; *loquacem* Z ³⁴*homicidium* = *homicidium* ³⁶*innumerus* = *innumeros. excelsus* MS; *excessus* Z, W, S ³⁹*dispectus* = *despectus* ⁴⁰*perventus* MS, Z; *perversus* W; *praeventus* S per Norberg ⁴²*domne* = *domni* W; *domnae* S, who *ergo* believes this letter to be addressed to nuns. *fortis* = *fortes* ⁴³*sortes* MS, Z, S; *sordes* W. ⁴⁴*fontis* = *fontes* ⁴⁵*montis* = *montem, montes*? ⁴⁸*deformat vultu et deformata s[unt?]* MS; *deformat vultum et deformatus* W, S; I have used Z. ⁵¹Walstra takes the following lines to refer to the fox, whom the latter describes as “toujours inférieur au chien.” Sources of the period universally disparage the fox and its devious ways; however, the issue here is far from clear. Certainly ll. 54-7 seem to describe dog, rather than fox, behaviour. ⁵²*psallat* = *psallit. dilator* = delator; S translates “informer paying a forfeit.” ⁵³*nullis* = *nullus* ⁵⁴Z suggests *talone* = *talonem* from *talus*. W is silent on this point. ⁵⁵*rotore* MS, S; *rudore* Z, W: this a noun seemingly created from the verb *rudere*, to bray, bellow, roar. Walstra renders the French as *en rugissant il enfle les joues*. S, retaining *rotore* without explanation, translates “puffs out his cheeks while belching.” ⁵⁶*crebat* = *crepat*; W and S translate as “bursts.” ⁵⁷*pudore* = *putore* ⁶⁰This could be King Childeric II, or as Walstra suggests, God. ⁶¹Per Walstra, (Commentaire IV.22) *bracco* is derived from the Saxon *bracka* and designates the young of a bear, wolf, or fox. It appears as a proper name in VP 12.2 attached to the abbot Brachio, which Gregory interprets as “bear cub.” It also can mean a hunting dog, as in modern German *Bracke* and French *braque*. Walstra here switches animals from fox to dog and translates *bracco* as *chien*, due, he states, to “la duplicité d’Importun.” I remain uncertain. ⁶³*cessare* and *timere* following are examples of the infinitive used as an imperative. ⁶⁶*decrascianto* MS; *degrassante* W, S; Z suggests a derivative of *crocitare*, to croak or caw, related to the Germanic *croccitan*, modern German *krächzen*, Anglo Saxon *cracetan*. The line would then read “do not fear the falcon with its sudden croak.” I find neither convincing but have no better suggestions. ⁶⁷*falco* = *falconem* ⁶⁸*illo loco* = *illum locum*. While not entirely happy with my own interpretation of this phrase, I cannot concur with Walstra’s tortuous argument for *non perdes illum ilico*, which translates unhelpfully as “you will not lose him (i.e. me) immediately.” ⁶⁹*coco* MS, S; *cocco* Z, W; Ducange and Meyer accepted the reading *coco*, i.e. “cook,” as correct. ⁷⁰*simulas* = *similas*. This statement is doubtless intended to imply that Importunus was illegitimate. ⁷²I agree with Walstra that a literal translation implies the baring of the teeth like an aggressive canine. Figuratively, it could mean “may you not enjoy your food!” I cannot agree with Hen’s view, “Changing Places,” 15, that Chrodobert is accusing Importunus of having bad breath, an interpretation for which I can find no grounds and for which he gives no explanation.

Letter 5. Chrodobert of Tours to a group of holy women.

As with the previous letter, there is no salutation attached to Letter 5. Chrodobert of Tours is again the writer, but this time he ignores Importunus and instead addresses powerful secular women and communities of religious women.²³²

²³² Due to a paralleling of wording and a reflecting back of the imagery of the previous poem, Shanzer, “Frodebert’s tail,” 395–6, believes that Letter 5 is a reply of Importunus

<p>1 <i>Nolite, domnae, nolite, sanctae,</i>
 <i>Nolite credere fabulas falsas,</i>
 <i>Quia multum habetis falsatores</i>
 <i>Qui vobis proferunt falsos sermones</i></p> <p>5 <i>Furi atque muronis,</i>
 <i>Similis aetiam et susuronis.</i>
 <i>Et vobis, domne, non erunt protectoris.</i></p> <p><i>Latrat vulpis, sed non ut canis;</i>
 <i>Saltus init, semper inanis,</i></p> <p>10 <i>Cauta proferit, iam non fronte</i>
 <i>Cito decadet ante cano forte.</i>
 <i>Volat upupa, et non [ut] hirundo;</i>
 <i>Isterco commedit in so frundo;</i>
 <i>Humile facit capta dura.</i></p> <p>15 <i>Sicut dilatus in falsatura</i>
 <i>Falsator vadit,</i>
 <i>Tamquam latro ad aurem psallit,</i>
 <i>Ut Escotus mentit; semper vadit</i>
 <i>Toritus et (h)oc dicit</i></p> <p>20 <i>Que numquam vidit.</i>
 <i>Nolite, domne, atque prudentis</i>
 <i>Vestras non confrangat mentis,</i>
 <i>Et non derelinquere serventes.</i>
 <i>Tempus quidem iam transactum</i></p> <p>25 <i>Et hoc feci, quod vobis fuit adaptum,</i>
 <i>Iam modo per verba fallacia</i>
 <i>Sic sum deiactus de vestra gratia.</i></p> | <p>Do not, ladies, do not, holy women,
 do not believe false fables,
 For you have many liars
 who offer you false words.</p> <p>They are like robbers and fools,
 they are just like tale-bearers,
 and for you, ladies, they will not be
 protectors.</p> <p>The fox barks, but not like the dog;
 he springs forward, always in vain,
 he profers his tail and not his face,
 he is quickly overcome by a strong dog.</p> <p>The hoopoe flies, but not [like] the swallow;
 it eats excrement in †so frundo†;
 a hard capture humbles it.</p> <p>Thus that liar goes about caught in
 his own falsehood,
 Like a thief he chants to the ear.
 He lies like an Irishman; always off-base,
 he speaks of what
 he has never seen.</p> <p>So prudent ladies,
 let him not upset your minds,
 and do not desert those serving you.</p> <p>Time indeed has now gone by,
 and I have written what you need to hear,
 for already now through false words
 I have been thrown from your favour.</p> |
|---|---|

Letter 5 – ¹domnae = dominae ⁵furi atque muronis = fures atque moriones per MLLM ⁶similis = similes. aetiam = etiam. susuronis = susurrones ⁷domne = dominae. protectoris = protectores ⁹faltus mit MS; saltus init Z, W, S ¹¹cano forte = canem fortem ¹²upua MS; upupa Z, W. = upupam; to my knowledge, all other interpretations of this line take the fox as the subject and define the verb volat as “to snatch,” rendering the line as “he snatches the hoopoe but not the swallow.” The line’s close parallelism to the proverbial latrat vulpis sed non ut canis, however, cries out for the equally proverbial volat upupa et non ut hirundo [the hoopoe flies but not like the swallow]. The addition of ut has the added benefit of rendering upupa and arundo/hirundo correct as they stand in the nominative form, while the hoopoe, quite sensibly, takes over from the fox as the subject of the next few lines. The imagery also makes sense in the light of the hoopoe’s characteristic undulating flight and its putative habit of eating dung à la Isidore’s Etymologies, which was composed only a few decades earlier than these texts. ¹¹arundo MS; hirundo Z = hirundinem; arundine W, S ¹³isterco = stercorem. commedit = comedit. isterco commedit:

to Letter 4 from Chrodobert. She remarks that otherwise the content is “dismally repetitive.” While her assessment is possible, I remain unconvinced.

Isidore's Etymologies states (12.7.66): upupam Graeci appellant eo quod stercora humana consideret, et foetenti pascatur fimo; avis spurcissima, cristis extantibus galeata, semper in sepulcris et humano stercore commorans. [The Greeks name the hoopoe thus because it settles on human waste and feeds on foul dung; it is the most loathsome of birds, with a protruding crest, always living in tombs and lingering on human excrement]. in so frundo MS. This phrase presents difficulties. Z takes upupa as the subject of this line and suggests in suo fronde (in his leafy boughs) while W, taking the subject to be the fox, argues for sufferendo (in resignation). Another possibility is frons, frontis, as in "it takes excrement into its face" ¹⁴humile = humilis ¹⁵dilatus = delatus ¹⁷aura MS, S; aurem W; Z expresses uncertainty as to which is intended. ¹⁹toritus = tortus. occidit MS; hoc dicit W; oc dicit Z, S ²¹domne = dominae. prudentis = prudentes ²²mentis = mentes ²⁴transactus MS, S; transactum Z, W ²⁷sexum MS; ne sim Z sic sum W, S deiactus = deiectus

6 Conclusion

The letter collection of Desiderius of Cahors is unique in the Merovingian epistolographical corpus for several reasons. Firstly, although incomplete, it is the only collection extant that purports to represent the correspondence of a Merovingian bishop; secondly, it is a valuable witness to add to our sparse sources for the seventh century; thirdly, it can be fleshed out by means of the *vita Desiderii*, which supplies the biographical details that the letter collection lacks. This group of letters strongly suggests that under the rule of Chlothar II and his sons and grandsons, potential bishops were raised at the court of the ruling king and formed close associations of *amicitia* there. When they later dispersed to various offices, networks of correspondence kept them in touch with each other and the king's court, which remained a mutual touchstone. Desiderius' collection also contains a rather high percentage of letters focusing on legal cases, which suggests a special interest in the law.

The evidence of the letters divides the preoccupations of bishops neatly into two halves, the greater weight falling to the pursuit and maintenance of *amicitia* networks, with a lesser but still significant portion given over to instruction of others. While there are incidents of bishops instructing and reproaching each other, they mainly seem to have taken it upon themselves to instruct non-bishops. Abbesses received pastoral care upon request, while kings were urged to good behaviour through hortatory "mirrors for princes," which either held up ideals for the king to emulate, or praised the king for good qualities already seen in his actions. When a problem existed with a king that a bishop wished to emend, he often approached the queen, urging her to use her persuasive powers

to reform her husband. The precedent for this, in the popular imagination at least, seems to have been Chothild's influence in the conversion of Clovis I. A letter to Leudegar's mother Sigrada, if authentic, can also be classed as instructional, containing as it does not family feeling, but hortatory rhetoric and gratitude toward God for suffering, together with hope for eternal reward.

The relationship between bishops in the Frankish kingdom and popes underwent profound changes over the centuries of the Merovingian era. The focus from the fifth to the mid-sixth centuries was the ups and downs of the struggle between the cities of Arles and Vienne for primacy. The success of Arles in this dispute can be attributed to a series of ambitious bishops who made a point of cultivating the popes of the time. This came to an end with the accession of Pope Gregory I in Rome and the appointment of Virgilius as bishop in Arles. By what we can glean from the letters in the *registrum Gregorii*, the two did not have a good relationship, and the pope turned to the secular arm both to facilitate his mission to the Anglo-Saxons, and to accomplish the reform he saw as desperately needed in the Gallic churches. This changed again with Boniface, missionary to the Germans, who made a point of cultivating several popes and placing himself under their auspices. Because this was the time of the Byzantine Papacy, it produced some interesting results.

Our final group of letters represents an exchange of insults or "flyting" between bishops Chrodober of Tours and Importunus of Paris over a batch of rotten grain sent by the latter as an *annona* to Tours. The resultant communication, while mostly stock abuse, also contains references to the factionalism that was rampant at the time, which in turn sheds some light on shadowy late seventh-century events.

Chapter 4

Bearers and Gifts

Letters Referenced in this Chapter

For Section I: Bearers

Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae:

1. Aldhelm to Leutherius of Winchester

Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae:

4. Columbanus to his monks

epistolae Arelatenses genuinae:

14. Pope Leo I to Ravennius of Arles	51. Pope Pelagius I to Childebert I
42. Pope Vigilius to Auxanius of Arles	52. as above
50. Pope Pelagius I to Sapaudus of Arles	

epistolae Austrasicae:

21. Rufus of Turin to Nicetius of Trier
24. unknown to Nicetius of Trier

epistolae Desiderii episcopi:

2.11. Paul of Verdun to Desiderius	1.9. Desiderius to Abbo of Metz
1.15. Desiderius to Felix of Limoges	2.21. Felix to Desiderius

epistolae Aviti Viennensis:

11. Avitus to Caesarius of Arles (same as *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 2)

epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis:

2. Avitus of Vienne to Caesarius (same as *epistolae Aviti Viennensis* 11)

registrum Gregorii:

6.5. to Brunhild	9.158. to Desiderius of Vienne
6.6. to Childebert II	9.209 to Serenus of Marseilles
6.50. to Palladius of Saintes	9.214. to Brunhild
6.51. to Theuderic II and Theudebert II	9.220. to Aregius of Gap
6.52. to Pelagius of Tours, Serenus of Marseilles, Aetherius of Lyons	
6.54. to Virgilius of Arles	
6.55. to Desiderius of Vienne and Syagrius of Autun	
6.56. to Protasius of Aix-en-Provence	
6.58. to Brunhild	9.222. to Candidus
6.59. to Arigius	11.10. to Serenus of Marseilles
6.60. to Brunhild	11.44. to Aregius of Gap
7.21. to Candidus	11.50. to Theudebert II
8.4. to Brunhild	11.51. to Chlothar II
9.216. to Theuderic and Theudebert	
9.219. to Syagrius, Aetherius, Virgilius, Desiderius	

S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae:

14. Eangyth and Bugga to Boniface	87. Pope Zacharias to Boniface
20. Gregory II to Charles Martel	105. Aethelbert II to Boniface
32. Boniface to Pethelm of Whithorn Priory	110. Lully to Fulrad and bishops
33. Boniface to Nothelm of Canterbury	112. Milred of Worcester to Lully
34. Boniface to Duddo	113. Lully to Denehard
35. Boniface to Eadburga	116. Cuthbert to Lully
36. Sigebald to Boniface	
49. Denehard, Lully, and Burchard to Cuneburga	

Venantii Fortunati opera poetica:

3.17. to Bertechramnus of Le Mans	8.17. to Gregory of Tours
5.5. to Gregory of Tours	10.13. to various bishops
5.6. to Syagrius of Autun	10.16. to Sigoald

5.8b. to Gregory of Tours

5.14. as above

5.15. as above

7.10. to Magnulf

7.18. to Flavus

7.25. to Galactorius

10.12. to Gregory, Romulf, Gallienus, Florentinus

11.25. to Radegund and Agnes

appendix carminum 5 to Childebert II

appendix carminum 6 to Brunhild

vita Desiderii:

11. Herchenefreda to Desiderius

For Section II: Gifts

Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae:

9. Cellanus to Aldhelm

Columbani abbatis Luxovienses et Bobbiensis epistolae

1. Columbanus to Pope Gregory I

epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae

9. Pope Pelagius II to Aunarius of Auxerre

14. Warnechar to Ceraunius to Paris

16. Chrodobert of Tours to Boba

18. Pope Zacharias to Gallic clerics

19. Pippin to Abbot Gayroinus

epistolae Arelatenses genuinae:

48. Pope Pelagius I to Childebert I

49. Pope Pelagius I to Sapadus of Arles

epistolae Austrasicae:

13. Gogo to Chaming

18. Theudebald to Justinian

17. Dynamius to Vilicus of Metz

epistolae Desiderii episcopi:

- 1.7. Desiderius to Medoald of Trier
- 1.10. Desiderius to Dado of Rouen

- 2.10. Sulpicius of Bourges to Desiderius
- 2.11. Paul of Verdun to Desiderius
- 2.12. as above

registrum Gregorii:

- 3.33. to Dynamius
- 4.30. to Empress Constantina
- 6.6. to Childebert II
- 6.50. to Palladius of Saintes

- 6.58. to Brunhild
- 7.33. to Dynamius and Aureliana
- 8.4. to Brunhild
- 11.43. to Asclepiodotus

S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae:

- 15. Bugga to Boniface
- 29. Leobgytha to Boniface
- 32. Boniface to Pethelm
- 34. Boniface to Duddo
- 50. Boniface to Pope Zacharias
- 54. Gemmulus to Boniface
- 56. Carloman to all Christians
- 57. Pope Zacharias to Boniface
- 59. Boniface to Pope Zacharias
- 62. Gemmulus to Boniface
- 63. Boniface to Daniel of Winchester
- 67. Boniface to Leobgytha, Tecla, Cynehild
- 69. Boniface to Aethelbald of Mercia
- 70. Lully to Eadburga
- 71. Lully to Dealwine
- 74. Boniface to Herefrith
- 75. Boniface to Egbert of York

- 78. Boniface to Cuthbert of Canterbury
- 91. Boniface to Egbert of York
- 93. Boniface to Fulrad
- 96. Boniface to Leobgytha
- 98. Lully to an abbess and nun
- 100. Lully to Leobgytha
- 105. Aethelbert II to Boniface
- 114. Cineheard of Winchester to Lully
- 116. Cuthbert to Lully
- 121. Alhred and Osgifu to Lully
- 122. Aeadulf of Rochester to Lully
- 124. Coena of York to Lully
- 125. Lully to Coena
- 126. Lully to Cuthbert
- 131. Botwin to Lully

variae Cassiodori:

1.45. Theodoric to Boethius

1.46. Theodoric to Gundobad

Venantii Fortunati opera poetica:

1.17. to Placidina

11.8. to Agnes

3.27. to the Archdeacon of Meaux

11.9. to Conon of Lérins

5.13. to Gregory of Tours

11.14. to Agnes

8.6. to Radegund

11.18. as above

8.8. as above

11.24. to Radegund and Agnes

8.19. to Gregory of Tours

8.21. as above

10.16. to Sigoald

appendix carminum 2 to Justin and Sophia*appendix carminum* 18 to Agnes*appendix carminum* 26 to Radegund and Agnes*appendix carminum* 27 to Agnes

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first examines the role of that shadowy third party in any medieval epistolographical transaction – the bearer of the letter. Discussed are the types of individuals who were likely to be hired for this task, his responsibilities, his foibles, and his probable modes and routes of travel.¹ Since one of the functions of the bearer was to also carry any gifts that accompanied the letter, the second section of this chapter examines various aspects of gift exchange in an epistolographical setting.

¹ No female bearers are mentioned in the Merovingian collections.

Section I: Bearers

...your bearer, standing over me threateningly while his words fell one by one from his gaping jaws, reminded me of nothing so much as a ruthless debt collector who had it in mind to compel me to pay out not so much what I owed, but what he thought he could get out of me. And although he was in such a hurry to get back that I was scarcely given time to catch my breath, nonetheless I obeyed your orders, garbled and tangled as they came out of his mouth – out of devotion rather than from any hope of pleasing you – even though you sent them in such a precipitous fashion.²

Venantius Fortunatus

The above letter-bearer gone wild had been sent from Gregory of Tours to his friend Venantius Fortunatus with a demand for what the latter termed *non valitura*, or as we might say, mission impossible: the poet was to compose verses celebrating the conversion of the Jews of Clermont by Bishop Avitus of that city, and he was to do so at once while the bearer waited.³ In spite of a series of protests that he was unequal to the task, and that he was being bullied by the bearer, Fortunatus managed to dash off 150 lines in two days.⁴ Although we are given no further information about the man and thus have no idea of his name or office, the poet's caricature of him as Gregory's buffoon-like but faithful mouthpiece affords a personalized and humourous view of a letter-carrier that is unique to these collections. (There are, however, other cases of "overbearing bearers" that we will examine later).

It is easy to forget that in the period before us, epistolography was triangular: written communication between two individuals always required a third whose task it was to

² *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.5a.1–2: ...*praesertim cum instans portitor per verba singillatim hianti fauce cadentia quasi gravis exactor non me tam fenora soluere cogeret quam pensaret. Sub quo, licet illum praeceps iter inpingeret, mihi interanhelanti vix licuerit respirare, tamen praeceptis vestris, licet impliciter expeditis, paremus devoti potius quam placemus.*

³ For Gregory's version of the Jews' conversion, see *LH* 5.11.

⁴ The last section of the poem (5.5b) begins as follows: *Haec inculta tibi reputa, pater alme Gregori / qui fortunato non valitura iubes / Adde quod exiguum me portitor inpulit instans / et datur in spatiis vix geminata dies.* [Settle my account with these verses / foster father Gregory / you who ordered Fortunatus to do what could not be done / Add that your bearer has threatened and forced poor little me / so I had to finish it in scarcely two days].

convey it from one to the other, sometimes over great distances.⁵ This individual was an everyday figure in what scholars now consider a mobile Frankish society, joining the multitude of others traversing the roads and rivers of Gaul for an endless variety of purposes: commerce, pilgrimage, flight, diplomacy, patronage, war, healing, marriage, brigandage, to name just a few. Such movement, plus the transportation and support structures undergirding it, has received a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years.⁶ In the area of communication, however, this attention has tended to focus on the public role of embassies and formal diplomatic activity, with the result that the delivery of private letters has received scant, if any, notice from scholars. The first half of this chapter, therefore, will focus on two questions: (a) what information do the Merovingian letters contain regarding letter-bearers and their specialized status and responsibilities? and (b) how do the letters contribute more generally to our knowledge of routes and modes of travel in the Frankish kingdom?

1 The Identity of Bearers

1.1 For Clerics

Bearers are mentioned in close to 15% of the letters in the Merovingian collections, with the great majority of that number being in letters sent by bishops. In spite of this not insignificant number, no clear profile emerges of the typical episcopal bearer apart from

⁵ In a few cases we have a quadrangle where two bearers are mentioned, without explanation. Examples are: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.11; *epistolae Arelatenses* 14, 42, 50, 51, and 52; *epistolae Austrasicae* 21; *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 87 and 112.

⁶ Some of the most recent examples are: Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411–533* (Cambridge: 2003); Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900* (Cambridge: 2001), also “Rats, communications, and plague: toward an ecological history,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34/1 (2003) 1–25; Gregory I. Halfond, *The Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, AD 511–768* (Leiden: 2010) and “Transportation, communication, and the movement of peoples in the Frankish kingdom, ca. 500–900 C.E.” *History Compass* Vol. 7 Iss. 6 (Nov. 2009) 1554–1569; P. Horden, “Travel Sickness: Medicine and mobility in the Mediterranean from Antiquity to the Renaissance,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. W.V. Harris (Oxford: 2005), 179–99; T. Reuter, “The insecurity of travel in the early and high Middle Ages: criminals, victims and their medieval and modern observers,” in *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, ed. J. Nelson (Cambridge: 2006), 38–71.

his inevitably holding ecclesiastical office. As a result deacons, subdeacons, abbots, and priests are commonly commended by name and office in the letters they carried. While this does not rule out bishops' use of others, such as lay *famuli*, as bearers, these, if they exist at all, go unmentioned in the letter collections.

Bearers of papal letters are even more elusive. One reason for this is due to the fact that we have little correspondence in our corpus that was initiated by the apostolic see. Rather, papal representation is almost entirely confined to replies to previous episcopal letters, with the bearer of the original letter doing double duty by carrying the pope's reply back to the Gallic individual who initiated the contact. In a letter dated 557 from Pope Pelagius I to Sapaudus of Arles, for example, the deacon Flavianus and subdeacon Nestorius, Sapaudus' bearers, had taken to Rome the bishop's letter requesting that his privileges be confirmed. After composing the letter complying with the request, Pelagius sent the two back to Sapaudus.⁷ Gregory I followed the same procedure when in 596 Brunhild and Palladius of Saintes jointly sent the priest Leuparic to Rome with a request for relics. Gregory replied to each separately but sent letters and relics back with the same bearer, Leuparic.⁸ When Gregory did initiate letters to Gaul, these were delivered via Candidus, his administrator of the papal estates there;⁹ Augustine, the leader of the mission to the Anglo-Saxons, and his monks;¹⁰ or Gregory's agent Cyriacus, formerly abbot of Gregory's own monastery of St. Andrew in Rome.¹¹

1.2 For Royalty

The small number of letters from royals in which bearers are mentioned indicates a mixed usage of clerical and lay individuals. As noted above, Brunhild used the services of a priest when she and Palladius requested relics from Gregory, although Leuparic may have been the choice of Palladius rather than Brunhild. When the queen later wrote to Gregory requesting the pallium for Syagrius of Autun, however, her bearer's failure to

⁷ *epistolae Arelatenses* 50.

⁸ Gregory's replies are *registrum Gregorii* 6.50 and 6.58.

⁹ *registrum Gregorii* 6.5, 6.6, 11.44.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 6.51, 6.52, 6.54, 6.56, 6.59, 6.60, 11.50, 11.51.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 9.209, 9.214, 9.219, 9.220, 11.10.

respond appropriately to the pope's questioning suggests that he was a layman – a situation I discuss more fully below. The only other letter from a royal in which the office of the bearer is mentioned is a mid-eighth century missive from King Aethelbert II of Kent to Boniface in which the king commends to his addressee his own bearer, the monk Ethelun.¹²

1.3 For Non-Elites

Letters of non-elites are rare and even more rarely are bearers mentioned in these; a few examples do exist, however. In one of her letters to her son, Bishop Desiderius of Cahors, Herchenefreda asks him to send her bearer Doderius back as quickly as possible.¹³ We are not told anything further about the man, but can reasonably assume that he was a member of her household. Another example is a letter written to Boniface in his early days on the Continent in which Abbess Eangyth and her daughter Bugga commend their bearer Denewald, a relative who is travelling in Boniface's direction on his way to another location.¹⁴ The prolific Venantius Fortunatus also provides a few examples. In one poem to Gregory of Tours, Fortunatus commends Prodomeris, his bearer, whom he names as his *famulus*.¹⁵ In a (probably) later composition the poet again makes reference to a *famulus* acting as bearer, this time a man by the name of Audulf. The latter's task was to deliver a pair of short verse-panegyrics to Brunhild and Childebert II.¹⁶

¹² *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 105.

¹³ *vita Desiderii* 1.1.

¹⁴ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 14.

¹⁵ *Venanti Fortunati opera poetica* 5.8b.9-10.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, *appendix carminum* 5.13 and 6.15. These verses were probably composed around the time of the Treaty of Andelot (587), a high point in Brunhild's fortunes when the future of her progeny and their kingdom seemed assured. The Treaty of Andelot was contracted between Childebert II, son of Brunhild and the deceased Sigibert, and Sigibert's brother Guntram, all of whose sons had died. The treaty, which was the fulfilment of a promise made after the Gundovald affair in 584, gave Childebert all Guntram's territories after his death, which according to Fred. 4.14 occurred in 593. See *LH* 7.33 and 9.11; also Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool:1995), 97 n. 1.

2 Petitioners as Bearers

2.1 Requests for Aid

There are a number of cases in the collections of petitioners who sought help or patronage from some important individual. If successful, these clients received a letter commending them to some other individual with the power and/or authority to assist them. It was then up to the petitioner to carry the letter to the addressee, who, if all went well, would agree to perform the action or service in aid of the letter's carrier.¹⁷

Venantius Fortunatus, who seemed drawn to helping people, became involved in several situations of this nature. Two of these concerned travellers. For a man from Italy who was unfamiliar with Gaul and appears to have lost his way, for example, Fortunatus composed a poetic epistle of introduction addressed to a group of unnamed bishops, requesting that they lend their aid to the stranger.¹⁸ Another time he sent a few lines of verse to Gregory of Tours, similarly asking that he provide for a traveller.¹⁹

The poet also composed several poems for people in distress due to the capture and/or enslavement of their offspring. One group is addressed to four people of consequence in aid of a father whose daughter had been taken captive.²⁰ Gregory of Tours is one of these. Two of the others – Romulf and Florentinus, mayors of the palaces of Childebert II and Brunhild respectively – are mentioned by Gregory in his *Histories*.²¹ The fourth

¹⁷ The collections bring no closure in these instances, as we never hear the end result. We cannot assume that the addressee always felt obliged to carry out the request, although the threat of losing face in one's *amicitia* network was a possible motivator.

¹⁸ *Venanti Fortunati opera poetica* 10.13.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 5.15. Interestingly, in his early days in Gaul, Fortunatus addressed a similar letter to the Gallic pontiffs on his own behalf, introducing himself as an Italian wayfarer, and asking for their aid (5.18). His early experiences as an "exile" likely brought home to him the discomfort of being a stranger in a strange land and motivated him to help others in the same position.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 10.12. The caption to these poems states *pro puella a iudicibus capta*, "for a girl captured/imprisoned by the magistrates." According to J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, (Leiden: 1976), *iudex* in this period can mean any state official.

²¹ *LH* 9.30. Childebert sent the two to Poitiers and Tours as tax inspectors. Although the poet addresses them as dear friends – *amice, mihi care, amice fidelis*, and the like – they are found nowhere else in his surviving corpus.

individual, Gallienus, is addressed by Fortunatus as *comes*; he is generally thought to be the same individual referred to as *amicus noster* by Gregory of Tours.²² The poems are individually crafted for each recipient and in each the poet makes it clear that the wronged father is the bearer of the letter. Another poem of this type, to Gregory alone, was on behalf of parents whom the poet had met at a shrine of St. Martin. The parents were mourning because their daughter had been accused of theft and as a result had been sold into slavery. Although no one had witnessed the incident, the father was unable, due to poverty, to clear his daughter's name.²³ It is likely that the father acted as bearer in this case as well, although this is not directly stated in the poem. A final example is a poem and prose exposition to Syagrius of Autun, persuading the bishop to aid a father who had sought help from Fortunatus after his son had been taken prisoner.²⁴ As explained by the prose portion, the poem, which takes the form of a magnificent multiple *carmen figuratum*, is "payment" for the bishop's assistance.²⁵ As the outcome of these situations is nowhere recorded, we have no idea if Fortunatus' efforts on behalf of these individuals bore any fruit, or indeed if the poet himself ever heard from any of the participants again.

The *registrum* of Gregory the Great contains many examples that demonstrate similar aid given in a papal context. Since a positive judgment would result in a papal directive rather than a mere plea for aid à la Venantius Fortunatus, this process was highly effective if one could make one's way to Rome.²⁶ A certain Dominicus came to the pope

²² LH 5.49. Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 3, 91 n. 180, points out that there is no evidence for this association.

²³ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 5.14.14–5.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 5.6.1.

²⁵ For more details see Chapter 2, "Venantius Fortunatus and his Correspondents," Section 2.6.

²⁶ There is an example in the *registrum* of a woman who petitioned Pope Gregory and became the bearer of her own letter. (This case has nothing to do with Merovingian Francia but is interesting both because the protagonist is a woman and because it documents a case where the Church actually returned property). A widow Stephania, mother of a young son, came to Gregory because she was suffering from extreme poverty. Her former mother-in-law had wrongly alienated a house belonging to the boy by donating it to the church. She wished to have it back for her son, but Gregory's deacon in Sicily, where the woman came from, refused to return it. Gregory reversed the

for help, for instance, because his four brothers had been ransomed from captivity by some Jews of Narbonne, only to be enslaved by those same Jews.²⁷ To Gregory, such a situation was *execrandum*. In response, the pope addressed a letter to Candidus, his agent in Gaul, advising him look into the matter and pay for the men's freedom, if necessary. This letter was given to Dominicus and it was his responsibility to deliver it to Candidus. The pope's concern over Jewish masters and Christian slaves surfaced again two years later when he addressed letters to Brunhild and her grandsons Theuderic and Theudebert in which he urged them to pass regulations forbidding Jews to own Christian slaves.²⁸ Although such laws had been promulgated in the Frankish kingdom since the reign of Clovis I, these had been enforced only haphazardly, if at all, by Clovis' successors. As with other Gallic church reforms in which Gregory took an interest, this one fell on deaf ears; it was not until the defeat of Brunhild and the reign of Chlothar II that a firmly anti-Jewish policy became predominant in the Frankish kingdom.²⁹

Another example of an individual seeking aid from Rome is that of a priest named Aurelius who travelled from Gaul to petition the pope for a position in one of the Gallic possessions of the apostolic see. Gregory granted his request and commended him in a letter to Candidus for its fulfillment.³⁰ Yet another instance involved the priest Pancratius, who had for some time served as priest in the church in Vienne under Bishop Desiderius, but had then converted to the monastic life and been made a deacon. When Desiderius ordered him back to his former service, Pancratius objected and travelled to Rome to plead his case with the pope. Gregory then composed a letter to Desiderius for Pancratius

deacon's decision and wrote a letter to Romanus, Defensor of Sicily, ordering him to see that the woman received the land back for her son. See *registrum Gregorii* 9.48.

²⁷ *registrum Gregorii* 7.21. The Jews likely bought the captives, who were doubtless being sold as slaves, for eventual ransom at a profit.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 9.214 and 9.216. The pope's concern was likely over the possibility of Jewish proselytizing and the subsequent loss of Christians to Judaism.

²⁹ For a thorough discussion of Jewish policy throughout the Merovingian era, see B. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe*, (Minnesota: 1977), 44–65.

³⁰ *registrum Gregorii* 9.222.

to take back to Vienne with him, ordering the bishop to allow his former priest to pursue his chosen life and remain in the monastery.³¹

2.2 Letters of Commendation

Related cases are those that commend or introduce the bearer, but which lack the drama and urgency of the above. There are several of this nature scattered throughout the collections. In the early sixth century, for example, Bishop Avitus of Vienne wrote a letter of commendation to Caesarius of Arles on behalf of Maximianus, bishop of Trier, who was travelling south in search of better medical help for an eye condition.³² A century later, Desiderius of Cahors addressed a letter of introduction to Abbo of Metz on behalf of an unnamed individual who was arriving in Metz to oversee a monastery.³³ Later still Boniface, early in his career, was given a letter of commendation from Pope Gregory II. This was addressed to Charles Martel and informed the *maior domus* that Boniface had been consecrated by the Holy See and sent as a missionary to the peoples east of the Rhine.³⁴ Although these examples cover widely-divergent situations, they are related in that the bearer is not simply the disinterested carrier of somebody else's letter, but is an active participant, indeed both initiator and beneficiary, in the proceedings.

3 The Responsibilities of Bearers

Bearers often had a variety of tasks to fulfill beyond simply carrying a letter from one place to the next. Like their more public counterparts, political ambassadors, private bearers were at times responsible for delivering a verbal message that enlarged upon or clarified the contents of the letter. In a letter to Bishop Leutharius of Winchester, for example, Aldhelm explained that he must change his plans for visiting him after Christmas due to various obstacles that had arisen. He does not elaborate, but states that the bearer of the letter will supply the details.³⁵ Milred of Worcester does the same when

³¹ *ibid.*, 9.158.

³² *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis episcopi* 2; also found as *epistolae Aviti Viennensis* 11.

³³ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.9.

³⁴ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 20.

³⁵ *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* 1.

sending his condolences to Lully on the death of Boniface: the letter's bearer has been instructed to orally deliver a fuller version of the thoughts expressed in the letter.³⁶

Occasionally the verbal communication entirely overtakes the written portion of the message, as in a reply from Paul of Verdun to Desiderius of Cahors. The former thanks Desiderius for the gift of wine and mentions in passing certain concerns raised by the bishop,³⁷ but leaves all discussion of them up to the bearer. Meanwhile, the bulk of the letter is restricted to epistolographical commonplaces.

Verbal messages often had to be delivered in delicate situations where success depended on the bearer's discretion and diplomacy. Desiderius of Cahors had a falling-out with Bishop Felix of Limoges, for example, that prompted a nasty letter, now lost, from Felix. In his reply Desiderius blamed the problem on the ill will of those close to Felix, but he also committed a verbal message to the bearer of the letter to seal their reconciliation.³⁸ The bearer must have done his job well, because some time later Felix sent Desiderius a profuse apology for his earlier offence.³⁹ In another instance, Boniface sent a letter to an Abbot Duddo, whom he names as his former pupil; the bearer in this case was Boniface's priest Eoban. Eoban's task was to explain to Duddo the troublesome case of the woman who married her children's godfather, and to request from the abbot information as to why this was considered a serious transgression.⁴⁰ While in some of these instances the verbal message was doubtless a memorized set piece, the more complex cases demanded a degree of verbal skill, knowledge, and tact on the part of the bearer that was the equal of any diplomatic situation. The above-noted case of Audulf, Fortunatus' *famulus* and bearer, was especially sensitive. Since the panegyrics Audulf was to deliver were designed to be declaimed in the presence of their royal recipients, Fortunatus must have

³⁶ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 112.

³⁷ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.11. These have to do with the case of the lady Bobila and her gifts of property to the church at Cahors. For further discussion, see Chapter 3, "Bishops' Letters," Section 1.4.

³⁸ *ibid.*, 1.15.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 2.21.

⁴⁰ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 34. Letters 32 and 33 in this collection also concern themselves with this situation, which troubled Boniface greatly. (He had allowed the marriage and only later found out that such a union was against the canons due to spiritual consanguinity).

relied on his bearer to perform this task on his behalf. This shows a remarkable trust in the man's ability, for a poor performance would risk royal displeasure not only for Audulf, but for the poet himself.

Bearers were also required at times to conduct business for the writers of the letters they were carrying. Boniface's priest and bearer Eoban was instructed, probably on the same journey as noted above, to deliver to Abbess Eadburga of Thanet the materials she needed to make a copy of the *epistolae* of St. Peter in gold lettering.⁴¹ Being entrusted with the safe transport of such valuable items over a great distance was a heavy responsibility. (We will encounter this again below when we examine the gifts, some of them both bulky and valuable, that bearers were often commissioned to deliver safely along with the letter). A further example of this nature is contained in a letter authored by Lully, who requested that the abbess Cuneburga send back to him with the bearer of the letter his two freedmen, Begiloc and Man.⁴² This would have required the bearer, who remains unnamed, to negotiate with the abbess for the release of the freedmen, arrange for their transport on the journey back to the Continent, and accompany and protect them on the way.

4 Bearer Malfunction

We gain appreciation for the skill with which most bearers fulfilled their duties when we examine a case where the bearer experienced some sort of breakdown at the moment of delivery. The year after Brunhild sent Leuparic to Rome for relics, she again sent a letter (now lost) to Pope Gregory, this time requesting the pallium for Syagrius of Autun.⁴³ We are not told whom she used this time as bearer, but it appears that when granted an audience with the pope the man was put through a series of questions to test his orthodoxy. Probably due to ignorance, he did not reply satisfactorily and as a result the pope received the impression that he was a schismatic. Although later in his reply

⁴¹ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 35.

⁴² *ibid.*, 49.

⁴³ The pope's reply is *registrum Gregorii* 8.4. For more details see Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 2.3.

Gregory softened this stance somewhat by stating that the bearer likely didn't know what he was talking about, the pope still considered the bearer's failings an impediment to Syagrius immediately receiving his pallium. While the situation was eventually sorted out, we cannot help but sympathize with the hapless bearer, who had to return home and face Brunhild's wrath at the failure of his mission.

There are other hints in the collections that relations were not always smooth between bearers and their counterparts in the epistolographical transaction. Venantius Fortunatus several times gives a veiled reference to the nuisance factor involved in hiring a bearer. Twice he implies that a bearer was not always available and that one must make use of travellers or whomever one can press into service.⁴⁴ And in a poem addressed to Magnulf, the brother of Duke Lupus of Champagne, the poet apologizes for his brevity with the excuse that the bearer is standing over his shoulder, impatient to be off.⁴⁵ An almost identical situation exists in a letter addressed to Nicetius of Trier from an unknown individual: toward the end the writer complains that because the bearer is anxious to begin his journey, he is unable to praise Nicetius as he ought.⁴⁶ These can be viewed as merely epistolographical *topoi*, but such complaints needed a basis in reality in order to resonate with the reader at all.

Alternatively, a bearer could be handily blamed for any problems once a letter left the hands of the sender. In July 599 Pope Gregory I sent a letter to Serenus of Marseilles, using his agent the abbot Cyriacus as bearer.⁴⁷ It had come to the pope's attention that Serenus had destroyed some icons in his church after noticing members of his congregation adoring them. This was all wrong, said Gregory; the bishop should prohibit people from worshipping the icons, but should by no means destroy them. A year later, Gregory found it necessary to reproach Serenus again for the same offence and this time he was most indignant on his bearer's behalf: the bishop had apparently suspected

⁴⁴ *Venanti Fortunati opera poetica* 7.18.5–6 to Flavus; 8.17.3 to Gregory of Tours.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 7.10.19.

⁴⁶ *epistolae Austrasicae* 24.

⁴⁷ *registrum Gregorii* 9.209.

Cyriacus of tampering with the first letter and had continued smashing icons.⁴⁸ While Serenus was perhaps less than ingenuous in his excuse for ignoring the pope's request – Cyriacus, after all, was one of Gregory's most reliable agents – the case highlights what must have been a common epistolographical concern: once a letter left the writer's hands, it was entirely under the control of the bearer.

This applied even more stringently to any verbal message, as illustrated in a letter in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*. When Boniface's priest Eoban returned from his trip to England described above, he was supposed to have brought a verbal message from one Sigebald,⁴⁹ who wished to consider Boniface as his bishop alongside his regular bishop, Daniel of Winchester, and had asked permission for this privilege. Receiving no reply, Sigebald repeated his request in written form.⁵⁰ In it he expresses his disappointment at being overlooked, complaining that if Eoban had done his work properly, Boniface would have sent him a letter granting his petition. It is possible that Eoban simply forgot to deliver the original verbal message or that Boniface failed to respond to it. Nonetheless the case underscores the fragility of the process and the strong possibility of it breaking down at some point.

This is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in a letter to Lully from Cuthbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow.⁵¹ The abbot relates an incident that happened six years earlier, when his priest Hunvin was on his way to Rome. Hunvin was to deliver some gifts to Lully on his way to Italy, but died when he reached the city of Benevento, so that Cuthbert never did hear what happened to the gifts. This report is most curious. Why didn't Hunvin deliver the gifts to Lully as he passed through Frisia on the way to Rome? Or did Lully receive the gifts but neglect to thank Cuthbert? More to the point, what was Hunvin doing in Benevento, which is well south of Rome? Again, this case serves to

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 11.10. In other words, Serenus was saying, the letter had been rendered invalid and he could ignore it. Possibly the seal had been broken.

⁴⁹ According to E. Dümmler, Sigebald was possibly abbot of Chersey Abbey in Surrey. M. Tangl believes he was the same individual later addressed by Lully as "Sigewald," see *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 113.

⁵⁰ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 36.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 116.

illustrate the uncertainty involved with sending letters and gifts, and the high degree of responsibility entrusted to the bearer, especially when travelling far afield.⁵²

5 Modes of Travel⁵³

5.1 Horses

There are several references to horses and their use as transport in the Merovingian letter collections. In a poetic epistle of congratulation to Sigoald on his becoming a count, Venantius Fortunatus recalls that when he entered Gaul as a stranger, Sigoald supplied him with the necessities of life, including a horse.⁵⁴ In another to Bertechramnus of Le Mans, the poet describes being taken for a ride in the bishop's *reda*, a Gallic chariot pulled by two pairs of horses.⁵⁵ According to the writer, the vehicle travelled at a great rate. (Bertechramnus owned such a large stable that when he died he bequeathed one horse each to all his servants – secular and ecclesiastical, free and servile; the rest went to friends and family).⁵⁶ A century and a half later, Lully had occasion to write a letter of complaint to Abbot Fulrad of St. Denis and the Frankish bishops.⁵⁷ The evil priests

⁵² An earlier example can be found in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris (Bk. 4.12). The bearer had delivered a letter successfully to Sidonius' friends Simplicius and Apollinaris, but on the way home had lost their reply to Sidonius. When the latter asked for at least a verbal message, the bearer was forced to admit that there was none; it had all been committed to writing. Sidonius was furious at the bearer, who seems to have been a household servant, and wrote again to his friends asking them to rewrite their reply.

⁵³ Although the letters under study are silent on the matter, there is evidence for the existence in the Frankish kingdom of a public post. A postal warrant (*evectio* or *tractoria*) was issued to qualified users that allowed them to requisition fresh horses and other supplies along the road. There are only two Merovingian references to this system. One is Gregory of Tours *LH* 9.9, in which King Childebert sends his servants off in his name *cum evectione publica* to sequester the property of his enemy Duke Rauching; the other is *Formula Marculfi* 1.11, superscribed *tractoria legatariorum* and opening with *ille rex omnibus agentibus*. While there are no examples and little likelihood of individuals other than the king's agents having access to the royal post, it is possible either that the *civitates* kept up way stations for travellers on business or that the dispersed network of episcopal estates and properties may have had some privatized or unofficial arrangement on well-travelled routes.

⁵⁴ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 10.16.1–4.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 3.17.

⁵⁶ M. Weidemann, *Testament des Bischofs Berthramn*, (Bonn: 1986), 30.

⁵⁷ *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 110.

Willefrid and Enraed, he states, had removed slaves that had been given to his church and traded them for horses. Not only that, they also stole livestock, including seven of his best four-year-old breeding mares, and many other horses that he and his people were raising. Evidently the hardship experienced in the wilds of Germania did not include doing without horses, at least under Lully's leadership.

The value of the horse as a standard mode of conveyance is also evident in the works of Gregory of Tours and his casual references to it stress how ubiquitous the animal was. In the *vitae patrum*, for example, Gregory describes a journey of Nicetius of Trier, who descended from his horse to answer a call of nature and had an encounter with the devil while doing so.⁵⁸ In the same work, St. Gallus is said to have advised one of his clerics, Viventius, to take his predecessor's horse, saddle it, and bring it to him for the bishop's use.⁵⁹ In another account, Gregory describes himself being thrown from his horse on a journey from Burgundy to Auvergne.⁶⁰ Perhaps the most telling example is that of the young man John, who Gregory tells us was sent to Bishop Innocentius of Rodez by his father Eulalius so he might become a priest.⁶¹ The young man practiced such abstinence, says Gregory, that he wore shabby clothes, ate barley-bread instead of wheat-bread, drank water instead of wine, and rode a donkey instead of a horse. That giving up the use of horse travel could be classed as an extreme act of asceticism points to the conclusion that only the lower strata of society, or those adopting a position of humility, were compelled to travel by other means.

When we supplement this epistolographical material with other sources, the picture that emerges is that any able-bodied male of any consequence in Merovingian society used horses or horse-drawn vehicles as transportation.⁶² The use of ox-drawn vehicles as a

⁵⁸ *vitae patrum* XVII.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, VI.

⁶⁰ *liber in gloria martyrum* 83.

⁶¹ *LH* 10.8.

⁶² According to Jamie Kreiner, "About the bishop: the episcopal entourage and the economy of government in post-Roman Gaul," *Speculum* Vol. 86 No. 2 (April 2011) 321–360, 343, also n. 93, "[bishops], like all important people of their time, always traveled on horseback." Women also rode horses and used horse-drawn vehicles.

method of transport during the Merovingian era, while well-documented, seems to have been limited to the use of women, children, the sick, and the poor.⁶³ There are no examples of a healthy adult male of means voluntarily riding in an oxcart. This gives a new twist to Einhard's famous description of the last Merovingian kings and their conveyance in oxcarts. These were not only symbolic of "rusticity and poverty," as Murray points out; more significantly, they marked the king – and his line – as effeminate, gender-ambiguous, degenerate, and ailing.

5.2 River Travel

Bearers of letters would often have been required to navigate the rivers of Gaul.⁶⁴ Several times Venantius Fortunatus provides glimpses of boats and river travel. In one poem to Radegund and Agnes, for example, he describes his journey from Poitiers north up the Loire and then, following the curve of the river, west to Angers and on to Cariatum, near Nantes, where he spent some time with Bishop Domitianus of Angers.⁶⁵ The return trip was not an easy one. After Fortunatus left Domitianus and boarded a small boat, the

Gregory of Tours reports how Marcovefa, King Charibert's queen, received Leudast, later Count of Tours, and placed him in charge of her stables (*LH* 5.48). Gregory also describes the wife of the traitor Duke Raucing parading through the streets of Soissons on horseback, bedecked with jewels and surrounded by a crowd of servants (*LH* 9.9). Perhaps the most surprising example occurred during the revolt at Holy Cross in Poitiers, when a troop of nuns led by Clotild arrived in Tours on foot, not out of humility, but because they had no horses to ride on (*LH* 9.39). Evidently such a situation was unusual enough to draw a comment from Gregory.

⁶³ A.C. Murray, "Post vocantur Merovingii: Fredegar, Merovech, and 'Sacral Kingship,'" in *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, ed. A.C. Murray (Toronto: 1998), 131, points out the Merovingian example of the wealthy Erminthruide, who left two of her wagons, with oxen and trappings, to the Church in her will; Murray refers us also to Gregory of Tours and the example of Deuteria, *LH* 3.26, who was placed by her mother in an oxcart drawn by untamed oxen and taken to her death. It is not clear from these examples whether women of high status voluntarily rode in oxcarts. Murray suggests that the ox wagons of the Roman *cursus clabularis*, or imperial slow post, also carried personnel, but this is limited in his sources to the sick and families of soldiers.

⁶⁴ Although there is nothing specific in the sources, river travel likely included watercraft that carried horses. Gregory of Tours (*LH* 5.49) describes a type of ferry made from two boats joined together and fitted with a deck. This could presumably carry horses as well as personnel, but seems to have been designed only to cross the river, not travel along it..

⁶⁵ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 11.25.

North Wind hit the area with such a storm that the water of the river was whipped up into large waves that caused flooding of the land on either side. The poet must have experienced a great deal of anxiety, for as we learn from a poem addressed to Count Galactorius of Bordeaux, Fortunatus was not fond of white water. Although he would love to come to Bordeaux, he says, his fear of the mountainous waves of the Garonne river holds him back.⁶⁶ This can only be a reference to the tidal bore, *mascaret* in French, which forms on the Garonne from June to November and which can at times reach a height of 1.5 metres. Fortunatus obviously knew the area well: his poem *de Egircio flumine* describes how this river, a tributary of the Garonne, dries up in the summer and becomes a raging torrent whenever it rains.⁶⁷

Two other poems of Fortunatus describe boat travel on the Moselle river in Austrasia. One was composed shortly after the poet's arrival at the court of Sigibert and Brunhild: in mock-tragic vein he laments the "theft" by the royal cook of the boat that was meant for Fortunatus and his baggage.⁶⁸ Vilicus of Metz, however, came to his rescue with a small skiff⁶⁹ and the poet, who seems at that time to have been a novice sailor, sat *pavidus*, panicstruck, as the boat skimmed the water, which kept soaking his feet. A later poem describes a long voyage on the Moselle in which Fortunatus accompanied Brunhild and her son King Childebert II on a royal progress.⁷⁰ He met the entourage in Metz and was evidently on horseback, for when he reached the river he was peremptorily pulled from his horse and commanded to enter a small boat for the journey downriver. The party made its way north from Metz, past Trier, on to Coblenz where the Rhine and the

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 7.25.13–4.

⁶⁷ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 1.21. This poem, being primarily a description, is not in this inventory. The river is the modern Gers.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 6.8.

⁶⁹ The word is *linter* in Latin.

⁷⁰ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 10.9 (not in this inventory). As with *appendix carminum* 5 and 6, this work, along with 10.8, is dated by George to around the time of the Treaty of Andelot. Although they are all praise poems for Brunhild and Childebert, grouping these together presents a problem, since *app. carm.* 5 and 6 were sent with and declaimed by the bearer Audulf, as described above, while the others were taken and declaimed by Fortunatus personally. This suggests a completely separate occasion for *app. carm.* 5 and 6 from the rest of this supposed group.

Moselle meet, then a little further down the Rhine to Andernach, a little southeast of Cologne. Here the company halted and enjoyed a large banquet, which included as entertainment the declamation of Fortunatus' poem to the assembled court.

River travel also comes up in a letter authored by Columbanus. The Irishman, addressing his disciples and particularly his designated successor Attala, states that he is writing while waiting to take ship *invitus* for Ireland, an exile imposed on him by Queen Brunhild and her grandson Theuderic.⁷¹ For details of the saint's journey we must turn to the *vita Columbani* of Jonas of Bobbio, who reports that Columbanus had travelled under guard from his monastery at Luxeuil to Besançon, Autun, and Auxerre, finally reaching Orléans on the River Loire. From there they travelled by river to Tours before halting in Nantes. When their ocean-going vessel was being rowed out of the mouth of the Loire to the open sea, it was driven ashore by a large wave, where it remained high and dry. All observing this incident took it for a miracle halting the exile of the holy man, who turned back with his followers and sought out Brunhild's nephew and archenemy, King Chlothar II, in Neustria.⁷² Columbanus never did return to Ireland.

5.3 Travel Between Gaul and Italy

People travelling to and from Italy had to get over or around the Alps.⁷³ The Romans had their favourite passes, many of which were constructed and/or upgraded under Augustus (31 BC-14 AD)⁷⁴ and these were doubtless still in use in Late Antiquity, although it is not known to what extent. The fifth-century Gallo-Roman Sidonius Apollinaris describes at length his own passage of the Cottian Alps in a letter to his friend Heronius:⁷⁵

⁷¹ *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 4.8. This letter is dated 610, i.e. approximately two decades after Fortunatus' description of his journey down the Moselle. Brunhild, now an elderly woman who has lost husband and son, is still energetically pulling strings via her grandsons.

⁷² *vita Columbani*, 38–47. Also Fred. 4.36; the latter takes his account from Jonas.

⁷³ For discussion see Robert Latouche, "Les Communications entre la Gaule et L'Italie sous le Bas-Empire et à L'Époque Mérovingienne," in *Studio in Onore di A. Farfani* Vol. I (Milan: 1962), 473–480.

⁷⁴ Edward Pyatt, *The Passage of the Alps* (London: 1984), 37.

⁷⁵ This is the range directly to the north of the coastal Maritime Alps.

*Egresso mihi Rhodanusiae nostrae moenibus publicus cursus usui fuit utpote sacris apicibus accito, et quidem per domicilia sodalium propinquorumque...Sic Alpium iugis appropinquatum; quarum mihi citus et vacilis ascensus et inter utrimque terrentis latera praeerupti cavatis in callem nivibus itinera mollita. Fluviorum quoque, si qui non navigabiles, vada commoda, vel certe pervii pontes, quos antiquitas a fundamentis ad usque aggerem calcabili silice crustatum crypticis arcubus fornicavit.*⁷⁶

When I passed the gates of Lyons, I found the state post at my disposal as one summoned by an imperial letter, and moreover the homes of intimate friends and relations lined the route...In this way I drew near to the heights of the Alps. I found the ascent quick and easy: between walls of terrifying precipices on either side, travelling had been simplified by cutting a pathway through the snow. As to the rivers, I found that such of them as were not navigable had convenient fords or at any rate bridges fit for traffic; these our forefathers have constructed on a series of vaulted arches reaching from the foundations up to the roadway with its cobbled surface.

Sidonius' observations of nesting birds and sprouting vegetation along the riverbanks in the Po River valley once he descended from the mountains signify that his journey was undertaken in the spring, perhaps the most dangerous time to cross the Alps because of the risk of avalanche. This makes his account of his easy Alpine crossing all the more curious, especially when compared to the following harrowing report by Ammianus Marcellinus of the same route – the Cottian Alps – penned a century earlier:

*In his Alpibus cottiis, quarum initium a Segusione est oppido, praecelsum erigitur iugum, nulli fere sine discrimine penetrabile. Est enim e Galliis venientibus prona humilitate devexum, pendentium saxorum altrinsecus visu terribile praesertim verno tempore, cum liquente gelu nivibusque solutis flatu calidiore ventorum...descendentes cunctantibus plantis homines et iumenta procidunt et carpenta...Hieme vero humus crustata frigoribus...incessum praecipitantem impellit, et patulae valles per spatia plana glacie perfidae vorant non numquam transeuntes.*⁷⁷

In the Cottian Alps, which begin at the town of Susa, there rises a lofty ridge, which scarcely anyone can cross without danger. For as one comes from Gaul it falls off with sheer incline, terrible to look upon because of overhanging cliffs on either side, especially in the season of spring, when the ice melts and the snows thaw under the warmer breath of the wind...men and animals descending with hesitating step slide forward, and wagons

⁷⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris, *epistolae*, Bk. 1.5.2–4 to Heronius. Translation taken from W. B. Anderson, ed. and trans. *Sidonius: Poems and Letters* (London: 1936).

⁷⁷ Translation taken from J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus, with an English translation*, 3 vols., (London: 1935–9 repr. 1971–2), vol. 1, XV.10.3–4. Note that Ammianus has the departure point at Susa rather than Lyons, as does Sidonius above. Susa is further east and closer to the mountains, but both cities lead to the Cottian Alpine crossing.

as well. In winter the ground, caked with ice...drives men headlong in their forward passage and the spreading valleys in level places, treacherous with ice, sometimes swallow up the traveller.

Is the report of Sidonius, who is not normally known for making light of difficulties, anything more than epistolographical bravado?⁷⁸ Is Ammianus the Greek overdoing the snow and ice for dramatic effect? Or do the two accounts simply reflect the vicissitudes of Alpine travel?

Venantius Fortunatus also travelled overland and crossed the Alps, this time east to west, when he emigrated from Italy to Gaul. His route was circuitous. According to his own account, he departed from Ravenna and headed straight north to Aquileia. After extensive river travel he first crossed the Julian Alps, which lie mainly in modern-day Slovenia, and then the Carnic Alps on the border between Austria and Italy. He then passed near what is now Innsbruck and reached Augsburg on the River Lech. The poet describes his Alpine experience rather dramatically as *pendulus montanis anfractibus*.⁷⁹ Once out of the mountains he travelled west until he reached the Danube, crossed the river, then continued northwest to the Rhine and its tributary the Moselle, on whose banks lies the city of Metz.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Latouche, "Les Communications," 475, suggests that we are seeing evidence of Sidonius' optimistic nature: "Mais Sidoine, qui était d'un tempérament naturellement optimiste, s'est plu à donner des apaisements à son correspondant et à lui déclarer qu'il n'a pas rencontré de difficultés dans la traversée des Alpes, qui était cependant considérée comme redoutable."

⁷⁹ Marc Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat: Poèmes* Vol. 1 (Paris: 1994), 4 translates this phrase as *suspendu au-dessus des abîmes*, or "hanging above the abyss." A closer translation might be "hanging from mountainous spirals."

⁸⁰ The poet describes his route twice: *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*, *Praefatio* 4, and *vita Martini* 4, lines 630ff.. The above is a broad outline of the poet's journey that combines elements of both accounts. I also refer to J. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford: 1992), 24 and Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, Introduction, ix.

Many scholars take for granted that the poet's arrival in Metz in the spring of 566, just in time for the wedding of Sigibert to the Visigothic princess Brunhild, was coincidental.⁸¹ A close look at the chronology does not support this, however. Regardless of whether we agree with Reydellet that the trip's duration was approximately six or seven months – which seems on the long side – or propose a shorter duration of perhaps four or five months, the poet's appearance at the wedding shortly after his arrival presupposes his crossing the Alps in the winter. This is a highly unlikely proposition.

Always a careful planner where his comfort and safety were concerned, it would be out of character for the poet to leave the Alps crossing to chance. Certainly on a later trip to Spain – where to his astonishment he met snowy conditions in the Pyrenees in July – he had clearly timed his trip to be in the mountains once summer was well underway, the optimum time to traverse the passes.⁸² He surely would have even more carefully choreographed his earlier, more arduous journey from Ravenna to Metz by ensuring a July or August crossing of the Alps. I would argue, therefore, that Fortunatus left Ravenna in the late spring or early summer of 565 and arrived in northern Gaul in the fall of that same year, thus avoiding both the avalanches and falling ice of the spring thaw in the mountains, and the next winter's ice floes in the northern rivers.⁸³ He then likely overwintered in or near Metz, got himself invited to the wedding, and had plenty of time to compose his panegyric.

⁸¹ Simon Coates, "Venantius Fortunatus and the Image of Episcopal Authority in Late Antique and Early Merovingian Gaul," *English Historical Review* Vol. 115 No. 466 (Nov. 2000) 1109, states that "he arrived as a royal wedding was about to take place." This is echoed by George, *VF: Poems*, 25 n. 1 who says he had "fortuitously arrived in Metz." Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, viii–ix, proposes that the poet left Ravenna in the late summer or early fall 565, arriving at Sigibert's court by spring 566. There is no question about the timing of the wedding, since Fortunatus states that it was spring in his panegyric to the royal pair, *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 6.1.

⁸² *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica Praefatio*, 4. The phrase is: *occurrents Iulio mense nivosis* [I met with snowy conditions in the month of July.]

⁸³ Depending on the severity of the winter, the Danube, for example, potentially freezes by January or February. Because of its current, however, it does not freeze smoothly but in many places becomes covered with ice floes, which render it impassable.

Fortunatus, travelling between Italy and Gaul in 565, may have been one of the last who, without a great deal of thought, chose the more convenient Alpine route over the coastal sea route for his journey.⁸⁴ A few years later, the Lombard invasion of northern Italy tipped the balance in favour of a sea crossing for those travelling from the peninsula to Gaul and back again.⁸⁵ This is reflected in Gregory of Tours' *liber historiarum*. The town of Cimiez, a modern northern suburb of coastal Nice, was in the second and third centuries a prosperous stopover on *la via Julia*, the pass over the Maritime Alps.⁸⁶ By the 580s, however, in a narrative involving a pilgrimage to Rome for relics, Gregory ignores Cimiez and refers only to Nice, the usual port on the sea route to Italy from which pilgrims set sail.⁸⁷ A later narrative involves Gregory's own deacon, who happened to be in Rome seeking relics when the consecration of Pope Gregory I took place. The deacon,

⁸⁴ For Fortunatus, whose starting point was Ravenna, the Alps crossing was more natural than travelling first to the coast and then taking the sea route. For those travelling to and from Rome, it may have been a toss-up between overland and sea travel.

⁸⁵ Latouche, "Les Communications," 476, fails to take into account the journey of Fortunatus, and his statement that "à l'époque mérovingienne les voyageurs préfèrent la voie maritime" overstates the case. A more nuanced and more correct conclusion would perhaps be that before 568 the Merovingians readily crossed the Alps when travelling to Italy, while after the Lombard invasion they preferred to use the coastal sea route from Nice or Marseilles to Rome, avoiding northern Italy altogether. It was not until the second half of the seventh century that the passage of the Alps again became favoured as a route to Italy, per Latouche, 479. A similar situation is documented in the fragmentary poem *de reditu suo* by Rutilius Namatianus, dated 416. The author explains that he is returning to Gaul from Italy via the sea route because of the ravages wrought by the Gothic wars. Unfortunately, the poem breaks off before Rutilius approaches Gallic territory. For edition and English translation of this work, see Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo libri duo: the Home-Coming of Rutilius Claudius Namatianus from Rome to Gaul in the year 416 AD*, ed. & trans. by Charles H. Keene & George F. Savage-Armstrong (London: 1907).

⁸⁶ Latouche, "Les Communications," 476. The *via Julia* was a route favoured by the Romans that ran from Rome to Marseilles through the Maritime Alps, the most southerly range bordering the coast between Gaul and Italy. It is mentioned, and given a legendary origin, by Ammianus Marcellinus, XV.10.8–9. In actuality, it was constructed under Caesar Augustus per Latouche, "Les Communications," 475.

⁸⁷ *LH* 6.6: A deacon of Angers was on his way to Rome to seek relics. He came via the Loire, the Saône, and Rhône to Nice, where his companion was healed by a miracle performed by the recluse Hospicius. The two then left to go on to Rome, clearly by sea, since Nice was part of the coastal sea route. Part of Gregory's narrative involves the Lombards coming to Nice itself and encountering St. Hospicius.

who was clearly intending to return to Gaul by sea, put off his departure from Ostia in order to witness the enthronement of the new pope.⁸⁸

In the last decade of the sixth century, Augustine and his companions also travelled by sea to reach Gaul, as seen by letters in the *registrum Gregorii* commending the mission group to various bishops. Indeed, we can trace their route through Gaul by these. By this time Marseilles had outdone its rival Nice as a commercial centre and was generally used as the departure and arrival point for coastal navigation to and from Rome. Letters from the pope are addressed to the governor and bishop of Marseilles as well as the bishops of Arles, Lyons, Tours, Vienne, and Autun. The mission group evidently landed in Marseilles and disembarked from their ship, made their way overland to Arles, then travelled up the Rhône, passing through Vienne and Lyons perhaps as far as Chalon before disembarking once again. From there they travelled overland to Autun and then on to the Loire, which would take them to Tours. Although Gregory also sent letters at this time commending Augustine and the mission to Brunhild and her grandsons Theudebert and Theuderic, the group ended up avoiding Austrasia altogether due to the outbreak of civil war in the north around the same time as they arrived in Gaul.⁸⁹

6 Conclusion

Although bearers of letters are not uncommonly mentioned by name and commended in the Merovingian letters, for the most part they remain in the shadows. This renders any meaningful bearer prosopography, either individually or collectively, an impossible task. It appears that for many letter writers, a bearer was simply someone who was at hand, geographically knowledgeable, and at liberty to travel. For bishops, there was likely a ready supply of other clerics; for laypeople a *famulus* could perhaps be sent or a

⁸⁸ LH 10.1.

⁸⁹ As recorded in Fred. 4.17, Chlothar II and his mother Fredegund occupied Paris and decimated the army of Brunhild and her grandsons. N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: 1997), 77–8, believes that this move contributed a great deal to subsequent instability in the Frankish kingdom. It also changed the route taken by the missionaries. See also Chapter 1, “Women’s Letters,” Section 2.3.

travelling relative prevailed upon. Others with fewer resources had to make do with a passing stranger, hired for the occasion, with little or no guarantee that their letter would ever arrive at its destination. Even a trusted and capable bearer could run into trouble: dangerous weather conditions, illness, brigands, or the outbreak of war in the regions in which he was travelling could upset the best-laid plans and cause the failure of his mission, or even his own death. We will now turn to the subject of letters with accompanying gifts, which complicated the bearer's job considerably.

Section II: Gifts

Gift exchange as a vehicle for historical study has been of interest to anthropologists, sociologists, and medievalists since the early years of the twentieth century.⁹⁰ Many aspects of gift exchange have been thoroughly discussed: reciprocity, the superfluous nature of gifts, gifts as determination and maintenance of status, gift-giving as an expression of *amicitia* and of the patron/client relationship, charity to the poor, donations to churches *pro anima*, the distribution of commodities and especially land, via a "gift economy," bribes, gift-giving as a political phenomenon, the potlatch, altruistic giving. Please note that this is only a partial list of the possibilities.

While almost all of the above can be used as templates to shed light on Merovingian gift exchange, scholars of this era have focused in general on the *Histories* of Gregory of Gregory, Fredegar, the *liber historiae Francorum* and hagiographical texts for their

⁹⁰ It all started with a study by French sociologist Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *Année Sociologique* 1 (1923–4), 30–186. The first medievalist to join the fray was Philip Grierson, "Commerce in the Dark Ages: a critique of the evidence," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 5 (1959), 129–40. Contributions are myriad, but some of the latest additions are Gazi Algazi et al, eds. *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen: 2003); Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian gift giving," *Speculum* Vol. 81, No. 3 (July 2006) 671–699; Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, *Do ut des: Gift Giving, Memoria, and Conflict Management in the Medieval Low Countries*, (Hilversum: 2007); Claire Sotinel, "Le don chrétien et ses retombées sur l'économie dans l'Antiquité tardive," *Antiquité Tardive* Vol. 14 (2006) 105–116; W. Davies and P. Fouracre, eds. *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2010).

material and have mined the letter collections only superficially as a source.⁹¹ This has resulted in two problems. First, a cursory examination of a limited selection of letters can form a misleading impression of the letter-writer's propensity for, and approach to, gift-giving. The second problem has to do with the uniquely personal nature of both the letters and any gifts that accompanied them.⁹² Without an appreciation of this, the letters' potential as a window on how the above aspects of gift-giving played out in the private sphere of epistolography is left unrealized. To date no study has focused primarily on the various aspects of individual, private, and personal gift exchange illuminated by the letter collections.

Gifts are referred to in approximately 16% of the letters in the Merovingian collections.⁹³ In virtually every case, the letter is primary and the gift an add-on; in other words, the letter was not simply penned to accompany or return thanks for an attached gift. This percentage is remarkably similar to that referring to bearers, but the two are not connected; indeed, in only a handful of cases are the two acknowledged in the same letter. Further, while it is quite plausible that a letter-writer may neglect to commend a bearer to his addressee, it is inconceivable that he would overlook a gift, if only to keep the bearer honest.⁹⁴ We can be quite certain, therefore, that the vast majority of

⁹¹ They have not been neglected entirely: F. Curta, "Gift Giving," 679, 680, 681, uses as evidence a few letters of Venantius Fortunatus and some of the letters of Boniface, while mentioning in passing those of Ruricius of Limoges and Avitus of Vienne.

⁹² I do not endorse the view of J. Haseldine, "Epistolography," in *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: 1996), 650–9, p. 651, who states that the medieval letter could be "almost anything except a private exchange of confidential information." For further remarks on this topic, see Introduction.

⁹³ I am aware that such a calculation has limited application. It loses meaning in the collections with multiple authors, for example. Also, gifts were a predictable part of embassies such as make up the latter half of the *epistolae Austrasicae*, so much so that their presence was omitted in diplomatic letters per Anthony Cutler, "Significant gifts: patterns of exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and early Islamic diplomacy," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38:1 (Winter 2008) 79–101, p. 81. I believe, however, that the 16% figure is a useful indicator overall as long as its application is not extended past the breaking point.

⁹⁴ The same argument holds for the compiler of the collection, whether the author himself or his friends after his death: as gifts tended to enhance the status of the giver, one would

Merovingian letters had no gifts attached. Yet a discrepancy arises when we test our percentage within the individual collections. Rather than a relative consistency across the board, we find that the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* involve gifts a whopping 30% of the time, those of Venantius Fortunatus 16% – our average – while in the rest of the collections the presence of gifts is negligible. Why is gift exchange so much more prevalent in the letters of Boniface and Lully? More to the point, why is gift exchange so sparse in the other collections in a period to which is commonly assigned the term “gift economy?” We will attempt to address both questions later, but will first examine the poetic epistles of Fortunatus, followed by those collections where gift exchange is conspicuous by its absence.⁹⁵ We will follow this by a discussion of the different kinds of gifts named in the letters and we will end this section by an overview of the abundant gifts in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*.

Throughout the following discussion, the reader will note that several terms for gifts are used by our letter writers: *dona*, *munera*, *eulogiae*, and *(e)xenia*. Since it often happens that we are not told the nature of the gifts mentioned in the letters, it is impossible in many cases to establish whether these words have preserved any of their original meaning. But even when we are made aware of what form a gift takes, word usage tends to be haphazard.⁹⁶ Most commonly used throughout are *munera* and *dona*; Boniface and Lully, as well as Venantius Fortunatus, applied these terms widely and interchangeably for gifts and bestowals of all kinds.⁹⁷ The diminutive *munuscula* was also used freely by

think this would not fail to be commemorated in the collection. I take strong issue with John-Henry W. Clay, “Gift-giving and books in the letters of Boniface and Lul,” *Journal of Medieval History* 35 Iss. 4 (2009) 313–25, 318, who believes that gifts may be sent off without a mention.

⁹⁵ This is also true of the large fifth-century collections. Avitus of Vienne’s collection, for example, records only five small gifts – of food – out of ninety-six letters. That of Ruricius of Limoges is little better, with six gifts – again of food – out of eighty-three letters. The latter did send four larger gifts, including two horses. The horses are a joke, however: the letter sent with them praises their sterling qualities, whereas in reality, as we learn from their recipients’ replies, the animals are an equine disaster in both appearance and temperament. Shanzer and Wood seem not to get the joke in their discussion.

⁹⁶ This in spite of Niermeyer’s dogged insistence to the contrary.

⁹⁷ These originally had quite narrow meanings: *dona* was a compulsory gift to the king and *munus* an investiture per *MLLM*.

all and sundry, but only for the gifts that one gave to others, as opposed to those one received. On the other hand, *eulogiae* seems to have retained a more narrow usage and we find it used only for “spiritual” gifts such as those sent by Radegund to Germanus of Paris or Easter offerings from Desiderius to his metropolitan Sulpicius of Bourges.⁹⁸ *Xenia* is used rarely in the Merovingian letters, and when it does it bears little resemblance to its traditional meaning of a gift connected with hospitality. Indeed, Lully and his co-workers use it in the same breath as *munuscula* in reference to a small gift of spices sent to the abbess Cuneburga.⁹⁹

7 Gifts in the *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*

The poetic epistles of Venantius Fortunatus are a special case since essentially all his letters functioned primarily as gifts in themselves. When material gifts are mentioned in these, the total is split fairly evenly between thanks for gifts received and descriptions of gifts sent. For example, Fortunatus received food on a regular basis from Agnes, must (partially fermented grape juice) from the Archdeacon of Meaux, apples, skins, and the use of a villa from Gregory of Tours, and a horse from Count Sigoald.¹⁰⁰ He sent flowers and food to Radegund and Agnes, and shells or shellfish to Placidina, wife of Leontius of Bordeaux.¹⁰¹ These gifts are invariably termed *dona* or *munera* by the poet. Almost all, both sent and received, are small, both in size and value, and portable: a type of gift that has been termed “symbolic” by scholars. This rather vague designation is seldom satisfactorily defined in the literature, but appears to mean that the gifts, while of little intrinsic value, represent an intensity of feeling that cannot be expressed materially.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Baudonivia, *de vita sanctae Radegundis*, Liber II, Chapter 7 and *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.10 respectively. For the former see also n. 107 below.

⁹⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 49. Another example is *epistolae Austrasicae* 17, in which Dynamius thanks Vilicus of Metz for some unnamed *xenia* that clearly have nothing to do with hospitality.

¹⁰⁰ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 11.8, 11.9, 11.14, 3.27, 5.13, 8.21, 8.19, and 10.16 respectively.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 8.6, 8.8, 11.18, *appendix carminum* 18, *appendix carminum* 26, 1.17 respectively. Placidina was a great-granddaughter of Sidonius Apollinaris, see *PLRE*, Vol. 3b.

¹⁰² This type of gift is discussed in Curta, “Gift Giving,” 679–70; also André Petitat, “Le don: espace imaginaire normatif et secret des acteurs,” *Anthropologie et Société* 19

Fortunatus does indeed often describe his small gifts in symbolic terms. In a tiny four-line poem to Radegund and Agnes, for example, he begs them *nec parva spernas: nam si mea vota requiras, munus in angusto cernitur amplius amor*.¹⁰³ His points of reference, however, tend to be based not on sentiment but on qualities either of the recipient or of the gift object itself. The purple of violets and their regal scent symbolize Radegund's royal glory, for example; three apples represent the trinity of himself, Agnes, and Radegund; shells are a token of Placidina's role as a gift to the world for whom Ocean calms its billows. At one point Fortunatus sent a gift to Agnes of a pendant cross that was doubtless of greater value than his usual bits of flowers and fruit.¹⁰⁴ It too is described symbolically in its accompanying verse as a *signum pro summo munere*, the True Cross that protects and governs them both, as two siblings who love each other.

Although Fortunatus several times receives gifts – and valuable ones – from Gregory of Tours, there is no record of his sending gifts to the bishop in return. Indeed, there is no evidence that the poet sent gifts to anyone except the women Radegund, Agnes, and Placidina. While it is possible that letters with gifts to males have not survived in his collected works, it is curious that not a single example is extant in this large corpus, especially in light of my argument above regarding the significance of attached gifts and the unlikelihood of their being disregarded by the compilers of collections.¹⁰⁵ Even Leontius, Placidina's husband, did not receive a gift from Fortunatus, although he merited three extensive poems that, not being classed as epistles, are not included in this

(1995) 17-18. Exceptions to the above are a horse, noted above, that the poet received from Count Sigoald (10.16), and the riverfront villa, presumably its revenues, from Gregory (8.19).

¹⁰³ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 11.24. [Don't despise small things; if you want to know that I mean by my gift: / in its smallness, it shows great love].

¹⁰⁴ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica appendix carminum* 27.

¹⁰⁵ This scenario illustrates the danger of plucking out a selection of letters and lumping them with other evidence to make a point, noted above. Curta, for example, "Gift Giving," 679–80, seems unaware of the extent and pattern of Fortunatus' gift-giving practices. Moreover, his reference to the poet and *eulogia* (n. 44) is misleading: in no case does Fortunatus use this word to describe a gift. The word appears only in the titles attached to two poems: 11.9 *pro eulogiis transmissis*, and 9.12 *pro eulogiis*. These titles may or may not be reliable; likely they were added only later, possibly when the collections were compiled and published, possibly later still by persons unknown.

inventory.¹⁰⁶ It is clear, therefore, that when corresponding with men, Venantius Fortunatus did not feel obligated either to include a gift with his initial address, or to reciprocate in kind when a gift was given to him. This strongly suggests that he viewed his verses as adequate recompense; as a purveyor of words, the poetic epistle was and remained his gift of choice.¹⁰⁷

This brings to our attention an aspect of gift exchange that Curta terms the “political phenomenon,” and which includes in its definition the identity that the gift imposes on both giver and receiver.¹⁰⁸ Fortunatus was a strong believer in *do ut des*. He had, therefore, to carefully choreograph his poetic gift-giving. On the one hand, overwhelming his recipient with an excess of erudition and prolixity could very well produce animosity, even if it enhanced his own status. On the other hand, a poem served up with too much humility could be seen as subordination. The trick was to send poetic gifts that created just the right social imbalance, thus obligating his recipients to reciprocate, without resentment, with some sort of material gift. This also involved presenting himself through his poetry as one who was entitled to be rewarded for it, while flattering his recipient as one who appreciated this and had the means to do it.¹⁰⁹ The fact that this system continued to work so well for Fortunatus suggests that the Frankish understanding of gift exchange and reciprocity, even when this knit together both tangible and intangible commodities, meshed exceedingly well with the poet’s Italianate one. It also emphasizes the skill with which Fortunatus was able to read his audience and adjust his style accordingly, a point which is explored at length in Chapter 2, “Venantius Fortunatus and his Correspondents.”

¹⁰⁶ *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*, 1.14, 1.15, 1.16. The last is an acrostic hymn in which each verse starts with a different letter of the alphabet.

¹⁰⁷ On letters as gifts, see Haseldine, “Epistolography,” 651; cf. Cutler, “Significant Gifts,” 83 in which the author quotes a ninth-century manual on Arab court etiquette which states that “each courtier must give an example of that which he holds most dear..a warrior should offer a horse, a poet his verses, and so on.” Although later in time and a world away, this sentiment seems appropriate here.

¹⁰⁸ Curta, “Gift Giving,” 677; Barry Schwartz, “The Social Psychology of the Gift,” *American Journal of Sociology* 73 (1967) 1–11, 2.

¹⁰⁹ It has been pointed out that a spontaneous gift can never be reciprocated fully because of its voluntary character and the fact that the return gift has about it an aura of coercion, cf. Schwartz, “Social Psychology,” 9. Fortunatus was undoubtedly well aware of such subtleties.

Although Fortunatus may have believed that adding a material gift to a gift poem was unnecessarily redundant, or that such a gesture cheapened or diluted his poetic offering in some way, it appears he did not feel this to be true in the case of exchanges with women. It is not clear why. Perhaps the conventions that governed interactions between the sexes allowed the poet to send material gifts to women without worrying about the social repercussions of the exchange.¹¹⁰ Certainly women themselves engaged in gift-giving – to the church, to the poor, to saints, to retainers. Radegund herself was no exception. When seeking the aid of St. Germanus of Paris in the process of leaving her husband King Chlothar, for instance, she sent *eulogiae* along with her letter to the bishop, thus indicating that she well understood how to use gifts to further her ends.¹¹¹ She also understood how a gift confers identity. Her biographer Baudonivia informs us that after receiving a fragment of the True Cross in a gem-encrusted reliquary and a decorated Gospel book from the Byzantine emperor, she returned thanks *cum simplici vestimento*.¹¹² This was surely a calculated move that conveyed an unmistakable signal regarding her status to those in Constantinople: the humble robe, while seemingly worthless in comparison to the rich gifts of relics from the East, was in actuality a relic itself because it had been worn by a holy woman. (This is akin to a situation that we read about in the *vita Germani* of Constantius of Lyons. In return for Galla Placidia's sumptuous silver platter heaped high with delicacies, the bishop of Auxerre sent a counter-gift of a loaf of bread on a wooden platter.¹¹³ Galla Placidia understood this gesture perfectly, and she subsequently used the loaf as a relic to perform miracles of healing). Since Fortunatus participated in the sequence by composing credential-establishing poems for Radegund to send to Constantinople, we can be certain he was

¹¹⁰ Although there is a tradition of “epistolary flirtation” between bishops and their (ecclesiastical) correspondents that is evident in later texts, this is unlikely to be the case here for the very good reason that Fortunatus was not a bishop until much later in his life. This does not rule out the possibility that it was permissible for a man to send gifts to women simply because they were female and outside the bounds of male social exchange.

¹¹¹ Baudonivia, *de vita sanctae Radegundis*, Liber II, Chapter 7.

¹¹² *ibid.*, Chapter 17. [with a simple robe]

¹¹³ Constantius of Lyons, *vita Germani*, ed. L.M. Duru, *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne*, Vol. 1 (Auxerre: 1850), 136–58; also Curta, “Gift Giving,” 678–9.

aware of her expertise, both as queen and saint, in the “political phenomenon” of gift exchange.

8 Gifts in the *epistolae Austrasicae*, the *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*, and the *epistolae Desiderii episcopi*

The above collections are particularly sparse in references to gift exchange. Two letters from this handful are in the *epistolae Austrasicae*.¹¹⁴ One, dated sometime before 575, is from Childebert II’s tutor Gogo to the otherwise unknown Duke Chaming. In it Gogo, calling the duke his *patronus dulcissimus*, thanks him for the *munera* he has bestowed on him many times in the past. He does not return a countergift. He does, however, append at the end of the letter a poem (now lost) that could take the place of one, although Gogo does not either state or imply this. Although *munera* is a common word for gifts, and was commonly used by Fortunatus for the “symbolic” gifts that he sent to women, it can also mean services performed for another as well as tribute, bribes, or other offerings. We cannot be sure, therefore, of the nature of the gifts that the duke apparently bestowed on Gogo.

Our second example is dated a few years earlier and was sent from Dynamius, governor of Marseilles and later Rector of Provence, to Bishop Vilicus of Metz.¹¹⁵ Dynamius is out of favour with the king, probably Childebert II, and he begs Vilicus to bring his plight to anyone who has the royal ear so he may be recalled to court.¹¹⁶ It is clear that Vilicus and Dynamius are allies and have corresponded before, since Dynamius mentions that he has fulfilled what Vilicus had previously commanded. Vilicus has sent some unnamed

¹¹⁴ *epistolae Austrasicae* 13.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 17. Although gifts are also mentioned in *epistolae Austrasicae* 18, which is from the Frankish King Theudebald to the emperor Justinian, I do not include it in this discussion because these gifts were diplomatic rather than private.

¹¹⁶ *LH* 6.11 records that Dynamius had harassed Theodore, bishop of Marseilles and tried to oust him from his see. He then backed King Guntram against Childebert II in their quarrel over Marseilles. When tricked and trapped without his retinue in St. Stephen’s church by Childebert’s duke Gundulf, Dynamius swore allegiance with gifts to Childebert, but soon afterwards rejoined Guntram.

xenia to Dynamius, for which the latter returns thanks in extravagant terms.¹¹⁷ As with Gogo above, Dynamius sends no countergift. He does promise, however, to compensate the bishop fully when his resources are restored to him.

There are also two references to gifts in the *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*. In one, Chrodobert of Tours adds a note written in his own hand to thank the abbess Boba for a *linea inconsutilis*, a shirt or tunic, probably liturgical, that was woven in the round without seams. As the bishop describes the garment as *corpori meo tamquam sciendo congrue preparata*, it is quite possible that the abbess herself or her women wove it for him.¹¹⁸ The comment is a trifle risqué and possibly represents an attempt at epistolary flirtation. If so, it is the only example of such in the Merovingian collections. The other gift letter in this collection was sent from Pippin, Mayor of the Palace, to Abbot Gayroinus and the congregation of St. Peter and St. Praeiection of the monastery of Flavigny, today Flavigny-sur-Ozerain.¹¹⁹ With the letter Pippin sent an ivory diptych on which was inscribed his petition: the monks were to offer assiduous prayers for himself and his progeny, and to chant one Psalm daily on his behalf. In return he would bestow on them a fishpond for their refreshment. It is unclear whether this arrangement had been previously discussed and agreed upon, in which case this letter simply records the final contract, or whether the proposal arrived on the doorstep of the monastery without warning, with the abbot given little choice but to comply.

¹¹⁷ As noted, this word, which traditionally meant a gift to a guest or highly-placed person, or tribute, is not often used in the collections. It may or may not have had a special meaning by this time. Another example of the word's usage is in Baudonivia's *de vita sanctae Radegundis* Chapter 7, where she describes Radegund's gift to Germanus of Paris, above, as *exenium*.

¹¹⁸ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 16. [prepared for my body as though you knew my size] This is the only reference to a gift of clothing outside the *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae*, below. For a full discussion on this letter from Chrodobert to Boba, see Chapter 3, "Bishops' Letters," Section 3.1.

¹¹⁹ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 19. Pippin was the father of Charlemagne. He deposed the last Merovingian king and was crowned king of the Franks at Soissons in 751.

The collection of Desiderius of Cahors contains three gift mentions out of a total of thirty-six letters. One, from Desiderius to Medoald of Trier, thanks the latter for his many *expensae et munera*, both past and present, and returns some unspecified *munuscula* to Medoald.¹²⁰ The second example is a letter from Sulpicius of Bourges, Desiderius' metropolitan, thanking him for the letter and *oblaciones* sent at Easter.¹²¹ As the gifts were likely part of the offerings required from suffragan bishops to their metropolitan, Sulpicius sends no countergift. He adds, however, that he hopes he will merit to receive *eulogiae* from Desiderius in the future. The final example in this collection is rather more complex. The letter is addressed to Desiderius from Paul of Verdun, who apparently had requested that Desiderius send him an amphora of "Falernian."¹²² The latter responded with ten tuns of wine, which Paul terms *tunnae decem elegantissimi Falerni tanti*.¹²³ Overwhelmed, Paul thanks Desiderius profusely and protests that he could never adequately reciprocate. He sends no countergift.

Paul's letter brings us up short against an issue which we have so far ignored, and that is the logistics of sending a bearer off not only with a letter and *munuscula*, but with an unwieldy gift requiring large amounts of expense and effort to transport. If *tunnae decem* is an accurate description, the above was an enormous quantity of wine.¹²⁴ Since a gallon of wine weighs about nine lbs., and a tun of wine equals 252 gallons, this would result in a total weight of over 22,000 lbs. Such a weight would require seven carts and fourteen oxen, which must then pull the load from Cahors to Verdun, a journey of over 300 miles. As such an undertaking seems preposterous, we will next consider the possibility that the word *tunna* in the letter does not mean tun at all, but is simply a generic term for vessel, perhaps an amphora or cask. (Paul does state that he originally asked for one amphora of

¹²⁰ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.7.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, 2.10.

¹²² It is highly unlikely that Desiderius had access to wine produced in the *falernus ager*, even if that area, just north of Campania, was still producing the real thing by this time. "Falernian" had evidently become a byword for nice wine of any sort, and this is doubtless how the term is used here.

¹²³ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 2.12: [ten tuns of the most elegant Falernian...]

¹²⁴ Ronald E. Zupko, "Weights and Measures," in *Medieval Latin*, 444, was used for calculations.

Falernian). Since the standard amphora held approximately ten gallons, each would weigh about ninety lbs., bringing the total to a more manageable but still startling 900 lbs. This could be pulled by one ox drawing a single cart. Oxen do not travel much faster than one mile per hour when pulling a load, however, so if the team travelled ten to eighteen miles a day, the journey to Verdun, with appropriate stops along the way to rest, would take a full month.¹²⁵ The ox(en) would need to be yoked and unyoked daily and fodder either bought along the route or carried with the wine, which itself would need to be guarded from theft. All this suggests that a substantial team of people was needed to accompany the wine to Verdun. The whole enterprise must have created a spectacle and cost Desiderius a small fortune.

What prompted such a lavish expenditure? We know that the bishop of Verdun was a close friend of Desiderius from the several letters between the two that survive in the collection. Indeed, in a letter to Dado of Rouen, Desiderius names Paul alongside Sulpicius of Bourges as replacements for his brothers who have died.¹²⁶ Paul also seems to have been in King Dagobert's inner circle and to have kept Desiderius informed about the latter's movements.¹²⁷ The gift of wine goes well beyond the bounds of the *munuscula* normally exchanged between even close friends, however, and a likely answer for its extravagance lies in the contents of Paul's thank-you letter, where we are given to understand that Desiderius had asked Paul's support in the case of the noblewoman Bobila.¹²⁸ It is clear that the bishop of Verdun's influence with the king was being paid for by means of the wine, and this overwhelming and very public response to his request for one amphora meant that he could scarcely refuse to give it. Although to modern

¹²⁵ Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and the Aegean at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: 2010), 120, estimates this speed of travel for a Bronze Age caravan based on the use of ox-drawn wagons by settlers in Oregon. The author also stresses that slow caravans are vulnerable to attack.

¹²⁶ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.10.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, 2.12.

¹²⁸ We met Bobila in Chapter 3, "Bishops' Letters." She wished to repossess and give to the church of Cahors a certain villa that had been turned over to King Dagobert by her now-deceased husband. This would naturally be of high interest to Desiderius. We are given little further information, as the details are reserved for the bearer's verbal message.

minds this sequence comes very close to bribery, exchanges like this are so common that we must categorize it as a routine way of getting things done in the Merovingian kingdom.¹²⁹

9 Solicited Gifts

Gifts were not uncommonly sought from others. Paul of Verdun's request for an amphora of wine from Desiderius is a case in point, although the request was granted in an unusually spectacular way. Solicited gifts tend to fall into three distinct categories: representations of superior technology and craftsmanship, relics, and books. The first two are sought only from kings and popes in the letter collections, while in contrast books are exchanged between all and sundry.¹³⁰ Neither is the rule hard and fast, for while books are always solicited in the collections, relics are sometimes sent out freely with no previous request at all. Finally, the symbolic *munuscula* discussed above were never solicited. Indeed, to do so would have been in bad taste, as the very essence of such a gift is its spontaneity.

¹²⁹ Examples abound: Radegund's gift to Germanus of Paris, above, could also be construed as bribery; Praetextatus of Rouen was supposed to have bribed with gifts certain people hostile to Chilperic, *LH* 5.18; Guntram Boso's father-in-law Severus tried to bribe his way out of trouble with King Childebert II in *LH* 5.25.

¹³⁰ Another category, that of livestock – specifically birds of prey – was also solicited. This topic, however, will be discussed below with the other gifts belonging to the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, as this collection is distinct from the others in the area of gift exchange.

9.1 Technology and Craftsmanship¹³¹

In the early sixth century, King Gundobad of Burgundy requested two time-keeping devices from the Gothic king Theoderic: one that measured time with water, and another that used the sun. These are not specifically named, but are described as *horologium, quod aquis sub modulo fluentibus et quod solis immensi comprehensa illuminatione distinguitur*.¹³² Theoderic, through Cassiodorus, lost no time in ordering Boethius to procure these, stating to the latter in a lengthy letter *quatenus impetratis delectationibus perfrundo quod nobis cottidianum (sic), illis videatur esse miraculum. Merito siquidem respicere cupiunt, quod legatorum suorum relationibus obstupescunt*.¹³³ To the Burgundians he was marginally more tactful, praising their desire to raise themselves up from barbarism by imitating the technology of their superiors.¹³⁴ To the modern mind at least, this sequence approaches the “unfriendly” potlatch-style component of gift-giving described by sociologist Schwartz, “which has as an essential aim the degradation of the recipient.”¹³⁵ There is no question whose status is to be enhanced here. Theoderic used the opportunity of Gundobad’s request to convey to the Burgundian mind an indelible impression of the cultural superiority of his own *civitas Romana*.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Several times in the letters we find requests for skilled personnel. While this is a related topic, I have not included it here, as I take the position that people cannot be classed as gifts. For a discussion of the recruiting of such personnel as an aspect of *amicitia* between bishops, see Chapter 3, “Bishops’ Letters,” Section 2.2. Examples are: *variae* II.40 of a cithara player requested by Clovis; *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.13 to Caesarius of Clermont for artisans who know how to lay underground pipes to increase the water supply into Cahors; *epistolae Austrasicae* 21 from Rufus of Turin to Nicetius of Trier, who has requested some Italian artisans of unknown skill; *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 116, in which Cuthbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, asks Lully to send a harpist and a skilled worker in glass.

¹³² *variae* 1.45. [one clock that is regulated by a measured flow of water and another by the capture of the immense sun’s light].

¹³³ *ibid.*, [so in obtaining and enjoying these delightful gifts, what for us is everyday will seem to them to be a miracle. For it is appropriate that they wish to gaze at something that they have heard about, to their stupefaction, through their own ambassadors].

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, I.46.

¹³⁵ Schwartz, “Social Psychology,” 5.

¹³⁶ At one point the letter states: *habetote in vestra patria, quod aliquando vidistis in civitate Romana*. [Here, have in your homeland what you have at times seen in our Roman city]. Traditionally, gifts to a king increase that king’s status, whereas here, doubtless because Theoderic was the “greater” ruler, the reverse is true.

This example is unique in the Merovingian collections. We can reasonably assume, however, that such requests and such responses were not uncommon. There are records of merchandise and gifts arriving in the Frankish kingdom from Constantinople, for instance, in which a similar imbalance in culture and technology is in evidence. Gregory of Tours reports an incident where he is called to admire a shipment commissioned by Chilperic that had arrived with the king's ambassadors returning from the court of Emperor Tiberius II.¹³⁷ The treasure included not only a fifty-pound gem-encrusted salver, but a number of gold medallions, each weighing one pound. The inscriptions and images on these – the emperor's bust with *Tyberii Constantini perpetui Augusti* on one side, and a charioteer with *gloria Romanorum* on the other – leave us in no doubt that those in Constantinople were alive to the possibilities of the psychological advantage inherent in bestowing gifts on cultures they viewed as inferior. It was unlikely that Chilperic saw himself in that light, of course, but he may have been keenly interested in copying the imperial message in the pieces for his own aggrandizement.

9.2 Relics

In the Merovingian letters relics are always dispensed by the pope or, in one special case, by the Byzantine emperor.¹³⁸ Two letters in the *epistolae Arelatenses* attest to Pelagius I (556-61) sending relics of St. Peter, St. Paul, and other holy martyrs to King Childebert I, son of Clovis, who had previously requested them.¹³⁹ One letter is to the king himself, while the other is to Sapaudus of Arles, and correct procedure seems to have been very important in the process. They are not sent directly to the king. Rather, we learn that the pope's subdeacon Bonus will deliver the relics to Sapaudus, who is urged to ensure that they then reach the king by the hand of a trustworthy person. Although these relics are

¹³⁷ *LH* 6.2.

¹³⁸ The special case is that of Radegund, who according to Gregory of Tours (*LH* 9.40), sent to Justin II and Sophia in Constantinople for a piece of the Holy Cross plus relics of the apostles and martyrs. *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica appendix carminum* 2 is a letter of thanks for the relics. See Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 1.1 for details; also Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems* (Liverpool: 1995), 111.

¹³⁹ *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 48 and 49.

described as being *beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli*, we are given no further information regarding their nature, whether corporeal or otherwise.

Pelagius II (579-90), under whom Gregory the Great was a deacon, is also recorded in the collections as sending relics to Gaul, this time to Aunarius of Auxerre in Burgundy.¹⁴⁰ These are described as *sacrae reliquiae*, but again without further details. The pope does, however, comment that Aunarius and *gloriosissimus filius noster* had requested that these be sent. This last must refer to King Guntram, who ruled Burgundy until his death in 593, after which his territories passed to his nephew Childebert II under the terms of the Treaty of Andelot. In the letter Pelagius urges Aunarius to seek the miraculous power of the relics, since they represent those whose bodily temples have been freed from the pollution of the pagans; the pope asks also that the bishop endeavour to persuade his kings to take up their swords against the Lombards.

Pope Gregory I, the successor of Pelagius II, distributed relics to several people in the Frankish kingdom both before and after becoming pope. Gregory of Tours reports, for instance, that his own deacon went to Rome to seek relics, receiving them from the hand of Gregory while he was still a deacon under Pelagius.¹⁴¹ According to a letter dated 596, Gregory sent relics to Brunhild and Palladius of Saintes, who had sent a joint request through the queen's priest Leuparic – Palladius for relics of Sts. Peter, Paul, Lawrence, and Pancras for the altars of his new church, and the queen for relics of Sts. Peter and Paul.¹⁴² In the letter Gregory carefully worded his concern for the care of the relics, stressing that they must be treated with reverence. Furthermore, their caretakers were not to be overburdened or troubled in any way, and were to be given proper remuneration for their work.

Although Gregory describes the above relics as *sanctorum Petri et Pauli nec non Laurentii atque Pancratii martyrum*, we know this time that they could not have been

¹⁴⁰ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 9.

¹⁴¹ *LH* 10.1.

¹⁴² *registrum Gregorii* 6.50 and 6.58 respectively.

corporeal, as it is well-known that this pope was averse to the gathering and distribution of corporeal relics. This is illustrated in a letter dated 594 to the Empress Constantina, wife of Mauricius (d. 602), in which Gregory states that only the Greeks dig up the bodies of their saints and distribute them. The Romans, he stresses, find this intolerably sacrilegious and believe that such presumption could never go unpunished; indeed, many have died who have disturbed the bodies of the saints or even gazed upon them.¹⁴³ Consequently, although Constantina had audaciously requested the head and burial shroud of Paul the apostle, she received in return only some filings from his chains. We can only imagine Constantina's disappointment, but Gregory, while maintaining great care and courtesy in his lengthy reply, makes no apologies. Instead, he assigns great significance to the filings, emphasizing that St. Paul wore them around his neck and on his hands, and claiming that many miracles continued to be performed through them.

Filings seem to have been Gregory's relic of choice. In the spring of 593, for example, after receiving the revenues from the papal estates in the Marseilles district, Gregory sent the same relic to its administrator Dynamius. These were contained in a small cross that functioned as a reliquary.¹⁴⁴ In the stem, some filings from St. Peter's chains had been inserted, and in the four arms of the cross, filings from the gridiron of St. Lawrence. Gregory added a personal note by assigning to the relic a spiritual meaning tailor-made for its recipient: the chains will free Dynamius' neck from sin, and the gridiron will inflame his mind with love for the Lord. Two years later, Gregory sent a similar relic to King Childebert II, this time a key of St. Peter filled with filings from the apostle's chains.¹⁴⁵ In the accompanying letter he assures the king that this will protect him from

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 4.30, not in this inventory. The pope adds that a silk cloth in a small box is to be placed near the saint's body and then lifted and deposited in the dedicated church; miracles then take place as frequently as if the saint's body were actually there.

¹⁴⁴ *registrum Gregorii* 3.33. This is the same Dynamius who corresponded with Venantius Fortunatus some twenty years earlier. By 595, however, Gregory remarked in a letter (6.6) that Dynamius was no longer able to fill his positions of Rector of Provence and administrator of the papal estates. Arigius succeeded Dynamius as Rector shortly after this. Gregory, however, decided to discontinue his usual arrangement of employing the Rector as his Gallic agent, preferring to employ his own agent, Candidus. See *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, s.v. Dynamius; Arigius.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 6.6.

every evil. In 601 Gregory forwarded the identical relic to the Gallic patrician Asclepiodatus, adding the comment that when hung around the neck, the relic will protect the wearer from all adversity.¹⁴⁶ That the pope handed out filings in reliquaries to widely-scattered individuals over a period of almost a decade illustrates his commitment to these small and portable talismans on the one hand and his determination to avoid the distribution of corporeal remains on the other, even when this may have risked offending powerful individuals. Moreover, the above three examples appear to have been unsolicited by the individuals who received them.

There are two Merovingian letters that refer to the seedy underbelly of relic traffic, both dated to the mid-eighth century. One is in a letter sent from Pope Zacharias to the Frankish clergy, urging them, among other things, to intervene in the matter of the relics of St. Benedict, which the monks of Monte Cassino, including Carloman, brother of Pippin and uncle of Charlemagne, were complaining had been stolen in secret from his grave.¹⁴⁷ Armed with this letter, the monks arrived at Fleury and demanded back the body of their patron. Abbot Medo acquiesced, but with reservation. The saint himself, hedged the abbot, would choose his final resting place. When the party approached the grave to exhume the body, a flash of light blinded the terrified group. The monks took home a few minor relics; Benedict stayed at Fleury.¹⁴⁸ The second letter contains a record of the acts of the Roman synod of 745, at which Boniface's messenger Denehard presented a letter outlining the follies and heresies of two troublesome individuals named Aldebert and Clemens.¹⁴⁹ Aldebert, writes Boniface, was going so far as to forgive sins and hand out his own fingernails and hair as holy relics.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 11.43.

¹⁴⁷ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 18. The Lombards pillaged Monte Cassino in 580 and it was not rebuilt until 718, when Pope Gregory II ordered its restoration. At some point in between those dates Benedict's remains had been translated from Monte Cassino, where he died, to the Abbey of Fleury in northern France.

¹⁴⁸ This tale, which incorporates Zacharias' letter, can be found in the late ninth-century writings of Adrevald of Fleury, *Miracula s. Benedicti*, Book 1, in *Les Miracles de Saint Benoît*, ed. E. de Certain (Paris: 1858), 1–14; cf. Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: the Diocese of Orléans, 800–1200* (Cambridge: 2005), 141–3.

¹⁴⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 59. See also 57 and 62, which address the same matter.

Gregory the Great also comments on questionable relic activity in the above letter to Empress Constantina. Certain Greek monks, he states, had been recently caught digging up bones at night in a field; when questioned, they admitted that they intended to take them home to Greece and pass them off as saints' relics.¹⁵⁰ Gregory of Tours likewise tells a story of a charlatan who posed as a holy man, claiming to have in his possession relics of the holy martyrs Felix and Vincent. When inspected, he was found to be carrying on his person a bag filled with roots, moles' teeth, mouse bones, and bears' claws and fat. The bishop remarks at the end of his tale that such impostures were not uncommon.¹⁵¹

The Merovingian letters highlight the extremes of relic distribution and management. On the one hand stands the ideal represented by Pope Gregory's exaggerated code of conduct in the realm of corporeal remains, coupled with his fatherly concern for the care and protection of all relics. At this exalted level, one requested relics from a spiritual superior – naturally sending an appropriate gift – and ensconced them properly with paid caretakers when they arrived. Bishops were a vital part of this chain of command, as evidenced by Pelagius I's insistence on sending the relics of Sts. Peter and Paul to Childebert I through the bishop of Arles.¹⁵² The whole proceeding represented a perfect world that ecclesiastics would have loved to attain, but which proved impossible to control: at the end of the day, the giver of the relics, and his episcopal counterpart, lost all control over them once they left their jurisdiction.¹⁵³ At the other end of the spectrum stood Greeks, grave-robbers, and charlatans who deceived *publicanos et rusticas*

¹⁵⁰ *registrum Gregorii* 4.30.

¹⁵¹ *LH* 9.6. It is not clear in the text whether the moles' teeth and other items were intended to be passed off as relics of these martyrs, or were simply additional articles carried by the "holy man."

¹⁵² According to Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul 481–751* (Leiden: 1995), 110, the bishop's participation in installing the relics once they reached their destination was essential.

¹⁵³ Hen, *Culture and Religion*, 109.

mulieres with their false relics and stolen body parts, and who were castigated in the sources as a result.¹⁵⁴

While these two streams doubtless existed and flourished in the Frankish kingdom, we must not be misled into thinking there was no middle ground of relic acquisition. Although missing in the letters, this middle ground is present in other texts, where it takes many different forms. Gregory of Tours, for example, speaks about the happy discovery of a treasure trove of corporeal relics – no squeamishness here – in the treasury of St. Martin’s church at Tours. In gratitude to God the bishop kept vigils and said Masses before distributing these in various places in both the cathedral and other churches and oratories in the Tours area. And while Rome was seen as an “inexhaustible treasure house of relics,”¹⁵⁵ these could also be gathered from cities much closer to home. The *vita Audoini*, for example, reports that when the bishop of Rouen came to Cologne, he visited the shrines of the city’s martyrs and took away many of their relics, which he set up in his own city.¹⁵⁶ Relics could also be passed down between relatives. The sister of St. Geretrud (626-659), coming to the latter’s monastery of Nivelles thirty years after her death, was given nuns, sacred books, and a large collection of relics for the establishment of her own monastery. This last included a fragment of her sister’s bed.¹⁵⁷

9.3 Books

Apart from the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, which we will examine shortly, there exists only a small handful of references to book exchange. All examples involve solicitation. Most involve Pope Gregory the Great: Columbanus begged Gregory to send him some of

¹⁵⁴ Lewis Thorpe, English translator of Gregory of Tours’ *libri historiarum decem*, renders this as “ruffians and peasant women.”

¹⁵⁵ Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: the Theft of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: 1978), 46.

¹⁵⁶ *vita Audoini episcopi Rotomagensis* 13; also Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 162. It is not clear how Audoin managed to do this without protest from Cologne.

¹⁵⁷ “Women’s monasteries and sacred space: the promotion of saints’ cults and miracles,” in *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, ed. L.M. Biel & F. Lifshitz (Philadelphia: 2008), 70.

his own writings, although there is no record of the pope's reply; sometime later Dynamius and his wife Aureliana requested and received a book of instruction; Brunhild asked for and received an unknown book.¹⁵⁸ There are just two others: a certain Cellanus petitioned Aldhelm to send him some of his sermons,¹⁵⁹ and Warnechar, Burgundian mayor of the palace under Chlothar II, sent the deeds of the Holy Triplets and Desiderius of Langres to Ceraunius of Paris at the bishop's request.¹⁶⁰ Even these few allow us to draw some general, although tentative conclusions: (a) books tended to be solicited and (b) they could be requested from anyone. Related to the latter point is that we get no sense that books were ever withheld or even dispersed reluctantly. Rather, the prevailing attitude seems to have been that anybody who could read had a stake in written texts. Even Pope Gregory, who was so cautious with relics, passed out books freely with no instructions as to their use or care. Motives for obtaining books are not given, but seem to be personal enrichment, instruction, or, as shown by the above letter from Warnechar, a desire to collect the deeds of saints and martyrs, perhaps to be archived for future *vitae*.¹⁶¹

We will now turn to the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, in which book exchange appears three times more often than in the other collections put together. We will first examine this active book exchange network and then the perspective of this collection on gift-giving as a whole, which differs in many respects from that of the other collections.

¹⁵⁸ *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 1; *registrum Gregorii* 7.33 and 8.4 respectively. The caption to a verse from Venantius Fortunatus to Gregory of Tours (5.8b) states *ad eundem pro libro praestito*; there is no mention of a book in the poem, however. Note: this Dynamius noted in connection with book exchange is not to be confused with the individual who was the Rector of Provence and who corresponded with Venantius Fortunatus.

¹⁵⁹ *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* 9.

¹⁶⁰ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 14. The Holy Triplets Speusippus, Eleusippus, and Meleusippus were believed to have been martyred in the environs of the city of Langres during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. They are also known as the Holy Twins. For discussion of book exchange as an expression of *amicitia*, see Chapter 3, "Bishops' Letters," Section 2.3.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 7 in which Aunarius of Auxerre, whom we met above receiving relics from Pelagius II, urges the priest Stephanus to write the *vitae* of two former bishops of Auxerre.

10 Gifts in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*

Many times in the *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae*, books and other material gifts are both mentioned in the same letter, a combination that never appears elsewhere. As in the earlier collections, books are almost always solicited. Book exchange seems to have taken place on an ongoing basis first between Boniface and his acquaintances in England and then, after Boniface's death, between Lully and his. This circle included the abbesses Bugga and Eadburga, Abbot Duddo, Daniel of Winchester and his successor Cineheard, Egbert of York and his successor Coena, Milred of Worcester, and Abbot Cuthbert of Wearmouth and Jarrow. There is no evidence that the two sought to exchange books with anybody in the Frankish kingdom.

Requests for the works of Bede began coming in from the Continent within a decade of the latter's death (735) and these top our list of sought-after texts. Mentioned are *de aedificatione templi*, the commentaries on the books of Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Mark, the commentary on Proverbs, and the homilies.¹⁶² Around the same time, Lully asked his former teacher Dealwine for Aldhelm's works on prose, meter, and rhythm.¹⁶³ Other authors remain unnamed, but requests include an unknown text on the suffering of the martyrs, a treatise on St. Paul's epistles, a book on the minor Prophets, and some books about the cosmos.¹⁶⁴ Note that the above were all dispersed from England to the Continent. Books also made their way from the Continent to England, although I am able to find only two examples of this. One is documented in a letter dated *c.* 745 to Archbishop Egbert of York from Boniface, who sent with it letters from the *registrum Gregorii*; Boniface states that to his knowledge these were as yet unknown in Britain.¹⁶⁵ (A few years earlier Boniface had sent his assistant Denehard to Rome to obtain copies of

¹⁶² *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 126, 125, 91 respectively. The commentary on Proverbs and the homilies are requested in the same letter.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, 71.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 15, 34, 63, 124 respectively.

¹⁶⁵ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 75. This is a curious statement. At least part of the *registrum* had made its way to Britain by this time, as Bede quoted several of the letters in his *HE*. Perhaps the *registrum* in its entirety came across the Channel in fits and starts over some years.

Gregory the Great's letters from the papal archives).¹⁶⁶ The other instance is a request to Lully from Cineheard of Winchester for some medical books *ultramarina*, described as difficult to obtain in England.¹⁶⁷ As there are no surviving letters from this time period with their roots in the Frankish kingdom, we cannot compare Anglo-Saxon interest in book exchange to Frankish, but certainly the transmission of texts described above supports the premise of a world of English scholarship and dissemination of literature that has long been recognized.¹⁶⁸

Other gifts, more difficult to transport than books, also made their way across the Channel at this time. Twice we are privy to birds of prey being sent to England, both times as solicited gifts. Sometime in the second quarter of the eighth century, Boniface forwarded to King Aethelbald of Mercia, *pro signo veri amoris et devote (sic) amicitiae*, a hawk and two falcons, two shields and two lances.¹⁶⁹ No motivation for this unusual cluster of gifts is given, nor is any countergift or "payment" from the king to Boniface recorded.¹⁷⁰ A second letter, sent some years later from Aethelbert II of Kent to Boniface, asks the latter to supply a pair of falcons capable of catching cranes, as such hawks were hard to come by in Kent.¹⁷¹ This time the king reciprocated upfront by sending with his

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 54 from Cardinal-Deacon Gemmulus to Boniface apologizes for the delay in getting these to him. It is unknown why Boniface felt the need to obtain these copies and then distribute them to Egbert. Bede had already sent the priest Nothhelm to Rome in the late 720s to collect the letters of Gregory and others from the papal archives. These were used to support the elevation of the see of York to an archbishopric, a goal already achieved by the time Boniface sent further copies there. See Joanna Story, "Bede, Willibrord and the letters of Pope Honorius I on the genesis of the archbishopric of York." *The English Historical Review* forthcoming: 4-7, (cited by permission).

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 114. [from overseas]

¹⁶⁸ See Michael Lapidge's recent work *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, (Oxford: 2006), Appendix D: "Ninth-century manuscripts of Continental origin having pre-conquest English provenance," 167-173, which includes lists of all Anglo-Saxon manuscripts exported to the Continent during this time.

¹⁶⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 69. [As a sign of true affection and devoted friendship...]. Curta, "Gift Giving," 681, suggests that the pairs of birds and weapons are symbolic, but confesses he has no idea of their meaning.

¹⁷⁰ Falconry had likely been practiced in Francia for centuries; regulations for it are to be found in the *Lex Salica* and other Frankish legal texts. It is uncertain when the sport made its way to England.

¹⁷¹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 105.

letter a three and a half-pound drinking cup lined with gold. In both cases, the difficulty of transporting the birds so that they arrived in healthy condition at the king's court is scarcely imaginable, as both fledglings and fully-trained adult hawks require almost constant feeding and exercise by a trained individual. Handlers skilled in the birds' care would have been essential as well as specialized equipment to carry and exercise them. Hawks and falcons are also messy birds, propelling highly-acidic feces great distances and regurgitating undigestible portions of their food, such as bones and fur or feathers, on a regular basis. The gifts of these predatory birds are especially intriguing given two letters in the collection in which are reported the results of Frankish synods that took place in the 740s, synods that scholars agree were initiated by Boniface and represent his main interests.¹⁷² One of the regulations resulting from these is that clerics were forbidden to hunt with dogs and keep falcons or hawks.¹⁷³ Evidently such a prohibition did not extend to clerics overseeing the obtaining and delivering of the birds to others.

There is not a single mention given to relics in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*. This is particularly surprising considering that popes Gregory III and Zacharias were both of Eastern extraction and therefore likely held more libertarian views of relic-appropriation than, say, Gregory I before them, who was freehanded with relics as long as they were not corporeal. Nor is there a trace of the token, homemade gifts of the type we find exchanged between Venantius Fortunatus and his circle.¹⁷⁴ Other gift items, however, that we find scarcely mentioned in the earlier collections, abound in that of Boniface and Lully. Clothing, for instance, was a commodity that traveled back and forth across the Channel with regularity. Most garments were cloaks of both linen and wool, sent either

¹⁷² *ibid.*, 56 and 78. See also Thomas Noble, "Introduction," in *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, ed. and trans. E. Emerton (New York: 2000), xx.

¹⁷³ These letters were sent from Carloman to all Christians, and Boniface to Cuthbert of Canterbury respectively. The wording of the prohibition is *nec non et illas venationes et silvaticas vagationes cum canibus omnibus servis Dei interdiximus; similiter, ut acceptores et walcones non habeant*. [We also forbid to all those in God's service any hunting and wandering about in wooded areas with dogs; similarly, they may not possess hawks and falcons].

¹⁷⁴ Curta, "Gift Giving," 681, thinks differently, interpreting the spices, the towels, (both discussed below) and even the falcons as symbolic gifts, if only we could read the symbols.

singly or in multiples.¹⁷⁵ Other items included tunics and footwear, as well as many unspecified articles of clothing. While we might expect the missionaries to be the ones receiving such practical gifts, this was not always the case. With one letter Boniface sent a decorated garment to Bishop Pehthelm of Whithorn and with another a cloak to Egbert of York.¹⁷⁶

Indeed, we find a solid emphasis on textiles in general, with many gifts of towels and altar cloths made from various materials from goat's hair to silk. Along with the above garment to Pehthelm, Boniface sent a *villosa*, or small towel. He even included a *villosa* – along with some silver and gold – with his letter to Zacharias congratulating him on his accession to the papacy.¹⁷⁷ We are reminded by this gesture of Radegund's gift of a rustic robe to the Byzantine emperor, but Boniface's inclusion of hard cash complicates the issue: the message, if there is one, is mixed. In contrast to Boniface's fondness for humble *villosae*, Lully sent a *palla* of the best quality silk with his request to Coena of York for some works of Bede.¹⁷⁸ Nor was this the only time Lully sent silk north. Two pieces at different times were sent to Abbot Cuthbert of Wearmouth and Jarrow: one a piece in which to wrap the remains of Bede, and another to be used as an altar-cloth.¹⁷⁹ It is not clear how Lully had access to luxury items such as silk, but his acquisition and subsequent gifting of this desirable fabric casts an interesting light on the possible trade activities of the mission as well as its growth in wealth after the death of Boniface.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 131: Abbot Botwin of Ripon sent a gift of six cloaks to Lully; 121: Alhred and Osgifu, rulers of Northumberland, sent Lully twelve cloaks and a gold ring as part of an embassy on its way to Charlemagne. Other "cloak" letters are: 105, 114, 116, 122. Many different words are used for this garment, of which there seems to have been many styles: *reptis*, *cocula*, *sagus*, *lacerna*.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 32 and 75 respectively.

¹⁷⁷ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 50.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 125.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 116 and 126 respectively.

¹⁸⁰ Xinru Liu, *Silk and Religion: an Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People AD 600–1200* (Oxford: 1996), 23, argues that silk manufacture and trade had reached new heights under the Arabs, who inherited much of Byzantine silk production; it was still very much a luxury item, however. In Letter 116 Cuthbert also asks Lully to send him an artisan in glass, another Eastern luxury. See also my earlier comments on the

Other gifts common in the Boniface and Lully collection but missing in the others are spices and incense. Twice Gemmulus, a cardinal in the papal curia, sent a bundle of these to Boniface, including cozumber, cinnamon, costmary, and pepper.¹⁸¹ A few years later Theophylact, another Greek or Syrian in the employ of the pope, twice sent to Boniface cinnamon, pepper, incense, and styrax, another balsamic oil similar to cozumber. These aromatic plants, which were used medicinally, are native to India and the Far East and may have made their way to Rome through commerce with Arab traders. Alternatively, they may have been brought from Byzantium by Greek clerics such as Gemmulus and Theophylact, who may have had a personal stash of such commodities. These exotic resins did not stay on the Continent, but were passed on to England. Not long after the above letters arrived with their treasures, Boniface sent a package of incense to the priest Herefrith, and around the same time Lully included some cinnamon and styrax with a letter to Eadburga.¹⁸²

It is clear that gift exchange in the *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* is distinctive in several ways from that in the other letter collections under scrutiny.¹⁸³ Many more letters have gifts attached; no relics change hands; clothing and textiles are popular, as are books, spices, and incense; wildlife is subjected to the rigours of travel and introduced into new territory. While much of what we can offer is mere speculation, we note first of all that the gifts of clothing in particular do not follow the rule of gift redundancy that

mission's horse-breeding activities for further evidence that Lully's leadership and business acumen greatly enriched the missionary community.

¹⁸¹ Cozumber is an Arab designation for an aromatic, liquid balsam used as incense per Antonio de Nebrija, *Dictionarium Medicum*, (Salamanca: 2001), 223. Costmary is another balsamic herb. The cardinal's accompanying letter carefully lists the amounts of each spice, possibly to ensure that the amount he sent got there safely. This adds weight to my argument that a gift would never be sent without written acknowledgement by the sender.

¹⁸² *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 74 and 70 respectively.

¹⁸³ One thing that has not changed is the Latin words used for "gift," which is almost invariably *munus* or its diminutive *munusculum*, or *donum* – exactly the same usage as that of Venantius Fortunatus almost two centuries earlier. Only Lully, whose Latin is much more high-flown than anyone other than the Greek clerics, occasionally uses *exenia* or *exeniola*. This further calls into question the notion that *eulogia* became the preferred word for gifts of friendship by the late sixth century.

sociologists are fond of quoting – in other words, that the true gift was something that one neither needed, or in many cases, wanted.¹⁸⁴ Instead, in a letter to Abbot Fulrad of St. Denis written near the end of his life, Boniface remarks that his priests in the border regions live a meager existence and cannot procure clothing without assistance.¹⁸⁵ Another letter sent from Lully to Boniface's kinswoman Leobgytha assures the abbess that he has not been neglecting her on purpose. She is to inform the bearer Gundwin of what she lacks, and Lully will take pains to obtain it for her.¹⁸⁶ The dispersal of cloaks and other garments, therefore, suggests a response to a real need and are thus the closest we come in these letter collections to altruistic gifts.

A further point to consider is the fact that many of Boniface's assistants were related to him, to Lully, and to each other. Leobgytha's mother, for example, was related to Boniface.¹⁸⁷ Tecla, who became abbess of his monastery in Kitzingen, was related to Leobgytha and therefore by extension to Boniface as well.¹⁸⁸ Cynehild, to whom Letter 67 was addressed along with Leobgytha, Tecla, and their sisters, was an aunt of Lully's and the mother of Berthgyth, whose plaintive letters to her brother Balthard are also found in the collection.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, as Lully states in a letter to an unknown abbess, he brought along a large crowd of his relatives when he crossed the Channel to join Boniface.¹⁹⁰ There are quite possibly other kin relationships of which we are unaware. Such a pool of familial ties creates networks of mutual dependency that grow exponentially as each relative added brings kin by marriage, etc., into the circle. This

¹⁸⁴ Curta, "Gift Giving," 672, notes that sociologists define gifts as bringing little or no benefit to their recipient.

¹⁸⁵ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 93. This is also a commentary on the relative poverty of the mission during Boniface's lifetime.

¹⁸⁶ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 100. The letter was written after Boniface's death, when Lully inherited the responsibility of caring for the former's relatives.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ David H. Farmer, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, (Oxford: 1997), s.v. "Tecla of England." Sources for this entry are *AA.SS.* Oct 7 and W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (1946), 77.

¹⁸⁹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 143, 147, 148. The information regarding the relationships is to be found in Otloh, *vita Bonifatii* 25; cf. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 1984), 30 and n. 110.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 98.

sense of community plus a desire on the part of those left behind in England to lend practical aid to the work of the mission may at least partially explain both the abundance of gifts that we find in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* and the nature of those gifts.

11 Conclusion

Except for the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, which are a window onto a unique situation characterized by a heightened sense of kinship, self-sacrifice, mission and community, there are too few gifts mentioned in the letter collections under study to justify the application of the term “gift economy” to the Merovingian era. We must be cautious, however, about concluding from this lack that a Merovingian gift economy did not exist at all. Gift exchange manifested itself in many venues not addressed by the letters, such as donations to the Church, or royal distribution of land or other valuables to followers. And as noted, embassies always carried gifts when travelling to foreign courts and returned home equally laden. However, these are all official gift-giving occasions and we cannot escape the conclusion that when given the chance to personally bestow a gift on a correspondent, almost every letter-writer in our collections chose not to do so. A public “gift economy” may have been the norm; in the private sphere revealed by the letters, it was virtually non-existent.

The low numbers may be at least partially attributable to the difficulty and expense of long-distance transport, especially of gifts that were unwieldy or required specialized handling like Desiderius’ Falernian and Boniface’s hawks. The “symbolism” that historians labour to attach to small tokens of *amicitia* may not be as vital a function of these gifts as their portability. Finally, the answer to the puzzle of why the letters as a whole do not record more gifts of this nature may lie above all in the fact that the letter itself was a gift. Under normal circumstances, both sender and receiver expected no more.

Chapter 5

The Merovingians and the Bible

Note: for letters referenced in this chapter, please see Appendix of Biblical Quotations at end of chapter.

1 Biblical Quotations in the Collections: an Overview

In his contribution to the *Oxford History of the Christian Church* series, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill concludes that the Bible was “the book that dominated the whole field of Frankish...literary activity.”¹ Y. Hen agrees, naming the Bible the “most important component in the discourse and literary production of the Merovingian kingdoms.”² This view is supported, albeit in reverse, by E. A. Lowe, who in the French section of his *Codices Latini Antiquiores* mourns the fact that from the centuries before 800 there survives an enormous preponderance of biblical and patristic texts and very few pagan literary texts.³ The general outline of these observations is reflected in the Merovingian letters, which are replete with biblical allusions, imagery, and quotations, and apart from the letters of the Irishman Columbanus, lack references to pagan works almost entirely.⁴

¹ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church, 500–900* (Oxford: 1984), 75.

² Yitzhak Hen, “The uses of the Bible and the perception of kingship in Merovingian Gaul,” *Early Medieval Europe* Vol. 7 Iss. 3 (1998), 281.

³ E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century*, (Oxford: 1972).

⁴ The Columbanian references are not straightforward. J.W. Smit, in Part II of *Studies on the Language and Style of Columba the Younger* (Amsterdam: 1971), argues that the few genuine allusions to pagan texts in Columbanus’ letters have their origin not in classical authors themselves, but in the Irishman’s reading of patristic texts, notably those of Jerome. The nub of the debate lies in the questionable authorship of certain poems that have been transmitted with the letters, which contain many classical references that cannot be argued away. Due to convincing arguments presented by Michael Lapidge, scholars no longer consider these to have been written by Columbanus, a conclusion which does serious damage to his reputation as the exceptional Irish scholar of his day. For a full discussion, see the essays in Michael Lapidge, ed. *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings* (Woodbridge: 1997). In a more recent article, Michael Herren reopens the debate, takes issue with some of Lapidge’s conclusions, and leaves the door open for Columbanian authorship. If Herren’s argument were to be accepted, we would of

But there is a difference, for although Lowe's patristic texts loom almost three times larger in his lists than biblical texts, Merovingian epistolographers cite patristic authors surprisingly little.

Wallace-Hadrill also believed that the Merovingians used the Bible "less as a source of doctrine than as inspired literature to sustain religious emotion."⁵ This scholar goes on to describe Frankish biblical usage as neither accurate nor authentic, but primarily sentimental and oral, and accompanied by well-worn and well-loved liturgical trappings. This view, which was doubtless based on the hagiographical and liturgical material that formed the basis of Wallace-Hadrill's work, is not entirely supported by a study of the letters. Rather, we find Scriptural usage in these collections to be more along the lines of that described by John Martyn in his English translation of the *registrum Gregorii*, where practical application of Scripture and its message was emphasized and "conversion of life, leading to the contemplation of divine truth, was the ultimate goal of all scriptural study."⁶

In the Merovingian letter collections, Scripture is quoted only by ecclesiastics. These are almost entirely bishops, but interestingly the letter that contains the largest number of Scriptural quotes in our entire corpus was written by Caesaria the Younger, abbess of Caesarius' monastery for women in Arles.⁷ While clerics quoted Scripture to each other as well as to laypeople, no example exists of a layperson, no matter how highly placed, quoting Scripture to anyone. It is not clear why this is so. Was there in place a convention that biblical material was the sole property of ecclesiastics? If so, was this convention

necessity be compelled to reconsider as well the source of the classical allusions in the letters. See Michael Herren, "Some quantitative poems attributed to Columbanus of Bobbio," in *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: a Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, ed. John Marenbon (Leiden: 2001), 99–112.

⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 76.

⁶ John R. C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 Vols. (Toronto: 2004), Vol. 1, 14–5.

⁷ This letter, addressed to Radegund and Agnes at Poitiers, is No. 11 in the *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*. For a discussion of this letter, see Chapter 1, "Women's Letters," Section 1.2.

enforced? Firm control over the dissemination of Scripture would have given bishops and other clerics a pronounced psychological advantage in the realm of spiritual matters.

Merovingian letter writers employed an extensive Scriptural palette. Present from the New Testament are the four Evangelia, the Actus Apostolorum, Paul's epistles *ad Romanos*, *Corinthios*, *Galatas*, *Ephesios*, *Philippenses*, *Colossenses*, *Thessalonicenses*, and *Timotheum*, the epistle *ad Hebraeos*, epistles *Iacobi*, *Petri*, and *Johannis*, and the *Apocalypsis*. The Old Testament is represented by *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numeri*, *Deuteronomium*, *Iosue*, *Samuhel* 1 and 2, *Regum* 3, *Paralipomenon*, *Ezras*, *Tobias*, *Iob*, *Psalmi*, *Proverbia*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Canticum Canticorum*, *Sapientia*, *Sirach*, *Isaias*, *Hieremias*, *Hiezechiel*, *Daniel*, *Isaiah*, *Iohel*, *Ionas*, *Abacuc*, *Zaccharias*, and *Macchabeorum*.⁸ Although the number of Old and New Testament books represented turns out to be fairly equal, in actuality the New Testament is quoted approximately three times more often than the Old Testament, and of the latter the *Psalmi* predominate.

For the most part, approximately one-quarter to one-half of the letters in any given Merovingian collection contains Scriptural quotations. Notable exceptions are the collection of Desiderius of Cahors, with only five out of thirty-six letters containing biblical quotes, and that of Columbanus, in which each letter but one contains Scripture. Within this broad spectrum, individual letters differ greatly. Some entire letters consist of little other than Scripture quotations strung together, while others contain very few.

The question of accuracy is a vexed one. As we shall see, complete faithfulness to what we know as the Vulgate is rare, yet we should not expect it to be otherwise, since before the Carolingian era there existed differing recensions for Italy, Spain, Gaul, and Ireland which were themselves constantly being revised.⁹ Uncertainty increases when we consider that most letter writers likely quoted Scripture from memory as they wrote, which depending on the individual and his or her state of mind could potentially range far

⁸ The inclusion of *Tobias*, *Sapientia*, *Sirach* and *Macchabeorum* indicates that these were considered canonical in the Merovingian era.

⁹ Roger Gryson et al, eds. *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart: 1994), Preface, xxix.

afield. For the purposes of this discussion, therefore, I treat small departures from the established text,¹⁰ such as differences in wording or small omissions, as insignificant, but I label as inaccurate, or at least noteworthy, those which deviate so widely as to represent wholesale departures from the meaning of the passage.

I have placed an Appendix of Biblical Quotations at the end of this chapter which lists all applicable letters and the Scriptural quotations found in each. This information has been lifted directly from the MGH editions of the letter collections; my contribution has been to bring it together for, to my knowledge, the first time. This Appendix is restricted to direct quotes only, for although on many occasions a letter-writer's prose may contain biblical echoes, their author's intent is often ambiguous.¹¹ Only when a writer prefaces his or her citation with a phrase along the lines of *ut dictum* or *cum apostolo dicebant* or *scriptum est* can we be sure that, in the writer's mind at least, a biblical quote is in the offing. Sometimes these authorial signposts are not in the text, but there is still clearly a direct biblical quotation present. These I have also included in the Appendix. For an analysis of some of this collected data, see the Chart of Biblical Quotations following the Appendix, which lists the ten most widely-quoted books of the Bible and compares the number of quotes they receive in the collections.

It will be noted that some major collections are omitted from the Appendix and the Chart. *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* is one of these, for although the poet often refers to biblical subjects, he never quotes the Bible.¹² Another is the *registrum Gregorii*, since the work on this pope's use of the Bible in his letters has already been done by his English

¹⁰ By this I mean the modern Vulgate.

¹¹ (a) There are times when a letter-writer clearly uses biblical figures and events to lend authority to what he/she is saying, without necessarily quoting Scripture to do so; I have included these in my discussion while omitting them from the Appendix. (b) MGH editors mark ambiguous Scriptural references with a "cf.," these are also omitted from the Appendix.

¹² See, for instance, 3.9 to Felix of Nantes, considered by many scholars to be the poet's best and which is full of Scriptural allusions, but no quotes; also 5.6 and 5.6a to Syagrius of Autun, a *carmen figuratum* that tells the Gospel story from Adam and Eve to Christ; for a discussion of this work, see Chapter 2, "Venantius Fortunatus and his Correspondents" Section 2.6.

translator, John R. C. Martyn, who includes both an index to all citations and a detailed analysis of these.¹³ A further omission is the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae*, which as the collection's name indicates, is problematic due to interpolations, fragments, outright forgeries, and the collection's suspect provenance.¹⁴ Others, such as the *variae* of Cassiodorus, are not eligible for inclusion because those that pertain to the Merovingians are found to contain no biblical quotations. Alternatively, some letters that are included in the Appendix do not necessarily represent Frankish practice because they either originate outside Gaul or are composed in Gaul by non-natives. This group is useful for comparison, however, and includes papal letters, the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*, the letters of Columbanus, and some individual letters scattered throughout the collections. Finally, the following observations on Merovingian use of the Bible in letter-writing are by no means a detailed analysis of this large topic. They are intended rather as a survey that opens the door to future study.

2 Heavy Use of Scripture: Letters of Instruction and Reproach¹⁵

2.1 Germanus of Paris to Brunhild

Because the letters that are heavily-larded with Scripture are rare and therefore signal that something out of the ordinary is happening, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at some of these in order to understand the author's intent and how heavy use of biblical material aided its realization. One such example was sent from Germanus of Paris to Queen Brunhild around the year 575, at a time when civil war was brewing between her husband

¹³ Martyn, *Letters of Gregory*, Vol. 1, 14–17 and 114–6.

¹⁴ While some of the letters in this collection are likely genuine, we cannot be sure of them due to the untrustworthiness of the others. Many are found nowhere else. I have, however, included summaries of each with comments in the Appendix of Summaries at the end of this work.

¹⁵ Heavy use of Scripture was not imperative in letters of instruction and admonition. That of Desiderius of Cahors to the abbess Aspasia (1.14), for example, although composed not long before that of Chrodobert to Boba (see below), contains only three references. However, this small amount is still the most he uses in any of his letters. This highlights the relativism involved in our subject: what is heavy to some would not be heavy to others.

Sigibert and his brothers and fellow kings.¹⁶ It was designed to persuade, instruct, and admonish the queen and contains a grand total of fifteen Scriptural quotations: six from the Old Testament and nine from the New Testament. Since scholars agree that the *epistolae Austrasicae*, the collection which contains the letter, is a formulary,¹⁷ it follows that Germanus' style of Scripture usage must have been considered worthy of emulation by future epistolographers.

The bishop takes three main approaches to Scripture in his letter. Firstly, he uses it to create distance between himself and what he is saying; in other words, by the use of direct biblical language he clothes himself as a prophet who is simply channeling God's message to his recipient, in this case a rather dangerous queen. This is evident in the first sentence of his address, which begins *quia caritas congaudet veritati et omnia sustinet et numquam excedit...audemus suggerere...*¹⁸ This rendition of 1 Cor. 13:6-8 is incomplete, but it paves the way for Germanus to begin to severely castigate the queen and through her, her husband King Sigibert. The next theme of the bishop's argument is *radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas*.¹⁹ This moves quickly into the lament *vae homini per quem scandalum venit*,²⁰ which Germanus applies to Judas and by extension to all those who have the power to do good but choose instead to do evil – Sigibert and his brothers. At this second stage he calls on Scripture as the ultimate moral authority and piles up quotations to reinforce the notion that by the law of reaping and sowing, God will judge such evildoers and bring them to ruin. At the end of this sensitive section Germanus again feels the need to remind the queen that he is acting under divine orders: *quia sacerdotibus praeceptum est, 'ut tuba exalta vocem tuam et adnuntia populo meo opera eorum.'*²¹ The

¹⁶ *epistolae Austrasicae* 9. For the political background to this letter as well as an analysis from the perspective of bishops as teachers, see Chapter 3, "Bishops' Letters," Section 3.3.

¹⁷ Elena Malaspina, *Il Liber Epistolarum della cancellaria austrasica (sec. V–VI)* (Rome: 2001), Intro. 1.2 and 1.3.

¹⁸ [since love rejoices in the truth, endures all things, and never dies...we dare to bring to your attention...]

¹⁹ 1 Tim. 6:10. [avarice is the root of all evil].

²⁰ Matt. 18:7. [woe to the man through whom temptation comes].

²¹ Isa 58:1. [since it has been commanded to priests: "lift up your voice like a trumpet and announce to my people their deeds]."

final portion of the letter focuses on the particular evil of fratricide and Scripture quotes such as *qui odit fratrem suum homicida est*²² are laid alongside the biblical examples of Cain, Absalom, Saul, and Joseph. At this point the bishop opens a door of escape by bringing in the example of Esther, who saved her people, as a model for Brunhild. He juxtaposes this attractive option with more hopeful Scripture passages: *qui nequiter agunt, exterminabuntur; qui vero expectant Dominum, ipsi hereditabunt terram*²³ and *beati pacifici quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur; pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam relinquo vobis*.²⁴ Germanus' technique of interweaving quotations with biblical figures is very effective and comprises the third part of his methodology of Scripture usage in this letter.

The wording of many of the bishop's citations suggests that he is quoting Scripture from memory. We cannot be certain of this, however, nor, as indicated above, can we assign an exact source to him with any certainty. While one quote – *vae homini, per quem scandalum venit* – is exactly as it stands in the Vulgate, others such as *qui nequiter agunt, exterminabuntur; qui vero expectant Dominum, ipsi hereditabunt terram* differ significantly.²⁵ The above quote beginning *beati pacifici* (see n. 24) is cobbled together from unrelated passages in the *Evangelia secundum Mattheum* and *Iohannem* and introduced by the phrase *salvator denuntiat*: is the bishop forming a catena or simply misremembering the passage? The bishop deploys some exegesis at the tropological level when he applies the quote *vae homini per quem scandalum venit* not only to Judas, but also to Sigibert and his brothers. For the most part, however – probably not to obfuscate the point of the argument – the biblical text is simply brought to bear, without further comment, on the issue at hand.

²² 1 Ioh. 3:15: [whoever hates his brother is a homicide].

²³ Ps. 36:9: [those who do evil will be exterminated, but those who await the Lord will inherit the earth].

²⁴ Matt. 5:9: [blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God]; Ioh. 14:27: [my peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you].

²⁵ In the Vulgate *iuxta Hebraicum* this verse is *quoniam qui malefaciunt interibunt; expectantes autem Dominum ipsi hereditabunt terram*; the Vulgate *iuxta lxx* is: *quoniam qui malignantur exterminabuntur; sustinentes autem Dominum ipsi hereditabunt terram*.

2.2 Chrodoberth of Tours to Boba

We will next examine another letter that was preserved as part of a formulary. This was sent by Chrodoberth of Tours to an Abbess Boba. Found in the present study as Letter 16 of the *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*, it was originally preserved in the *formulae collectionis Sancti Dionysii*, edited by K. Zeumer in the MGH.²⁶ The letter was composed about a century after that of Germanus, above, and instructs the abbess on how to deal with a nun polluted by adultery. While this letter is also heavy with biblical quotes – containing eleven from the New and two from the Old Testament – it differs from the earlier letter in two key ways. First, it contains no arm’s-length posturing; as it is written to an abbess, an insider as it were, and moreover is in answer to her specific request for pastoral care, it does not need to. Second, Chrodoberth reinforces Scriptural authority, and at the same time grounds it, by sending certain synodal canons that address the issue at hand – something that Germanus does not do, nor would we expect him to. Indeed, canons pertaining to civil war and *scandalum*, if any were to be found, would serve only to detract from Germanus’ centre-stage role of God’s mouthpiece to misbehaving royalty.

In the heaping up of biblical quotations combined with an emphatic use of biblical models, however, this letter is very similar to the earlier one. Chrodoberth’s theme is the repentant sinner and God’s forgiveness, and his examples and quotations reflect this. The example of Mary Magdalene, who Chrodoberth wrongly believes was the same Mary who was the sister of Martha and Lazarus, is followed by a diverse array of people, named and unnamed: Paul the apostle – originally a persecutor of Christians – Zachaeus, the Thief on the Cross, the Shepherd and the Lost Sheep, the people of Nineveh, King David, and others make their appearance. Biblical quotations accompany these: *remittuntur ei peccata multa, quoniam dilexit multum*;²⁷ *fuistis aliquando tenebrae, nunc autem lux in Domino*;²⁸ *ubi abundavit peccatum, superhabundabit et gratia*;²⁹ *sicut enim exhibuistis*

²⁶ In the Preface to his edition of the formulary, Zeumer expresses the opinion that this letter and others pertaining to Tours were added to the archives of St. Denis at some later date, probably sometime in the Carolingian era. For further discussion on this letter from the perspective of the bishop as teacher, see Chapter 3, “Bishop’ Letters,” Section 3.1.

²⁷ Luc. 7:47. [her many sins were forgiven, for she loved much].

²⁸ Eph. 5:8. [once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord].

*membra vestra servire inmunditiae et iniquitati ad iniquitatem, ita nunc exhibete membra vestra servire iustitiae in sanctificatione.*³⁰

As in the letter to Brunhild, the bishop seems to be quoting from memory: some of the quotes are identical to the Vulgate, while others differ in insignificant ways. Besides the error involving Mary Magdalene, Chrodobert also departs significantly from a passage in Hiez. 33:12-16 with the quote: *peccator in quaquunque die vel quacumque ora conversus fuerit et ingemuerit, omnia peccata sua oblivioni traduntur.*³¹ We know he intends a direct quote, as he precedes it by the phrase *excellentissimus propheta, qui spiritu Dei plenus dicit.*³² The actual passage is as follows in the modern Vulgate: (I have underlined the phrases that appear in Chrodobert's quote).

12. *tu itaque fili hominis dic ad filios populi tui iustitia iusti non liberabit eum in quacumque die peccaverit et impietas impii non nocebit ei in quacumque die conversus fuerit ab impietate sua et iustus non poterit vivere in iustitia sua in quacumque die peccaverit* 13. *etiam si dixero iusto quod vita vivat et confisus in iustitia sua fecerit iniquitatem omnes iustitiae eius oblivioni tradentur et in iniquitate sua quam operatus est in ipsa morietur* 14. *sin autem dixero impio morte morieris et egerit paenitentiam a peccato suo feceritque iudicium et iustitiam* 15. *pignus restituerit ille impius rapinamque reddiderit in mandatis vitae ambulaverit nec fecerit quicquam iniustum vita vivet non morietur* 16. *omnia peccata eius quae peccavit non imputabuntur ei.*³³

²⁹ Rom. 5:20. [where sin abounded, grace will abound all the more].

³⁰ Rom. 6:19. [for just as you used to present your members to serve impurity and ever-increasing wickedness, so now present your members to serve righteousness in sanctification].

³¹ [in whatever day or hour the sinner turns from his sins and mourns over them, all his sins are consigned to oblivion].

³² [the excellent prophet, who was full of the spirit of God, said...]

³³ Hiez. 33:12-16: [You, therefore, son of man, say to the sons of your people that the righteousness of the righteous will not liberate him in the day he has sinned and the sin of the wicked will not harm him in the day he has turned from his sin; the just will not be able to live in his righteousness in the day he has sinned. If I will have said to the righteous that he will live, and confident in his righteousness he does evil, all his righteousness will be consigned to oblivion and in the evil he has worked he will die. But if I will have said to the wicked "you will die" and he repents from his sin and does what is right and just, restores what he has pledged, returns what he has stolen, walks in the decrees of life, and does no evil, then he will live and not die – all the sins that he has committed will not be imputed to him].

As can be seen, the bishop's quote conflates no fewer than five verses by plucking out phrases here and there and cobbling them together. The result, while not distorting Christian teaching on repentance, nonetheless gives little sense of the original passage.

2.3 Nicetius of Trier to Chlodosind

A final example is a letter written by Nicetius of Trier to Chlodosind, daughter of Chlothar I and wife of the Lombard king Alboin.³⁴ Like the above two letters, it was composed to instruct and admonish a woman, and became part of a later formulary. The letter was likely written shortly before the Lombards invaded northern Italy in 568. The bishop's purpose is to persuade Chlodosind to make every effort to steer her husband away from Arianism.³⁵ Like Germanus, Nicetius takes refuge behind biblical injunction, by exhorting the queen *per tremendum diem iudicii*,³⁶ but he is in a safer position than was Germanus, since his letter admonishes rather than castigates. Furthermore, Chlodosind was far away and powerless to do him any damage. Again like Germanus, his argument is basically in three parts. After an opening citation of Matt. 6:33 – *quaerite primum regnum Dei et omnia bona adponentur*³⁷ – he begins to heap up Scripture passages, this time focusing on what he sees as the folly and error of Arian belief, which he seeks to demolish with one pertinent quote after another.³⁸ Some allegorical exegesis is in evidence as Nicetius interprets passages such as Gen. 18:1-15, in which the three heavenly beings appeared to Abraham, as representative of the Trinity.

³⁴ *epistolae Austrasicae* 8.

³⁵ For discussion of the ambiguities of Lombard belief in relation to this letter, see Chapter 3, "Bishops' Letters," Section 3.3.

³⁶ [by the fearful Day of Judgment].

³⁷ [Seek first the kingdom of God and all good things will be added to you]. Nicetius – or his source – has abbreviated the passage somewhat and changed the wording. The passage in the modern Vulgate is: *quaerite autem primum regnum et iustitiam eius et omnia haec adicientur vobis*. [but seek first the kingdom and its righteousness and all these things will be added to you]. Note that the expected word "Dei" (i.e. *regnum Dei*) is not part of the text.

³⁸ Arian Christians were visiting and preaching at the Lombard court at the time of writing, hence the focus on Arianism in the letter.

One clue to Nicetius' source material appears in the following quote: *distribuite gradus eius ut enarretis in progenie altera*.³⁹ This rendition of Ps. 47:13-14 appears as follows in the modern Vulgate – note that for the Psalms, two versions are given: *iuxta Hebraicum* and *iuxta LXX*.⁴⁰ As above with Chrodobert, I have underlined the words that appear in Nicetius' quote.

1. *iuxta Hebraicum*:

*circumdate Sion et circumite eam, numerate turres eius; ponite cor vestrum in moenibus, separate palatia eius ut narretis generatione novissima.*⁴¹

2. *iuxta Septuaginta*:

*circumdate Sion et conplectimini eam, narrate in turribus eius; ponite corda vestra in virtute eius et distribuite domus eius ut enarretis in progeniem alteram.*⁴²

The bishop's quote is much closer to the Septuagint version. The missing "m" endings on the accusative feminine singular *progeniem alteram* can be explained by the fact that by Nicetius' time such accusative singulars were indistinguishable in pronunciation from the ablative singular. The substitution of *domus* for *gradus* suggests that the bishop was quoting from memory; while differing widely in meaning, the words are similar in shape and are both fourth-declension nouns in the accusative plural. In his interpretation of the passage, Nicetius focuses on the word *eius*, arguing that it proves that God is One. Although intended as an argument against Arian belief, which takes the position that Christ was a created being and therefore not "One" with the Father, the Scripture passage does not lend itself well to that purpose since it is referring not to Christ, but to Zion and its fortifications. This paragraph of Scripture quotes mixed with a modicum of exegesis forms the largest section of the letter.

³⁹ [distinguish his steps so that you may tell them to the next generation...] It is uncertain exactly what Nicetius meant by this quotation.

⁴⁰ These versions reflect Jerome's translation from the Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint, respectively.

⁴¹ [Go around Zion, go around her, number her towers; set your mind on her fortifications and notice her palaces so you can describe them to the next generation].

⁴² [Go around Zion, encircle her, tell about her towers; place your thoughts on her mighty works and examine her buildings so that you can describe them to the next generation].

These three letters and their preservation as formulae make it plain that when a Merovingian bishop needed to instruct, admonish, and persuade, use of both biblical quotations and biblical figures was considered appropriate, the former as moral compass and authority, and the latter as inspiration for the recipient, often a woman. The guideline seems to have been the more citations the merrier, since all the letters that fall into this category contain far more than, say, ordinary letters of *amicitia*, some of which we will examine shortly. On the other hand, these letters are almost completely devoid of patristic quotations, references, or allusions; extended exegesis of biblical material, and the use of patristic texts with their wealth of detailed biblical interpretation, either was not considered suitable for a female audience, or was not a major concern in this instructional setting.

Other letters in the same category – exhortatory with heavy use of Scripture – are the above-noted letter from Caesaria the Younger to Radegund and Agnes⁴³ and the letter of Caesarius of Arles to his sister Caesaria the Elder that spawned it;⁴⁴ another from an unknown bishop to one of the sons of Dagobert,⁴⁵ and one from Leudegar of Autun to his mother Sigrada.⁴⁶ All the recipients of these letters are women, with the one exception being a king before the age of his majority. There are no comparable letters to Merovingian kings or other males of mature age. Instead, the type of instruction given by bishops to kings and other powerful figures tends to be of the “mirror for princes” type; these urge the recipient toward Christian principles and virtues, but do not include Scripture citations.

⁴³ *epistolae aevi Merovingici. collectae* 11.

⁴⁴ *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis episcopi* 21. Although Caesaria borrows extensively from Caesarius’ letter, she herself uses about twice the number of Scripture quotations and these have almost no overlap with those of Caesarius.

⁴⁵ *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 15. Note: although it is generally agreed that the recipient was a son of Dagobert, not all scholars concur. For further discussion see Chapter 3, “Bishops’ Letters,” Section 3.2.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 17. Note that this letter is of questionable authenticity.

3 Varied Use of Scripture: Letters of Defence

3.1 Cyprianus of Toulon to Maximus of Geneva

Defence of one's own position and reproach in response to another's criticism was another instance in which biblical authority was deemed appropriate and indeed imperative, but here the extent of its usage is inconsistent in the collections and difficult to evaluate. Heavy use of Scripture was sometimes made in a defensive situation, however, as heavy as we find in the letters of instruction above. An example of this is found in a letter written early in the sixth century from Cyprianus of Toulon to Maximus of Geneva.⁴⁷ Cyprianus had been accused by Maximus of having Nestorian leanings, and in reply vigorously defends his orthodoxy. He begins very early on to batter his opponent with Scriptures that support the reality of Christ's human nature and how it meshed and functioned with his divine nature. This is a technique we have encountered before, but this time all quotations are from the New Testament, with the majority being from the *evangelium secundum Iohannem*. Almost without exception they follow their sources closely, much more so than the instructional letters discussed above. This, plus the close sequencing of the quotes, especially those from *secundum Iohannem*,⁴⁸ makes it fairly evident that Cyprianus was not quoting from memory, but had a biblical text in front of him.

In the last paragraph of the letter,⁴⁹ the bishop takes a different tack and subtly goes on the offensive. First he comments that he is sending Maximus some of his own works along with those of Hilary and Leporus and would appreciate a return letter with Maximus' views on these. If distance makes the sending of such a letter difficult, says Cyprianus, then it can be directed *per fratri vestro, domno meo*, Caesarius of Arles. This mention of Cyprianus' prestigious metropolitan was doubtless meant to demoralize his opponent by reminding Maximus that the diocese of Arles had recently had its privileges

⁴⁷ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 1; the bishoprics of these men are uncertain.

⁴⁸ See this entry in the Appendix; the sequence is Ioh. 6:33, 48, 52, 54, 62, 63. There are no material deviations from the modern Vulgate in these quotes.

⁴⁹ The letter, although substantial, ends abruptly and is possibly a fragment.

restored, ousting Geneva's metropolitan bishopric, Vienne, from disputed territory.⁵⁰

While further stating that he would be happy to learn a better way of faith if his is proved deficient, Cyprianus then proceeds to imply that it is his correspondent whose faith needs upgrading. Posing as a patient teacher of a dull-witted pupil, Cyprianus uses the words of St. Paul to speak directly to Maximus: *nocte et die orantes ut videamus faciem vestram et suppleamus ea quae desunt fidei vestrae*⁵¹ and *quicumque perfecti, hoc sentiamus, et si quid aliter sapientes, et hoc vobis Deus revelavit*.⁵² Both of these quotes show only slight deviations in vocabulary from the Vulgate.

3.2 Remigius of Rheims to Heraclius, Leo, and Theodosius

At other times, a no less vigorous defence will rest upon few Scripture quotes. In a letter dated 512, Remigius of Rheims found it necessary to severely castigate the bishops Heraclius, Leo, and Theodosius, of uncertain sees.⁵³ While we are privy to few details, these bishops had apparently sent a joint letter, now a *deperditum*, in which they castigated the elderly Remigius for taking up a certain delinquent priest on the recommendation of King Clovis I, an action which they claimed was uncanonical. According to Remigius, the three had been insulting and belligerent in their accusations,

⁵⁰ This happened in 513 when Pope Symmachus restored to Arles the dioceses that had been usurped by Vienne when the former's territory had been divided due to political boundaries. Although the pope's ruling gave Arles *de iure* control over the disputed territory, it probably did not take *de facto* effect until 523 under the Ostrogoths. See W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters*, (Liverpool: 1994), 87. As the letter above is tentatively dated 524–533, the disputed territory could have been very recently restored when the letter was written, rendering Cyprian's remark regarding Arles even more pointed.

⁵¹ 1 Thess. 3:10: [praying night and day that we might see your face and supply whatever is lacking in your faith].

⁵² Phil. 3:15: [those of us who are faultless should understand this, and if you reason otherwise, God will also reveal it to you]. The MGH edition of W. Gundlach has *nobis* in the last phrase of this quote, as in "God will also reveal this to us." This would require the *sapientes* to also refer to "us" rather than "you." The Vulgate has *vobis*, however, and I believe this more clearly reflects Cyprian's tone and intent.

⁵³ *epistolae Austrasicae* 3. Gundlach suggests that the see of Heraclius is Paris or Sens. Although I can find no evidence for Paris, there was a bishop of that name in Sens at that time (d. 515). The bishopric of Leo is unknown, while that of Theodosius is likely Auxerre (c. 507–516). None of these individuals are mentioned in the *PLRE*.

even going so far as make the rude comment *melius vos fuisse non natos*.⁵⁴ Interwoven with his indignation at the bishops' presumption, Remigius' reply focuses on the circumstances surrounding the delinquent priest and the man's rehabilitation through penance. Interestingly, these Gallic bishops have Greek names, and while names are not a sure guide to ethnicity, the suspicion arises that although occupying Gallic bishoprics, the three bishops had Byzantine interests, and that the dispute between Remigius and these individuals had its basis in the theological debates over the nature of Christ that were ongoing during the early years of the sixth century and beyond.⁵⁵

Remigius uses only two direct biblical quotations in his reply to the three bishops. Firstly, he opens his address with *caritas numquam excedit*,⁵⁶ stating further that it is plain by their letter that such a sentiment had no place in their thinking. Except for the substitution of *excedit* for the modern Vulgate *excidit*, the two are identical. Later in defence of his actions toward the lapsed priest, he quotes from Hiezechiel: *nolo mortem morientis, sed ut convertatur et vivat*,⁵⁷ which the Vulgate renders as *numquid voluntatis meae est mors impii dicit Dominus Deus et non ut convertatur a viis suis et vivat?* While a reasonable paraphrase of the Vulgate, the substitution of the word *morientis* for *impii* is curious. Was this a memory slip? a different source? Or was the bishop making a point about the connection between the *impius* and his state of dying while alive – *moriens* – until he is converted?

⁵⁴ [better you had never been born].

⁵⁵ Remigius' episcopate (c. 459-533) spanned the reigns of three Byzantine emperors – Anastasius I, Justin I, and Justinian. The specific date of 512 was arrived at because Remigius states he had been bishop of Rheims for 53 years at time of writing.

⁵⁶ 1 Cor. 13:8. [love never fails].

⁵⁷ Hiez. 18:23: [I do not wish the death of the dying, but that he be converted and live]. The Vulgate version: [Is it my will that a sinner should die, says the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live]? (The latter taken from the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible).

3.3 Letters of Pope Pelagius I

Pope Pelagius I also wrote a letter of defence to Sapaudus of Arles around the middle of the sixth century.⁵⁸ After years of mutual amiability, the bishop had sent a letter to Rome accusing Pelagius of taking up Justinian's theological position and condemning the Three Chapters when he was resident in Constantinople. The pope's indignant and lengthy reply, unlike those of Cyprianus and Remigius, employs no direct biblical quotes, although he does allude to a disagreement between St. Peter and St. Paul that is outlined in Gal. 2:11-21. Instead, Pelagius relies for support on patristic texts: Cyprianus, whose letter to Quintus he quotes, and especially Augustine, specifically the *de anima et eius origine*, the *enarrationes in Psalmos* 62, and the *retractiones*. Pelagius argues that, like Augustine, he has corrected his earlier views with a *ensorius stilus*.⁵⁹

Although Augustine appears to be a favourite with Pelagius I – he quotes him in two other letters in the Merovingian collections⁶⁰ – several of this pope's letters in the Arles collection do contain a small number of biblical quotes. It is possible that in the letter to Sapaudus the pope was purposely deploying patristic material in the face of a hard-core doctrinal subject and an episcopal audience. This decision, if such it is, seems to have been personal choice rather than convention, however, for the above letters of Cyprianus and Remigius are addressed to an episcopal audience, yet there are no patristic sources in evidence. In other words, it is possible that when writing letters, ecclesiastics relied less on established tradition and more on personal inclination at the time of writing. Pelagius' two letters to King Childebert I further illustrate this. Both are in reply to the king's concerns about the pope's orthodoxy and both are calm and reassuring in tone, yet the earlier, dated the end of 556, contains no quotes or allusions whatsoever,⁶¹ while the

⁵⁸ Although there are five letters from Pelagius I to Sapaudus recorded in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*, this letter is not among them. It is dated 558-560, a year or two later than the last entry in the Arles collection, and is to be found as number 5 in the *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae*. There is no indication of what new information prompted Sapaudus' original letter, which came at the end of a series of friendly, almost intimate exchanges between the bishop of Arles and the pope.

⁵⁹ [censorial pen].

⁶⁰ *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 6 and *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 55.

⁶¹ *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 48.

other, dated a few months later, contains four Scripture quotes.⁶² These follow the modern Vulgate neither more nor less accurately than the others we have examined,⁶³ and they seem to be sprinkled throughout the pope's letter more for the purpose of embellishment than as authority for his statement of faith. These letters to the king are devoid of patristic references.

4 Scriptural Usage in Letters of *amicitia*

4.1 Mapinius of Rheims to Vilicus of Metz

Letters of *amicitia* contain few quotes overall and the purpose of these appears to be simple embellishment, which I define as an addition that is superfluous to the letter's contents. Such a quote may express a desire on the part of the writer to enhance his own spiritual status in the view of his addressee and/or to entertain him with the pleasure of their shared biblical erudition. We see this illustrated by Mapinius of Rheims in a mid-sixth century letter to Vilicus of Metz.⁶⁴ The purpose of the letter is business: Mapinius wishes to find out the cost of pigs in the area of Rheims. Before getting down to business, however, the rules of *amicitia* dictate that he must first greet and compliment his episcopal addressee. Mapinius therefore devotes much of his short letter to praising Vilicus' charity and care for his flock. At one point the bishop quotes Christ's admonition to Peter in Ioh. 21:17 – *pasce oves meas*.⁶⁵ This small citation is the only biblical quote in the letter, and matches the Vulgate exactly. Only at the end of the letter does the bishop bring up the subject of the pigs and the *solidi* required to pay for them.

4.2 Abbot Florianus to Nicetius of Trier

Another example, dated around the same time as Mapinius' letter to Vilicus above, is a letter from Abbot Florianus of Romenus to Nicetius of Trier. In it the abbot begs the bishop's aid in urging King Theudebald I to make good on his promise to protect the

⁶² *ibid.*, 54.

⁶³ The same can be said regarding the biblical quotes of Pope Gregory I: while some follow the Vulgate exactly, others differ slightly in wording.

⁶⁴ *epistolae Austrasicae* 15.

⁶⁵ [feed my sheep].

Roman population of the island of Christopolis, who had fled there to escape the Lombards.⁶⁶ After praising Nicetius as a redeemer of captives, and making his request for aid, Florianus – a master of self-abasement – presses into service a number of lugubrious Scripture passages reinforcing his own unworthy, weak, and sinful self-image: *Dominus mortificat et vivificat deducit ad inferos et reducit; multa flagella peccatoris*; and *non egent qui sani sunt medicum sed qui male habent*.⁶⁷ Once again, these are in no way integral to the main purpose of the letter, which is King Theudebald's treatment of the Romans. Each of these quotes is virtually identical to the Vulgate version.⁶⁸

4.3 Desiderius of Cahors

Five of this bishop's collection of thirty-six letters contain biblical quotes, but apart from those in the one letter to a woman, Abbess Aspasia, they are used almost entirely for embellishment. In a general message of greeting to his metropolitan, Sulpicius of Bourges, for example, Desiderius adds two quotes: *ego inhabitabo in eis et inter illos ambulabo*⁶⁹ and *ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, et ego in medio eorum*.⁷⁰ Although these are supposed to bolster the bishop's request that Sulpicius root out obstinacy among the brothers, they do not seem particularly apt. Another letter to Caesarius of Clermont begins with a preamble on charity and salvation that finishes up

⁶⁶ *epistolae Austrasicae* 5. This island is in the middle of Lake Como, which is just north of Milan. Since Lombard times the island has been called Comacina. Gregory of Tours reports (*LH* 3.32) that in the time of Theudebald (548–55) and his father Theudebert I (533–58), the Austrasians claimed parts of northern Italy and became involved in various invasions and battles against the Byzantines; this evidently included the area around Lake Como.

⁶⁷ Respectively 1 Sam. 2:6: [the Lord kills and makes alive, he brings down to the grave and raises up]; Ps. 31:10: [many are the scourings of the sinner]; Luc. 5:31: [those who are healthy do not need a doctor, but those who are sick].

⁶⁸ The quote above from the Psalms matches the Vulgate version *iuxta lxx* rather than that *iuxta Hebraicum*, which translates the phrase *multa flagella peccatoris* as *multi dolores impii*.

⁶⁹ *epistolae Desiderii* episcopi 1.12. 2 Cor. 6:16: [I will dwell with them and walk among them]. Both this and the following quote differ only slightly from the Vulgate.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, Matt. 18:20; [where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them].

with a biblical flourish: *caritas omnia suffert*.⁷¹ This sentiment has nothing whatever to do with the purpose of the letter, however, which is to solicit skilled workmen able to build an aqueduct for Cahors. Two quotes in Desiderius' letter to Chlodulf, son of Arnulf of Metz, are similarly applied. The letter begins, for example, with a phrase from the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: *ubi habundavit peccatum, superhabundavit gratia*.⁷² The context is not sin and grace, however, but the writer's feelings of sadness regarding some misfortune Chlodulf has suffered on the one hand, and his gladness because of his affection towards him on the other. These quotes follow the Vulgate with varying degrees of accuracy; again, it is impossible to tell if the bishop was working from memory, or whether he had at hand a version that differed from what we are used to in the modern Vulgate. In contrast to these scriptural trinkets is a quote in a letter from Desiderius to King Dagobert in which the bishop takes issue with a royal judgment that was unfavourable to the church of Cahors. This is not a letter of *amicitia*, and here the bishop's one Scripture citation is aimed directly at the king and germane to the matter at hand: *iudicium sine misericordia erit ei qui non fecerit misericordiam*.⁷³

5 Insular Epistolography

5.1 *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae*

Biblical usage in the letters of the Anglo-Saxons Boniface and Lully differs in key ways from the ones we have already discussed. For one thing, Scripture is far more prevalent: as can be seen from the end-of-chapter Appendix, fully half of the letters in this collection contain quotes from the Bible. Further, these are in the main letters of *amicitia*, which in the Frankish letters are usually devoid of quotes. And since, unlike their Frankish sisters, Anglo-Saxon clerical women exchanged *amicitia* letters with Boniface

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 1.13; taken from I Cor. 13:7: [love endures all things]. The phrase matches the Vulgate.

⁷² *ibid.*, 1.8. Rom. 5:20: [where sin abounded, grace abounded more]. Here Desiderius' quote differs somewhat from the Vulgate, which has *ubi autem abundavit delictum superabundavit gratia*.

⁷³ *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* 1.5. Iac. 2:13: [judgment without mercy will be applied to him who has not shown mercy]. Again, this quote differs slightly from the Vulgate's *iudicium enim sine misericordia illi qui non fecit misericordiam*.

and Lully and their circle,⁷⁴ many of them participated in quoting the Bible as well; the abbesses Egburga, Eangyth, Heaburg, and Bugga, along with Berthgyth, sister of Balthard, provide us with the only record in these collections of women quoting Scripture to men.

As in the Frankish *amicitia* letters, Scripture quotes in the Boniface and Lully collection are used mainly for embellishment and the expression of a shared Christian culture. The citations consist for the most part of spiritual commonplaces, which are inserted seamlessly into the text and which are only sometimes signposted by *ut scriptum* or some similar phrase. The effect is more natural than in the Frankish *amicitia* letters, where the quotes frequently present as awkward and artificial. Often a quote contains only a few words of a Scripture passage followed by *et reliqua* or *et cetera*; whether this signifies an Anglo-Saxon shorthand, or a redactor lightening his workload, is unknown. Although Daniel of Winchester remarked that Boniface was highly learned in the Scriptures – *vos in divinis voluminibus optime eruditos*⁷⁵ – the latter relied heavily on the recycling of familiar biblical material in his letters. His favourites appear over and over again: *homo quasi herba dies eius sicut flos agri sic florebit*,⁷⁶ for instance, and *qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri et ad agnitionem veritatis venire*⁷⁷ or *tunc iusti fulgebunt sicut sol in regno patris eorum; qui habet aures audiat*,⁷⁸ to name a few. These seem to have been part of a communal pool of quotations that was shared and used by all, including those in Rome. Iac. 5:16 for example – *confitemini ergo alterutrum peccata vestra et orate pro invicem ut salvemini multum enim valet deprecatio iusti adsidua* – was quoted by Boniface to various nuns and abbesses, to Egbert of York, and to the priest Herefrith; it

⁷⁴ There are no examples in the Merovingian collections of Frankish women exchanging letters of *amicitia* with men. See Chapter 1, “Women’s Letters,” Section 1.2.

⁷⁵ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 64: [you are most learned in the divine Scriptures...]

⁷⁶ Ps. 102.15: [the days of man are as the grass; he flourishes like the flower of the field]. Note that this quote exactly echoes the modern Vulgate’s *iuxta Hebraicum* version rather than the *iuxta lxx*, which reads *homo sicut faenum dies eius, tamquam flos agri sic efflorescit*.

⁷⁷ 1 Tim. 2:4: [(God) wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth].

⁷⁸ Matt. 13:43: [then the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father: he who has ears to hear let him hear].

was quoted back to Boniface once by the Roman cardinal Gemmulus and twice by Theophylact, Roman archdeacon. After Boniface's death, it was quoted to his successor Lully by Cuthbert of Canterbury.⁷⁹ Another example is 1 Tim. 2:4 above, which besides being quoted several times by Boniface, was used by Pope Gregory II in a letter to the Old Saxons and in another letter by the priest Wigbert to the monks of Glastonbury.⁸⁰

Style of biblical usage in the *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* differs in a number of ways from that in the other collections. Indications are that Anglo-Saxons, both men and women, were more conservative in their use of Scripture in that they stuck more closely to their sources. The collection contains no passages taken far out of context, or instances of patchwork such as in the letter of Chrodobert of Tours to Boba. The source used is very close to the modern version of the Vulgate and throughout there are only slight deviations in wording, with few incidents even of this. This suggests that the recension familiar to the Anglo-Saxons – which was doubtless Roman, since Anglo-Saxon Christian doctrine was learned directly from Rome – was the version that was revised under Charlemagne and later developed into the Vulgate that we know today. Whether the Anglo-Saxons quoted from memory or had biblical texts in front of them, however, is unknown.

In certain situations Scripture usage increases dramatically in individual letters in this collection. When urging Aethelbald, king of the Mercians, to reform his adulterous ways, for example, Boniface and the bishops who were his co-authors quote Scripture with much greater frequency than usual; as in Germanus' letter to Brunhild above, this has the dual function of providing the necessary moral authority on the one hand while removing the writers from direct responsibility and possible reprisal on the other.⁸¹ There is a difference, however, in that the Anglo-Saxon admonitory letter is addressed to a king, a

⁷⁹ Iac. 5:16: [Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed/saved; for the assiduous prayer of the righteous is effective and powerful]. The letters in which this quote is found are 66, 67, 91, 74, 54, 84, 85, 111.

⁸⁰ The quote was used by Boniface in letters to all the English people (46), to Eadburga (65), to Aldherius (38); the other letters are 21 from Gregory and 101 from Wigbert.

⁸¹ *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 73.

situation that seems to have been avoided in the Frankish world.⁸² A letter of consolation sent by Boniface to his friend the abbess Bugga also contains more than the bishop's usual number of quotes.⁸³ Again, this parallels the earlier Frankish letters to women such as that from Chrodobert to Boba or Desiderius to Aspasia with their reliance on Scripture in a situation requiring instruction and/or pastoral care. Finally, as in the Frankish letters, exegesis is only rarely performed on the Bible passages quoted.

5.2 *Columbani abbatis Luxovienses et Bobbiensis epistolae*

Columbanus employed biblical quotations more heavily than any other letter-writer in the Merovingian collections: six out of his seven surviving letters contain direct Scriptural quotes and four of these show heavy usage. There is no way of knowing whether this can be attributed to Irish erudition, Irish directness and aggressiveness, or simple personal preference. Moreover, it is difficult to find a clear pattern in this usage. While several letters to popes show a great number of quotes, the one that contains none at all is also addressed to a pope, and the one extant letter to Gregory I contains only a few. And although Columbanus weaves biblical passages into his own text in a method similar to that of Boniface et al., in other ways his usage differs significantly. For one thing, his quotes tend not to follow the Vulgate. This could mean either that Columbanus' memory tended to stray, or more likely, that his quotes were based on a different version than the Anglo-Saxons. (Although the Vulgate had reached Ireland around the time of Columbanus' birth in the mid-sixth century, and he must therefore have been familiar with it, manuscripts indicate that a flourishing tradition based on the *vetus latina* was also cultivated there; most often the two traditions are found mixed).⁸⁴ Further, unlike

⁸² As above, in the Frankish kingdom such heavy-handed letters were seemingly addressed to women or underage males only.

⁸³ *ibid.*, 94.

⁸⁴ For an index of Columbanus' biblical citations see G.S.M. Walker, ed. *Sancti Columbani opera* (Dublin: 1957), 216-20. Columbanus' biblical source(s) are somewhat of a puzzle to scholars, "uncertain" and "peculiar" being two of Walker's divisions. Some citations seem to be *vetus latina* translations from the Septuagint. For discussions, see Neil Wright, "Columbanus' *Epistulae*," in *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, ed. M. Lapidge (Woodbridge: 1997), 29-92; Jane B. Stevenson, "The Monastic Rules of Columbanus," 208 n. 27, Donald Bullough, "The Career of Columbanus," 6, and *passim*

Boniface's circle with their Scriptural favourites, Columbanus seldom repeats himself. Only once does the same Bible verse recur: Iac. 10:5: ...*quae* (i.e. *oves*, sheep) *alienorum vocem non audiunt, sed fugiunt ab eo*⁸⁵ appears in both Letters 2 and 5. In this case at least he must have been quoting from memory, since the quote is slightly different each time.⁸⁶ As in the Boniface letters, we sometimes find a shortened quote followed by *et reliqua*, but due to the Columbanian fondness for prolixity, it is easier to believe this time that this was the work of a later redactor rather than of the writer himself. Finally, Columbanus' quotes intersect so rarely with the pool from which Boniface and his circle draw so heavily that we can comfortably conclude that this is a random event when it does happen.⁸⁷

Because of the small number of surviving letters for Columbanus, we must approach any conclusions with caution. Consideration of the higher incidence of Scripture in the letters of Boniface and Lully in combination with those of Columbanus, however, strengthens the argument that Insular convention dictated a higher epistolographical usage than was the case across the Channel.⁸⁸ While this situation seems to point to a higher level of Insular biblical scholarship as well, this is not necessarily the case: the prolific usage found in the Boniface letters, for example, is actually founded upon a relatively small pool of favoured quotes that were passed back and forth between friends.

in the same volume. See also Michael Richter, *Medieval Ireland: the Enduring Tradition* trans. by B. Stone and A. Keogh (Dublin: 1988), 71. For an older work see G. Lomiento, "La Bibbia nella *compositio* di San Colombano," in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Colombaniani* (Bobbio: 1965), 63-80.

⁸⁵ Iac. 10:5. [who do not hear the voice of strangers, but flee from it].

⁸⁶ The quote above is from Letter 5. Letter 2 quotes it as: *non enim audiunt vocem alienorum, sed fugiunt ab eo*. The Vulgate differs somewhat: ...*alienum autem non sequuntur sed fugient ab eo*.

⁸⁷ For example, Columbanus' quote from Iac. 13:35 (Letter 2) is also found in *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 104; the same is true for Iac. 15:12. As far as I can tell, these are the only two that match.

⁸⁸ This is not to suggest, however, that Irish and Anglo-Saxon convention necessarily acted in tandem, except coincidentally.

6 *Vitae* and Biblical Usage: A Comparison

Having examined a number of letters and letter writers in connection with the Bible, it will be of interest at this point to compare some descriptions of a bishop's Scriptural erudition in his *vita* or other sources with actual usage in his correspondence. This is only possible, of course, when we have access to both texts, a situation which is comparatively rare. The author of the *vita Desiderii*, for example, emphasizes the future bishop's love and knowledge of the Scriptures: *summopere enim varia scripturarum poma decerpere studebat, ut futurus Christi sacerdos plene prius disceret, quam demum possit docere et rationabilem ostiam (sic) offerre*.⁸⁹ As already noted, however, the bishop of Cahors' correspondence is singularly lacking in Scriptural references and quotes. On the other hand, the *vita Remigii* makes no mention of this bishop's Scriptural expertise, yet biblical quotations do appear in the few letters of his that are extant, although he tends to be selective in their use. In another example, Gregory of Tours describes how Abbot Aredius (St. Yrieix) became the disciple of Nicetius of Trier, asking him in particular to instruct him in the Holy Scriptures.⁹⁰ Nicetius is the author of two letters in the Merovingian collections; in both of these he quotes the Bible and in his letter to Queen Chlodosind, as already stated, he quotes it extensively. Caesarius of Arles was known for his knowledge of Scripture, yet quotes almost none in his letters. An exception to this is his letter to his sister Caesaria upon founding his monastery for women, where Scripture quotes appear frequently.⁹¹ A final example is Columbanus, whose use of Scripture is extensive in the few letters that survive under his authorship. This matches the report in his *vita*, in which Jonas of Bobbio stresses his subject's diligent study and mastery of the Scriptures.⁹² It is clear from these examples, and their lack of a clear pattern, that the *topos* of Scriptural expertise in a *vita*, or its lack, does not necessarily carry over into an epistolographical setting.

⁸⁹ *vita Desiderii* 6. [He expended great effort in culling the various fruits of Scripture, in order that this future bishop of Christ might fully learn, before at last he could teach and offer a "reasonable sacrifice."] (Phrase in quotes taken from Rom. 12:1; Vulgate: *rationabile obsequium*).

⁹⁰ *LH* 10.29.

⁹¹ See *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 21.

⁹² *Vitae Columbani abbatis et discipulorum eius* Chapters 7 and 9.

7 Conclusion

The evidence in the Merovingian letters indicates biblical usage in epistolography to be mixed and subject to various factors, many of which remain unknown to us. The disparate nature of this corpus and its spread over several centuries does nothing to ease this dilemma. Merovingian epistolographers seem to have viewed Scripture in a primarily practical and literal sense, rather than mystical or allegorical, as Wallace-Hadrill would have us believe. There is virtually no exegesis overall. Instead, Scripture was a prop to be brought out at need and many bishops show a particular skill in choosing a pithy passage and inserting it where it will hit home. And as shown, bishops often altered biblical material, sometimes radically, in order to adapt it to their purposes. That no less a personage than Pope Gregory I handled Scripture in identical fashion indicates that this was normative.⁹³

While both quantitatively and qualitatively difficult to evaluate, certain characteristics stand out. First, it can be said with justification that in these collections biblical material was the sole property of ecclesiastics. Second, certain aspects of its usage come into clearer focus in those letters where Scripture is employed heavily. In these we see it used as a tool for instructing those regarded as “students,” such as women and underage males, as the ultimate authority when castigating the powerful, and as a weapon when pressed into a position of defence. Third, except for the letters of Boniface and Lully, the Bible does not seem to have played a large role when a letter’s main purpose was to express or maintain the bonds of *amicitia*. Scripture quoted in this type of letter can be characterized almost exclusively as embellishment. At the end of the day, the most obvious conclusion is that personal taste was the final arbiter of when and how much Scripture usage was useful and/or appropriate in any given epistolographical situation.

⁹³ Martyn, *Letters of Gregory*, 16, states that while Gregory most often quoted “without altering Holy Writ at all,” he sometimes changed wording and/or adapted the text to suit his purposes.

8 Chart of Biblical Quotations

The following bar graph draws on data from the Appendix of Biblical Quotations below to quantify the ten books of the Bible quoted most frequently in the Merovingian letter collections, together with the number of quotes they received by letter writers. Most noteworthy is the unevenness of the Evangelia. Mattheus not only far outstrips Luca and Iohannis, but is the most-quoted book of any in the Bible. In contrast, *secundum* Marcum received only nine quotes overall, which amounts to fewer than 10% of those received by *secundum* Mattheum; it is therefore missing from the chart entirely due to its low popularity. Of St. Paul's epistles, his first and second *ad* Corinthios, his first *ad* Timotheum, and his epistle *ad* Romanos received the most quotes. The epistle of Iacobus is the most widely-quoted epistle by a writer other than St. Paul. Unsurprisingly, the Old Testament book of Psalmi was clearly very popular and received almost as many quotes as the Evangelium *secundum* Mattheum. The only other Old Testament book to make the chart is Proverbia.

9 Appendix of Biblical Quotations

The following Appendix contains all the Scripture quotations noted in the MGH by the editors of the various Merovingian collections. The collections presented here follow the same order as the Appendix of Summaries and entries within each collection are numbered consecutively. After listing the sender and the recipient in each case, the entry proceeds with a list of the Scripture quotations found in the letter. These are placed in biblical order for easy reference. Please note that the Psalmi follow the Vulgate numbering system.

Columbani abbatis Luxovienses et Bobbiensis epistolae:

- Letter 1. Columbanus to Pope Gregory I: Deut. 32:7; Eccl. 9:4; Cant. 4:6; Gal. 1:3.
2. Columbanus to a Gallican synod: Ps. 81:1; Ion. 1:12, 13; Matt. 7:23, 11:29, 23:13; Ioh. 10:1, 5, 13:35, 14:15, 15:12; Rom. 16:19; 1 Cor. 7:20, 11:16; 2 Cor. 6:6, 8:9; Eph. 4:13; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:14, 3:12, 4:1; Iac. 2:17, 7:21, 20:26; 1 Ioh. 2:6.
4. Columbanus to his monks: Iob 40:9; Ps. 50:13, 62:4, 118:10, 119:7, 146:11; Isa. 53:7; Hier. 1:14; Hiez. 32:19; Matt. 10:22, 13:21, 18:19; Mar. 4:17; Luc. 11:23; Ioh. 20:19, 21; Act. 4:32; Rom. 9:16; 1 Cor. 1:25; Eph. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 10:36; 1 Pet. 1:7, 2:21.
5. Columbanus to Pope Boniface IV: Ex. 2:14; Ps. 18:5; Prov. 27:6; Isa. 40:9, 58:1; Hier. 9:3; Matt. 24:22, 28:20; Luc. 18:8, 21:34, 35; Ioh. 10:5; Rom. 13:11, 14:23; 1 Cor. 3:11, 12:26, 14:38; Eph. 2:14, 4:10; Col. 4:6; 1 Tim. 5:12; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:17; Apoc. 1:16.
6. Columbanus to Boniface IV: Ps. 49:8-13; Isa. 1:14; 4 Ezr. 1:31; Matt. 26:26; Mar. 2:11; Luc. 15:5; Ioh. 1:29, 7:8; 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:16-7; 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 Ioh. 4:18.
7. Columbanus to a young man: Iac. 1:19.

epistolae aevi merowingici collectae:

- Letter 1. Cyprianus of Toulon to Maximus of Geneva: Ioh. 1:14, 3:13, 6:33, 48, 52, 54, 62, 63, 20:28; Act. 20:28; Rom. 9.5, 10.9; 1 Cor. 1:22-4, 2.8; 2 Cor. 5.19, Phil. 3.15; 1 Thess. 1.7, 8, 3.10; 2 Thess. 1.3.
7. Aunarius of Auxerre to Stephanus: Rom. 13.8.
9. Pope Pelagius II to Aunarius: Rom 1.32.
11. Caesaria to Radegund and Agnes: Ps. 1:2, 18.9, 15, 23:11, 26.9, 30.25, 32:18, 46:8, 69:2, 104:43, 111:9, 118:11, 21, 117, 165, 145:7, 8; Sir. 2.1; Hier. 17.5, Matt. 5:9, 19, 6:20, 15:11, 19:29, 24:13; Luc. 1:49, 52, 12:33; Ioh. 8:34; Rom. 12:1, I Cor. 2:9, Eph. 4:26, 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Ioh. 2:11.
12. Pope Boniface IV to Florianus of Arles: Prov. 14:4; Isa. 52:11; Matt. 10:8.
15. a bishop to a young king: 3 Reg. 3:7-9; Par. 1:10; Ps. 19:10, 36:5-6, 36:34, 40:2-3, 61:11; Prov. 16:20; Ioh. 3:27, I Cor. 6:10; Eph. 4:26; Iac. 1:5, 17, 20.
16. Chrodobert of Tours to Boba: 2 Sam. 12:13; Hiez. 33:12-13; Mar. 2:14, 16:9; Luc. 5:27, 7:47, 18:10ff; Ioh. 11:2, 12:3; Rom. 5:20, 6:19, 7:24-25, Eph. 5:8.
17. Leudegar of Autun to Sigrada: Ps. 115:12-13; Isa. 38:5; Matt. 12:50; Mar. 4:19; Luc. 10:39-42, 23:24; Ioh. 12:26, 14:6; Act. 4:32; Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 1:4, 2:9; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Eph. 6:16-18; Phil. 1:29, 2:1; 2 Thess. 1:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 10:32-4; I Pet. 1:6, 7:2.
18. Pope Zacharias to Frankish bishops and priests: Rom. 8:28, 10:15; Gal. 6:10.

epistolae Arelatenses genuinae:

- Letter 4. Pope Zosimus to Patroclus of Arles: 1 Tim. 3:6.
11. Pope Leo I to Ravennius of Arles: Matt. 25:23; 1 Tim 1:9.
30. Pope Hormisdas to Caesarius of Arles: Matt. 10:37; 1 Cor. 12:26; 1 Tim. 2:4. (This is letter 10 in *epistolae Caesarii*.)
31. Pope Felix IV to Caesarius: 1 Tim. 3:7, 5:22. (Letter 11 in *epistolae Caesarii*.)

34. Caesarius to the bishops of Gaul: Ps. 6:7, 40:9, 101:10; Hiez. 33:11-13.
(Letter 14a and 14b in *epistolae Caesarii*.)
35. as above
37. Pope Agapitus to Caesarius: Prov. 21:13. (Letter 16 in *epistolae Caesarii*.)
39. Pope Vigilius to Auxanius of Arles: Matt. 24:45-6, 25:21; Heb. 5:4; Iac. 1:12, 17.
40. Pope Vigilius to the bishops of Gaul: Matt. 18:20; 2 Cor. 11:28.
41. Vigilius to Auxanius of Arles: Matt. 5:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:2-4.
43. Vigilius to the bishops under Childebert I: Matt. 18:29; Ex. 24:14.
44. Vigilius to Aurelianus of Arles: Ioh. 14:27; Act. 1:1-2; Rom 10:15; 2 Tim. 2:1-3, 7, 15.
45. Vigilius to Aurelianus: 1 Sam. 2:28; Isa. 49:18; Act. 4:32; Rom. 16:17; 1 Pet 5:8-9.
50. Pope Pelagius I to Sapaudus of Arles: Luc. 12:48; 2 Cor 10:13-14; 1 Tim. 5:21.
54. Pope Pelagius I to Childebert I: Matt. 18:14, 28:19; Prov. 9:1; 2 Cor. 5:10.
55. Pope Pelagius I to some Tuscan bishops: 1 Pet. 3:15.
56. Pope Pelagius I to all the people of God: Rom. 10:2.

epistolae Austrasicae:

- Letter 3. Remigius of Rheims to three bishops: Hiez. 18:23, 33:11; I Cor. 13:8.
4. Remigius to Falco of Liège: Ioh. 21:15.
 5. Abbot Florianus to Nicetius of Trier: Ex. 15:1; Phil. 3:20.
 6. Florianus to Nicetius: 1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 31:10; Luc. 5:31.
 7. Nicetius to Justinian: Iohel 2:31; Zacc. 1:3; Luc. 12:37; Ioh. 16:28.
 8. Nicetius of Trier to Chlodosind: Ex. 3:14; Deut. 4:35; Ios. 5:13; Ps. 17:12, 47:14, 49:2, 82:19; Matt. 28:19; Ioh. 1:1, 14, 27, 14:8, 28, 16:28; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 7:14; Apoc. 4:8.
 9. Germanus of Paris to Brunhild: Gen. 35:3; Iob 22:8; Ps. 36:9; Isa. 58:1, Dan. 3:40; 1 Macc. 1:14; Matt. 5:9, 16: 27, 18:7; Ioh. 12:35, 14:27; I Cor. 13:6-8; 2 Cor. 6:2; 1 Tim. 6:10; 1 Ioh. 3:15.

11. Mapinius of Rheims to Nicetius of Trier: 2 Sam. 22:8; Mar. 3:24; 2 Tim. 2:19.
15. Mapinius of Rheims to Vilicus of Metz: Ioh. 21:17.

epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis:

- Letter 2. Avitus of Vienne to Caesarius: Tob. 11:2-15.
18. Pope Hormisdas to Caesarius: Ps. 71:1, 14; 2 Cor. 11:2.
 20. Pope Boniface II to Caesarius: Gen. 19:26; Ps. 17:4, 23:6, 59:10, 89:24, 112:9; Prov. 4:23, 8:35; Sap. 8:21; Sir. 2:1; Ap. Pauli 40; Matt. 10:22, 12:34, 15:19, Matt. 25:34-6, 40; Luc. 16:19, 17:32; Ioh. 6:44, 7:38, 15:5; Act. 14:22; Rom. 11:35-6, 14:23, 1 Cor. 7:25, 6:18; Phil. 1:29, 2 Thess. 3:10; Heb. 12:1-2; Iac. 1:17; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Ioh. 2:15-6; Apoc. 14:4.
 21. Caesarius to Caesaria: Ps. 16:4, 111:9; Prov. 4:23; Sir. 2:1; Matt. 10:22, 12:34, 15:19, 24:13, 25:34-5, 40; Luc. 16:19, 17:32; Ioh. 7:38; Act. 14:21; 1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Ioh. 2:15-16; Apoc. 14:4. (see further quotations for Caesarius of Arles listed under the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*).

epistolae Desiderii episcopi:

- Letter I.5. Desiderius to Dagobert I: Iac. 2:13.
- I.8. Desiderius to Chlodulf: Ps. 111:2; Rom. 5:20.
- 1.12. Desiderius to Sulpicius of Bourges: Matt. 18:20, 2 Cor. 6:16.
- 1.13. Desiderius to Caesarius of Clermont: 1 Cor. 13:7.
- 1.14. Desiderius to Aspasia: Prov. 4:23; Sir. 2:1; Luc. 9:62.

S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae:

- Letter 9. Boniface to Nithardus: Ios. 1:8; Ps. 1:2, 101:12, 118:97; Sir. 7:40; Sap. 8:1-4.
10. Boniface to Eadburga: Prov. 37:2.
 11. Boniface to Daniel of Winchester: Matt. 10:40.
 13. Egburga to Boniface: Ps. 1:2, 83:7; Matt. 25:36; Rom. 10:15; 1 Ioh. 4:18.

14. Eangyth and Heaburg to Boniface: Ps. 35:7, 140:2; Sap. 6:7; Matt. 7:25, 27; Act. 8:26-7.
15. Bugga to Boniface: 2 Cor. 6:6.
17. Pope Gregory II to all Christians: Matt. 10:40; Luc. 1:79.
21. Gregory II to the Old Saxons: Ps. 95:4, 5, 145:6; Luc. 21:31; Rom. 1:14, 12:12; Col. 2:1, 2-4, 7-8, 3:17; 1 Tim. 2:4.
23. Daniel of Winchester to Boniface: Ps. 93:19; Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3.
24. Pope Gregory II to Boniface: Matt. 9:38, 10:8, 22; Luc. 10:2; 2 Tim. 4:7.
25. Gregory II to the Thuringians: Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 2:9.
26. Gregory II to Boniface: Sap. 10:21; Matt. 26:27; 1 Cor. 10:28, 11:25; Eph. 4:5.
30. Boniface to Eadburga: Ps. 17:6; 2 Thess. 3:1.
31. Boniface to an unknown brother: Ps. 112:5-6; Eph. 6:19; 2 Thess. 3:1.
37. unknown to unknown: 2 Cor. 12:9-10.
38. Boniface to Aldherius: 1 Tim. 2:4.
41. Boniface to his people in Germany: Gal. 6:2.
42. Pope Gregory III to all clerics: Matt. 10:41; Mar. 16:20.
43. Gregory III to the people of Germania: Matt. 10:32, 17:20, 22:37; Luc. 11:9-10, 12:8; Gal. 3:27.
44. Gregory III to the bishops of the Bavarians and Alemanni: Isa. 8:18; Matt. 25:34; Ioh. 18:9; Eph. 4:1.
45. Gregory III to Boniface: Isa. 8:18; Matt. 7:14, 25:20, 21; Rom. 8:28.
46. Boniface to all English people: 1 Tim. 2:4.
48. Boniface to Grifo: Ps. 104:15; Matt. 13:43; Mar. 8:36; 1 Cor. 2:9; 1 Ioh. 5:19.
51. Pope Zacharias to Boniface: Lev. 19:26; Num. 23:23; Ios. 1:6; Ps. 5:7; 1 Tim. 3:2, 13; Iac. 5:19-20.
52. Zacharias to Witta of Buraburg: Mar. 16:20; Eph. 2:14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8.
53. Zacharias to Burchard of Würzburg: identical to 52.
54. Gemmulus to Boniface: Iac. 5:16.
57. Zacharias to Boniface: Act. 13:2.

61. Zacharias to the people of Gaul: Isa. 24:2; Matt. 5:13.
62. Gemmulus to Boniface: 2 Cor. 12:9-10.
63. Boniface to Daniel of Winchester: Ps. 33:20; Prov. 3:12; Hier. 6:14; 2 Cor. 7:5, 12:9-10; 1 Tim. 4:3; 2 Tim. 4:3.
64. Daniel of Winchester to Boniface: Ps. 33:1; Isa. 5:20; Matt. 9:13, 18:19; Luc. 8:45; Ioh. 11:34; Act. 9:15, 16:3, 18:18; Rom. 13:1.
65. Boniface to Eadburga: Ioh. 1:29; 2 Cor. 7:5; 1 Tim. 2:4.
66. Boniface to a nun: Ps. 9:19; Matt. 5:3; Luc. 21:19; 1 Cor. 15:58, 16:13-4; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Iac. 5:16; 1 Ioh. 5:15.
67. Boniface to Leobgytha, Tecla and Cynehild: Ps. 33:20; Matt. 10:22; Luc. 21:19; 1 Cor. 15:10, 16:13-4; Eph. 5:16-7; 2 Thess. 3:1-2.
69. Boniface to King Aethelbald: Eccl. 12:13.
72. Ingalice to Lully: 1 Cor. 13:4, 7; 2 Tim. 3:12.
73. Boniface and others to King Aethelbald: Prov. 3:26, 12:1, 28:24; 6:30-32; Sir. 18:8; Sap. 5:6-11, 13-15; Matt. 5:9, 16:26, 25:34, 40; Ioh. 8:34; Rom. 2:14-5; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:9-10, 19, 7:2; 2 Thess. 2:3; Iac. 1:10-11; 1 Pet. 4:3.
74. Boniface to Herefrith: Iac. 5:16.
76. Boniface to Huetbert: 1 Cor. 3:7; Eph. 6:19; 2 Thess. 3:1.
77. Pope Zacharias to Boniface: Isa. 8:18; Ioh. 18:9; 1 Cor. 11:1; Matt. 25:34.
78. Boniface to Cuthbert of Canterbury: Eccl. 25:12; Ps. 54:6, 89:1; Prov. 3:5, 6, 18:3, 10; Cant. 1:5; Isa. 5:4, 7, 22, 58:1; Hiez. 3:17-18, 34:2-5, 9-10.
80. Zacharias to Boniface: Lev. 11:44; Ps. 26:12; Eccl. 16:23, 22:6-7, 18; Hiez. 3:8-9; Aba. 3:17; Sap. 1:2; Matt. 5:10, 11:30, Matt. 24:13, 25:34; Luc. 2:14, 21:34; Ioh. 10:2; Act. 20:26-8; Rom. 5:4-5, 8:35; Eph. 5:18; 1 Tim. 6:17; 2 Tim. 4:1-3, 22; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Apoc. 3:12.
82. Zacharias to some bishops and priests: Ps. 132:1; Eccl. 3:1; Matt. 10:28; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 4:1-3, 6:10; 1 Tim. 1:5.
83. Zacharias to the Frankish nobles: Gen. 15:6; Ps. 49:18, 96:10; Matt. 7:15, 22:21; Luc. 9:62; Rom. 4:3, 12:9.

84. Theophylact to Boniface: Ps. 39:6, 44:14, 105:23; Eccl. 12:15; Cant. 8:7; Matt. 20:16, 25:29; Iac. 5:16.
85. Theophylact to Boniface: Matt. 25:21; Ioh. 10:16; Iac. 5:16.
86. Boniface to Zacharias: Eccl. 3:2, 7, 9-11.
87. Zacharias to Boniface: Hiez. 33:5; Matt. 10:22, 24:3; Luc. 12:43-4; Ioh. 11:25-6, 14:6; Gal. 1:9; Iac. 4:6.
90. Benedict to Boniface: Act. 14:21.
91. Boniface to Egbert of York: Iac. 5:16.
92. Lully to Gregory: Eccl. 7:40; Matt. 10:22; Ioh. 18:36; 1 Ioh. 2:15.
94. Boniface to Bugga: Ps. 33:20, 44:11-12, 50:19; Prov. 3:12; Luc. 21:19; Act. 14:21; Rom. 5:3-5, 8:35-7; 2 Cor. 12:10; Heb. 12:6.
100. Lully to Leobgytha: Iob 10:1; Ps. 93:19; Luc 6:20, 21:19.
101. Wigbert to the monks of Glastonbury: Eph. 6:19; 1 Tim. 2:4.
103. Lully to Boniface: Matt. 7:7, 25:1.
104. Boniface to Gemmulus: Ioh. 13:35, 15:12; Iac. 5:15-6.
106. Boniface to Optatus: Ioh. 12:35; Gal. 6:2; 2 Thess. 3:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:8.
111. Cuthbert of Canterbury to Lully and associates: Matt. 18:19, 24:46-7, 25:21; 1 Thess. 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1; Iac. 5:16.
112. Milred of Worcester to Lully: Act. 4:32.
128. Lully to Abbess Suitha: Hiez. 18:4; Matt. 15:14; Luc. 15:12; 1 Tim. 5:20.
129. Tyccea and Aldbercht to Lully: Ioh. 13:35, 15:12; 1 Pet. 4:7-8.
134. Magingaoz of Würzburg to Lully: Ps. 104:4; Matt. 25:23.
137. Wigbert to Lully: Ps. 125:5.
142. unknown to unknown: Prov. 5:29.
146. unknown monk to unknown: Matt. 5:3, 9:37.
147. Berthgyth to Balthard: Iob 10:1; Ps. 26:10; Cant. 8:6.

Appendix: Summaries of Individual Merovingian Letters with Historical Context

This inventory contains a summary of each letter in the Merovingian letter collections. The “number” given designates the placement of the letter within each collection. Dates are those assigned by the editors of the various collections; I do not necessarily endorse these. The order of the collections in this Appendix is as follows:

Page 271: *Additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium*

Page 271-2: *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae*

Page 272-6: *Columbani abbatis Luxovienses et Bobbiensis epistolae*

Page 276-85: *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae*

Page 285-310: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*

Page 310-28: *epistolae Austrasicae*

Page 328-41: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi*

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Page 355-6: *epistolae Aviti Viennensis*

Page 356–68: *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis*

Page 368–97: *registrum Gregorii*

Page 397–455: *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae*

Page 455–62: *variae*

Page 463–520: *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica*

Page 521–24: Letters in *vitae* and other texts

The last group consists of letters found in works other than collections. For detailed information on the collections themselves, please refer to the Introduction.

additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium

Nos. 1-5

Date: 660-695

Correspondents: Chrodoberht and Importunus

This group of five epistles are an exchange of insults in rhymed prose between two seventh-century bishops: Importunus of Paris and Chrodoberht of Tours. (see *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 16 for a letter from Chrodoberht to an abbeſs). The bishop of Tours had received a ſhipment of wheat from Paris that was inedible, a ſituation that prompted a letter outlining his complaints. Incensed by this poor reſponse, Importunus wrote back with two poems ſlandering Chrodoberht's morals. The latter then reſponded with two more and added ſome ſlander of his own. While theſe ſound more like ſchoolboy pranks than correſpondence between biſhops, moſt ſcholars accept them as genuine. The background of theſe texts is the coup of Grimoald, mayor of the Auſtravian palace, and the factionaliſm that developed in the Frankiſh kingdom in the laſt half of the poorly-documented ſeventh century. See Chapter 3, Section 5 for diſcuſſion.

Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae

No. 1

Date: 671

Sender: Aldhelm

Recipient: Leutharius

Aldhelm is at Canterbury, ſtudying under Hadrian. He advises the biſhop of Wincheſter that he had planned to celebrate Chriſtmas with his brothers at Malmesbury and then viſit him at Wincheſter after that, but now muſt change his plans due to various obſtacles which the bearer of the letter will explain in more detail. He then proceeds to deſcribe the curriculum he is ſtudying: Roman law, Latin poetry and meter, calculation – eſpecially fractions – and aſtrology. He ſpeaks of the concentration and diligence required for all this, and begs the biſhop to greet his companions from youngeſt to eldeſt, and to pray for him. Leutharius was a Frank who came from Gaul and took the office of biſhop of the

West Saxons at the invitation of King Coenwalh; his uncle Agilbert had formerly held that position but had left after a quarrel with the king (Bede, *HE*, 3.7).

No. 9

Date: 705

Sender: Cellanus

Recipient: Aldhelm

This letter is a fragment. In flowery language, Cellanus, an Irishman “exiled” in the country of the Franks, praises Aldhelm’s eloquence, for although he has not heard him in the flesh, he has read his well-constructed books. He begs Aldhelm to send him some of his sermons and mentions that he lives where the body of the Irish monk Furseus lies. (This is Péronne in Picardy). An account of the life of Furseus is given by Bede in his *HE*, 3.19; cf. the Frankish *vita Fursei*, edited by Krusch in MGH, SRM IV (II).

No. 10

Date: 705

Sender: Aldhelm

Recipient: Cellanus

This is an extremely small fragment that is Aldhelm’s response to the previous letter. M. Lapidge and M. Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge: 1979), 149, suggest that as a pair these letters may carry underlying gibes and therefore could represent another chapter in the literary war between Aldhelm and the numerous and vociferous Irish scholars who abounded both in England and the continent by this time.

Columbani abbatis Luxovienses et Bobbiensis epistolae

No. 1

Date: 595-600

Sender: Columbanus

Recipient: Pope Gregory I

Columbanus defends the Irish custom of celebrating Easter between the 14th and 20th day of the moon and takes issue with its calculation on the 21st or 22nd that has been accepted by the Gallic bishops and the pope. For by the 21st or 22nd day, the moon does not rise until after midnight, and with darkness thus prevailing, it is illegal to hold a festival of light. And if Easter is held before the 14th day of the moon, it places Christ's Resurrection before his Passion, which cannot happen before the spring equinox. The writer also inquires as to whether he ought to associate with clerics who have bought their way into office, or with bishops who have confessed to adultery while deacons. (The fact that the "adultery" was with their wives renders them no less guilty according to the writer). Columbanus is also concerned about monks who with mistaken zeal for perfection flee to the desert without their abbot's permission. Since bodily infirmity prevents him from visiting the pope in person, he begs that Gregory send him his commentaries on Ezekiel, the Song of Songs, and Zechariah; he has already read his Pastoral Rule. Although there is no record of any reply from Gregory to this letter, the pope does mention Columbanus in two extant letters: *registrum Gregorii* 5.17 (not in this inventory) to Venantius of Luni, in which he asks the bishop to give Columbanus a copy of his Pastoral Rule; and 11.9 to Abbot Conon of Lérins, see below.

No. 2

Date: 603 or 604

Sender: Columbanus

Recipient: a Gallican synod

At odds with the Frankish clergy and the court of Burgundy because of his tenacious adherence to Irish customs and his severe lifestyle, Columbanus has been summoned to appear before a synod to answer for himself. This is generally agreed to be the synod of Châlons of 603 per Neil Wright, "Columbanus' Epistolae," 29. Columbanus refuses to appear at the synod lest his words cause contention, but defends himself with this lengthy letter which is a curious mixture of pride and humility. He rebukes the bishops for their incorrect calculation of Easter and reminds them that he has already demonstrated the correct one in several volumes sent to both Pope Gregory I and Aregius of Lyons, and

pleads with them to allow him to remain where he is – at Luxeuil in the Vosges mountains where he has lived for twelve years.

No. 3

Date: 604

Sender: Columbanus

Recipient: Pope Sabinian or Boniface III

Columbanus has been thwarted of his desire to visit the new pope, either Sabinian (604-606) or Boniface III (607), due to the turbulence and uprisings in the lands that lie between them. He sends copies of the letters in which he demonstrated to Pope Gregory and the Gallican bishops that the Irish calculation of Easter was the correct one; this note accompanies those copies. He implies that he made no progress in convincing the recent synod (see previous letter) and requests that the new pope allow him and his disciples to remain in seclusion and follow their own customs without harassment. He cites Canon II of the Council of Constantinople, in which churches established among barbarian peoples are declared free to use their own laws.

No. 4

Date: 610 or 611

Sender: Columbanus

Recipient: his monks

Forced into exile in a move resulting from his conflict with Brunhild and her grandson Theuderic, Columbanus exhorts his monks through this missive while waiting for his ship to be made ready. He orders them to place his beloved Attala at their head, or if he decides to follow him into exile, they should choose Waldelenus as prior. Quoting much Scripture, he consoles them, admonishes them to be in agreement in all things, and commends himself to their prayers. Jonas of Bobbio's *vita Columbani* states that he was only taken as far as Nantes, where God made it clear through a miracle that he was not to go back to Ireland. Accordingly, far from opposing his remaining on land, all the people

donated gifts of food. After some time he made his way to Chlothar I, ruler of Neustria, who received him “as a veritable gift from heaven,” as well he might, as it gave the king a hefty psychological advantage over Brunhild and her brood. He later travelled to Italy hoping to excise the Arian heresy from the Lombards. This resulted in the foundation of the monastery of Bobbio on land given him by King Agilulf.

No. 5

Date: 612-615

Sender: Columbanus

Recipient: Pope Boniface IV and his clergy

Upon entering Italy in 612, Columbanus was advised by a man named Agrippinus that the faith of Pope Boniface IV (608-615) leaned toward Nestorianism. Horrified, Columbanus defended the pope to Agrippinus, but having been asked by the Lombard King Agilulf to beg the pope to confirm his orthodoxy, he sends this rather aggressive letter, at the same time protesting his own unworthiness. He expresses his astonishment that the Lombards, who had long trampled underfoot the Catholic faith by their Arianism, now feel the need to question the faith of the pope himself. He advises Boniface to congregate a synod, demonstrate that his faith is not that of Vigilius, and anathematize his opponents.

No. 6

Date: 590-615

Sender: Columbanus

Recipient: a young man

At his request, Columbanus exhorts his servant, a certain young man. This consists of a long litany of moral precepts: be useful in humility and the humblest in authority, learned in character, tough in gentleness, joyful in bitterness, sad in joyfulness, severe in sweetness, sweet in bitterness, slow to answer, swift to listen, slow to speak, fleeing youthful desires and diligent in everything he does. If he can achieve these things, he will be blessed and may look forward to eternal life. The authenticity of this letter is in doubt,

but certain stylistic details support Columbanus' authorship, per Wright, "Columbanus' Epistolae," 59.

Note: The authorship of four *carmina* that have in the past been published with the above letters – most notably by W. Gundlach in the MGH – can no longer be attributed to Columbanus due to convincing arguments presented by Michael Lapidge, "The authorship of the adonic verses *Ad Fidolium* attributed to Columbanus," *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 18 (1977) 815-80, and by the same author, "Epilogue: did Columbanus compose metrical verse?" in *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*.

epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae

No. 1

Date: c. 524-533

Sender: Cyprianus

Recipient: Maximus

Bishop Cyprianus (Toulon?) addresses Bishop Maximus (Geneva?) who has condemned the writer's faith because he had said that Christ suffered as a man. (In other words, that he had Nestorian leanings). Because we do not have the original letter from Maximus, the issue is not entirely clear. Much Scripture is quoted, some out of context. MGH editor W. Gundlach adds that some citations such as one attributed to Hilarius, bishop of Poitiers (315-367) are not found in any surviving records; the same is true of a hymn quoted. From the mention of the Nestorians it is evidently a concern at this time that one's faith take correctly into account how Christ's two natures, divine and human, meshed and functioned. Cyprianus suggests that because of his distance from his correspondent, that Maximus send his reply through Caesarius, bishop of Arles (502-542).

No. 2

Date: 532

Sender: Troianus

Recipient: Eumerius

Bishop Troianus (Saintes?) responds to a letter of Bishop Eumerius (Nantes?), who had consulted him about a certain *puer* who was uncertain whether he was baptized or not. The slave remembers only that his head was at one time wrapped in a linen bandage, used to keep the head warm after illness. Troianus states that the canons agree that the individual should be baptized right away. If this Eumerius was the bishop of Nantes, he is possibly the individual for whom Venantius Fortunatus wrote epitaph 4.1, per *PLRE* Vol. 3a.

No. 3

Date: 540

Sender: Leo

Recipient: Childebert I

King Childebert I had earlier sought Bishop Leo of Sens to either ordain a bishop for the city of Melun or allow another to ordain one. As Melun is under his own jurisdiction, Leo is very put out by this request, which seems to have been prompted by a certain neglect of the town due to impassable roads, but may in actuality have been due to political rivalries. Leo's strongly-worded reply points out that his own king, Theudebert I, has not given his consent for this and furthermore that the canons forbid it. He threatens to withdraw his communion from any who support or participate in such a move.

No. 4

Date: 552

Sender: Milanese clergy

Recipient: Merovingian legate

The clerics of the province of Milan ask the help of a certain legate of one of the Merovingian kings who is setting out for Constantinople. Pope Vigilius was taken there by force over six years earlier at the command of the emperor Justinian and many efforts have been made in the imperial city to compel him to condemn the Three Chapters. As this would cast a shadow on what was established at the Council of Chalcedon of 451

concerning the two distinct natures of Christ and how they operated, the pope refused. The Milanese bishop Datius was also in Constantinople and both he and the pope have suffered much persecution there. People have been sent into Italy in an attempt to discredit them, and even Anastasius, whom Bishop Aurelianus of Arles sent to the pope in Constantinople two years before, was not allowed to leave the royal city until he agreed upon his return to persuade the bishops in Gaul to condemn the Chapters (cf. *epistolae Arelatenses* 45). The writers instruct their addressee to inform the Gallican bishops via letter as to what is going on in Constantinople so that they in turn might send letters of support to the pope and Datius. They request finally that the legate find out why Datius has not been returned to his church after so many years; in his absence no bishops have been ordained and as a result many people have died without baptism.

No. 5

Date: 558-560

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Sapaudus

Sapaudus of Arles has accused Pope Pelagius I because when the latter was a deacon in Constantinople he wrote a letter yielding to the Eastern bishops. This meant he took the Emperor Justinian's theological position and condemned the Three Chapters, an act which caused many bishops in the West to shun him, even though he appears to have later retracted. The pope defends his actions and compares himself to Augustine, who retracted at the end of his life much of what he had said in his earlier works. Pelagius is upset that a few rumour-mongering individuals have been able to shake up the Gallic bishops so severely that he is being asked once again to validate his faith; he sent one letter to King Childebert I at the beginning of his pontificate for this purpose (see *epistolae Arelatenses* 48) and has recently sent another covering the same subject to the same king at his request (*epistolae Arelatenses* 54). He admonishes the bishops to concentrate rather on the unity of the church. At the end of the letter he censures the Gauls for allowing laymen to move from cleric to bishop in a single day and for the custom of making images from wheat flour – probably a type of salt dough – and

distributing the various body parts on feast days. While the custom of forming figures from dough is common to many cultures both past and present – the Mexican *Día de los Muertos* is an example – I have been unable to find any others that distribute the body parts.

No. 6

Date: 558-560

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Valerianus

Pope Pelagius I orders the patrician Valerianus, a Byzantine commander in northern Italy (see *PLRE* Vol. 3b, s.v. Valerianus 1), to arrest certain schismatics and send them to the emperor Justinian under guard. This situation undoubtedly has to do with the bitterness and schism that came about in the West due to the controversy of the Three Chapters. Justinian made a concerted attempt to force Pelagius' predecessor, Vigilius, to condemn these and when he finally did, Pelagius supported Vigilius. The pope now encourages Valerianus to take up the cause of punishing the evildoers in this matter. Evil, he says, must be punished and when the Church seems to be acting as persecutor, she is merely being diligent, as a father, unwilling, punishes his son for his own good. Although contained in a Merovingian collection, the contents of this letter have no connection with events in Gaul.

No. 7

Date: 573-603

Sender: Aunarius

Recipient: Stephanus

Aunarius bishop of Auxerre has written some *vitae* of the confessors, some in prose and some in verse. Here he urges the priest Stephanus to do the same: that of Germanus in verse and that of Amator in prose. Germanus and Amator were fourth-century bishops of Auxerre. Stephanus' *vita Amatoris* is still extant. The author is known to posterity as

Stephanus Africanus.

No. 8

Date: 573-603

Sender: Stephanus

Recipient: Aunarius

Stephanus replies to the previous letter from the bishop of Auxerre. Protesting that he is unequal to the task and using several examples of the disasters that can befall those who attempt undertakings beyond their skill, he begs the bishop's support and indulgence for any rusticity that may appear in the work. In the end he submits to Aunarius' paternal authority and agrees to compose the *vitae*.

No. 9

Date: 5 Oct. 580

Sender: Pope Pelagius II

Recipient: Aunarius

Pope Pelagius II replies to Bishop Aunarius of Auxerre who wished to come to Rome but was prevented by the uprisings of the Lombards. The pope assures Aunarius that spiritually they are always present to one another but at the same time is upset that those in Gaul do not seem to be doing much to help Italy in her time of tribulation. The pope entreats the bishop to urge the Merovingian kings (Childebert II and Guntram) to leave their own squabblings, put aside thoughts of alliance with the Lombards, and turn their attention to defeating them lest they incur divine punishment. He sends the relics which the bishop and the king had asked for.

No. 10

Date: 585 or 586

Sender: Pope Pelagius II

Recipient: Aunarius

Pope Pelagius II replies to Bishop Aunarius of Auxerre who had reported to him that new churches abound in his region. Aunarius had also commended himself to the pope's prayers and the pope asks for the bishop's prayers in turn as he is burdened by many anxieties.

No. 11

Date: ante 559

Sender: Caesaria

Recipient: Richild and Radegund

Radegund and Richild (probably the Frankish name of Agnes, abbess of the monastery founded by Radegund in Poitiers), have written to Abbess Caesaria of Arles requesting that she send them the *regula virginum* as set out by Caesarius bishop of Arles, 502-542. (This Caesaria is not the sister of Caesarius who ruled the monastery for women that the bishop founded in Arles, but her successor and relative of the same name). The abbess sends the Rule they have asked for and adds advice and encouragement for their new life, quoting passages from *epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis* 21, a precursor to the *regula virginum*, as she does so. She emphasizes the reading of the Scriptures, especially the evangelists, memorizing the Psalter, living in peace and harmony, and in particular eschewing the company of men so they might keep their chastity. She also exhorts Radegund against overly severe fasting.

No. 12

Date: 23 Aug. 613

Sender: Pope Boniface IV

Recipient: Florianus

Although he states that does not know him personally, Boniface IV greets Bishop Florianus after receiving a letter announcing his election as bishop of Arles. This agrees with the testimonies the pope has already heard from the kings (Theudebert II, who is dead by this time, although the pope is unaware of this – and Theuderic II) and the pope's

representative in Gaul, the priest Candidus. Boniface instructs Florianus in pastoral care, warning him that his new position is more a burden than an honour in that shepherds of souls must cleanse themselves and live humbly before caring for others. The pope also sends the bishop the pallium according to the accustomed privileges of the bishopric of Arles, adding more instruction concerning keeping his life worthy of wearing this garment. He also exhorts him to carefully weed out simony wherever he finds it and commends to him the patrimony of the Roman church in Gaul.

No. 13

Date: 23 Aug. 613

Sender: Pope Boniface IV

Recipient: Theuderic II

Pope Boniface IV replies to King Theuderic II who has notified him of the ordination of Bishop Florianus of Arles and requested that the pallium be sent to the latter according to antique custom. The pope praises the faith of the king and his interest in the bishop's ordination, and encourages him to donate to the paupers of the church of St. Peter in Rome. Note: Sometime this year Theuderic II died of dysentery at Metz as his army was marching against his cousin Chlothar II. He may have already been dead by the time this letter was written.

No. 14

Date: c. 614

Sender: Warnechar

Recipient: Ceraunius

The Burgundian Warnechar writes a very formal and obsequious letter to Bishop Ceraunius of Paris who is collecting the deeds of the saints for the city of Paris and has asked Warnechar to send him those of the holy triplets Speusippus, Eleusippus, and Meleusippus. The triplets were said to have been martyred in Cappadocia in the late second century under Marcus Aurelius and their relics later brought to Langres; they

were not martyred in that city as Warnechar believes. Although there are three of them, they are confusingly known to posterity as the Holy Twins. The writer also sends the deeds of the martyr Bishop Desiderius of Langres. Warnechar was Mayor of the Palace of Burgundy under Brunhild in the early seventh century but worked as an agent for her rival, Chlothar II. Chlothar confirmed Warnechar's position as Mayor for life after Brunhild's execution (Fred. 4.42 and *PLRE*, Vol. 3b, s.v. Warnechar).

No. 15

Date: c. 645

Sender: a bishop

Recipient: a young king

A certain bishop writes to a young king at the beginning of his reign – probably either Clovis II or Sigibert III, sons of Dagobert. This is a seventh-century “mirror for princes.” The bishop holds up as examples the biblical kings David and Solomon as well as the young king's own ancestors Childebert I and Chlothar I. He encourages him to follow the wise advice of older counsellors and to pursue justice in his kingdom and humility in himself so that his days might be long upon the earth and his reign long remembered for its good works.

No. 16

Date: c. 653-674

Sender: Chrodoberht

Recipient: Boba

Bishop Chrodoberht of Tours replies to a certain Abbess Boba who has asked for help in dealing with a nun polluted by adultery. The bishop has not found the issue addressed in the synods of Nicaea, Chalcedon, Ephesus or Constantinople, but has found a judgment in the synod of Orléans, and sends the abbess a copy of the applicable canon. He also adds his own counsel from the Scriptures and advises the abbess that the nun may delete her past fault with penance. He reminds Boba of Mary Magdalene, Zacheus, Paul the

apostle, King David, and the Thief on the Cross, all great sinners whom the grace of Christ saved when they repented. At the end, in his own hand, Chrodobert thanks the abbess for a linen garment she sent, and probably made, for him. This is possibly the same Chrodobert who exchanged letters of insult with Bishop Importunus of Paris, see Chapter 3, Section 5.

No. 17

Date: c. 675

Sender: Leudegar

Recipient: Sigrada

Bishop Leudegar of Autun sends a letter of consolation and advice to his mother Sigrada who is residing in the monastery of St. Mary of Soissons. Much Scripture is quoted and Sigrada is urged to be patient, to love her enemies, and to view her abbess and her fellow nuns as her family.

No. 18

Date: 750 or 751

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Frankish bishops and priests

Pope Zacharias has received a letter from Abbot Optatus and the monk Carloman, brother of Pippin, mayor of the palace, regarding ongoing conflict between Pippin and his half-brother Grifo, whom they have tried to reconcile to no avail. The monks who brought the letter asked further that Zacharias exert his influence to have the body of the holy Benedict, which had been stolen in secret from his grave, restored to them. (At some point Benedict's relics had been translated from Monte Cassino, where he died, to Fleury, the modern St. Benôit-sur-Loire in northern France). The pope urges all the Frankish bishops and priests to intervene in both these matters. Optatus, Carloman, and the bearers of the letter are all monks from Monte Cassino.

No. 19

Date: 748-751

Sender: Pippin

Recipient: Gayroinus and his congregation

Pippin, mayor of the palace, sends tablets of ivory to Abbot Gayroinus and the congregation of saints Peter and Praeiectus of Flavigny, today Flavigny-sur-Ozerain. On these he writes that he is bestowing on them the fishpond known as Glenno in exchange for their prayers for him and his progeny. He also requests that they chant one psalm each day on his behalf.

epistolae Arelatenses genuinae

No. 1

Date: 22 Mar. 417

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: Gallic bishops

The struggle between Arles and Vienne for primacy in Gaul began as early as 398 just after the Praetorian Prefecture was transferred to Arles from Trier, and it gained momentum when Patroclus was elected bishop in 412. The Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine states that the former bishop, Heros, was unjustly driven out of Arles and was replaced by Patroclus, who was a friend of Constantius, master of the soldiers. While we cannot necessarily take such a statement at face value, it is certainly evident that Patroclus was one who knew how to use events and people to achieve his own ends. It was he who first used the legend of St. Trophimus to support Arles' claim. He also happened to be in Rome when Zosimus was elected pope and made good use of this circumstance to gain the new pope's favour and some unprecedented privileges for Arles. In this decretal letter Zosimus announces to all the bishops established throughout Gaul and the Seven Provinces that if a cleric set out for Rome from any part of Gaul, that he, the pope, will not receive that cleric unless he is supported by a letter of introduction and commendation from the metropolitan bishop of Arles. He orders also that the provinces

of Vienne and Narbonne I and II are to be placed under the pontificate of Arles and, because the holy Trophimus, apostle of the Gauls, was the first bishop of Arles, that it is to possess all the parishes it held in ancient times. This gives the bishop of Arles the power to ordain all bishops in those places. Finally, all cases are to be referred to the bishop of Arles unless an examination by the pope is required due to their gravity.

No. 2

Date: 22 Sep. 417

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: Aurelius and the bishops of Africa, Gaul and the Seven Provinces, and Spain

In this general letter Pope Zosimus issues a warning against receiving or allowing ecclesiastical communion to three bishops who had been excommunicated: Tuentius, Ursus, and Lazarus. Tuentius had apparently taken up the Priscillian superstition, which took the position, among other heretical beliefs, that matter and nature were evil, a belief which precipitated an extreme asceticism in its followers. Ursus had been expelled for his crimes. Lazarus had falsely accused Bishop Bricius and was rejected by the Council of Turin, only to be restored by the same Bishop Proculus who had charged him; Lazarus then turned around and restored Ursus and Tuentius. To make matters worse, those performing these and other ordinations have not been observing the correct day or place for such ceremonies. Along the way Zosimus makes reference to the supremacy of Arles and at the end he appends the last three paragraphs verbatim from Letter 1 of the collection, which he had sent six months previous to all the Gallic bishops to establish that supremacy and the privileges attached to it. Note: Aurelius was bishop of Carthage.

No. 3

Date: 26 Sep. 417

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: Hilarus

The privileges given to the church of Arles by Zosimus aroused a great deal of

indignation among the bishops of Vienne and Narbonne I and II. Here the pope responds to an objection by Bishop Hilarus of Narbonne I, who is contending that candidates for the priesthood or a bishopric ought not to be ordained by someone else in another province. Zosimus argues that Arles has this right from the holy Trophimus, first bishop of Arles, who passed it to his successors. If Hilarus despises this ancient custom, any who have been ordained by him will be rejected and he himself will be excommunicated. We are not told how the bishopric of Arles obtained a copy of this letter for its archives.

No. 4

Date: 26 Sep. 417

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: Patroclus

Bishop Proculus of Marseilles in Narbonne II is also aggravated by the wide powers given the bishop of Arles and has reacted by reserving for himself the right to ordain bishops in his own province. According to Zosimus, this makes him a usurper of the metropolitan privilege that belongs only to Arles. The pope stresses again to Patroclus that anyone of any ecclesiastical grade travelling to Rome from Gaul must have a letter of introduction from him, Patroclus. In addition, those wishing to rise up in ecclesiastical orders must not be promoted too rapidly, but must follow the usual steps and examinations. As the pope is not able to annul a previous ordination, anyone promoted suddenly who has already been ordained must remain at the level he has now achieved, but anyone from now on who tries to leap ahead precipitately will not only be unable to achieve the rank he is aiming for, but will even lose the one he has already gained. Zosimus wishes the bishop to bring these matters to the attention of all.

No. 5

Date: 29 Sep. 417

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: bishops of Vienne and Narbonne II

The Council of Turin took place in September 417. It appears that Bishop Proculus of Narbonne II and Bishop Simplicius of Vienne took the opportunity of demanding from the council the power of ordaining priests and bishops in their own province “as though metropolitans.” Zosimus takes great exception to this impudence. Because of ancient custom, the statutes of the Fathers, and the reverence owed to St. Trophimus, he again confirms that the metropolitan bishop of Arles will continue to have control over all ordinations in Narbonne and Vienne.

No. 6

Date: 4 Mar. 418

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: Patroclus

Proculus is still ordaining whomever he pleases in Narbonne II and Zosimus is becoming frustrated because Patroclus seems powerless to stop him. The pope also insinuates that the much-touted letter of commendation is not materializing nearly as much as it should be. Rumour also has it, says the pope, that Proculus is not only joining up with troublemakers, but is ordaining them immediately just to annoy the pope. Zosimus orders Patroclus to make these people aware that they will never be received in office under these conditions.

No. 7

Date: 4 Mar. 418

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: clergy, monks, and people of Marseilles

Pope Zosimus warns the clergy, monks and people of Marseilles that, although repeatedly admonished by Patroclus the metropolitan bishop, the reprobate bishop Proculus has not ceased to ordain bishops. The pope describes him as stirring up trouble and joining with others of like mind whose only goal is to disturb the harmony of the church. He urges the populace of Marseilles to turn their sights to Patroclus, to whom the pope has already

committed their care in a previous letter.

No. 8

Date: 418

Sender: Honorius and Theodosius II

Recipient: Agricola

The emperors Honorius and Theodosius II advise Agricola, Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, that as Prefect Petronius had ordered, a council of the Seven Provinces is to be held in the metropolitan city of Arles – which they name Constantina – from the Ides of August up to the Ides of September. They are reviving this council, which hereafter is to be preserved as a yearly custom, on account of private and public necessity, for the utility of all. If urgent business detains those in charge of the far-distant provinces of Novempopulana and Aquitaine II, they are permitted to send legates to represent them.

No. 9

Date: 26 Aug. 449

Sender: Pope Leo I

Recipient: 13 Gallic bishops

Having been notified of the election of Ravennius to the bishopric of Arles, Pope Leo the Great declares to various bishops his support of their choice. The agreement of the clergy, the enthusiasm of the citizenry, and the harmony of all the proceedings have convinced the pope that Ravennius is God's choice for Arles, and he congratulates the bishops on their good work.

No. 10

Date: 26 Aug. 449

Sender: Pope Leo I

Recipient: Ravennius

Pope Leo I has learned from a report of some clerics of Arles that one Petronianus, a certain good-for-nothing vagrant, has boasted throughout Gaul that he is a deacon of the pope, and has gained access to many churches thereby. The pope exhorts the bishop of Arles to warn all the bishops of the province about this matter, to excommunicate Petronianus, and then to expel him.

No. 11

Date: Aug. 449

Sender: Pope Leo I

Recipient: Ravennius

Having heard of Ravennius' promotion to the bishopric of Arles from the bishops who consecrated him (see Letter 9), Leo congratulates him and instructs him regarding the duties that are now his. Besides qualities of character, he impresses upon him especially a knowledge of ecclesiastical law so he might exercise his power within its confines. If Ravennius fulfills these responsibilities, he will be in the company of those good and faithful servants of whom the Lord spoke in Matt. 25:23. The pope also requests that Ravennius keep in close touch with him and update him on events in Gaul.

No. 12

Date: Apr. 450

Sender: All bishops

Recipient: Pope Leo I

Now that Ravennius has taken over the bishopric of Arles, nineteen bishops of the provinces of Arles, Vienne, Narbonne II and Alpes Maritimae are entreating Pope Leo to restore the ancient privileges of the church of Arles which they claim have diminished over time. This is actually a request that the pope reverse his decision of 445, when Ravennius' predecessor Hilarus came into conflict with the pope due to his excessive independence and as a result was stripped of many of his metropolitan rights. (It is to be noted that no letter to or from Hilarus (429-449) is contained in this collection). The

bishops argue that they are merely asking Leo to restore the situation as it existed in antiquity; that Trophimus was to Arles as St. Peter was to Rome; that the papal archives will confirm the supremacy of Arles as mandated by Leo's predecessors; and that princes such as Constantine, Valentinian and Honorius honoured the city in the past by making it a centre of power and the consulate. They contend further that Arles should not only have dominion over the four provinces above, but also over all of Gaul. If Leo gives back these metropolitan privileges to the church of Arles, the bishops hint that they will repay him with some deed of gratitude.

No. 13

Date: 4 May 450

Sender: Pope Leo I

Recipient: various bishops

Here Leo responds to the bishops who wrote Letter 12. He confirms that Bishop Hilarus, predecessor to Ravennius, lost some metropolitan privileges due to "excess presumption," but is unwilling to give them all back at this point. For one thing, the bishop of Vienne has beaten them to the punch by his own letter to the pope in which he complains that Arles has usurped some of his rights. Leo decides that a path of moderation is the correct one. He therefore assigns four cities – Valence, Tarentaise, Geneva, and Grenoble – to Vienne, while the remaining cities of the province will be assigned to Arles. (Leo's decision did nothing to quell the controversy; if anything, it added to it). Attached to this letter is a statement purporting to be from the time of Pope Symmachus, fifty years later, that confirms what Leo has decided.

No. 14

Date: 4 May 450

Sender: Pope Leo I

Recipient: Ravennius

Leo has sent his priest Petronius and his deacon Regulus to Arles with this letter and a

verbal message. There has been an attack in the East on orthodox belief and he wishes all Christian bishops to be fully informed regarding this. (Although the pope does not name this latest heresy, it is doubtless the Eutychian controversy, a struggle that claimed the pope's full attention and which was resolved, in large part by Leo's influence, by the Council of Chalcedon in 451; this peaceful state of affairs was overturned 100 years later by the Three Chapters controversy). The pope refers to a letter of his own sent both to Arles and to the East "for the defence of the faith" and a letter of Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, which "accords completely with our sensibilities." Leo requests that Ravennius bring these matters to the attention of all the Gallic bishops.

No. 15

Date: 3 Nov. 462

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: Leontius

The pope reproaches the bishop of Arles in no uncertain terms because he was not informed by him that in the province of Narbonne, which pertains to the rulership of Arles, one Hermes had usurped a certain episcopate. Instead he had to hear it through rumour borne by the deacon John who got it from Frithericus. (According to Gundlach, this was the brother of the Visigothic Theoderic II). The pope now requires a written report from Leontius and his fellow bishops to be sent as quickly as possible. Note: this letter is out of date order in the collection.

No. 16

Date: 26 Jan. 462

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: Leontius

The new pope announces the beginning of his pontificate to the bishop of Arles and orders him to make this known to all his fellow bishops.

No. 17

Date: Feb. 462

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: Leontius

The pope has received a letter from the bishop of Arles through the *vir spectabilis* Pappolus that had obviously crossed with the one he had sent Leontius announcing his election as pope. This suggests that the two had an ongoing relationship before Hilarus became pope. The bishop had urged Hilarus to preserve the paternal canons and the pope agrees that this is his primary focus as his wish is to promote unity among the bishops. The pope also urges Leontius to write frequently and he will do the same; he also sends Pappolus back with a verbal message regarding issues he wants corrected.

No. 18

Date: 3 Dec. 462

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: Gallic bishops

Pope Hilarus complains loudly concerning Hermes, who because he was expelled from Béziers without cause, reckoned that by right he ought to be taken up by the church of Narbonne, and thus having been disparaged by one church committed the crime of usurpation in another. Through a council held on his natal day – i.e. of his ordination – with bishops Faustus of Riez and Auxanius of Aix-en-Provence present and lending their vigor and authority to the proceedings, the pope ordered that the power of ordaining bishops be taken away from Hermes and awarded to Constantius bishop of Uzès. If Hermes survives Constantius, this privilege will return to him; when Hermes dies, it will be restored to the current bishop of the Narbonnese church. The pope orders further that from now on the bishops from every possible province come together annually to a council at the invitation by letter of the metropolitan Leontius of Arles. Thus if anything perverse be found in the ordination or way of life of the clergy, it might be emended, with the more serious problems being referred to the apostolic see. He also confirms that it is

permitted to no cleric to set out for a foreign province unless fortified with a letter from his metropolitan. As well, a petition has been submitted by the bishop of Arles requesting that those of its possessions alienated while Hilarus was bishop (under Pope Leo, see above) be restored by papal authority; the pope sends this back to be placed on the agenda of matters covered by the bishops in the upcoming synod. Finally, Hilarus warns that fully functioning estates belonging to the church must not be alienated unless such a transfer has been presented and discussed beforehand in the council and assent given to do so. Note: confusingly, there are both a bishop and a pope in this letter named Hilarus.

No. 19

Date: 10 Oct. 463

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: Leontius

The pope has learned from Gunduicus, Master of the Soldiers – and King of the Burgundians, according to Gundlach – that Mamertus bishop of Vienne has consecrated a bishop in the city of Die against the will of its people. He has checked the papal archives and discovered that Die was never assigned to Vienne. Hilarus wishes to turn the case over to the Gallic bishops, and he reminds the bishop of Arles that it is his duty to bring it up in the yearly synod. Once the fate of Mamertus has been decided, the bishops are to let the pope know in a joint letter how his wishes for such a case have been carried out. Hilarus takes great pains to walk Leontius through the steps he needs to take for a successful outcome, suggesting that the pope is eager to offload such cases onto the regions where they actually occurred. The following letters indicate that this attempt was not successful.

No. 20

Date: 463 or 464

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: bishops of Vienne, Lyons, Narbonne I and II, and the Alps

Reminding the above bishops of his earlier letter concerning the injury committed against Leontius of Arles by Mamertus of Vienne (see previous letter), Hilarus once again enjoins upon them the following: that for ecclesiastical discipline and for cases that frequently arise among the priests of the Lord, synodal councils are to be held yearly. These will help keep in check any of the brothers about to break out in wrongdoing against another and who might go beyond the boundaries established by the venerable fathers. The synods are to be overseen by Leontius of Arles and the place and time are to be established with a view to convenience of travel. In this way failing to attend may be rendered all the more inexcusable. He is turning the problem of what to do with the bishop wrongfully ordained by Mamertus over to Leontius.

No. 21

Date: 25 Feb. 464

Sender: Pope Hilarus

Recipient: various Gallic bishops

The pope replies to the upsetting news that has been reported to him by these bishops: that Mamertus of Vienne has violated the rulings of Pope Leo and ordained a bishop for Die, a city assigned to the bishop of Arles (see Letter 19). The pope berates Mamertus and commiserates with Leontius, but he is unwilling to proceed with the harsh punishment proposed by the bishops, which involves both Mamertus and the bishop he ordained losing their rank. He points out that a physician does not at once chop off a diseased limb, but first tries milder remedies. Likewise in this case, he recommends that Mamertus atone for his guilt by painstaking attention to proper behaviour in the future. Meanwhile, he will retain his office, but the pope punishes him by revoking the four cities given to Vienne by Leo (Valence, Tarentaise, Geneva, and Grenoble) and giving them back to Arles. The bishop of Die whom Mamertus wrongfully ordained is not to be expelled as the bishops recommend, but is to be confirmed in his bishopric by Leontius, by whom he ought to have been ordained in the first place.

No. 22

Date: 23 Aug. 494

Sender: Pope Gelasius

Recipient: Aeonius

The new pope announces the commencement of his pontificate through Eupronius and Restitutus, who have been visiting parts of Italy bringing aid to the holy congregation there and who are now returning home to Gaul. He rejoices that he has the opportunity to communicate thus with the bishop of Arles after such a long time and asks him to spread the news abroad to the Gallic bishops.

No. 23

Date: 21 Oct. 499

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: Aeonius

Aeonius of Arles has complained that during the time of Symmachus' predecessor (Anastasius II 496-8), the bishop of Vienne gained some privileges from the apostolic see against the statutes of the canons. The pope is disturbed by this, and instructs the bishop to send to him a member of his clergy who is thoroughly versed in this controversy so he may decide what to do. He orders Aeonius to contact the bishop of Vienne and advise him to send his own man to the pope to present his side of the story. Although unnamed in this letter, the bishop of Vienne is the famous Avitus, "the most outstanding bishop in Gaul" according to Ennodius (*vita Epiphani*, 173). Aeonius' complaint refers to a political division of the metropolitan territory of Arles that took place in the 470s. At that time Avitus' predecessor was able to take *de facto* control over six dioceses that were situated in Vienne territory but had been assigned to Arles. During his episcopate, Avitus went a step further and acquired *de iure* rights over those dioceses from the pope. Arles now is demanding these back.

No. 24

Date: 29 Sep. 500

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: Aeonius

The pope has learned through the messenger of the bishop of Arles, the priest Crescentinus, that a quarrel has arisen between Arles and Vienne regarding the ordination of bishops in neighbouring cities. He has looked into the matter and found that his predecessor Anastasius II had made a number of decisions that went against earlier decretals. After railing against this inappropriate situation, he throws the ball back into the bishop's court: Aeonius is to make sure that ancient custom is preserved when deciding whose right it is to ordain which bishop. W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles, Community*, 71 believes that this letter documents the outcome of the dispute from Letter 23 and shows Arles receiving back its *de iure*, but not its *de facto*, rights over the dioceses acquired by Avitus under Anastasius II.

No. 25

Date: 6 Nov. 513

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: all Gallican bishops

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 6.

No. 26

Date: Oct 513

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: Pope Symmachus

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 7a.

No. 27

Date: 6 Nov. 513

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 7b

No. 28

Date: May or Jun. 514

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: Pope Symmachus

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 8a.

No. 29

Date: 11 Jun. 514

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 8b

No. 30

Date: 11 Sep. 515

Sender: Pope Hormisdas

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 10

No. 31

Date: 3 Feb. 528

Sender: Pope Felix IV

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 11

No. 32

Date: 7 Apr. 534

Sender: Pope John II

Recipient: all Gallic bishops

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 12

No. 33

Date: 6 Apr. 534

Sender: Pope John II

Recipient: priests, deacons, clergy of the church of Riez

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 13

No. 34

Date: Apr. 534

Sender: Pope John II

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 14a.

No. 35

Date: Apr. 532

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: all Gallic bishops

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 14b.

No. 36

Date: 18 Jul. 535

Sender: Pope Agapitus

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 15.

No. 37

Date: 18 Jul. 535

Sender: Pope Agapitus

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 16

No. 38

Date: 6 May 538

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Caesarius

See summary under *epistolae Caesarii episcopi* No. 17.

No. 39

Date: 18 Oct. 543

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Auxanius

After reigning as bishop of Arles for forty years, Caesarius has died and his office has passed to Auxanius. This news has been reported to the pope by John the priest and Teridius the deacon, nephew of Caesarius and steward of his monastery for women. With much quoting of Scripture, the pope's assures Auxanius that if he imitates the example of his praiseworthy predecessor Caesarius and deviates in no way from what has been

constituted by the apostolic see, he will gain the crown that God gives to those who love Him. With regard to the privileges Auxanius has requested, including the right to wear the pallium, the pope states that he must first obtain the consent of the Most Christian Emperor and that he is in the process of doing that.

No. 40

Date: 22 May 545

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: all Gallic bishops

The pope announces to all the bishops who are under the reign of Childebert I as well as those who have since ancient times been under the authority of Arles, that he is appointing Auxanius as his vicar in Gaul. (Although the main part of Childebert I's kingdom was in the north, he received Arles and Marseilles when the Ostrogoths ceded Provence to the Franks in 535). If any contention emerges, the bishop of Arles is to convoke a synod to deal with the matter, while matters of greater magnitude are to be referred to the apostolic see. No bishop is to absent himself from such a gathering without a watertight excuse, in which case he is to send a faithful delegate in his place to report to him all that transpires. Further, no bishop is to set out for foreign territory without a letter of introduction from the bishop of Arles. See also Letter 41, which as a pair with this one forms the pope's belated resolution to the issues raised in Letter 39.

No. 41

Date: 22 May 545

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Auxanius

In this letter, written nineteen months after Auxanius first announced his election to Vigilius and requested that the privileges that had rested on Caesarius be conferred on him, the pope at last appoints him as his vicar in Gaul. He outlines the bishop's traditional responsibilities: he must hold a synod when dissension arises; any cases that

involve Christian belief or that are of such magnitude that they cannot be terminated must be referred to the apostolic see with a full report; no bishop must travel to a foreign country without a letter of commendation from Arles. The pope commends Justinian and Theodora to the bishop's prayers as well as Belisarius, who seems to have been the go-between between Vigilius and the emperor in this matter. (As of 544, Belisarius was back in Italy). Finally, the pope concedes to the bishop the right to wear the pallium.

No. 42

Date: 22 May 545

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Auxanius

The bishop has again sent John and Teridius to the pope, this time regarding Bishop Praetextatus (Apt?), and the precipitate rise of laymen into holy orders. The details of the matter are not clear, but the pope is adamant that such must not occur, and that Auxanius must convene an assembly of his fellow bishops to deal with the case, where he must examine the statutes of his predecessors and coming up with a sound judgment. It is interesting that this letter and the arrival of John and Teridius in Rome dovetail so neatly with the two previous letters outlining Auxanius' privileges. Was the bishop tired of waiting for his pallium and decided to nudge the pope's memory under the guise of asking for his advice? The case does not sound like a major one.

No. 43

Date: 23 Aug. 546

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: all bishops under Childebert I

After only two or three years as bishop, Auxanius has "completed the course of this present life" and his office has passed to Aurelianus. Using the illustration of Moses leaving Aaron and Hur behind as his representatives when he ascended the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, Vigilius announces to all the bishops under Childebert I

that with the king's approval he is appointing the new bishop as his vicar in Gaul. The new bishop is to convene synods and all bishops are to attend unless they have an excellent reason not to, in which case they are to send a representative to report back to them. Again, any bishop travelling to other lands must carry a letter of introduction from the bishop of Arles. The *liber pontificalis* reports that Vigilius is at this time en route to Constantinople, where he arrived in late 546 or early 547 and became embroiled in the Three Chapters controversy.

No. 44

Date: 23 Aug. 546

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Aurelianus

This letter forms a pair with Letter 43. The pope announces to the bishop of Arles that with King Childebert I's testimony and assent he is conferring on him the privileges and responsibilities associated with papal vicar that were assigned to his predecessor(s). As usual, these are convening synods to deal with dissent and other issues that arise, while referring thorny issues to the apostolic see; requiring that each bishop travelling to distant territory obtain a letter of introduction from the bishop of Arles; and the use of the pallium. Vigilius instructs the bishop to work towards maintaining the good rapport between "his most clement princes," Justinian and Theodora, and King Childebert I, and expresses his desire that Aurelianus write a letter of thanks to Belisarius, who again acted on behalf of the pope in obtaining Byzantine consent for these privileges for Arles. See the letter from Aurelianus to King Theudebert I, *epistolae Austrasicae* 10.

No. 45

Date: 29 Apr. 550

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Aurelianus

Vigilius is now cooling his heels in Constantinople and has received a letter from the

bishop of Arles expressing concern regarding the correctness of his faith. In what sounds like a recited creed, the pope assures the bishop that he upholds what was established by the four councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus I, and Chalcedon, and by all his predecessors, chiefly Celestine, Sixtus, and Leo. He anathematizes any who do not. He asks that Aurelianus notify his fellow bishops that they have nothing to worry about and that they should disregard those who go around stirring up dissension. Further, the pope has heard that the Goths have taken Rome – as indeed Totila did in 549 – and asks that Childebert I be prevailed upon to write a letter to their king urging him not to disturb Catholic churches in any way. Vigilius is including with this letter a brief verbal report through the bearer Anastasius but promises to send a much fuller one to the bishop when the emperor allows him to return home as he has promised him. Unfortunately for the pope, Justinian's "promise" didn't amount to much; Vigilius spent the next five years in Constantinople and died there in 555.

No. 46

Date: Jul. 4 556

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Sapaudus

The new pope believes the bishop of Arles has already been informed of his recent election, which he alludes rather coyly to as the "operational grace of the omnipotent God." He hopes they might enjoy visits with each other as well as frequent correspondence. Due to the doctrinal controversies in which he was embroiled, and the fact that he was chosen by Justinian to succeed Vigilius, Pelagius needed to overcome Western hostility; this letter is an example of his efforts to gain the support of Arles. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 48, n. 26, believes it likely that Sapaudus was the bishop who compiled this collection of the letters of the Arles bishopric.

No. 47

Date: 16 Sep. 556

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Sapaudus

The pope has received a letter from Sapaudus and he rejoices over the well-being of the bishop. He notes that the papal image depicted with effusive praise by the bishop in that letter does not represent his present state, but perchance his future one, with God's aid. He informs the bishop that recently some people – probably clerics – had come to Rome from Francia and he was impressed by how much love they bore the bishop of Arles. Seeing he was writing to King Childebert I (this letter is missing), he took the occasion to also write to Sapaudus regarding a new matter of usurpation that is of some concern. (W. Gundlach suggests that this may have to do with the bishop of Vienne). Pelagius recommends that Sapaudus send someone to Rome who is well-versed in this affair to represent his interests, as the pope is unwilling to appear as a prosecutor if and when Sapaudus' opponents arrive in Rome.

No. 48

Date: 11 Dec. 556

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Childebert I

King Childebert has heard a rumour that the pope's faith is suspect, a rumour that is causing "seeds of scandal" to be sown in Francia; he has therefore sent a letter to the pope regarding this matter through his messenger Rufinus. This reply is an example of the damage control this pope had to perform in order to overcome Western suspicion of his beliefs (see summary of Letter 46). Pelagius assures the king regarding his own faith and anathematizes all who depart from the teachings of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. He also urges the king and others not to give credence to everything they hear. For, he says, Justinian has taken away the basilicas of the heretics and given them over to Catholics and now the heretics are doing everything they can to stir up trouble, including sending false declarations in the pope's name. And some bishops, who are ignorant of the basics of the faith, are taken in when they should be refuting these Nestorians. He, Pelagius, suffered a great deal in Constantinople from the agitations

stirred up by Theodora when she was alive, but Justinian, he states, has never wavered from orthodoxy. Childebert has also requested relics and these have been sent through the pope's cleric Bonus. They will be given to Sapaudus, who will pass them on to the king. The pope mentions that he has previously sent relics to the monastery of Lérins.

No. 49

Date: 14 Dec 556

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Sapaudus

The pope lets Sapaudus know that his subdeacon Bonus will be arriving with the relics of Peter and Paul and other holy martyrs discussed in the previous letter; the bishop is to send them on to the king with someone who is entirely trustworthy. Sapaudus has previously petitioned the pope to confirm his privileges but Pelagius refuses until he receives a further letter. He then asks the bishop to urge the Patrician Placidus, who is in charge of the papal estates in Francia, to send the rents from those estates to the pope, first purchasing clothing to be given to the poor with part of the money. The estates in Italy are apparently desolate and cannot support anybody. The pope would also like to have Anastasius, brother of Paul the Defensor, return as soon as possible. It is unclear from this letter whether or not the pope is actually making the confirmation of Arles' privileges contingent upon Sapaudus' successful handling of Placidus and the rents in arrears.

No. 50

Date: 3 Feb. 557

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Sapaudus

In this letter the pope confirms Sapaudus as papal vicar in Gaul and outlines the privileges and responsibilities that go along with this, which are familiar to us from previous letters. He also confers on him the use of the pallium and sends him one of these

garments, which is evidence that each succeeding bishop did not inherit the pallium of his predecessor, but was given his own. (It is likely that each bishop was buried in his pallium, as occurred later in the Middle Ages).

No. 51

Date: 3 Feb. 557

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Childebert I

Sapaudus had also sent to the pope a petition from Childebert requesting that Pelagius confirm Arles' privileges. Was this the letter the pope was waiting for? Here the pope replies to the king and informs him that he has indeed made Sapaudus papal vicar, as the papal archives indicate that this was done by his predecessors. He urges the king to nurture and uphold the bishop and his church.

No. 52

Date: Feb. - Apr. 557

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Childebert I

The pope has learned that Childebert I has agreed to the petition of an unknown bishop who has asked that his case be judged by the bishop who ordained him and that the judicial assembly be held in that bishop's city. Further, Childebert has ordered Sapaudus of Arles to agree to this procedure, which is contrary to the canons. (The bishop of Arles, as papal vicar, alone has the right to try cases). Pelagius warns that if anyone goes ahead with this, they must be cut off and penalized, as they are guilty of presumption. He also admonishes the king to be more circumspect in the future when granting petitions so he doesn't concede something to a petitioner that is against ecclesiastical rules.

No. 53

Date: 13 Apr. 557

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Sapaudus

A trader named Peter is setting out for Arles and the pope takes the opportunity of writing to Sapaudus and asking about his health. He would also like to hear by return letter if his confession of faith to Childebert I (Letter 48) was satisfactory to the king and to the bishops. He commends to the bishop and to Placidus, the administrator of the papal estates in Gaul, the Romans who have fled there out of fear of war. Finally, he reminds Sapaudus about the clothing that is to be purchased from the revenues of the papal estates: it is to be shipped to the Roman port where it will hopefully relieve some of the poverty that is rampant in the city. (Cf. Letter 49)

No. 54

Date: Apr. 557

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: Childebert I

The king's messenger Rufinus has arrived to ask the pope to let them know if he holds to the tenets of the Tome of Pope Leo the Great. This so-called Tome was a statement of faith written by Leo in the form of a letter addressed to Flavian Archbishop of Constantinople. It was presented at the Second Council of Ephesus in 449. As well, the king wished Pelagius to send his own statement of faith in his own words. The pope responds with a resounding affirmative to the Tome of Leo and presents his own statement of faith at great length and in great detail. He discusses the Trinity and the nature of Christ; the Virgin birth and Mary as the Mother of God; the way of salvation; the rewards of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. He ends with an admonition to the king to protect his realm from those who would stir up scandal by pretending they hold the true faith when in reality they are sowing tares among the true grain.

No. 55

Date: 16 Apr. 556

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: 7 bishops of Tuscia

The pope has received a letter in which these bishops, who have been assigned to take care of the Tuscan grain supply, say they want to separate themselves from the church at Rome because they have doubts regarding the orthodoxy of the pope's faith. (Tuscia is today Tuscany plus much of Umbria and northern Lazio). They have already begun by leaving the pope's name out of the Mass. As might be expected, Pelagius is perturbed by this and reproaches the bishops for separating themselves from communion with the whole world; although he himself is an unworthy candidate for the apostolic see, the office itself remains undergirded by custom. The pope issues a profession of faith in which he assures them that he supports the four synods of Constantinople, Ephesus I, Nicaea and Chalcedon, and the Tome of Leo, and urges anyone with further doubts to come to him directly so he can explain to them in person. It should be noted that this "statement of faith" was written about eight months before the more extensive one that the pope wrote to Childebert I. Although this letter is in the Arles collection, it has nothing whatever to do with Gaul.

No. 56

Date: 555-556

Sender: Pope Pelagius I

Recipient: all the people of God

This letter is of uncertain date, but shows Pelagius again trying to settle rumours that his faith is not orthodox. Labelling as "immature" those who require such a profession of faith on his part, he nonetheless proceeds to declare in detail his support for the four synods of Nicaea, Ephesus I, Constantinople, and Chalcedon, the canons, and the letters of all his predecessors, especially Leo, whom he calls "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," a name given to Christ in the Book of Revelation. Pelagius states near the beginning of the

letter that he will outline his faith in an attachment, which is now missing from the document. Seeing that the pope's profession of faith appears to be complete as it stands, however, it is likely that what was originally written as an attachment became incorporated into the body of the letter at some later date.

epistolae Austrasicae

No. 1

Date: ante 486?

Sender: Remigius

Recipient: Clovis I

The bishop of Rheims consoles the king upon the death of his sister Albofled and urges him, for the sake of the kingdom, not to give in to his sorrow. He also reminds him that Albofled should not be mourned, since she has joined a chorus of virgins in heaven and is now in a position to answer the petitions of those on earth. He apologizes that he has not come personally to meet with the king; if Clovis commands it through the bearer Maccolus, he will ignore the harshness of the winter and attempt to reach him. Gregory of Tours quotes the first two sentences of this letter in *LH* 2.31 and adds the information that Albofled died shortly after being baptized.

No. 2

Date: 486?

Sender: Remigius

Recipient: Clovis I

The bishop of Rheims has received the news that Clovis has taken Belgica Secunda, the Roman province in NE Gaul that is closest to Britain. He takes the opportunity to instruct the king on how to reign well, an early "mirror for princes." The king ought to choose good counselors, listen to the priests' counsel, relieve the poor and afflicted, rule with justice, and free captives. If he does this, says the bishop, both his character and his reign will be counted as noble by posterity.

No. 3

Date: 512

Sender: Remigius

Recipient: Heraclius, Leo, and Theodosius

Remigius of Rheims, who has been a bishop for fifty-three years, refutes the effrontery of these three bishops in reproaching him regarding the delinquent priest Claudius, whom he took up and tried to restore. (According to W. Gundlach, Heraclius is bishop of Paris or Sens, Leo's bishopric is unknown, Theodosius is bishop of Auxerre). No one has spoken to him so rudely in his life, he states. Remigius defends himself by arguing that although he made Claudius a priest it was not for reward, but on the recommendation of the king, whom one could hardly refuse. Further, he interceded for him only on the condition that he perform penance, which has a solidly Scriptural foundation for restoring the lapsed. The three bishops have also demanded that Remigius restore the affairs of one Celsus, who was led astray by Claudius, but the old man knows nothing of this matter and refuses.

No. 4

Date: c.500?-533

Sender: Remigius

Recipient: Falco

Remigius vigorously condemns Bishop Falco of Liège for his misdeeds. Falco has performed ordinations in the church of Mouzon which the metropolitans of Rheims are supposed to do, and has thus transgressed against the canons. Remigius is unwilling that all those newly ordained by Falco should lose their status, but will carefully consider what to do with those he considers unfit. Falco has also had the land taxes and rents owing from the peasants delivered to his own door. As a result of these actions, Remigius is pained and has lost all respect for the wayward bishop.

No. 5

Date: 551-552

Sender: Florianus

Recipient: Nicetius

Florianus, abbot of the monastery of Romenus, asks the bishop of Trier to enlist the help of three deceased holy figures so that they in turn might beseech the confessor Ambrose to take him up as his special client. The three are Ennodius of Pavia, who is Florianus' father from the font of baptism, Caesarius of Arles, who taught him his Latin letters, and Theodatus, his predecessor as abbot, "inferior in station but not in merits." He also implores Nicetius to pray for his bishop Datius. Finally, he wishes to be informed whether Nicetius is willing to take up what he has requested from him. Cf. *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* no. 4: Datius, bishop of Milan, has been detained in Constantinople along with Pope Vigilius.

No. 6

Date: c.550

Sender: Florianus

Recipient: Nicetius

This letter is dated slightly earlier than the one previous, although it is later in the collection. The abbot of the monastery of Romenus praises Nicetius, Archbishop of Trier, as one who redeems captives and relieves the oppressed, while reminding him that he is the heir of Maximinus – a 4th century bishop of Trier – and St. Paul. This is all leading up to a request that Nicetius urge King Theudebald – whom Gregory of Tours labels "malicious" (*LH* 4.9) – to preserve the oaths he made on behalf of the Roman population of Lariens, renamed Christopolis. (This is an island in the middle of Lake Como in Italy that from Lombard times has been called Comacina. According to Gundlach, the Romans likely fled there to escape the Lombards). Florianus also begs Nicetius to pray for him and his infirmities.

No. 7

Date: ante 565

Sender: Nicetius

Recipient: Emperor Justinian

In a very strongly-worded letter Nicetius of Trier urges Justinian to turn aside from his dalliance with the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies and return to orthodoxy. Otherwise, says Nicetius, he is a son of the devil and an enemy of justice who is headed for the infernal regions with the heretics he is defending. Along the way the bishop mitigates this stance somewhat by implying that Justinian has been led astray by evil counsel. He advises him to call back those leaders of the church he has sent into exile and publicly proclaim that he has erred, for at time of writing he has been anathematized by the churches of Italy, Africa, Spain and Gaul. This is a very different view from that of Pope Pelagius above, who claimed that Justinian's faith was unwavering, see *epistolae arelatenses* 48.

No. 8

Date: ante 568?

Sender: Nicetius

Recipient: Chlodosind

In a letter sent through Lombard legates returning home from the kingdom of the Franks, the bishop of Trier urges Queen Chlodosind, daughter of Chlothar I and sister of Guntram, Sigibert, and Chilperic, to convert her husband Alboin, king of the Lombards, to the catholic faith. (Nicetius had heard that the king was entertaining Arians at court). He gives many examples from both the Old and the New Testaments regarding the oneness of the Trinity that refute the Arian belief in the preeminence of God the Father over Christ the Son. Having proven his point scripturally, he turns to more earthly examples: Catholics are right in their faith because they see miracles daily at the tombs of their saints; Arians cannot do this and so are wrong. To further encourage Chlodosind in her task, the bishop uses the example of her grandmother Chlothild, who allegedly

converted Clovis I to catholicism. Finally, the bishop reminds her of how successful Clovis was politically after his baptism and how much wealth he and his sons accumulated. Note that it is not clear what faith, if any, held Alboin's allegiance.

No. 9

Date: 575

Sender: Germanus

Recipient: Queen Brunhild

As Gregory of Tours makes clear (*LH* 4.47-51), since the previous year the three surviving sons of Chlothar I – Sigibert, Guntram, and Chilperic – have been fighting among themselves and devastating the country. In this letter the bishop of Paris warns the queen of a rumour that names her as the perpetrator of the civil conflict. He attempts to gain her support in urging her husband Sigibert to put a stop to the destruction. He assures her of the judgment of God for those who hate and murder their kindred, citing examples from Scripture such as Cain, Joseph's brothers, and Absalom. He also reminds her of Queen Esther and encourages her to adopt a similar role and save her people. Gregory reports in his account that the bishop warned Sigibert that if he set out to kill his brother Chilperic he himself would die, a prophecy which was shortly fulfilled.

No. 10

Date: 546-548

Sender: Aurelianus

Recipient: Theudebert I

Theudebert was the son of Theuderic I, oldest son of Clovis I. This flowery mini-panegyric to the king from the bishop of Arles is not entirely without foundation, as Gregory of Tours also praises Theudebert's kingly qualities (*LH* 3.1, 25, 34). The bishop praises the king's exalted family, his mercy, his generosity to the poor, and his virtuous counsel. He also reminds him of the Day of Judgment when there will be no rich or poor, pauper or potentate; all will be judged by their merits.

No. 11

Date: c. Jun. 550

Sender: Mapinius

Recipient: Nicetius

Mapinius of Rheims had been earlier summoned by King Theudebald I, son of Theudebert I (see previous letter), to a synod to be held in the city of Toul on the first day of June. The bishop notified the king by return letter that, since the king did not declare the reason for the summons, he was not required to attend. By the time he was told that the synod had to do with Bishop Nicetius of Trier, who had excommunicated several of the king's followers for their unclean lifestyle and suffered reprisals in return, it was too late for him to travel there in time for the synod. Mapinius now apologizes to Nicetius for his absence but reproaches him for not letting him know of his troubles directly so he could be kept up to date. He wishes to know how guilty the troublesome Franks were, whether they could be restored with pastoral diligence, and whether other bishops such as himself could receive them with impunity.

No. 12

Date: c.580?

Sender: Dynamius

Recipient: a friend

Here Dynamius, patrician and Rector of Provence, expresses his love in extravagant terms to an unknown friend. His protestations of affection are all stock formulae: the receipt of his beloved's letter relieved his desires as water quenches his thirst under the hot sun; although absent in body, friends are together in spirit; a further letter will bring comfort to his insignificance, and so on. It is not unlikely that the recipient was Venantius Fortunatus, who sent two poetic epistles to Dynamius (6.9 and 10) that are similar in tone to this letter. Dynamius also received letters from Pope Gregory I (3.33 and possibly 7.33).

No. 13

Date: ante 575?

Sender: Gogo

Recipient: Chaming

Using the standard language and images of *amicitia*, Gogo, foster-father and tutor of the Austrasian King Childebert II, thanks the otherwise unknown Duke Chaming for his patronage and gifts. He also informs the duke that the king – probably Childebert's father Sigibert – has increased him with many honours as he promised in his youth. Gundlach, the 19th century editor of this collection in the MGH, reports that originally there were some verses attached in which Gogo commemorated his relations. These are now lost.

No. 14

Date: c.573

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Magnericus

The poet Venantius Fortunatus greets the new bishop of Trier with a congratulatory poem on his new honour. Magnericus succeeded Nicetius and Fortunatus makes much of the latter's reputation and holy attributes and praises Magnericus' success in living up to his formidable predecessor so that nobody has cause to lament his passing. At the end he begs for the bishop's favour. The poem is not found in Fortunatus' collected works. M. Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, vol. 3, 163, n. 128, notes that it was taken from the *epistolae Austrasicae* and added by F. Leo to his MGH edition of Fortunatus' *opera poetica*, where it appears as *appendix carminum* 34.

No. 15

Date: c.540-550

Sender: Mapinius

Recipient: Vilicus

The bishop of Rheims extols the charity and generosity of the bishop of Metz, wishing him life to his 60th year, which he obviously considers a great old age. He states that Vilicus is valued above all other bishops, and seeks his prayers. Toward the end of the letter Mapinius requests that Vilicus indicate to him how much money he should send toward the acquisition of pigs in the Metz region. Vilicus will then convey these funds – or pigs – into the right hands. This is likely to do with taxes in kind owed to the king.

No. 16

Date: 565-581

Sender: Gogo

Recipient: Trasericus

Gogo praises the eloquence and wisdom of the bishop of Toul and disparages his own with typical humility. He adds to what the bishop has apparently already expressed to him: that foreign poets should be avoided, and that poor speech and poor understanding go hand in hand. The grammarians Parthenius and Dodorenius are mentioned as good and bad examples respectively. Dodorenius is unknown but Parthenius was Gogo's teacher and the grandson of Ruricius of Limoges. As a young man, Parthenius visited Arles and took a letter from his grandfather commending him to Caesarius, see *epistolae Caesarii* 5. The discussion between Gogo and Trasericus regarding foreign poets may be referring to Venantius Fortunatus. It is possible that this is the same Trasericus whose oratory Fortunatus praised (2.13, not in this inventory).

No. 17

Date: 542-568

Sender: Dynamius

Recipient: Vilicus

Dynamius (see 12 above) has been exiled. In this prime example of the benefits of *amicitia* in such a situation, Dynamius declares that he has performed the tasks requested of him by the bishop of Metz, and lauds the bishop's ability to draw all men to himself.

He also thanks him for the gifts he sent, at the same time expressing doubt at to his own ability to praise them properly. He begs Vilicus to use his influence with everybody who has the royal ear so that he might be recalled to the king's favour. (This indeed occurred in November 587 under King Childebert II after some years of shifting loyalties.)

No. 18

Date: 547

Sender: Theudebald

Recipient: Emperor Justinian

King Theudebald replies to the emperor who had sent gifts of congratulation through his legates upon his taking up the throne of his deceased father Theudebert (cf. Letter 10). Justinian had apparently criticized Theudebert harshly in the past – a likely explanation for this is found in the next letter – but now seeks friendship with his son, who defends his father and takes the emperor to task for the criticism. He offers the requested friendship.

No. 19

Date: Sep. or Oct. 534-547

Sender: Theudebert I

Recipient: Emperor Justinian

Theudebert I replies to a letter from the emperor which apparently requested that he send 3000 men to the aid of the patrician Bregantinus, of whom nothing further is known. The king, who is obviously foot-dragging, excuses his delay by blaming the late arrival of Count Andrea, Justinian's legate who brought the request for military aid; he adds that there is another reason for his tardiness that the count will convey verbally to the emperor when he returns to Constantinople. If the emperor then sends an embassy back to him, states Theudebert, then everything will proceed smoothly to their mutual benefit.

No. 20

Date: 534-547

Sender: Theudebert I

Recipient: Emperor Justinian

Justinian has sent legates to Theudebert I to enquire which territories and peoples form part of his kingdom. The king names the Thuringians, the Northern Suavians, the Saxons, the Eucians – probably Jutes – all of Francia and parts of northern Italy and Pannonia. W. Gundlach mentions that it is nowhere else attested that the Franks had acquired any part of Pannonia. Nonetheless, Theudebert overstepped his bounds when he claimed all Francia was his, as he ruled only Austrasia. His uncles Childebert I and Chlothar I controlled the rest.

No. 21

Date: c.550

Sender: Rufus

Recipient: Nicetius

The bishop of Turin sends to the bishop of Trier, along with this letter, the Italian artisans he has requested. These are led by the priest Amabilis, who will present them to Nicetius, and they are secured under oath. Rufus bemoans the fact that he cannot journey to see Nicetius as he has done in the past, and he recalls the happy times they used to have. He asks for a letter in return and begs Nicetius to greet his servants the deacons Sunnoveho and Catellionus.

No. 22

Date: c.550

Sender: Gogo

Recipient: Petrus

Gogo, tutor of Childebert II, has recently acquired an estate situated in the diocese of Petrus of Metz and requests that the bishop take it under his care. We are given no details for this arrangement. Most of the letter is taken up with greetings from Gogo to various clergy and the bishop himself. He salutes each individually, describing in colourful terms the activity for which each is known. Theodosius, for example, “soothes the ears of all with serene chants,” while Mactarius the archdeacon “does astonishing work in church repairs.” Altogether eight individuals are named. Finally, Gogo praises and greets an unnamed bishop who has built a “temple” above the shores of the Moselle. This is likely Nicetius of Trier, whose castle above the Moselle Venantius Fortunatus commemorates in his poem 3.12. (not in this inventory)

No. 23

Date: c. 475

Sender: Auspicius

Recipient: Arbogast

In this poetic epistle dated as the earliest in the collection, the bishop of Toul praises the count-elect Arbogast of Trier, son of Arigius and grandson of the general Arbogast who, although a Frank himself, fought on the side of the Romans in the late 4th century. The new Arbogast surpasses the former, Auspicius says, because he is a believer in Christ, while his grandfather died a pagan. In a type of “mirror for princes” (cf. *epistolae Austrasicae* 2 & *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 15), the bishop urges him especially to guard against the vices of cupidity and avarice, to donate to the poor and the saints, and to honour and love Bishop Iamlychus of Trier.

No. 24

Date: 561

Sender: unknown

Recipient: Nicetius

An unknown writer praises the merits and preaching of the bishop of Trier, who has returned to his see after an extended absence. The bishop had been exiled by Chlothar I in 560 because he had excommunicated the king for his misdeeds, but when Chlothar died the next year his son Sigibert recalled the bishop, as reported by Gregory of Tours, *vitae patrum* 17.3. The writer greets the lord king, presumably Sigibert, and commends himself to the bishop's prayers, complaining that because the bearer is anxious to be off, he must close the letter before praising all of Nicetius' attributes.

Note: here begins the group of letters that accompanied two different embassies to Constantinople for the purpose of discussing a Frankish-Byzantine alliance and joint invasion of Italy. A secondary theme is the situation and fate of Athanagild, Childebert's nephew, who was handed over to the Greeks with his mother Ingund, wife of the Visigothic prince Hermenegild.

Letters 25 to 39 pertain to the first embassy.

No. 25

Date: 584

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: Emperor Mauricius

According to their agreement of an alliance and as he had promised through those legates sent previously, King Childebert II sends as envoys to Emperor Mauricius the following: Bishop Ennodius, Grippo the sword-maker, Rado the chamberlain and Eusebius the scribe. These will declare matters to him orally. Grippo and the embassy are mentioned by Gregory of Tours in *LH* 10.2 and 3.

No. 26

Date: 584

Sender: Brunhild

Recipient: Emperor Mauricius

Brunhild writes what seems to be a letter to support that of her son Childebert above. The similar wording of various phrases suggests that the same scribe wrote both letters. As in Childebert's letter, Brunhild entrusts a message to the legates to be delivered orally.

No. 27

Date: 584

Sender: Brunhild

Recipient: Athanagild

Athanagild was the grandson of Brunhild, son of her deceased daughter Ingund and Hermenegild, son of Leuvigild king of the Visigoths. Ingund was handed over to the Byzantines with her young son when Hermenegild and his father fell out, ostensibly over matters of faith. Ingund died in Carthage en route to Constantinople, and Athanagild continued on to the capital with his "protectors." Here Brunhild informs her grandson that legates have been sent to the emperor to discuss an alliance. At the same time, they will try to do something about his situation and they will communicate these matters to him.

No. 28

Date: 584

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: Athanagild

In formal language, King Childebert II advises his nephew Athanagild, the son of his sister Ingund, that legates have been sent to the emperor to an assembly in Constantinople, from whom he will be able to learn more certainly what is to be done about his situation.

No. 29

Date: 584

Sender: Brunhild

Recipient: Anastasia

Brunhild informs the empress that her son Childebert II has sent an embassy to the emperor Mauricius with oral messages. She hopes that peace will be established between their two peoples. Note: Anastasia is the emperor's mother-in-law, widow of his predecessor Tiberius II Constantinus.

No. 30

Date: 584

Sender: Brunhild

Recipient: Anastasia or Constantina

This letter informs the Empress that an embassy has been sent but while close in content to the previous letter, it urges peace more pressingly. There is no mention of an oral message. Gundlach suggests that it is addressed to Anastasia, Tiberius's mother the dowager empress, but as the former almost-identical letter was also addressed to her by name, and this letter has no salutation, it's likely destination is rather Constantina, empress and Maurice's wife.

No. 31-39

Date: 584

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: various officials

The next nine short letters are addressed to different individuals, some known and others unknown, but are so similar in content that their editor has given them identical summaries in the MGH. Each first praises the reputation and qualities of the recipient, offers greetings and friendship, notifies the individual of the embassy to Emperor Mauricius, and asks for support for an alliance between Franks and Greeks. The recipients are John, Patriarch of Constantinople; Honoratus the apocrisiarius, (the plenipotentiary of the pope at the Byzantine court); Domitianus, bishop of Melitene (Roman Armenia), who is a relative of the emperor and visiting Constantinople; a Magister Theodore; John the Quaestor; Meganto the curator; Paul, father of Mauricius;

an unspecified Italian patrician; and the patrician Venantius. These nine letters were carried by the legates and were to be given to the addressees along with an oral message. The language used makes an especially interesting study, as each uses somewhat different wording to express what is essentially an identical message.

No. 40

Date: 585 or 590

Sender: Byzantine Exarch

Recipient: Childebert II

Although Childebert II did indeed send an army into Italy to fight on the side of the Byzantines against the Lombards, this letter and the following indicate that there were many bumps along the way. Here the Exarch of Ravenna, either Smaragdus or his successor Romanus, has received information from one Andreas that he has reported to the emperor and empress in Constantinople. This is the news that the Frankish dukes have double-crossed the Greeks by making a temporary peace with King Authari and his Lombards so they might safely plunder the countryside. The Exarch is sure that Childebert will be dismayed by this behaviour and asks the king to order the army to immediately stop spilling Christian blood and snatching priests from their churches; he also wants those who have been captured to be released.

No. 41

Date: 585 or 590

Sender: Byzantine Exarch

Recipient: Childebert II

Another letter from Smaragdus or Romanus reveals a further Byzantine effort to obtain Frankish aid for the war against the Lombards. The Exarch gives a brief history of recent Greek exploits and victories, and describes how several Lombard dukes and cities submitted of their own accord. He is again confident that Childebert is directing his anger against the dukes that betrayed the Greeks and urges him to fulfill his earlier promise –

we gather from this that the Frankish army has not yet accomplished anything in Italy that it came for. (cf. Letter 42) Further, he would like to be informed when and from what direction the Frankish army will approach when it does finally regroup, asking that while on the march they not burn buildings, plunder the countryside, or take Romans captive.

No. 42

Date: 585 or 590

Sender: Mauricius

Recipient: Childebert II

This letter from the Byzantine emperor minces no words in its scathing criticism of Childebert's failure to follow through on his promises to help the Greeks against the Lombards. Although he received the Frankish legates with imperial benevolence, Mauricius describes their travels over land and sea as a waste of time, as his ears were wearied with boasting and juvenile speeches reinforced with terrible oaths, all of which accomplished nothing. He invites Childebert to explain these matters in detail, and insists that for an alliance to succeed he must make a priority the friendship he has undertaken with the emperor.

Letters 43 to 47 pertain to the second embassy.

No. 43

Date: 585

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: Theodosius

In a letter to accompany the embassy to Constantinople, Childebert asks the emperor's young son to take the boy Athanagild under his guardianship until he reaches young manhood. This would be accomplished under the protection of the emperor, who the writer hopes will rule for a long time until the kingdom passes to his son. (Such an event never occurred due to a coup in 602 that replaced Mauricius on the Byzantine throne with

Phocas. Mauricius and his entire family were killed in the process, cf. *registrum Gregorii* 13.5.) Because of the phrase *dicta fortuna* in the superscript, E. Malaspina, Italian translator of the *epistolae Austrasicae*, believes that this letter was dictated by Venantius Fortunatus.

No. 44

Date: 585

Sender: Brunhild

Recipient: Anastasia or Constantina

Brunhild expresses her pleasure that Childebert II, her son, has reached the age where he can treat personally with the emperor through an embassy. She says that the verbal message the legates are to deliver is about a matter initiated by herself and has to do with her grandson Athanagild, who is being held by the Greeks. She would like him back, and to persuade the empress, she asks her how she would feel if Theodosius was torn from her, reminding her that after the death of her daughter (Ingund), only this “sweet token” remains to her. If the boy is returned, she states, then the empress will receive God’s reward for freeing captives and peace and love will increase between their two peoples. The addressee “Anastasia” is supplied by the editor but is not written in the MS; the letter should likely instead be addressed to Constantina.

No. 45

Date: 585

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: John

The king praises the reputation of the patriarch of Constantinople, which has reached even to Germania, and which compels the devotion of the writer. He begs him to use his influence with the emperor to obtain the release of his nephew and his return to the Frankish kingdom. Childebert hints broadly that a successful Frankish-Byzantine alliance

is tied to a satisfactory resolution of Athanagild's situation, which strongly suggests that the boy became a bargaining chip between Franks and Greeks.

No. 46

Date: 585

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: Laurentius

Childebert is pleased to have reached an age where he can deal with diplomatic concerns and advance the cause of Christ. In this letter to Bishop Laurentius of Milan the king likens him to his saintly namesake Ambrose, and praises his works and reputation. Childebert then advises the bishop that he has sent forces into Italy against the Lombards, but that Smaragdus, Exarch of Ravenna, must be advised that it is up to the Republic to do its bit against the enemy as much as it can. While condemning the Lombards in colourful language, he assures the bishop that he will send an army next year to deal with anything that remains of this execrable people. Finally, he asks both Laurentius and through him Smaragdus, to advise the legates to hurry to Constantinople and back, so that what they have learned might be reported to him.

No. 47

Date: 585

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: Mauricius

Childebert has learned that the son of Scaptimund is being detained in Constantinople. He begs the emperor to release him and return him home to Francia, thus gaining the approval of God and man. Scaptimund and his son are otherwise unknown.

No. 48

Date: ante 581?

Sender: Childebert II

Recipient: Grasulf

This is a letter written on Childebert's behalf by his guardian and tutor Gogo and is thus dated to the age of the king's minority. It is in reply to a message from a Duke Grasulf, possibly duke of Friuli (Gundlach says Histria), who although a Lombard seems to be poised between joining up with the Franks and Byzantines and remaining loyal to the Lombard cause. Gogo advises him to join the former but to obtain papal sanction before proceeding. He also promises that an army will be sent into Italy to aid Grasulf once he joins the Byzantines. This letter illustrates the shifting loyalties in Italy at this time and the complexity of the situation there.

epistolae Desiderii episcopi

Note: letters in *liber* 1 are from Desiderius to others while those in *liber* 2 are addressed from others to him. For the reader's convenience, I have combined the two *libri* here in date order.

No. 2.2

Date: 629-630

Sender: Bertegysle

Recipient: Desiderius

Desiderius is currently filling the office of treasurer at the court of Dagobert I and Abbot Bertegysle sends a letter asking about his welfare and that of the king. He also requests his aid and influence in a case he is pursuing against the patrician Philippus, who is delaying it. Finally, he would like to know how the servants are working out that he sent to court at Desiderius' request for the lord's work, i.e. royal service. (Desiderius was also treasurer to Dagobert's father Chlothar II *per vita Desiderii*).

No. 2.19

Date: ante 630

Sender: Verus

Recipient: Desiderius

Bishop Verus of Rodez asks for Desiderius' patronage for his nephews in the same way he himself has enjoyed it in the past. He sends this request through the deacon Leodoald and begs for a reply.

No. 1.1

Date: ante Apr. 630

Sender Desiderius

Recipient: Salustius

Desiderius thanks Salustius bishop of Agen for the outstanding benevolence of his patronage and, in answer to his request, declares that he has renewed acquaintance successfully with former aristocratic friends. He has also entered into a relationship with Salustius' friend Flavodus. He requests the bishop's prayers on his behalf.

No. 1.5

Date: Apr. 630-Jan. 639

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Dagobert I

On the strength of their youthful companionship, Desiderius prays King Dagobert I, who installed him as bishop of Cahors, that he examine carefully a certain case concerning the church of that city. The letter implies that the king has made a judgment, not advantageous to Cahors, that Desiderius would like to see changed.

No. 2.12

Date: 632

Sender: Paul

Recipient: Desiderius

Paulus bishop of Verdun responds to Desiderius' letter through the brothers Frodolenus and Ruco of Metz. Desiderius has asked about King Dagobert's movements – a topic that seems to be of some importance – and Paul replies that he has been to Verdun, is spending Christmas at Rheims and is then travelling on to the Rhine. He also reports that Chainoald bishop of Laon has died, and thanks Desiderius for his many kindnesses.

No. 2.15

Date: 632

Sender: Constantius

Recipient: Desiderius

Constantius bishop of Albi announces to Desiderius that he has returned safely from the palace of King Dagobert, who is now staying at Mainz; again as in the previous letter, it seems to be important to keep track of the movements of the king. The bishop invites Desiderius to celebrate the nativity of the Lord in his city – Cahors is not far from Albi – and asks that he tell him if and when he might come.

No. 1.7

Date: 630-c.639

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Medoald

Desiderius thanks Bishop Medoald of Trier for his many kindnesses and gifts of aid in the past and begs that he pour out prayers on his behalf in the future. He requests also that he kindly receive his messenger the abbot Claudius, who is bearing some little gifts along with this letter, and that he write back concerning his own health, that of his people, and that of the king.

No. 2.5

Date: 630-c.642

Sender: Sulpicius

Recipient: Verus

Desiderius has notified his metropolitan bishop Sulpicius of Bourges of some injury done to his people by the deacon Perricius of Rodez. As the deacon's actions fall under the jurisdiction of Verus bishop of Rodez, Sulpicius writes to the latter regarding his upcoming *placitum* and the subsequent emendation of the deacon's crime. He emphasizes that if the deacon delays to obey when he is summoned, he is to be handed over to Sulpicius himself to be judged.

No. 1.12

Date: 630-c.642

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Sulpicius

Here Desiderius writes a standard letter of *amicitia* to his metropolitan bishop, Sulpicius of Bourges. He requests that Sulpicius root out defiance among the bishops and commends himself to his prayers.

No. 2.10

Date: 630-c.642

Sender: Sulpicius

Recipient: Desiderius

Archbishop Sulpicius of Bourges thanks Desiderius for the letter and the gifts he received from him at Easter and offers in return extravagant wishes for his welfare and long life. The gifts were doubtless obligatory.

No. 2.1

Date: 630-642

Sender: Sulpicius

Recipient: Desiderius

Archbishop Sulpicius of Bourges replies to Desiderius, who has made the request that they visit each other often. He states that he prefers to exchange mutual addresses rather than travel the great distance between them. Letters call up the image of the beloved, he states, making physical closeness merely a redundancy.

No. 2.13

Date: 630-644

Sender: Abbo

Recipient: Desiderius

Bishop Abbo of Metz has already received two letters through different people from Desiderius regarding the matter of an estate whose revenues supply lighting for the basilicas of Metz, an arrangement that was set up by King Dagobert. The estate was originally owned by the lady Bobila's father, who turned it over to the king. Bobila now wishes to repossess it and bestow it on the church of Cahors. Abbo claims he is working on the case from his end and requests that Desiderius convince Bobila to enter into and adhere to the agreement put forth by his brother Godenus. (For further information on this case see also: Letter 2.11 from Paul to Desiderius and 2.4 from Constantius and Dado to Desiderius).

No. 1.9

Date: 630-644

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Abbo

Desiderius commends to Bishop Abbo of Metz the bearer of this letter who is arriving in Metz to oversee a monastery there. He asks him to receive him as an intimate and especially to allow him to be present when he converses with other clerics, reminding him of the time when they all used to entertain themselves with storytelling at the court of Chlothar II.

No. 2.11

Date: 630-647

Sender: Paul

Recipient: Desiderius

Bishop Paul of Verdun greets Desiderius, who has suggested that something be done in the case of the lady Bobila. Paul does not present his reply in the letter, but sends a verbal message with the bearers. He thanks him profusely for the ten tuns of Falernian wine and for his other gifts in the past. He commends himself to Desiderius' prayers and promises to pray also for him unceasingly. (For the case of Bobila see also Letter 2.13 from Abbo to Desiderius and 2.4 from Constantius and Dado to Desiderius)

No. 1.11

Date: 630-648

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Paul

Desiderius invites Bishop Paul of Verdun to participate in the dedication of the basilica of the monastery he is constructing. He has also invited other bishops for the same purpose, and is looking forward to some conversation about the good old days at court when they were all together.

No. 1.13

Date: 630-650

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Caesarius

Desiderius opens with an admonishment to the bishop of Clermont to strive for those things that pertain to the health of the soul and reject those things which hinder it. The bishop soon comes to the point: he wishes to correct the scarcity of the water supply in

Cahors by bringing water in to the city through underground wooden pipes. He asks Caesarius to send him skilled artisans who know how to do this.

No. 2.20

Date: 630-655

Sender: Gallus

Recipient: Desiderius

A messenger has arrived from Marseilles to say that Provence is being laid waste by plague. Gallus bishop of Clermont advises Desiderius to set guards around Cahors so that no one may exit the city and bring the plague back into it. The neighbouring regions have already done this, blocking entry to merchants and tradespeople.

No. 1.14

Date: 630-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Aspasia

Desiderius teaches and exhorts Abbess Aspasia, who is upset because of some sins she has committed, through the story of a woman found in one of the gospels. (The story, which he states he has written down for her, is missing). He advises her to do as much penance as her health can stand, attend to vigils, fasts and prayers, and not to look back.

W. Gundlach, editor of the *vita Desiderii*, believes that this letter indicates that Desiderius had the care of a monastery for virgins.

No. 2.16

Date: 630-655

Sender: Verus

Recipient: Desiderius

Having been informed by Desiderius that Bishop Sulpicius of Bourges has postponed a certain synod to another time, Bishop Verus of Rodez responds that this has twice been announced to him: once through Desiderius' deacon and again through his letter. Verus asks for the bishop's prayers and the consolation of hearing that he is well.

No. 2.14

Date: 630-655

Sender: Chaenulf

Recipient: Desiderius

The otherwise unknown Chaenulf implores Desiderius to name a time and a place where he might meet with him. It is possible that this individual is identical with a count named Chainulf, whom Fredegar reports was killed by Ermenfred at Augers in the year 641 (Fred. 4.83 and *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, s.v. Chainulf).

No. 2.21

Date: 630-655

Sender: Felix

Recipient: Desiderius

With florid humility, Bishop Felix (probably) of Limoges seeks forgiveness from Desiderius for a letter written about two years previously which was dishonouring to him. He begs to be taken back into his favour.

No. 1.15

Date: 630-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Felix

Desiderius has received a nasty letter from Bishop Felix, probably of Limoges. He blames much of this on the ill will of those close to Felix, likening their speech to the

whisperings of serpents and the Siren's song. He begs forgiveness if he is guilty at all, but rejects what he feels is empty harassment. He also commits a verbal message to the letter's bearer which he feels sure will reconcile the two of them. The original letter from Felix, which is not extant, is in all likelihood the one that prompted Felix's profuse apology in the previous letter.

No. 1.8

Date: 630-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Chlodulf

Desiderius reminds Chlodulf of the time when he was a stranger and Chlodulf gave him support and friendship. The latter's father was St. Arnulf bishop of Metz and Desiderius urges Chlodulf to remember his life and words and try to emulate him. If he does this, he will share his father's eternal reward. Desiderius commends his bearer and mentions in passing some business to do with Chlodulf's patron, St. Stephen, that he is administering. Chlodulf himself became bishop of Metz in 656 and enriched the Cathedral of St. Stephen in that city.

No. 2.7

Date: 630-655

Sender: Rauracius

Recipient: Desiderius

Bishop Rauracius of Nevers has sent some men to Cahors to investigate a matter involving property situated in the diocese of Cahors but belonging to the church of Nevers. One of the issues is the number of servile tenants on the estate in question; another is the estate's immunity from the interference of royal agents. Rauracius asks Desiderius' aid for his agents while they do their investigation and his protection for the above-noted immunity. If everyone works together, he says, the episcopal revenues can be fairly calculated and properly distributed.

No. 2.8

Date: 630-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: various officials in Spain

Desiderius greets everybody in Spain of any importance, both ecclesiastical and lay, and commends to them his priest Antedius and his accompanying servant, who are travelling through Spain on business.

No. 2.18

Date: 630-655

Sender: Palladius

Recipient: Desiderius

This is a legal document in epistolary format. In it Bishop Palladius (of Auxerre, according to editor W. Arndt) turns over to Desiderius several estates situated in the diocese of Cahors. These include lands, slaves, and everything attached to them that is owned by his church by right. One of these – Bagido – includes the woman Chromatia, whose brother the priest Deotherius oversees the church at Saintes. Chromatia holds a praecatoria, or grant of usufruct, to the estate which will allow her to remain there and be supported for her lifetime.

No. 2.9

Date: 634-655

Sender: Sigibert III

Recipient: Desiderius

King Sigibert III, son of Dagobert, replies to Desiderius, who had sent a letter to him through Abbot Betto. In answer to his queries, Sigibert states that he is well and his kingdom is running smoothly – his subjects are obeying him and are even cohabiting

peacefully with barbarians and pagans! The king also assures Desiderius that he has done what the bishop has requested regarding a certain (unknown) matter.

No. 1.3

Date: post 639

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Sigibert III

Desiderius salutes and exhorts King Sigibert III, who has gained the kingdom of his deceased father Dagobert I. The bishop urges him to act such that he will be remembered for his good works.

No. 1.4

Date: post 639

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Sigibert III

Desiderius extravagantly thanks King Sigibert III for the letter; this could be 2.9 above. The bishop is anxious that he find the same favour and familiarity with Sigibert as he had with his father Dagobert and petitions the new king to that effect. He also apologizes for not greeting him in person, as he was forced to return to the city before seeing him. He would like the bearer to return with news of the king's welfare.

No. 2.4

Date: 640-647

Sender: Constantius and Dado

Recipient: Desiderius

Bishops Constantius of Albi and Dado of Rouen announce to Desiderius that Godenus, who was supposed to appear before the counts Cariato and Maurinus, had failed to show but had sought a postponement, which was announced by Flavian. Because of the weight

of Desiderius' authority, they request a copy of the letter he had earlier written to Godenus. (This all has to do with the case of Bobila and the villa of Rotovollo, cf. 2.13 from Abbo to Desiderius and 2.11 from Paul to Desiderius)

No. 2.6

Date: 640-655

Sender: Eligius

Recipient: Desiderius

In this letter of *amicitia*, Bishop Eligius of Noyon commends himself to Desiderius' prayers and sends a greeting both in his own name and also that of Bishop Dado of Rouen. Eligius reminds Desiderius that the distance separating them is insignificant if they are joined in Christ for all eternity. Dado (see 2.4 and 1.10, this collection) composed an extant *vita Eligii* which has been transmitted along with a letter to Chrodobert of Paris/Tours, see below under "letters in *vitae* and other texts."

No. 2.3

Date: 641-655

Sender: Aviulfus

Recipient: Desiderius

Bishop Aviulfus (of Valence, according to W. Arndt) has received Desiderius' cleric from Spain and as requested, is sending him on to Desiderius with this letter. He apologizes for a past fault or mistake and urges Desiderius to apply his influence in some unknown situation that he would like to see resolved. At the end he asks for the bishop's prayers.

No. 1.10

Date: 641-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Dado

After much time has passed, Desiderius takes the opportunity to renew his friendship with Bishop Dado of Rouen. He reminds him of their youth together at the court of King Chlothar II, along with Dado's special friend Eligius, now bishop of Noyon (cf. 2.6). He tells Dado that his two brothers (Rusticus and Syagrius) have died and been replaced in his affections by Bishops Paul of Verdun and Sulpicius of Bourges.

No. 2.17

Date: c.644

Sender: Sigibert III

Recipient: Desiderius

King Sigibert III has learned from others around him that Desiderius has been summoned by his metropolitan Vulfoleud, bishop of Bourges, to a synod taking place on the Kalends of September. (Vulfoleud was successor to Sulpicius.) The king is annoyed that he has not been informed about this ahead of time and indeed is still unaware of where it is to be held. Consequently he forbids Desiderius to attend and most emphatically states that any future councils will only take place if he is given advance notice. The king was not just being temperamental: the root of the problem lies in the fact that while Cahors was under Sigibert's jurisdiction, Bourges was under that of his brother Clovis II.

No. 1.6

Date: post 644-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Grimoald

Desiderius writes to Grimoald, mayor of the Austrasian palace, and requests that those things be put into effect that his messenger declares verbally. He expresses the wish that Grimoald embrace him with the same favour as did his father Pippin and commends himself and his church to him. He also asks Grimoald about the well-being of his brothers and of the king, and that he pass on whatever news there might be in that region. Note that Grimoald appears in two poetic epistles from Importunus of Paris to Chrodobert of

Tours, see *Additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium* above and discussion in Chapter 3, Section 5.

No. 1.2

Date: post 644-655

Sender: Desiderius

Recipient: Grimoald

Desiderius commends the bearer of the letter, Abbot Lupus, to Grimoald mayor of the palace, who in turn is to take him under his wing and present him before King Sigibert III. The abbot also has a verbal message for Grimoald and Desiderius hopes that after hearing this, that the former will uphold and protect the monastery that Desiderius recently had built in honour of St. Amandus. (According to W. Gundlach, this is the same monastery mentioned in the *vita Desiderii* that was afterwards called St. Gery.) Desiderius also asks after the health of the king, as well as that of Grimoald and his brothers.

epistolae Viennenses spuriae

No. 1

Date: 140?-155?

Sender: Pope Pius I

Recipient: Verus

Verus has been sent from Rome to Vienne, “the senatorial city,” to spread the Gospel and the pope would like to be informed of the success of this mission. He comments that the house that the woman Euprepia has donated to the Roman Christian poor is being used to celebrate Mass. Pius also informs the bishop that many have died and been martyred, including Timothy, Marcus, Paul, and Peter, and he encourages Verus to imitate the example of these. He passes on the greetings of Soter and Eleutherus and mentions that one Cherintus has turned many from the faith.

No. 2

Date: 140?-155?

Sender: Pope Pius I

Recipient: Justus

A certain Athalus has brought a letter carrying news of recent martyrdoms in Vienne and the pope rejoices over this and congratulates Justus on having been elected bishop after the death of Verus. Pius advises the bishop on how best to fulfill his duties: care for the bodies of the martyred saints; visit those in prison and urge them on to martyrdom themselves; protect and minister to his people. Certain brothers and colleagues of the pope, including the priest Pastor, have also departed recently and it has been revealed to him that he, Pius, will soon follow them. He entreats Justus not to forget him and to greet his brothers in the Lord that are in Vienne.

No. 3

Date: 189-c.199

Sender: Pope Victor I

Recipient: Dionysius

The pope instructs the bishop of Vienne that Easter is not to be celebrated on the 14th of the month when the Jews celebrate Passover, but between the 15th and the 21st. Anyone who keeps this custom with the Jews is simply celebrating in the shadows and under the law instead of in sincerity and truth. Neither Peter nor Paul taught that Easter was to be celebrated on the Jewish holiday. Dionysius is to instruct the Gallic priests regarding this matter.

No. 4

Date: 189-c.199

Sender: Pope Victor I

Recipient: Paracoda

Victor I advises Paracoda, successor to Dionysius, that the Eastern churches are sundered from the Western in their understanding of when Easter should be celebrated. He urges him to follow the instruction of the apostles and teach that it is to be celebrated from the 15th of the month.

No. 5

Date: 251-253

Sender: Pope Cornelius

Recipient: Lupicinus

Pope Cornelius announces to Archbishop Lupicinus of Vienne that a Prefect has been established at Rome with a view to oppressing the Christians; they are permitted to hold Masses neither publicly nor in the catacombs. Many brothers have received the martyr's crown, and the pope admonishes and exhorts all those believing in Christ to persevere in their faith.

No. 6

Date: 314-335

Sender: Pope Silvester I

Recipient: all bishops in Gaul and the Seven Provinces

This letter is an almost word for word copy of the first paragraph of Letter 1 of the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae*, which is from Pope Zosimus to Bishop Patroclus of Arles. The pope's opening remarks stress that any cleric setting out from any part of Gaul must obtain a letter of introduction from the bishop. (Here the bishop named is Paschasius of Vienne). The rest of the Arles letter and its list of privileges is excluded here and the letter ends rather abruptly with a list of the seven provinces that are under the control of Vienne.

No. 7

Date: 1 Oct. 417

Sender: Pope Zosimus

Recipient: Simplicius

The pope advises the bishop of Vienne that out of reverence for St. Trophimus he has given jurisdiction over three provinces (Narbonne, Arles, Vienne) to the bishop of Arles, whose legate arrived before that of Vienne. He is now convinced, however, of the justice of Simplicius' position with the result that he is allowing him to claim those cities nearest to Vienne until the matter can be investigated further. In the *PL*, this letter is attributed to Zosimus but is labelled "*auctor incertus*." Letter 5 of the *epistolae Arelatenses*, which was written by Zosimus only two days before this one and severely rebukes both Simplicius and Proculus of Narbonne for trying to ordain bishops in their own provinces, adds to this uncertainty.

No. 8

Date: 6 Jan. 450

Sender: Pope Leo I

Recipient: the bishops of Gaul and the province of Vienne

Compelled by the presumption of Bishop Hilarius of Arles, the pope advises the bishops throughout Gaul and the province of Vienne that he has transferred some of the privileges and rights of antiquity that used to belong to Arles over to the bishop of Vienne. Hilarius has been removed from his position. Although this letter is corroborated by Letters 13 and 18 of the Arles collection, there is no firm consensus on whether it is spurious or genuine. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 170 n.125, considers it problematic. The *PL* includes it as number 10 in Leo's collection without comment.

No. 9

Date: 498-514

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: all the bishops of Gaul

Pope Symmachus announces to all the bishops throughout Gaul that he is confirming what Pope Leo I decreed concerning the controversy that has arisen between the bishops of Vienne and Arles. This letter in its entirety can be found in the *PL* as Letter 8 and is as well in the Arles collection as number 25. In the Vienne collection here, however, it appears as a fragment with several small interpolations.

No. 10

Date: 28 Feb. 679 or 680

Sender: Pope Agatho

Recipient: Edictus

The pope reports to the archbishop of Vienne through the priest Donatus, who is returning to Vienne from the Roman synod, that at the recent council held at Constantinople the bishop of Antioch (Macharius, according to Gundlach) was condemned for his errors and Theophanius ordained in his place. He orders this to be announced to all the bishops of Gaul.

No. 11

Date: 701-707

Sender: Pope John VI or VII

Recipient: Eoaldus

Eoaldus had asked the pope about the correct way to celebrate mass and the pope advises that although much diversity has arisen in this matter, with some following Rome and others Jerusalem, Ephesus, or Alexandria, that Vienne ought to follow Rome where its spiritual legacy originated. He concedes to him the use of the pallium and sends a few hairs from the head of St. Paul, whose disciple Crescens first preached the Gospel to Vienne.

No. 12

Date: 708-715

Sender: Pope Constantinus I

Recipient: Eoaldus

The bishop has sent his archdeacon to seek relics of the saints and Pope Constantinus I sends him the following: pieces of the sponge and clothing of the Lord, the chains of the apostles, part of a bronze pot of the Maccabees, and some of the ashes of St. John the Baptist. The pope asks that these be venerated as if they had come directly from St. Peter.

No. 13

Date: 31 Aug. 719

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: Austrobertus

The pope thanks the archbishop of Vienne for a letter updating him on the state of the Gallic Church and also for the gifts to be distributed among wanderers and captives. He commends Boniface, missionary to the Frisians, to the bishop and asks him to promote his cause with the Frankish leaders. Finally, the pope reinforces the authority of the church of Vienne as laid down by his predecessors.

No. 14

Date: 7 Mar. 742

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Austrobertus

The pope replies to the bishop of Vienne, who through his priest Clement has reported that the churches of Vienne province are in a turbulent condition. He assures the bishop that such was predicted in the Gospels and that it can't be worse than the Lombards who are devastating Italy. Priests who have paid for their ordination are to be punished severely but retained, if they are useful; if not, they are to be stripped of their ordination. The pope sends the acts of the Roman synod held on March 22 – presumably the previous year – and a dalmatica – a garment wore by the deacons of the Roman church – for the

bishop's use. This letter is in the *PL* in almost identical format.

No. 15

Date: 24 Jun. 752-757

Sender: Pope Stephen II

Recipient: Proculus

The pope sends his condolences to the bishop of Vienne regarding the unspecified afflictions the Viennese church is experiencing and remarks that this church is particularly dear to the Roman senate. He adds that he has written to the princes of the Franks to restore to the church the metropolitan power it held of old and that with papal authority he himself will protect the bishop's ancient and confirmed privileges.

No. 16

Date: 757-767

Sender: Pope Paul I

Recipient: Charles

Proculus bishop of Vienne had complained to the pope about the deprivation and diminishment of his church and the pope has responded by writing this letter to King Charles, requesting that he restore the church of Vienne to its ancient glory, when it was the "most renowned among the renowned." Paul reminds the king that Vienne merited to have Crescens, an intimate of the apostles, as its evangelist and that its privileges were conceded to it by the great Fathers of the church. A problem arises here in finding a "King Charles" to fit to the reign of Pope Paul I, who was in office from 757 to 767. Charles Martel died in 741 and Charlemagne did not begin to rule until 768 when Pippin the Short died.

No. 17

Date: 1 Jan. 775

Sender: Pope Hadrian I

Recipient: Bertericus

The pope announces to the bishop of Vienne that at an Easter meeting in Rome with Charles, king of the Franks, he was successful in persuading the king to swear before the body of St. Peter that he would restore their ancient privileges to all the metropolitan churches in Francia, even those whose previous honour had been lost for many decades through the deprivations of the barbarians. Each metropolitan centre is to maintain those cities subject to it which were assigned by Pope Leo I. The pope makes an interesting remark about the bestowal of the pallium.: he does not want a metropolitan church to suffer any encroachment of its rights if one of its suffragans has received the pallium at the request of the Franks. We are reminded of Gregory the Great sending the pallium to Syagrius of Autun in 597 at the request of Brunhild, to the indignation of other bishoprics such as Vienne. This letter is number 55 in Hadrian's collection in the *PL*.

No. 18

Date: 15 Jul. 800-814

Sender: Pope Leo III

Recipient: Volferius

Charlemagne has asked the pope to confirm the privileges of the bishops of Gaul as they were in the days of the pope's predecessors. The bishop of Vienne has also requested this for his own bishopric. Leo complies with these petitions, remarking that Tarentaise has meanwhile achieved a certain precedence but that Alpes Graiae has come under Viennese sovereignty. He adds that those in Rome have endured much from impious and wicked men. This letter is not in the *PL* with Leo's other letters.

No. 19

Date: 5 Dec. 817

Sender: Pope Paschal I

Recipient: Bernardus

Pope Paschal I rejoices that Bernardus has taken up the governance of the church of Vienne. He concedes to him the use of the pallium, which he has requested, and inasmuch as the Viennese church was founded by the apostles in the ancient manner, he confirms all the privileges that were granted to the church of Vienne by his predecessors.

No. 20

Date: 8 Jul. 824

Sender: Pope Eugenius II

Recipient: Bernardus

The pope replies to the bishop of Vienne after the latter had questioned him about a certain issue. The specific issue is unknown, but Eugenius has searched the papal archives and has found a ruling on the matter in the Justinianic lawcode whose prescription has a forty-year lifespan. He clarifies the matter further in an appended list which is now lost. The pope also confirms Vienne's privileges that were conferred on it by his predecessors. The pope makes an interesting reference to St. Peter as *claviger*, a word meaning "key-bearer" which to my knowledge is found nowhere else in these collections. This letter is in the *PL* in virtually identical form.

No. 21

Date: 861

Sender: Pope Nicolaus I

Recipient: Adonis

The pope replies to a letter from the bishop of Vienne, who has requested the use of the pallium. The pope is disappointed in the bishop's application, for while he discussed his understanding of the four synods, he overlooked the fifth and sixth, and there will be no pallium issued until Adonis corrects this. The pope also informs the bishop that a synod was recently held in Rome and he sends him the Acts from it, asking him to disseminate them to his fellow archbishops and urge his suffragan bishops to observe them. The letter

may be a fragment as it ends abruptly. It stands as number 15 in the *PL* under the letters of Nicolaus I.

No. 22

13 Jun. 867

Sender: Pope Nicolaus I

Recipient: Adonis

The bishop has sought confirmation of his privileges from the pope and the latter complies with this request by confirming everything that his predecessors, especially Pope Leo, bestowed on the bishop's predecessors. The bishop of Vienne is to be papal vicar and have jurisdiction over the Seven Provinces, convoking synods and dispensing ecclesiastical law. Grenoble, Valence, Die, Alba Vivarium, Geneva, Tarentaise, and Maurienne are to remain permanently under its control now and in the future. Tarentaise especially, although its bishop may keep some rights that he has gathered for himself, must take care not to overstep his bounds but must humbly be subject to Vienne in all things. This letter's editor, W. Gundlach, clearly believes it to be a forgery. It is printed in the MGH as though taken from some other letter with interpolations, but without explanation as to a possible source. The letter is in the *PL*, however, with other letters of Pope Nicolaus I.

No. 23

Date: 18 Jun. 908

Sender: Pope Sergius III

Recipient: Alexander

The pope confirms to the archbishop all the rights that the church of Vienne has possessed in the past and possesses in the present, in particular those pertaining to its jurisdiction over the Seven Provinces supposedly conferred by Pope Silvester in the 4th century. (The letter outlining the latter, however, is taken directly from a letter to the bishop of Arles – see notes to Letter 6 of this collection). The writer also mentions a

decree of King Guntram which made the church of Maurienne with all its estates subject to the church of Vienne, a reference which W. Gundlach designates as spurious. Gundlach also contends that the first and last paragraphs of this letter are taken from another privilege written by Sergius III.

No. 24

Date: 11 May 1048-1054

Sender: Pope Leo IX

Recipient: Leodegar

The pope confirms and corroborates the privileges bestowed on the Viennese church by Pope Sylvester (see note to previous letter). All bishops throughout the Seven Provinces are to obey the bishop of Vienne, and everything conferred on it by the emperors of the Romans and the kings of the Franks and of Burgundy, are to remain unchanged. This letter is number 108 in the *PL*.

No. 25

Date: 1077

Sender: Pope Gregory VII

Recipient: the clergy and people of the Viennese church

In this fragmentary text, the pope initially bewails the heresy of simony that tears through the church of God like a wild beast. He then contrasts such to the election of Warmundus to the bishopric, whose ordination followed the canons in every way. He encourages his addressees to obey the bishop and venerate the apostolic see. Finally, he confirms all the privileges held by the church of Vienne from antiquity to the present and entreats them to aid their bishop in recovering the Abbey of St. Barnard, which has been violently removed from it.

No. 26

Date: 6 Mar. 1077

Sender: Pope Gregory VII

Recipient: Warmundus

As is customary with each new bishop, Warmundus has entreated the pope to confirm the privileges of his church. Gregory does so, establishing Vienne's jurisdiction over the Seven Provinces, the seven cities of Grenoble, Valence, Die, Alba/Viviers, Tarentaise, Geneva, and Maurienne, and other abbeys, monasteries, and churches. All are to remain undisturbed in the possession of Vienne on pain of excommunication.

No. 27

Date: 1088

Sender: Pope Urban II

Recipient: the bishops of churches subject to Vienne

The church of Vienne has apparently been without a bishop for some years and the newly-elected pope urges its suffragan bishops to make sure one is elected as soon as possible. For without a shepherd to guard it, intones the pope, its goods and possessions will be plundered by irreligious people. Urban forbids anyone to remove anything whatever, adding that everything belonging to Vienne from antiquity is to remain undisturbed and undiminished. This letter is in the *PL*.

No. 28

Date: 1089

Sender: Pope Urban II

Recipient: the people of Vienne

At the pope's urging (see Letter 27), a new unnamed archbishop has been elected in Vienne. Because of depredations to the church's possessions that took place when it was without a pastor – as the pope warned would happen – the bishop has taken a trip to Rome to entreat Urban to restore them to Vienne. The pope is impressed with the qualities and virtues of the new archbishop and confirms that everything conferred on

Vienne by his predecessors are to remain inviolate. He is especially concerned that the goods that Artaldus/Ataldus seized be restored in their entirety. The latter is a *praepositus*, i.e. a cleric or layman in charge of church property. This letter is in the *PL*.

No. 29

Date: 1099-1118

Sender: Pope Paschal II

Recipient: Guido

Calling on the power given to St. Peter of binding and loosing, the pope confirms the privileges of the Viennese church in answer to the bishop's petition. The seven cities listed in Letter 26 are to remain under its jurisdiction and the abbeys both inside and outside the city are also to be overseen by Guido. All estates, donations and other possessions are to remain inviolate in perpetuity. The pope makes an interesting analysis of the use and meaning of the pallium, whose function, he states, is to aid humility and justice. When angry, the wearer is to pass judgment as though not angry; but when tranquil, he must not bypass severity when needed. According to Gundlach, this letter is a mixture of material from the *regesta* of either Urban II or Paschal II together with an unknown source. Note: Bishop Guido became Pope Callixtus II in 1119.

No. 30

Date: 25 Feb. 1120

Sender: Callixtus II

Recipient: Peter the deacon and the canons and clerics of Vienne

The pope confirms the privileges of the Viennese church as they were under his predecessors. In this decretal some castles are added and the pope declares that a cemetery attached to the church of St. Mauricius is to be free to all strangers who wish to be buried there, unless they have been excommunicated. The archbishop of Vienne is permitted to have a cross borne before him when he travels throughout his province and no layman may seize any clerical dwellings that are inside the church cloister or assault

anyone living there. Anyone knowingly contravening these privileges and not responding to repeated warnings will be excommunicated.

epistolae Wisigoticae

No. 11

Date: 610-612

Sender: Bulgar

Recipient: a Frankish bishop

The count of Septimania, the old Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis that had been under the control of the Visigoths since 462, has been upset by a rumour that Brunhild and her grandson Theuderic are stirring up the Avars “in their usual fashion” against the latter’s brother Theudebert. It appears that Theudebert has been notified of the plot and wishes to form an alliance with King Gundemar of the Visigoths; the count wishes to know what stage has been reached in the negotiations so he can put funds aside for war and declare public Rogations. According to Fredegar, Brunhild had attempted to sow enmity between the brothers ever since she was evicted from Theudebert’s court and joined Theuderic’s in 599. It was perhaps natural that she should call on the Avars, or Huns, as shortly after her son Childebert’s death in 596 they had attacked the Franks and she had been forced to buy them off (cf. *HL* 4.11 and *PLRE*, Vol. 3b, s.v. Bulgar).

No. 12

Date: 610-612

Sender: Bulgar

Recipient: a Frankish bishop

Bulgar again contacts a certain bishop of Francia regarding the alliance between the Goths and Theudebert II. After praising the merits of the bishop, he informs him that part of the agreement between his lord King Gundemar and Theudebert involves a sum of money to be given to the Franks. He, Bulgar, has sent a letter to Theudebert through Bishop Verus of Rodez notifying the king that he is holding this money in trust and that

trustworthy legates should be sent to collect it. When this is done, the alliance between them will immediately take effect. He wishes the bishop to whom he is writing to inform him at his earliest convenience if Theudebert has yet received his letter, if he is having success against the Avars, and how things are proceeding in general with regard to the proposed alliance. If the Avars are getting the better of him, Gundemar will order public fasts in Septimania so that God may see fit to shatter the army of the enemy.

No. 13

Date: 610-612

Sender: Bulgar

Recipient: a Frankish bishop

Bulgar has received a report that the legates sent by King Gundemar to Theudebert were captured and imprisoned by Brunhild and Theuderic when they got to Irupinas, a town in the bishop's territory. This immediately casts the bishop under suspicion and Bulgar gives it to him with both barrels. In retaliation, the count has taken Iubiniacus and Cornelianus – now Juvenac and Corneilhan in southern France – which had been given to Brunhild many years ago by Reccared. Brunhild wants these *civitates* back and is sending messengers to Bulgar to that effect which he is passing on to Gundemar. The count stresses, however, that he will do nothing until the legates have been freed and allowed to travel to their destination.

epistolae Aviti Viennensis

No. 46

Date: 508

Sender: Avitus

Recipient: Clovis I

The bishop of Vienne writes a congratulatory letter to the king of the Franks on the occasion of his baptism on Christmas Day of an unspecified year. (D. Shanzer and I. Wood argue for 508 in *Avitus of Vienne*, 367-8). He implies that the king had flirted with

Arianism before choosing Catholicism (this is reinforced by the fact that the king's sister Lenteildis converted from Arianism to Catholicism), and compares him to the Greek emperor, likely a reference to Anastasius. The bishop finds only one thing wanting: he wishes Clovis to take the seed of faith to the pagans in the remoter areas of his kingdom. The letter breaks off in mid-sentence shortly after this statement.

epistolae Caesarii Arelatensis

No. 1

Date: 513

Sender: Ennodius

Recipient: Caesarius

Ennodius, who became bishop of Pavia in 514, writes to Caesarius to congratulate him on his successful appearance before King Theoderic the Ostrogoth. (According to the *vita Caesarii*, Bk. 1.36-38, the king had him taken to Ravenna on trumped-up charges, but was quickly won over by the bishop's holy demeanor and praiseworthy speech and actions). He praises Caesarius' talents and virtues and commends himself to his prayers.

No. 2

Date: 502-518

Sender: Avitus

Recipient: Caesarius

Avitus of Vienne introduces bishop Maximianus (Trier?), bearer of the letter, to Caesarius. Maximianus is looking for help with an eye condition; the implication is that there are better eye doctors in the south. The letter is actually undated, but must have been written between Caesarius' succession in 502 and Avitus' death in 518. Although Arles and Vienne were involved in a territorial dispute at the time, we get no sense of this in the letter. This letter is No. 11 in *epistolae Aviti Viennensis*.

No. 3

Date: 506

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: Ruricius

Caesarius rebukes Ruricius of Limoges for neither attending the Council of Agde in September 506 nor sending a representative. Ruricius was a senior bishop who was 30 years older than Caesarius, which is probably why the latter did not invoke the usual punishment for non-attendance: excommunication until the next synod. Caesarius also informs Ruricius that there is to be a synod at Toulouse in the coming year, an assembly that never took place due to the Battle of Vouillé and the death of Alaric II.

No. 4

Date: 505 or 507

Sender: Ruricius

Recipient: Caesarius

The bishop of Limoges does not seem overly offended by the previous letter, but at the same time defends himself vigorously. He states that he was unable to attend the synod due to illness and reminds Caesarius how tired he was when they met up in Bordeaux. (Caesarius was exiled there in 505/6, *Vita* 1.21-4). He could not have borne the heat, he maintains, if he had come. Further, he complains mildly that he has been informed rather late about the next synod and should perhaps have been told in advance due to his rank and age, even if his city does not carry as much prestige as some.

No. 5

Date: 502-507

Sender: Ruricius

Recipient: Caesarius

The bishop's grandson Parthenius is visiting Arles and Ruricius takes the opportunity to connect with Caesarius and commend his grandson to him. This was the same Parthenius

whose slave Caesarius cured in *vita* 1.49. He became the teacher of Gogo, who praises him in *epistolae Austrasicae* 16. In one part of the letter Ruricius expresses the sentiment that a letter bestows gain on the recipient without detracting from the sender. The bishop discussed this same notion in identical terms to Namatius, his daughter-in-law's father, in a letter dated 485-495 (Book 2.5).

No. 6

Date: 6 Nov. 513

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: the bishops of Gaul

Caesarius had travelled to Rome in 513 and discussed the state of Gaul with the pope (*vita* 1.42). As documented in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* (of which this letter is No. 25), there was an ongoing dispute over boundaries due to the Visigothic conquest of Provence and Avitus of Vienne had taken control over some dioceses that had belonged to Arles as of Pope Leo's settlement of 450. Here the pope announces to all the bishops of Gaul that at the request of Caesarius he has confirmed what Pope Leo I determined concerning this controversy. In other words, the bishop of Vienne will claim under his jurisdiction the towns of Valence, Tarentaise, Geneva, and Grenoble and the bishop of Arles will take the other parishes and the rest of the dioceses as his privilege and honour for the time being. The pope emphasizes that everyone is to be content with the honour attributed to him. Caesarius probably did not receive *de facto* control over the disputed territory until 523 when an Ostrogothic army annexed it. The controversy between Arles and Vienne must have taken on interesting overtones from Caesarius' accession to the bishopric in 502 until Avitus' death in 518, as two of the most powerful bishops ever to reign in Gaul battled it out for supremacy.

No. 7a

Date: 513

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: Pope Symmachus

This petition, no. 26 in the Arles collection, is a *deperditum*, known only by its copy at the end of the pope's reply (7b). It contains four violations of church law that Caesarius wishes the pope to condemn. These problems continued to be condemned right down to the time of Gregory of Great, which shows the limited success of the papal response.

They are:

1. that the pope prohibit the alienation of any estates from churches in Gaul, with the sole exception of monasteries.
2. that he not permit laymen who have functioned as paid employees of the republic to be ordained unless legitimately prepared ahead of time.
3. that he prohibit widows who have for some time used the religious habit, as well as nuns dwelling for a long time in monasteries, either to marry willingly or to be snatched away unwilling.
4. that no one be permitted to gain the episcopate through ambition, bribery or hired support; clerics and citizens must not presume to embark on a course of action leading to the episcopate without the acquaintance of the metropolitan and his thorough consent.

The bishop asks for these things to be sanctified by the pope both in his own province and throughout all Gaul.

No. 7b

Date: 6 Nov. 513

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: Caesarius

The pope commends Caesarius, agrees that his requests (as above 7a) are reasonable and within canon law, and in answer to his petition decrees the following:

1. that possessions given or left to churches and under their arbitration must not be alienated, unless temporarily to deserving persons in cases of necessity.
2. that those who wish to achieve the episcopate by bribery or the promise of goods must be thwarted or suffer canonical penalties, nor must those desiring to become bishops hire paid supporters, intimidate others into supporting them, or offer gifts for support.
3. that laymen must not be allowed to enter the episcopate lightly and without going through the steps laid out for such office.
4. those who try to marry God's virgins, be they willing or no, are to be prosecuted; those who seize and abduct widows and virgins are to be excommunicated.
5. it is not permitted to widows who have remained for a long time in religious practice to marry; the same goes for virgins who have spent many years in a monastery.

Transgressors of these edicts are to be excommunicated. The pope orders the bishop of Arles to make these statutes known to all the bishops throughout Gaul and concedes to him the use of the pallium, the first time this garment had been bestowed on any bishop of Gaul. No other bishopric received a pallium until 599, when Gregory the Great conceded it to Brunhild's protégé Syagrius of Autun.

No. 8a

Date: 513 or 514

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: Pope Symmachus

This letter, like 7a, is known only from a copy appended to the pope's response. Caesarius has sent the abbot Egidius and the notary Messianus to petition the pope regarding the obstinacy of the bishop of Aix-en-Provence. This city was the civic capital of Narbonne II, but its ecclesiastical power had been taken over by Arles in the 5th

century. Caesarius wants the pope to confirm all his own privileges and to particularly warn the recalcitrant bishop that he must show up when ordered to attend a synod or an ordination.

No. 8b

Date: 11 Jun. 514

Sender: Pope Symmachus

Recipient: Caesarius

The pope confirms the privileges of Arles as requested above (8a), specifically over the bishop of Aix-en-Provence in Narbonne II, and adds that Caesarius should be in charge of all ecclesiastical matters that arise in Gaul and Septimania, thus designating him as papal vicar in those regions. He is to summon synods and resolve controversies, referring only the most difficult and persistent cases to the apostolic see. Further, if anyone sets out for Rome on church business, he must obtain a letter of recommendation from the bishop of Arles. If the bishop of Aix refuses to come when summoned, he must face ecclesiastical discipline.

No. 9

Date: 23 Jul. 514

Sender: Pope Hormisdas

Recipient: Caesarius

This letter, in which Pope Hormisdas announces his election to Caesarius, exists only as a fragment of two or three lines. Besides here in the Caesarius collection, it is also found as a note appended to Letter 29 in the *epistolae Arelatenses*.

No. 10

Date: 11 Sep. 515

Sender: Pope Hormisdas

Recipient: Caesarius

As his collected letters indicate, Pope Hormisdas was keenly interested in putting an end to the Acacian schism and he seems to have had only a minimal interest in the provinces of the West. After sending a delegation to Constantinople in 515 under the leadership of Ennodius of Pavia in an effort to resolve contentious issues, he sent this letter to Caesarius, updating him and the other Gallic bishops on the results of that embassy. The pope is optimistic: many bishops of Dardania, Illyria, and Scythia have now turned their backs on their past errors and have agreed to obey the rulings of the apostolic see. This involves anathematizing Eutyches, Nestorius, Dioscurus of Alexandria, and their followers. He warns the Gallic bishops not to become polluted by the same heresies and commends to them his defensor Urbanus, through whom he would like a response.

No. 11

Date: 3 Feb. 528

Sender: Pope Felix IV

Recipient: Caesarius

Caesarius had asked the pope for corroboration of Canon 2 of the Council of Arles of 524, which required a year of probation from lay candidates to a bishopric before being ordained. This letter and letter 19 indicate that there was trouble enforcing this canon. Felix agrees that probation is a good idea for many reasons, not the least of which is that some have had the audacity to revert to secular life after their ordination. He confirms that there are to be no sudden promotions; instead, a bishop is to be elected by common consent with every observation of the canons.

No. 12

Date: 7 Apr. 534

Sender: Pope John II

Recipient: the bishops of Gaul

The case of Bishop Contumeliosus of Riez was the subject of the Council of Marseille, which Caesarius convened in May 533. Contumeliosus was charged with illicit sexual

relations – probably with his wife – and alienating church property. He confessed and agreed to a period of penance, but there was no agreement on how long this should be or how long he should be suspended from office. For this reason Caesarius asked the pope to resolve the issue. John replied with three letters. This one to the bishops advises that Contumeliosus is to be removed from office and placed in a monastery to do penance. Meanwhile, a Visitor is to be supplied to take over the church administration, taking care that he pursues only those matters that pertain to the sacred mysteries and makes no changes in clergy or property.

No. 13

Date: 6 Apr. 534

Sender: Pope John II

Recipient: the clergy of the church of Riez

This is the second of the three letters sent by the pope in the case of Contumeliosus of Riez. It informs the church of Riez that their bishop has been deprived of his office, but they are to be provided with the services of a Visitor. Caesarius will supervise the appointment of this person and take care of all the details. The pope wishes to make it clear to the people of Riez that they should obey the Visitor only in matters pertaining to the sacred mysteries; he will have nothing to do with church property, nor will any clergy be promoted until a proper bishop is elected. It becomes clear from this letter that the bishop has lost his office permanently, a move that reflects Caesarius' position on the matter (see 14b). Besides this, he must issue a sworn statement in which he confesses his error.

No. 14a

Date: Apr. 534

Sender: Pope John II

Recipient: Caesarius

This is the third and final letter dealing with the wrongdoing of Contumeliosus of Riez. The pope thanks the bishop of Arles for his report of what happened and informs him that he has suspended Contumeliosus from office. He asks Caesarius to designate a Visitor in his place until a new bishop can be obtained and asks him to be sure to reveal the identity of any bishop committing such crimes in order to deter others. Finally, he appends a number of canons and decretals that cover such a situation. They are:

- a decretal from Pope Siricius to Himerius bishop of Tarragona (385).
- the Canons of the Apostles, nos. 25 and 29 (late 4th C. Greek)
- Council of Neocaesarea, canon 95 (314/9)
- Council of Antioch, canons 4 and 15 (341)

No. 14b

Date: Apr. 534

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: the bishops of Gaul

Caesarius sends a copy of Pope John's letter 14a, with its list of canons, to his suffragan bishops with instructions to copy it and pass it on to other bishops. He also added an addendum of further canons and a commentary of his own. The canons are as follows:

- Council of Nicaea, canon 2 (325)
- Council of Valence, canon 4 (374)
- Council of Orléans, canon 9 (511)
- Council of Orange, canon 22 (441)
- Council of Epaone, canon 22 (517)

In his lengthy commentary, the bishop of Arles expresses his own views on the case. He admonishes the Gallican bishops lest, stirred up by a misplaced pity, they consider those canons more savage than fair in which clerics taken in adultery are forbidden restoration to their sees. Although these lose temporal beatitude, he says, they can achieve eternal

beatitude through penance; further, an example must be set that deters others from such wicked deeds. At the end, he adds what seems to be some incongruous comments: it is permissible to offer gifts on behalf of the soul of one who was executed by the secular authorities; and violators of tombs who survive the secular justice system are to be excommunicated.

No. 15

Date: 18 Jul. 535

Sender: Pope Agapitus

Recipient: Caesarius

The bishop of Arles had asked the new pope for permission to alienate a piece of church property to help the poor, probably the sisters of Caesarius' monastery headed by his sister Caesaria. Agapitus refuses this request and quotes from decisions made at the Council of Rome IV (502) under Pope Symmachus. For Caesarius' convenience, the pope has extracted and appended certain pertinent passages from the canons of the council. Note: Letter 18 to Pope Hormisdas contains a similar request dated twenty years earlier for permission to alienate church property on behalf of the nuns of Arles. At that time Hormisdas gave his assent.

No. 16

Date: 18 Jul 535

Sender: Pope Agapitus

Recipient: Caesarius

After a short time in exile, Contumeliosus moved back to Riez, resumed his episcopal see, recovered his property, and appealed his case to the pope, who had been informed wrongly by his Defensor that Caesarius had agreed to this. The pope has agreed to hear the case a second time but insists that Contumeliosus be suspended from management of the ecclesiastical patrimony and the celebration of Mass until the conclusion of the new inquiry. However, the bishop is to be provided with adequate financial support. The pope

actually mildly rebukes Caesarius for reducing Contumeliosus' personal privileges prior to the second inquiry. Again, he appends a copy of the relevant canons, a list now lost.

No. 17

Date: 6 May 538

Sender: Pope Vigilius

Recipient: Caesarius

Theudebert I of Austrasia had asked Pope Vigilius through his legate, the Illustrious Modericus, by what penance it might be possible for a man to purge his fault of undertaking a marriage with his brother's wife. The pope here passes the inquiry over to Caesarius of Arles to handle, reminding him that the expiation of such a sin would take a great deal of heartfelt penance, but that the administration of that penance is best supervised by the local bishops. Further, the man and wife should take care to live separately, lest they "return to their vomit" and resume wrongful cohabitation. According to Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 118, the king's request for papal intervention in this circumstance is unusual and likely signals serious disagreement between the king and his bishops and/or an interest in cultivating relations with the pope with a view to regional supremacy. It must be noted that Gundlach's summary of this letter in the MGH misleadingly states that Theudebert is inquiring about his own marriage to his brother's wife. Firstly, the Latin does not say this; secondly, there is no evidence that Theudebert I, son of Theuderic I and grandson of Clovis I, ever had a brother.

No. 18

Date: 514-523

Sender: Pope Hormisdas

Recipient: Caesarius

The pope replies to a request from Caesarius that the "choruses of women devoted to God" set up by the bishop in the church of Arles be granted immunity from any interference by Caesarius' successors. Hormisdas grants this in the legal language of a

decretal, adding the proviso that bishops and clerics be allowed to visit the nunnery in appropriate fashion. Caesarius has also requested that the pope confirm a one-time sale of church property and a donation that the bishop made on behalf of his monastery of women. Although Caesarius agrees this is not to happen in the future, the pope seems a little uneasy with this; he nonetheless confirms it as requested. (Twenty years later Pope Agapitus refused a similar request, see Letter 15). The letter was signed by seven of Caesarius' suffragan bishops and kept with other documents for the protection of the monastery after Caesarius' death. It has survived only as an appendix to a ninth-century copy of Caesarius' *regula virginum*.

No. 19

Date: 6 Nov. 527

Sender: Caesarius and other bishops

Recipient: Agroecius

The bishop of Antibes was accused at the council of Carpentras (527) of ordaining a cleric who had not completed a year of probation, a rule established by the council Arles in 524. Because he did not show up to defend his actions, the bishops took a serious view of the matter and decided he was guilty of a deliberate transgression, particularly since in 524 Agroecius' representative had signed the canons of the council along with all the rest of the bishops. He was therefore sent this letter forbidding him to celebrate Mass for a year. There is no record of his reaction to this sentence.

No. 20

Date: 25 Jan. 531

Sender: Pope Boniface II

Recipient: Caesarius

According to Klingshirn, (*Life, Testament, Letters*, 124), the council of Orange was Caesarius' most important theological achievement. Its canons "steered a middle course between an extreme Augustinian emphasis on grace and predestination and an extreme

Pelagian emphasis on free will.” (In other words, is faith a product of our own will, or is it a gift of God’s grace?) The canons of the council were not able put the argument to rest, however, and Caesarius felt constrained to write to Pope Felix IV and Boniface, who was then still a cardinal, for support. By the time the letter reached Rome, Felix had died and the papal succession was disputed between Boniface and Dioscurus. Boniface (II) finally won but in the process the answer to Caesarius’ letters was delayed. At the end of the day, the pope wholeheartedly supported Caesarius’ views and dismissed any Pelagian leanings as false.

No. 21

Date: 506-508

Sender: Caesarius

Recipient: Caesaria the Elder

This letter that Caesarius wrote to his sister, whom he placed at the head of his community of ascetic women (see Letter 18), was used as a Rule by the nuns until they received his *regula virginum*. It retained its importance even then: Caesaria the Younger quoted parts of it in her letter to Richild and Radegund (cf. *epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 11) and others cited it up until the ninth century. The bishop draws on the church fathers to offer advice regarding the giving of alms and the dangers of fraternizing with outsiders. He also warns against elegant clothing, appearances in public, and the dispersal of wealth to wealthy relatives. His most stringent warnings and his greatest attention focus on the preservation of chastity.

registrum Gregorii

Note: for the sake of clarity, I am using for this collection the numbering system of John R. C. Martyn, English translator of the *registrum*, which differs in many cases from that in the MGH.

No. 1.45

Date: Jun. 591

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius and Theodore

This is the first letter Gregory wrote to anyone in Francia since becoming pope in September 590. The recipients are addressed as “bishops of Marseilles,” although in actuality Virgilius is bishop of Arles. Jews travelling on business in parts of Marseilles have brought to Gregory’s attention that many of their people living in that district had been forcibly baptized. The pope does not berate those responsible for such deeds, but gently admonishes them to draw people of this sort to convert to Christianity by the overpowering sweetness of their preaching; otherwise, those baptized by force will immediately return to their old ways.

No. 3.33

Date: Apr. 593

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Dynamius

The pope announces to Dynamius that he has received the 400 Gallican *solidi* he has forwarded from the revenues of the Church patrimony in the Marseilles district; the pope is courteous enough not to mention that the Gallican *solidi* are useless in Italy (cf. 6.10). In return, Gregory sends a small cross containing relics. In the stem, some pieces of St. Peter’s chains have been inserted, and in the four parts around the cross, pieces of the gridiron of St. Lawrence. The pope ties these neatly to their proposed function: the chains will free Dynamius’ neck from sin, and the gridiron is to inflame his mind with love for the Lord. This is the same Dynamius who was Rector of Provence and who corresponded with Venantius Fortunatus and others two decades earlier. (cf. *epistolae Austrasicae*. 12 and 17, *Venantii Fortunati opera poetica* 6.9 and 6.10).

No. 5.31

Date: 15 Apr. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: tenants of Roman estates in Gaul

The pope is writing to the tenants of his estates that belong to the Roman patrimony in Gaul. These appear to be Romans, as Gregory speaks to them regarding their behaviour, which must be above reproach as they live “among crowds of foreigners.” The pope’s plan to send his priest Candidus to oversee them and collect revenues has been delayed by the winter; meanwhile, he instructs them to take orders from the patrician Arigius, ruler of the province of Marseilles, until Candidus arrives. Note that Gregory has decided to place his own agent in Gaul after Dynamius has stepped down, rather than rely on Gallic personnel to oversee the papal estates. See also 6.6.

No. 5.58

Date: 12 Aug. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius

The pope responds favourably to a request from the bishop of Arles for the pallium and the vicariate of the apostolic see. At the same he bewails the reports he has heard that simony is rampant throughout the Gallic church and that laymen are being promoted precipitately to holy orders. He wishes the bishop of Arles to urge King Childebert to drive out such sins from his kingdom. (The pope’s arguments against simony also appear verbatim in his letters to bishops in Greece per Martyn, *Letters of Gregory the Great*, 393, n. 252). Meanwhile, any bishops travelling to foreign lands must obtain a letter of recommendation from Virgilius, who also has the authority to call synods when needed.

No. 5.59

Date: 12 Aug. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: all Gallic bishops

This letter accompanied the previous one. It informs the bishops under the rule of Childebert II that the pope has appointed Virgilius bishop of Arles as his vicar in Gaul. They are to obey his authority, attend any synods he may convoke, and obtain a letter of recommendation from him when they desire to travel to other lands. The pope emphasizes that he has instructed Virgilius that the heresy of simony is to be entirely eradicated and to this end the letter sent to the bishop of Arles is to be read in their presence.

No. 5.60

Date: 15 Aug. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Childebert II

The pope replies affirmatively to Childebert's letter of support for Virgilius and the privileges assigned to Arles. As in the previous two letters Gregory bemoans the report that while their bishops lie dying, certain laymen are being tonsured and leaping onto the newly-vacated throne. With consummate skill in tailoring a situation to fit his correspondent's thought world, the pope compares this situation to Childebert appointing as army commander a man who has no experience as a soldier. He also exhorts the king to ban the heresy of simony from his kingdom.

No. 6.5

Date: Sep. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

This letter forms a pair with the next one to Childebert and is the fulfillment of the pope's promise of April 595 (5.31) to send his priest Candidus to oversee the Roman patrimony in Gaul. This is Gregory's first letter to Brunhild. He praises her son and the education she has provided for him, and urges her to lend her support to Candidus.

No. 6.6

Date: Sep. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Childebert II

Gregory commends to the king the priest Candidus, bearer of the letter and new governor of the Roman patrimony. He remarks that he has learnt that Dynamius is no longer able to fulfill this position. (According to the *PLRE*, Vol. 3a, Dynamius likely died around this time). He praises Childebert as a Catholic, as opposed to an Arian, ruler and sends him as a relic a key of St. Peter in which filings from the apostle's chains are enclosed. He assures the king that this relic, hung around his neck, will protect him from evil.

No. 6.10

Date: Sep. 595

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Candidus

This letter accompanied the previous two borne by Candidus, the new governor of the Roman patrimony, and contains instructions for spending the revenues collected from it. As Gallic *solidi* cannot be used in Italy, Candidus is to purchase both clothing for the poor and a number of English boys of seventeen or eighteen years old for service in monasteries. A priest was to accompany them to Italy and baptize any of them who threatened to die en route. Gregory likely planned to use these boys, once trained, to return to England and facilitate his mission, and their purchase may lie behind the story of Gregory and the fair-haired boys in the Roman slave market.

No. 6.50

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Palladius

The priest Leuparic has carried a letter to the pope on behalf of the bishop of Saintes, who has built a church with fourteen altars in honour of saints Peter, Paul, Laurence, and Pancras. Palladius wishes four of the altars to be dedicated with relics of these saints, and Gregory supplies them as requested. He urges that they be received with reverence and preserved with care, and that those serving the altars not lack sustenance.

No. 6.51

Date: 23 Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Theuderic II and Theudebert II

This is the first of the mission letters. King Childebert II died late in 595 and the pope commends Augustine, leader of the missionaries and bearer of this letter, to his two young sons Theuderic and Theudebert, who were ruling in his stead with their grandmother Brunhild likely acting as regent. (It is probable that Gregory was updated on political events in Gaul through Candidus, whom, it is to be noted, the pope commends in each letter in the group). Augustine is accompanied by a group of monks and was to pick up other monks along the way as the group approached England. It is difficult to evaluate with any certainty Gregory's remarks that the English desired conversion to Christianity but were neglected by priests *e vicino*. Portions of these letters appear in Bede's *HE*.

No. 6.52

Date: 23 Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Pelagius, Serenus, Aetherius

The salutation of this letter greets the bishops Pelagius of Tours and Serenus of Marseilles, while its first sentence salutes Aetherius of Lyons. Likely it was to be given to each in turn, as they were some of the first cities Augustine and his following would encounter. (The missionary group travelled from Italy by boat and entered Gaul at Marseilles to begin their journey north). The pope commends the missionaries and

Candidus to the bishops, asks for their support, and assures them that Augustine will provide a full account of their mission.

No. 6.53

Date: 23 Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: the servants of our Lord

This is a letter of encouragement to the monks who accompanied Augustine. The pope urges them not to give up the Lord's work, even though their abbot Augustine is away from them and they are discouraged from the tiresome journey and the tongues of abusive people. This letter was not part of the original bundle of letters sent with the mission as it mentions Augustine's absence. It could have been taken back by the latter when he returned as a newly-made abbot; alternatively, it could have been sent via some other bearer while Augustine was still in Rome. It is not clear why Augustine returned to Italy.

No. 6.54

Date: 23 Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius

The pope commends the missionaries to the bishop of Arles and requests support for their mission. Following that he commends Candidus and the Roman *patrimoniolum* to Virgilius and suggests that with his help something could be done to help the poor, pointing out rather acidly that the patrimony's revenues collected by the bishop's predecessor were still being held in Arles and had never been restored to the Roman church.

No. 6.55

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Desiderius of Vienne and Syagrius of Autun

Again, the pope commends Augustine and his fellow monks, along with Candidus and the Roman patrimony, to these bishops. We can only speculate why Gregory chose to group certain cities together with a common letter, like Vienne and Autun here, and Tours, Marseilles, and Lyons in 6.52, while others received an individual letter.

No. 6.56

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Protasius

The pope praises the good works and devotion of the bishop of Aix-en-Provence, about which he has learned from the report of Augustine. Gregory has also become aware, probably from the same source, that Protasius was formerly a steward in the church of Arles and he exhorts the bishop to put pressure on Virgilius, who is wrongfully hoarding the taxes owed to the Roman patrimony. Like some others, this letter could not have gone with the initial batch of introductory letters but must have accompanied Augustine on his second trip to Gaul, this time as abbot. It therefore belongs with 6.53, 6.57, and 6.59 and should be dated perhaps several months later.

No. 6.57

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Abbot Stephen of Lérins

This letter is also one of those prompted by Augustine's early report to Gregory, which evidently praised the vigilance of the abbot of Lérins. The pope encourages his addressee in the protection of those God has placed under his care and thanks him for the gift of spoons and plates for the use of the poor. Like 6.53, 6.56, and 6.59, this letter should be dated later than July 596, as it was carried by Augustine on his second trip from Rome to

Gaul. Why did Augustine make an early return trip to Rome? There is no evidence in the letters that he got “cold feet” and fled as Martyn believes. Bede states that it was the monks who got cold feet and sent their leader back (*HE* 23). The political situation in Gaul may have had something to do with this, see comments to Letter 6.58, immediately below. Alternatively, when we consider the valuable report Augustine took back to Gregory, and the use the pope was able to make of this information, the “flight” to Rome was possibly a reconnaissance trip that was built into the mission plan from the beginning.

No. 6.58

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

Although dated the same, this letter does not belong with the mission bundle, but was sent separately via Brunhild’s priest Leuparic, who had brought the queen’s letter to Gregory. Brunhild had asked for relics of Sts. Peter and Paul and the pope sends these with his reply. He admonishes her to make sure they are put in place with due honour and that those entrusted with their care are not afflicted with burdens or want so that the relics suffer neglect. The year 596 was a difficult one for Brunhild. Her son Childebert had died and his minor sons Theudebert and Theuderic had no sooner inherited his kingdom than their cousin Chlothar, with his mother Fredegund, attacked and did severe damage to their army. We should not be surprised therefore that Brunhild chose this time to request relics from the pope and when Fredegund died the next year (597) Brunhild must have thought that God was indeed on her side.

No. 6.59

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Arigius, patrician of Gaul

This letter is another sent with Augustine on his second trip to Gaul as it mentions both the “report” of the latter and that he is the letter’s bearer; it too should be dated later than July 596 along with 6.53, 6.57, and 6.56. The pope praises Arigius’ piety, asks him for support for his mission, and commends to him his priest Candidus, governor of the patrimony of the Roman church. Arigius was ruler of Marseilles and had been temporarily rector of the Gallic papal estates. He also appears in 5.31 and 9.212.

No. 6.60

Date: Jul. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

This letter, one of those carried by Augustine on his initial journey, praises the queen’s piety, commends the missionaries to her, and requests her protection and support for them. The pope informs her that the English desire to receive the Christian faith but have been ignored by the priests in their area. We have no way of knowing exactly which priests Gregory means – Ireland? Wales? Gaul itself? Or is this simply a rhetorical flourish? The pope also commends to Brunhild Candidus, administrator of the Roman patrimony in Gaul.

No. 7.12

Date: Oct. 596

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Respecta

The patrician Dynamius and his wife Aureliana have endowed the monastery of St. Cassian in Marseilles and joined it with another one under their control. (This is unlikely to be the same Dynamius who was Rector of Provence and administrator of the papal estates in Gaul until *c.* 595, see *PLRE*, Vol. 3a). They have requested certain privileges for it which the pope grants, at the same time naming Respecta as the abbess of the convent. The nuns have the right to choose a new abbess upon the death of the existing

one, and no bishops or ecclesiastics are permitted to have jurisdiction over the monastery's property or management. The nuns are to be subject only to the authority of the Holy See. The bishop, however, must supply the nuns with pastoral care and punish any who have violated the canons.

No. 7.21

Date: May 597

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Candidus

A man named Dominicus has come to Gregory because his four brothers were ransomed from captivity by some Jews of Narbonne who then kept them as slaves. The pope considers it a travesty that Christians are in servitude to Jews and he sends the man to Candidus with this letter, ordering him to look carefully into the matter. If what the man says is true, and if none of the brothers have the funds to purchase the desired freedom, then Candidus is to ransom them himself.

No. 7.33

Date: Jul. 597

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Dynamius and Aureliana

The pope replies to a letter from Dynamius and Aureliana (cf. 7.12) in which they have requested a book of instruction. Gregory praises their Christian zeal and encourages them to pray, read, and do good deeds, as well as to be on their guard against the wiles of the devil. He advises them that he does not have ready the sort of book they requested but will send one at a later date. Again, this Dynamius is not to be confused with the former Rector of Provence.

No. 8.4

Date: Sep. 597

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

The queen has requested that Gregory bestow the pallium on her favourite bishop, Syagrius of Autun. (To gain a proper appreciation of the audacity of this request, we must keep in mind that no bishopric other than Arles had been conceded this honour since Pope Symmachus first granted it to Caesarius almost a century previously). The pope seizes on the queen's request as a bargaining chip in his efforts to effect Gallic ecclesiastical reform. He assures Brunhild that he and the Byzantine emperor are equally eager for this concession, but that a number of impediments stand in the way, including the fact that the bearer of her letter "was implicated in the error of the schismatics." (This likely means he failed some verbal test of orthodoxy given him upon arrival). Moreover, protocol required that the pallium be requested by the one receiving it, after which the merits of the case are examined. The pallium therefore will go to Candidus, who will bestow it on Syagrius when he properly requests it along with support from other bishops, and proves himself worthy under examination. The rest of the letter is devoted to the reforms the pope would like to see: simony eradicated, no premature promotion of the laity into clerical orders, and pagan practices in the populace punished by the application of Roman law. Finally, Gregory sends to Candidus a book the queen has requested.

No. 9.158

Date: May-Jun. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Desiderius

Pancratius, formerly serving in a priestly office in Desiderius' church in Vienne, has converted to the monastic life and been made a deacon. Desiderius has called him back to serve in his former position, but Pancratius is loathe to relinquish his new one. He has therefore presented himself in Rome to plead his case with the pope. Gregory sends him back with this letter ordering that he be allowed to remain in the monastery in his chosen way of life.

No. 9.209

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Serenus

Gregory commends to the bishop of Marseilles the abbot Cyriacus, the bearer of the present letter, who is on his way to Syagrius bishop of Autun. The pope adds that it has come to his attention that Serenus had recently smashed some images in his church when he noticed them being adored by members of the populace. Gregory praises the bishop's zeal but takes issue with his actions. Pictures are put there so that the illiterate might read there what they cannot read in books. Serenus therefore should preserve images but at the same time prohibit people from worshipping them. This is not the end of the matter, see 11.10 below.

No. 9.212

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Wantilonus and Arigius

The Gallic patrician Arigius appears in 6.59 and 5.31, while Wantilonus is otherwise unknown. Hilarius, the bearer of the present letter, has fallen afoul of some men through no fault of his own and seeks the protection and patronage of these courtiers. It is possible that this is the same Hilarius who brought the 400 *solidi* to Gregory in 3.33. This would also explain the pope's interest in what appears to be a purely secular matter.

No. 9.213

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

In terms similar to the previous letter, the pope directs his requests for patronage for Hilarius to Queen Brunhild. Again, the pope does not explain his interest in this secular matter and his willingness to write two letters in support of it.

No. 9.214

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

Once again (cf. 8.4) Gregory brings up with Brunhild two of his most pressing concerns regarding the Gallic church: the sudden promotion of laymen to the episcopate, and the sale of clerical offices, i.e. simony. In order to eradicate such evils, the pope urges the queen to command that a synod take place under the auspices of Bishop Syagrius with the pope's most reliable agent, the abbot Cyriacus, in attendance. Gregory remarks that he has sent the pallium to Syagrius as a reward for his aid to the English mission; the garment is to be used in the celebration of Mass. The pope also expresses his amazement that in Gaul Jews are permitted to possess Christians as slaves and he urges her to pass a regulation to deal with this problem.

No. 9.215

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Syagrius

In the years after 574, the Lombards overran some of the territories of the Franks. To compensate for this and obtain the goodwill of Guntram and Childebert II, they agreed to cede to Guntram, among other things, some of the land that belonged to Turin and its bishop. It has now come to Gregory's attention that Ursinicus bishop of Turin is suffering serious prejudice because, contrary to the canons, another bishop has been ordained in his parishes under Frankish rule. The pope strongly urges the bishop of Autun to apply with all due diligence to the kings to have this matter rectified. According to J.R.C. Martyn,

the area in question is the diocese of St. Jean de Maurienne, which was established by King Guntram and given its own bishop. As Guntram died in 592, the problem has taken some years to surface.

No. 9.216

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Theuderic II and Theudebert II

The pope admonishes Brunhild's young grandsons regarding the same concerns as are contained in his letter to her of the same date (9.214). In this letter he reverses the order in which he discusses the two major problems of lay promotion and simony, addressing the latter first. In between he complains in a brief aside that the Church estates are not paying their taxes, a statement that suggests that they are being taken illegally, probably by the kings' agents. At the end, as in the letter to Brunhild, he both urges them to assemble a synod and reproaches them for allowing Jews to possess Christians as slaves. The final paragraph of both letters are identical.

No. 9.217

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius

King Childebert I (d. 558) established a monastery of the Holy Apostles in Arles and petitioned the apostolic see for privileges for its inhabitants (Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, Vol. 2, 681, n. 610). As a result, a letter of confirmation was sent from Gregory's predecessor Vigilius to Virgilius' predecessor Aurelianus. Here the pope repeats the story of the founding of the monastery and emphasizes that its rights must not be disturbed in any way. He adds a copy of Vigilius's letter, now lost. Gregory's language suggests that Virgilius had been interfering in some way that was causing complaints from the monastery.

No. 9.218

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Aurelianus

Gregory consoles Aurelianus after the death of his brother, seemingly through the machinations of his adversaries, although this is not made entirely clear. To help assuage his grief, the pope advises Aurelianus to turn his mind toward works of charity and hospitality with prayers and tears. It is possible that this Aurelianus was related to the household of Dynamius and Aureliana (cf. 7.12 and 7.33). Note: this individual is not the same as the mid-sixth century bishop of Arles of the same name, see previous letter 9.217.

No. 9.219

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Syagrius, Aetherius, Virgilius, Desiderius

In its attempts to address abuses in the Gallic church, this letter seems to be of a piece with 9.214 to Brunhild and 9.216 to her grandsons Theuderic and Theodebert. Gregory admonishes these four leading bishops, whom we have already met above, regarding simony, laymen becoming bishops precipitately through ambition, the cohabitation of clerics with women, and the importance of holding at least one synod annually. This last he commands to be assembled by the letter's recipients with Syagrius and Cyriacus acting as mediators. The acts of the synod are to be collected and reported to Gregory through Cyriacus.

No. 9.220

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Aregius

Aregius bishop of Gap has recently visited Rome where he petitioned the pope for permission for himself and his archdeacon to wear the dalmatica, a garment worn by the pope's deacons in Rome. The bishop left Rome rather abruptly, however, due to an epidemic which was causing the death of many of his people. Gregory commiserates with the bishop's distress but advises him to turn his attention to the living rather than to the dead. He grants the use of the dalmatica, and sends these garments with the faithful Cyriacus. He also urges Aregius to be present at the upcoming synod and advises him that Syagrius is to receive the pallium if and only if he corrects church abuses through the above-noted synod.

No. 9.221

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Desiderius

The pope's church manager, John, had returned to Rome sometime before September 597 and given a report on the situation in Gaul, including the information that Desiderius, bishop of Vienne, desired that the pallium be bestowed on him, a privilege which he claimed was part of ancient custom. It appears that the bishop has now revived that request, probably in the aftermath of Syagrius of Autun receiving that very privilege at the request of Brunhild. As Gregory has had the papal archives checked and found no trace of any bishop of Vienne ever receiving the pallium, he turns down the request, advising the bishop to search the manuscripts of his own church for further evidence. We know that the bishop of Arles had retained sole use of the pallium in Gaul until Gregory sent it to Syagrius and we can only imagine the fury and disappointment of the bishop of Vienne, as he is elbowed out not only by Arles, but now also by Autun.

No. 9.222

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Candidus

The bearer of this letter, the priest Aurelius, has travelled all the way from Gaul to Rome to petition the pope for the position of priest or abbot in an oratory or some other possession of the apostolic see in Gaul. Gregory has granted his request and commends him to the assistance of his agent Candidus for its fulfillment.

No. 9.223

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Syagrius

This is the official letter accompanying the pallium and conferring it on Bishop Syagrius of Autun. Gregory gives as his reason for granting it the aid that the bishop gave to Augustine and the mission to the English. Although the pope had made the privilege contingent upon Syagrius convening a synod to correct abuses in the Gallic church, this seems never to have occurred in spite of the pope's relentless urgings in that direction (cf. 9.219 and 9.220). Along with the pallium, Gregory places the church of Autun second in rank in Gaul after the church of Lyons. This is a clear indication that the centre of church power has shifted north away from Arles.

No. 9.224

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Syagrius

Gregory requests the aid of Syagrius of Autun in bringing to heel two recalcitrant bishops from Italy. The first is a certain Menas who has set out for Gaul but is living a life of such frivolity that he is an embarrassment to the apostolic see. The second is a bishop Theodore from the diocese of Constantius of Milan, who has fled to Gaul to escape discipline. The pope wishes the two to be found and returned to Italy as soon as possible. Theodore did end up undergoing trial in Milan several years later under Constantius' successor Deusdedit (see 13.31, not in this appendix). The fact that these two bishops

considered Gaul an appropriate place to pursue a less than holy lifestyle is an interesting commentary on its reputation in the Italian mind.

No. 9.225

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius and Syagrius

It has come to Gregory's attention that a certain nun by the name of Syagria has been violently reclaimed by her husband and that the above bishops of Arles and Autun have done nothing to come to her aid. Since the woman still wishes to reenter the convent and give over her property to the Church, the pope insists that she have the right to decide what to do with her own possessions after setting aside a suitable portion for her sons. It is curious that these particular two bishops – not at all close geographically – are involved together in this matter, and equally curious that the woman's name is the feminine form of Syagrius' own. She may have been related to him.

No. 9.226

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Asclepiodotus

This letter clearly belongs with 9.212 and 9.213, which are of the same date, and which also ask for the help and patronage of powerful people against the enemies of the bearer, Hilarius. The pope assures Asclepiodotus that he will receive a heavenly reward in return for helping Hilarius. The patrician is also the recipient of 11.43 below.

No. 9.227

Date: Jul. 599

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Theuderic II and Theudebert II

Similarly to that written to Syagrius of Autun of the same date, this letter addresses the woes of Ursinicus of Turin and urges the kings to see that he receives back his bishopric and his goods (see 9.215). Gregory reminds the kings that the prayers of those priests whom they protect will cause them to flourish at the hands of God.

No. 11.9

Date: Oct 600

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Abbot Conon

Gregory instructs the abbot of Lérins and praises his virtues, of which he has learned through a report of Menas, now bishop of Toulon. The latter was one of the subjects of 9.224 whom the pope ordered Syagrius of Autun to find and return to Italy due to frivolous morals but who is now back in favour (cf. 13.5). Gregory also commends the Irish monk Columbanus, to whom he sent a copy of his *regula pastoralis* in 5.17 (not in this inventory), to the good graces of the abbot.

No. 11.10

Date: Oct. 600

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Serenus

Gregory again reproaches Serenus of Marseilles for destroying images (cf. 9.209). It seems that the bishop had doubts about the pope's previous letter on the same subject and had suspected the bearer Cyriacus of tampering with it, a position that has rendered the pope most indignant. The latter reiterates his point that images are the teachers of the illiterate and that people should be encouraged to venerate and even paint them, but taught not to worship them. It has also come to Gregory's attention that Serenus is spending time with evil men and the pope instructs him how to walk the fine line between restraining such with fatherly encouragement and casting off those who will not repent.

No. 11.34

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Desiderius

This is the first of the batch of letters whose main purpose is to commend and introduce the second group of monks sent from Rome to aid Augustine in England. This group was led by Laurence and Mellitus, who became second and third Archbishops of Canterbury respectively after the death of Augustine (see 11.48). Here the pope expresses distress because Desiderius of Vienne is teaching Latin grammar and rhetoric to certain people. The pope will only concede to the bishop those things he is seeking if Desiderius agrees to lay aside his enthusiasm for secular letters. As with Syagrius, the pope clearly wants recipients to earn their privileges, but in this case we are uncertain what Desiderius was seeking. Is it the pallium, a privilege he had requested two years before? (cf. 9.221)

No. 11.38

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius

Gregory is still trying to persuade somebody in Gaul to hold a synod to eradicate simony; here it is Virgilius of Arles' turn to receive admonition in this regard. The pope is also concerned that the bishop correct Serenus of Marseilles, who is receiving corrupt men – specifically a lapsed priest – into his company. (Serenus is the bishop of Marseilles who destroyed the images in his church and received a reprimand from Gregory, cf. 9.209 and 11.10). The pope also commends to Virgilius the monks who are on their way to Augustine.

No. 11.40

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Aetherius

Aetherius of Lyons has demanded certain privileges for his church that he claims are according to ancient custom; in turn, Gregory urges Aetherius to assemble a synod to deal with simony. The bishop cannot be simply seeking primacy since already in 599 Gregory clearly placed Lyons first in Gaul when he conferred the pallium on Syagrius of Autun (9.223). At any rate, since the pope can find nothing in the papal archives to support Aetherius' claims, he orders the bishop to send the applicable documents from the Lyons archives so he can see for himself what should be allowed. As the pope mentions that he has had no success in tracking down the acts and writings of St. Irenaeus (fl. latter half of second century), it is likely that the bishop is basing his claims on the connection of his church with this saint, a martyr who Christianized much of Gaul and who was said to be a bishop of Lyons. (We are reminded of requests for privileges based on similar connections: St. Trophimus for Arles and St. Crescens for Vienne, cf. *passim epistolae Arelatenses* and *epistolae Viennenses*). Gregory also commends the monks travelling through Gaul on their way to Augustine.

No. 11.41

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: various Frankish bishops

The list of bishops includes Menas of Toulon and Serenus of Marseilles whom we have met before, plus five others who appear only in this letter: Lupus of Châlons-sur-Saône, Agilfus of Metz, Simplicius of Paris, Melantius of Rouen, and Licinius of Angers. Gregory commends to them the new group of monks, including the priest Laurence and the abbot Mellitus, who are going to join Augustine. He remarks that due to the great numbers of English being converted, the missionaries in England are unable to carry out the work without reinforcements.

No. 11.42

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Aregius

Once again, Gregory commends the group of monks going to England, this time to the bishop of Gap. At the same time, he expresses joy that Aregius' letters to him have shown that equanimity has returned to the bishop after his time of grieving (cf. 9.220). He urges him to summon a synod to root out simony.

No. 11.43

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Asclepiodatus

Gregory praises this Gallic patrician's good deeds and devotion to the poor and commends to him the priest Candidus, administrator of the patrimony of the Roman church in Gaul. He urges him to be generous to the latter and to continue to attend to the needs of the poor. The pope includes the gift of a relic: a key from the body of St. Peter in which some filings from his chains are enclosed. If Asclepiodatus hangs this around his neck, asserts the pope, it will protect him from every adversity. (Gregory sent the same relic to King Childebert II in 595, see 6.6.) See also 9.226.

No. 11.44

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Aregius

Gregory commends to the bishop of Gap the priest Candidus, administrator of the Roman patrimony in Gaul. (Aregius would have received two letters from the pope dated June 601, this one borne by Candidus, and another (11.42) brought with the second missionary

group.) The pope asks Aregius to support and assist Candidus in his efforts to relieve the poor.

No. 11.45

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Virgilius

Gregory commends to the bishop of Arles Augustine, if he should happen to pay him a visit. He also orders that anything of importance the latter mentions to Virgilius during such a visit ought to be carefully investigated. To our knowledge, no such visit ever took place nor would there be any reason for it, unless a synod was convened that Augustine was invited to attend (see Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory of Great*, 791, n. 247).

No. 11.46

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

As it has come to Gregory's attention that many priests in Brunhild's territories are living shamelessly and wickedly, he seeks her permission to send over a representative to investigate and correct this situation. The pope assures her that the prosperity and success of her grandsons' reigns depend on her willingness to allow and support this move.

No. 11.47

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Theuderic II

The pope commends to King Theuderic II the monks who are travelling through Gaul in order to join Augustine in England. At the same time, he praises the king's piety as

expressed in the latter's letters to him and thanks him for help given to Augustine when the first mission to the English came through Gaul. He urges him to order a synod to deal with simony and vices in priests, thereby assuring himself a successful reign with the protection of God. Interestingly, this is the first time Gregory writes separate letters to the royal brothers. This suggests that he was aware that Brunhild had been driven out of Theudebert's kingdom in Austrasia a couple of years earlier and had teamed up with the younger Theuderic in Burgundy. In reality, the half-brothers continued to work in tandem for many years, as Book 4 of *chronicon Fredegarii* indicates. (See 11.50, Gregory's letter in this batch addressed to Theudebert.)

No. 11.48

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

Gregory thanks Brunhild for the help she gave to Augustine as he set out to convert the English people and commends to her the second group of monks travelling to England under the leadership of Laurence and Mellitus.

No. 11.49

Date: 22 Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

Gregory exhorts Brunhild to order a synod to be assembled to outlaw simony. Once again, although the pope admonished many people about the same matter, no synod ever took place.

No. 11.50

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Theudebert II

See my comments attached to Letter 11.47 regarding Gregory's individual letters to the royal brothers. The pope urges Theudebert II to convene a synod to drive out vice and heretical simony, which he names as the predominant sin in the Gallic churches. He also thanks him for the aid given to Augustine and his party when they set out to convert the English, and commends to him the bearers of this letter, the monks who are going to reinforce Augustine's mission.

No. 11.51

Date: Jun. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Chlothar II

This is the first letter in the *registrum* addressed to King Chlothar, son of Fredegund and Chilperic, cousin of Theudebert and Theuderic, and ruler of Neustria. As with the other rulers, the pope exhorts him to convene a synod against simony and commends to him the monks bearing this letter along with Laurence and Mellitus. Gregory also thanks Chlothar for his assistance to Augustine's mission to the English, although there is no evidence that he had any connection whatever with it.

No. 11.56

Date: 18 Jul. 601

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Mellitus

Gregory instructs Abbot Mellitus, who is on his way to Augustine in England, to advise the latter not to destroy the shrines of pagan idols, but only the idols themselves. Holy water should then be sprinkled inside the temples, altars constructed, and relics placed there. On special days people can feast and celebrate around these with praise and thanks to God as they formerly used to when they sacrificed animals to the devil. In this way

they may be wooed gradually over to the worship of the true God in their customary places of worship. In his letter to Ethelbert (11.37, not in this inventory), the pope exhorts the king to destroy pagan shrines. Did Gregory change his mind regarding these? If so, he must have changed it rather precipitately, as the letter to Ethelbert was written only a month before this one to Mellitus.

No. 13.5

Date: Nov. 602

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Brunhild

This letter to the queen addresses many different topics and concerns. *(a)* Gregory advises Brunhild that in accordance with her petition he has conceded privileges for peace and protection to the church of St. Martin and the convent and hospice of Autun which were founded by her. (The queen's protégé Syagrius died in 600). *(b)* Brunhild's legates Burgoald and Warmaricar have disclosed secret information verbally to the pope regarding peace between the Franks and Byzantium, and he will take care to indicate to her shortly what is to be done. (According to Martyn, *Letters of Gregory the Great*, 829, n. 30, this was in response to threats from the Avars. Byzantium had its own problems: one month after this letter was written, Phocas killed the emperor Maurice and his family in a palace coup, see Fredegar, *Chronicle*, 4.23). *(c)* Menas bishop of Toulon has been found in no way culpable (cf. 9.224 and 11.9). *(d)* Regarding a certain bishop who is too mentally ill to properly carry out his duties, Gregory has written to Aetherius of Lyons (see following letter 13.6) about how to proceed; certainly while he is alive and ill rather than sinful, no other bishop may be consecrated in his place. *(e)* A certain twice-married man is not to be admitted to sacred orders. *(f)* Finally, although Brunhild has agreed that a papal representative may come and convene a synod (cf. 11.46), the pope appears to put this on the back burner at this time.

No. 13.6

Date: Nov. 602

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Aetherius

This is the letter mentioned in 13.5 above that deals with the problem of a mentally ill bishop, who in this case is a suffragan of Lyons. While the bishop is alive and not sin but illness keeps him from performing his duties, no one is to be ordained in his place. If he has times of lucidity, he should petition that another be consecrated, and the church must then support the two of them. If not, a suitable person must be chosen to carry out episcopal duties who will be consecrated bishop when the mentally ill bishop dies; again, the church must support both. Any ordinations during this period of transition must be performed by Aetherius.

No. 13.7

Date: Nov. 602

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Theuderic II

The pope praises Theuderic for aiding his grandmother Brunhild in her efforts to establish peace with Byzantium (see my remarks under 13.5) He assures the king that the legates Burgoald and Warmaricar have made all clear to him in a private meeting and he will do his best to advance those matters that are pleasing to God. Note that the *registrum* contains no similar letter to Theudebert II, half-brother of Theuderic. While this omission could indicate a gap in the collection, it is equally likely that Gregory was aware that the centre of power had shifted with Brunhild away from Theudebert to the court of Theuderic.

No. 13.9

Date: Nov. 602

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Senator

As requested by Brunhild (13.5), Gregory outlines and confirms the privileges attached to the hospice in Autun of which Senator is priest and abbot. No one is to remove or diminish anything conferred on it, now or in the future; abbots are to be elected without simony by the kings with the consent of the monks; no abbot may aspire to the office of bishop; any complaints against the abbot must be examined by the bishop of Autun along with six other bishops. These privileges seem to be in place to protect the monastery and hospice from inroads by the bishop of Autun, which suggests that Brunhild's relationship with the new bishop was not as successful as the one she had with Syagrius.

No. 13.10

Date: Nov. 602

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Talasia

In a letter almost identical to the one previous, Gregory confirms to the abbess the privileges of the convent of St. Mary, founded by Syagrius in Autun under Brunhild's patronage.

No. 13.11

Date: Nov. 602

Sender: Gregory

Recipient: Lupus

In another almost identical letter, Gregory confirms the privileges of the abbey church of St. Martin of Autun, presided over by the priest and abbot Lupus. Like the hospice and the convent, this church was founded by Bishop Syagrius and Brunhild. This batch of letters dated November 602 are the last Gallic letters in the *registrum* before Gregory's death in March 604.

S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae

No. 9

Date: 716-717

Sender: Wynfrith/Boniface

Recipient: Nithardus

Wynfrith, later renamed Boniface, encourages the young man Nithardus to pursue his studies of Holy Scripture. The letter appears to have been written during the time Wynfrith had returned to England after his first missionizing attempt in Frisia. Nithardus must therefore be a Frisian or a Frank, for Wynfrith promises to return and help him with his studies. A poem is attached which contains an acrostic on the name Nithardus.

No. 10

Date: 717

Sender: Wynfrith/Boniface

Recipient: Eadburga

Eadburga, abbess of Thanet, has asked Wynfrith to describe to her the vision of a monk in the monastery of Wenlock who recently died and came to life again. Wynfrith had already heard the story from an Abbess Hildelida, but to get a more accurate account he went to the monk and got the story in his own words. He then recounts to Eadburga the vision, which describes angels and demons scuffling over the souls of those who have recently died and their punishments and rewards. Some people still alive, like Ceolred, king of Mercia, also appear, and their sins revealed. Attached at the end is an unfinished poem.

No. 11

Date: 718

Sender: Daniel

Recipient: all people

The bishop of Winchester gives Wynfrith this general letter of commendation and introduction as he sets out for Rome on his second trip to the continent. He hopes this time to secure the support of Pope Gregory II for his mission to the Germans.

No. 12

Date: 15 May 719

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: Boniface

This is the first time that Wynfrith is called Boniface. The pope commissions him to take the Gospel of Christ to those people “still in the bonds of infidelity.” In addition, Boniface must use the sacramental rites sanctioned by the apostolic see when admitting new Christians to the Church. This is the first reliably genuine correspondence between the papacy and Francia extant in these collections for over 100 years, the last being from Pope Boniface IV to Theuderic II in 613. (This is disregarding three letters in the *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* which exist nowhere else and are highly suspect.)

No. 13

Date: 716-720

Sender: Egburga

Recipient: Boniface

Abbess Egburga reminds Wynfrith of their bonds of affection and the friendship the latter had for her brother Oshere who has died. She is also grieving for her sister Wethburga, who seems to be enclosed in a Roman cell. She begs Wynfrith to pray for her in her sorrow and to send her a holy relic or a letter as a remembrance. At the end one Ealdbeoreth adds greetings.

No. 14

Date: 719-722

Sender: Eangyth and Heaburg/Bugga

Recipient: Boniface

Boniface is back on the Continent. Abbess Eangyth writes to him on behalf of herself and her daughter Heaburg, also called Bugga, thanking him for his letter and outlining all the miseries they face due to poverty, concerns about the people they care for, discord, poor crops, and taxes. Especially distressing to the women is the loss of relatives and friends. Many have died and many others have left for Rome, a pilgrimage they also wish to take. Although many oppose this course of action, the women will act on Boniface's advice on whether they should go or stay. (See Letter 78 for Boniface's opinion on this topic in the mid-740's). They commend to Boniface their relative Denewald, the bearer, who is travelling on to the priest Berhthere.

No. 15

Date: 720-722

Sender: Bugga

Recipient: Boniface

Abbess Bugga congratulates Boniface on the success of his mission: firstly, the pope agreed to sponsor the endeavour; secondly, Rathbod, ruler of the Frisians, was overcome; and thirdly, God sent Boniface a dream of harvest, gathering in sheaves of souls. She has not been able to obtain the book he requested on the sufferings of the martyrs, but will send it as soon as she can; meanwhile, she sends fifty *solidi* and an altar cloth. She looks forward to receiving the sacred writings he promised her and begs him to offer Masses for the soul of a relative.

No. 17

Date: 722-3

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: all German Christians

The pope commends to all German Christians Boniface, to whom he entrusts a two-pronged mission: firstly to convert and baptize those who, ignorant of the true faith, still worship pagan gods, and secondly to correct those who have a form of Christianity but who have wandered away through the snares of the devil. Gregory urges all who encounter Boniface to participate in this task by lending him whatever aid he requires.

No. 18

Date: 722-3

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: Thuringian clergy, monastic orders, and populace

The people of Thuringia have requested that Boniface be ordained as their bishop and the pope invests him with this authority. He outlines to them the privileges and duties of the new bishop, adding the curious stricture that no Africans may be admitted to ecclesiastical orders, as some are Manichaeans and others have often been shown to be rebaptized. Church revenues are to be divided into four parts: one for the bishop, a second for the clergy, a third for the poor, and a fourth set aside for building maintenance.

No. 19

Date: 722-3

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: all Thuringian Christians

The pope commends Boniface to Asulf, Godolaus, Wilareus, Gundhareus, Alvoldus, and all faithful Thuringian Christians. He praises the five men, presumably leaders, for remaining loyal to the Christian faith when pressed by their people to return to the worship of idols.

No. 20

Date: 722-3

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: Charles Martel

The pope commends Boniface, the bearer of this letter, to Charles Martel. He notifies him that Boniface has been consecrated bishop by the Holy See and sent to preach Christ to the German people dwelling east of the Rhine.

No. 21

Date: 722-3

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: the Old Saxons

There is some disagreement over the dating of this letter and as a consequence uncertainty as to its author – Gregory II or Gregory III. (Gregory II died in 731). The writer addresses the Old Saxons, calling upon them to give up the worship of idols made by human hands and instead turn to the one true God who made heaven and earth. He warns them to prevent no one from converting who wishes to. Finally, he commends Boniface, sent to them to learn about their ways and comfort them with the words of the Gospel.

No. 22

Date: 723 or 724

Sender: Charles Martel

Recipient: all people

Charles Martel responds to the pope's letter to him (20) by taking Boniface under his protection and issuing this declaration for the latter to carry with him. This act of patronage has taken place before witnesses, signed by his own hand, and sealed with his ring. Boniface is to be left in peace and may come at any time into Charles' presence to receive redress of any wrongs.

No. 23

Date: 723-725

Sender: Daniel

Recipient: Boniface

The bishop of Winchester suggests to Boniface ways to overcome the resistance of the people he is attempting to convert. He should not argue with their beliefs or anger and offend them by criticism, but should probe their minds with questions so that they may draw their own conclusions about the futility of their pagan superstitions. Why, for example, do Christians possess the lands rich in oil and wine and a superior culture while they are left with lands stiff with cold and few comforts? At the end Daniel asks Boniface to pray for his bodily infirmities.

No. 24

Date: 4 Dec. 724

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: Boniface

Gregory replies to a report from Boniface that the work is proceeding favourably. The pope congratulates him but reminds him that only those who persist to the end will win the crown. He advises Boniface that a certain bishop – likely Gerold of Mainz – who is trying to reap where he has not sown will be kept in check by Charles Martel, and that he, the pope, has written letters regarding his mission to the Thuringians and the people of Germany (cf. 17, 18, 19, 21, 25).

No. 25

Date: Dec. 724

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: the Thuringians

Commencing with a short creed of Christian belief, Gregory commends their new bishop Boniface to the Thuringian population. He urges them to listen to the latter's instruction, honour him, and obey him in all things while at the same time to love God and receive baptism. They also must cease evildoing and idol worship. Finally, they are to build a house for the bishop to live in and churches where they may pray. This letter outlines what is in effect a mission plan or pact for these people, with responsibilities and benefits on both sides.

No. 26

Date: 22 Nov. 726

Sender: Pope Gregory II

Recipient: Boniface

Boniface has sent his priest Denuald to Rome with an update on his mission work, which is prospering, and some inquiries regarding Christian teaching and pastoral care. These are the highlights of the pope's reply:

1. marriage may be contracted only after the fourth degree of relationship.
2. if a wife cannot fulfill her sexual duty due to disease, her husband may take another wife, but must continue to support the first.
3. only one cup of wine may be placed on the altar when Mass is performed.
4. a child oblate may not later leave the cloister and marry.
5. lepers may participate in the Eucharist but may not eat with healthy persons.
6. it is folly to try to escape an epidemic by flight as no one can escape the hand of God.
7. Boniface should not avoid clerics living immorally, but should both speak and eat with them, persuading them back to the paths of righteousness.

No. 27

Date: c. 725?

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Bugga

Boniface replies to Bugga who has asked his advice on whether she should make a pilgrimage to Rome. Boniface encourages the trip but wants her to wait until the assaults of the Saracens in the Roman area have subsided. This last information he has received from Wiethburga, who is likely the sister of Abbess Egburga mentioned in 13, and who is now living a quiet life as a recluse in Rome. Bugga is to make the necessary preparations for the journey and wait for Wiethburga's invitation. (See 78 for how Boniface's opinion of women's pilgrimages had altered by the 740s). On another note, Boniface cannot yet send the writings Bugga requested (15?) as he has not had time to complete it, a statement that suggests he is copying it for her himself. Finally, he thanks her for the gifts and clothing she sent.

No. 28

Date: c. 732

Sender: Pope Gregory III

Recipient: Boniface

Gregory congratulates Boniface because he has by now converted a great many to faith in Christ. He gives him authority to ordain bishops where the multitude of the faithful is large. The pope also appoints him archbishop and sends him the pallium, instructing him to wear it only when celebrating a solemn mass or when consecrating a bishop. Finally, he answers Boniface's questions as follows:

1. no horses are to be eaten as this is an abominable practice.
2. prayers and offerings for the faithful Christian dead are allowed.
3. no one may marry within the seventh degree of relationship. (cf. 26 which speaks of the fourth degree)
4. a man whose wife has died may marry again only once.
5. Christians may not sell slaves to the heathen for sacrifice.

No. 29

Date: post 732

Sender: Leobgytha

Recipient: Boniface

This English nun asks Boniface to pray for her father Dynne, who died eight years ago, and her mother Aebbe, who is related to Boniface and is now grievously ill. She sends a little gift and asks him to remember the bonds of their affection and kinship. She attaches a little poem – described as “awkward verses” by E. Emerton, translator of the Boniface letters – that contains an invocation of the Trinity on Boniface’s behalf. She mentions that she is studying poetry under Abbess Eadburga of Thanet (cf. 10, 30, 35, 65, 70), and that the abbess continues to study Divine Law.

No. 30

Date: c. 735

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Eadburga

Boniface thanks the abbess of Thanet for the gift of sacred books that she has sent to him, “an exile in Germany.” He requests her prayers so that he may preach effectively.

No. 31

Date: c. 735

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: an unknown spiritual brother

In this short letter, Boniface urges a certain brother to invoke God on his behalf so that the Gospel of Christ might flow unimpeded and become known throughout the people.

No. 32

Date: c. 735

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pethelm

The recipient is the bishop of Whithorn Priory – Candida Casa in Latin – in SW Scotland, founded in 397 and the first Christian settlement north of Hadrian's Wall. Boniface sends as gifts a decorated garment and a coarse towel and asks the bishop whether it is permissible for a man to marry a widow for whose son he has acted as godfather. Boniface declares that he is entirely ignorant of this matter and has seen no discussion of it in any ecclesiastical writings he is aware of.

No. 33

Date: 735

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Nothelm

Boniface begs Nothelm, Archbishop of Canterbury, to forward to him the questions that Augustine sent to Pope Gregory I together with the pope's replies. He is specifically interested whether these condone marriage in the third degree of relationship. He is also concerned about the authenticity of the letter containing the pope's replies as the papal archivists say they have no record of it. Interestingly, scholars are still debating this issue. The purported letter is not to be found in the *registrum Gregorii*, although Bede devotes much space to it in his *HE* (1.27). Boniface also questions the archbishop regarding the man who married his godson's mother (cf. 32).

No. 34

Date: 735

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Duddo

The identity of this abbot, whom Boniface names as his former pupil, is unknown. Describing himself as an old man "worn out by the storms of the German sea," Boniface asks his correspondent to send him any spiritual writings he thinks will be helpful to him, and in particular the part he lacks of a treatise on St. Paul's epistles. His priest Eoban, the bearer, will explain the situation of the woman who married her children's godfather and

he wishes Duddo to send any information he has on why this is a capital crime among the Romans.

No. 35

Date: 735

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Eadburga

Boniface thanks the abbess of Thanet for what she has already done for him and asks her for one further favour: he wishes her to make a copy of the Epistles of St. Peter in gold lettering in order to impress the carnally-minded pagans to whom he is preaching. He sends with the bearer Eoban the materials she will need to accomplish this.

No. 36

Date: 732-746

Sender: Sigebald

Recipient: Boniface

Sigebald, likely abbot of Chertsey Abbey in Surrey, renews his request that he be permitted to consider Boniface his bishop alongside his regular bishop Daniel of Winchester. His previous request for this privilege was sent through the priest Eoban and Sigebald is sure that if Eoban had done his work properly, that Boniface would have granted his petition and sent a consoling letter. Meanwhile, Sigebald has added Boniface's name to the list of those he commemorates during the Mass.

No. 37

Date: 732-746

Sender: unknown

Recipient: unknown

The writer has heard of his friend's grave long-term illness and writes to console him. He advises him that this is the scourging of a loving God, who is preparing his soul to be received into eternal life in heaven.

No. 38

Date: 732-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Aldherius

Boniface asks the abbot to pray for himself, tossed by "the waves of the German tempests," the Germanic peoples who are worshipping idols, and for the brothers who worked with him but who have now died.

No. 40

Date: c. 735-7

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: the monks of Fritzlar

Wigbert, abbot of Boniface's missionary outpost of Fritzlar in northern Hesse, has died. In this letter Boniface arranges the affairs of the monastery and assigns offices and tasks to the remaining brothers. He appoints Tatwin as the new abbot. He urges them to preserve their chastity and abide in brotherly love while they wait for his return from Rome.

No. 41

Date: 737-8

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: his people in Germany

Boniface made a third trip to Rome in 737-8 where Pope Gregory III made him papal legate for Germany. While there he sent this report to the brothers at Fritzlar notifying

them that the pope received him graciously and commanded him to continue his work. He is currently awaiting the decision of a synod but the pope has not yet announced when it is to be held. When it is over he will return home to them.

No. 42

Date: c. 738

Sender: Pope Gregory III

Recipient: all bishops, priests, and abbots

As he left Rome, the pope gave Boniface this letter commending him to the bishops, priests, and abbots of all provinces. In it he urges them to give Boniface every possible assistance, and by no means to forbid any of their ministers to take up with him and help him in his work if they so desire.

No. 43

Date: c. 737

Sender: Pope Gregory III

Recipient: the nobles and people of Germany

This letter was also sent with Boniface when he returned home from Rome. Here the pope addresses both the nobility and the people of Hesse and Thuringia, urging them to abstain from all heathen practices such as fortunetelling, sacrifice to the dead, oracles in groves or by wells, amulets, incantations, and sorcery, all of which, he says, were common in their country. Instead they are to reverence and honour the Lord.

No. 44

Date: c. 737

Sender: Pope Gregory III

Recipient: bishops of the Bavarians and the Alemanni

The pope names these bishops as Wigo, Liudo, Rydolt, Vivilo, and Adda. He appoints Boniface as his vicar over them and urges them to hold a synod twice a year, to take instruction from Boniface as to the form and usage proper to the Catholic Church, and to reject the practices and doctrines of the heathen, of any Britons who show up, and of false priests. In addition, they are to turn the people under them away from sacrifices to the dead.

No. 45

Date: 29 Oct. 739

Sender: Pope Gregory III

Recipient: Boniface

This letter focuses on the aftermath of Boniface's recent visit to Rome. Gregory congratulates Boniface on bringing as many as 100,000 German souls into the bosom of Mother Church and goes on to discuss and approve his organization of the Bavarian church, a topic the two evidently addressed during the visit. He also acknowledges the contribution of Charles Martel (cf. 22). Vivilo, who is one of the bishops addressed in Letter 44, was the sole bishop among the Bavarians when Boniface arrived to assess their situation. (Many of these Germanic peoples were partially Christianized before Boniface's arrival). The latter has now divided the province into four dioceses and ordained three new bishops to join Vivilo. The pope advises that priests of good repute, but ordained by people of unknown background, may be consecrated by their new bishops and carry on while those baptized in the name of the Trinity but in a heathen dialect should be confirmed but need not be rebaptized. Boniface is to hold a council in the Danube valley. Finally, he is not to consider himself at liberty to linger in one place when his work is done, but must move on continually to new regions with his preaching.

No. 46

Date: c. 737

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: all the English

Boniface urges all the people of the stock and race of the Angles to pray for the conversion of the pagan Saxons. He adds that the Saxons themselves acknowledge their kinship ties with them.

No. 47

Date: 737-741

Sender: Torhthelm

Recipient: Boniface

In this letter, possibly a response to Letter 46, the bishop of Leicester praises Boniface's zeal for the conversion of the Saxons, promises to pray for him and remember him in the Mass, and sends a small gift as a token of his affection.

No. 48

Date: late 741

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Grifo

After the death of Charles Martel, Boniface beseeches his son Grifo to aid the servants of God in Thuringia and defend the Christians against the malice of the heathen. This letter raises a number of questions. Grifo was imprisoned in a monastery by his two half-brothers Carloman and Pippin shortly after his father's death. It is unlikely that Boniface was aware of this event, or he would not have sought aid from this youngest son of Charles by his second wife Swanhild. One possibility is that the date of the letter should be changed to 747, when Grifo escaped from the monastery and fled to the neighbourhood of Thuringia with his followers. Another, more likely proposition is that the letter was actually intended for all three surviving sons of Charles Martel; the vocative plural *fili* that occurs twice in this short letter supports this argument.

No. 49

Date: c. 732-742

Sender: Denehard, Lully, and Burchard

Recipient: Cuneburga

Although the letter is ostensibly from all three men, Lully appears to have actually composed it. They tell the abbess that after the death of their relatives they went to Germany and became monks under Boniface and are now his assistants. They ask her to pray for them and to be their patron if they should happen to visit Britain. Lully requests that the abbess send back to him with the bearer of his letter two young freedmen, Begiloc and Man, whom he and his father released when they departed for Rome. A small gift of spices accompanies the letter.

No. 50

Date: Jan.-Mar. 742

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pope Zacharias

Boniface congratulates Zacharias on his accession to the papacy. He informs the pope that he has created three dioceses in the German lands and appointed three bishops to govern them, with sees at Würzburg, Buraburg, and Erfurt; he wishes the pope to confirm these in writing. (cf. Letter 45 where four bishoprics are mentioned; this remains unexplained). Boniface also advises the pope that Carloman, Austrasian mayor of the palace, has asked him to convene a synod to reestablish ecclesiastical discipline, something the Frankish elders say has not happened for over eighty years. (The Council of Rouen, Neustria, was held in 650). He asks the pope's sanction in choosing his successor and in prosecuting cases of immorality among priests and irregular marriage among laymen. Finally, he deplores the excesses of the Kalends of January in Rome, which many of the common people around him seem somehow to be aware of; these include women selling amulets and bracelets, bands of singers parading in the streets, and feasting day and night. All this behaviour, Boniface states, is a reproach and a hindrance to what he is trying to do in Germany, and he would like the pope to prohibit the holiday. Included with the letter are gifts of a warm blanket and some silver and gold.

No. 51

Date: 1 Apr. 743

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

Zacharias addresses Boniface's inquiries from the previous letter. He ratifies the three German bishops as requested, at the same time questioning whether their towns are worthy of having bishops at all due to their insignificance. He encourages the council spearheaded by Carloman, hoping it will be used to divest the church of priests who are violating the canons. He seems mainly concerned about priests committing adultery, entering into a second marriage, and shedding human blood (in battle). The pope absolutely forbids Boniface to choose a successor at this time but he may designate somebody on his deathbed. He agrees that the Kalends of January celebrations are pernicious and notes that they were prohibited by his predecessor Gregory III, a decree which he will hasten to renew. He has also sent letters to Carloman and the three new bishops.

No. 52

Date: 1 Apr. 743

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Witta

As he promised in the previous letter to Boniface, the pope congratulates the newly-ordained Bishop Witta, or Wintan, of Buraburg. He confirms his see and outlines the rights and privileges pertaining to his office.

No. 53

Date: 1 Apr. 743

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Burchard

This letter is identical to the previous one. No copy exists of the letter to the third German bishop.

No. 54

Date: 742

Sender: Gemmulus

Recipient: Boniface

Boniface had sent his messenger Denehard (cf. 49) to Rome to request some of the epistles of Pope Gregory I. Cardinal-Deacon Gemmulus apologizes for the delay in fulfilling this request and explains that he has been afflicted with a painful gout, which condition Denehard will further elaborate to Boniface in person. He sends some fragrant incense called cozumber to be used in the Mass.

No. 56

Date: 743

Sender: Carloman

Recipient: all Christians

Carloman ratifies and publishes the acts of the synods of 742 and 743. The second is mentioned as being held in Liptinas, which is near the monastery today known as Lobbes in Hainault, Belgium. Included as present are: Boniface, Burchard, Reginfried, Wintan, Willibald, Dadanus, Eddanus, and their priests. The highlights of the first synod are as follows:

1. a synod shall be held every year.
2. revenues defrauded from churches must be restored.
3. false priests and adulterous deacons must lose their incomes and perform penance.
4. no cleric is permitted to bear arms, hunt with dogs, or keep hawks and falcons.
5. each bishop must prevent the people from performing pagan rites in the churches in the name of holy martyrs and confessors.

6. after this synod, any clerics or nuns falling into carnal sin shall do penance in prison on bread and water.
7. priests and deacons must not wear cloaks like laymen, but cassocks.

At the second synod, all present confirmed the acts of the first. It was repeated that corrupt clerics are to be expelled and forced to do penance. Carloman requests that because of attacks by surrounding populations, a portion of Church property is to be used for the benefit of the army as a *precarium* – a temporary grant of real estate – with each estate so used being paid one *solidus* annually as a rent to the Church. Churches and monasteries under this contract, however, must not be allowed to suffer deprivation or its lands will immediately revert back. A fine of fifteen *solidi* is introduced for anyone who engages in heathen practices.

No. 57

Date: 22 Jun. 744

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

The pope here replies to a small bundle of letters from Boniface that have not survived. He expresses his pleasure at the desire of Pippin and Carloman to be involved in Boniface's mission and also confirms three archbishops at the latter's request: Grimo of Rouen, Abel of Rheims, and Hartbert of Sens. He states that he has sent each of these a pallium with instructions on its purposes and usage. Finally, he approves the conviction and imprisonment of two false priests, one of whom led people astray through various prophecies and heresies and another who kept a concubine and had two children by her. These are Aldebert and Clemens respectively; see Letter 59.

No. 58

Date: undated

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

Zacharias has received a disturbing and confusing letter from Boniface proposing that instead of three archbishoprics and pallia, he wishes one bestowed on Grimo alone. Here the pope asks for clarification. The issue is never resolved, although it is referred to obliquely in Letter 86 as having to do with some delay in the Frankish princes fulfilling certain promises. Boniface has also taken Zacharias to task for simony on the suspicion that he received payment for the pallia, a charge which the pope refutes with vehemence.. Finally, the pope confirms Boniface as papal vicar not only in Bavaria, but in the whole province of Gaul.

No. 59

Date: 25 Oct. 745

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pope Zacharias

This text contains the part of the acts of the Roman Synod of 745 that pertains to the heretical acts of Aldebert and Clemens mentioned in Letter 57. In the first session, Boniface's messenger Denehard is ceremoniously brought into the room in the Lateran Palace where the synod is assembled and is asked to present his material. He hands over a letter from Boniface complaining that Aldebert, a Gaul, and Clemens, a Scot (Irishman), are still carrying on with their heresies. The former is going so far as to forgive sins and hand out his own fingernails and hair as holy relics, while the latter, among other things, is imposing parts of the Jewish law on Christians. In the second session of the synod, a *vita Aldeberti* and a letter used by him that was apparently written by Jesus and dropped from heaven, are read aloud. Those at the third session are treated to a sacrilegious prayer written by Aldebert that names numerous angels and calls on their aid. The decision of the council is that the two are to be deprived of all priestly functions and penance imposed upon them; Clemens is also to be anathematized along with all who follow his teachings. Note that Boniface had already imposed similar sentences on the two to little or no effect.

No. 60

Date: 31 Oct. 745

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

The pope replies to several letters of Boniface. He grieves over the raids of the heathen – Saxons, Frisians, and Saracens – that are plaguing the mission's efforts and congratulates him on the success of the Frankish synods, the involvement of Pippin and Carloman, and his report at the Roman synod of those scoundrels Adelbert and Clemens. He has sent a copy of their sentence so that every schismatic in Francia may be warned. The false teacher Gewilip of Mainz, according to Boniface now on his way to Rome, will receive short shrift. Zacharias also confirms the establishment of Cologne as Boniface's own metropolitan centre and reminds him to hold a synod annually among the Franks.

No. 61

Date: 31 Oct. 745

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: the people of Gaul

In this circular letter, the pope congratulates everyone throughout the Frankish domains on the synod held under the auspices of Pippin and Carloman, their obedience to the instructions of Boniface, and the resultant casting out of false priests. He urges them to continue along this path, suggesting that they will be victorious over all their enemies if they do so.

No. 62

Date: Oct. 745

Sender: Gemmulus

Recipient: Boniface

Boniface has written to Gemmulus with certain instructions and the cardinal, whose task is apparently to deal with the pope's correspondence, replies (cf. 54). He assures Boniface that at the Roman synod, Adelbert and Clemens and their followers were

anathematized, a fact that Denehard can confirm verbally. The nuns that Boniface sent to Rome with introductions have been cared for by Gemmulus. The cardinal thanks Boniface for the gifts of a silver cup and a piece of cloth and sends him in return a generous quantity of spices and incense, including more cozumber.

No. 63

Date: c. 742-6

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Daniel

Boniface consults his old friend the bishop of Winchester regarding fellowship with false priests who he feels are leading the people into error. These priests appear to be connected with the Frankish court and because of his need to secure and maintain the patronage of the Frankish prince, Boniface is unable to avoid personal contact with these priests. He does, however, refuse to take the Eucharist with such. Boniface also requests that Daniel send him the book containing the six Prophets copied by his teacher Abbot Winbert; in this copy the writing is large and contains no abbreviations, a boon to Boniface's failing eyesight. He consoles Daniel, who has recently become blind, and sends a silk and goat hair bath towel to dry his feet.

No. 64

Date: c. 742-6

Sender: Daniel

Recipient: Boniface

The bishop of Winchester replies to the previous letter, reminding Boniface that the enemy would not have attacked him so vehemently if he didn't recognize the excellence of Boniface's work. He advises him to endure with patience what he cannot correct and gives several reasons for this. Firstly, Scripture forbids the rooting out of tares before the harvest is ripe. Secondly, only by leaving the world altogether would it be possible to avoid all evil men. Thirdly, the apostle Paul declares that he was afflicted by this same

problem and fourthly, Jesus set the example by attending banquets with questionable people. Daniel devotes a great deal of space to Augustine's views on this matter. In *de fide et operibus*, the latter points out that the Church is supposed to consist of good and evil men until the end of the world in the same way that both clean and unclean animals all entered the ark through the front door. Only when those governing the Church are able to exert effective discipline over the unruly, and that without too much disruption, ought this to be addressed. In other words, says Augustine, there is a time for punishing and reforming and a time for dissimulation and tolerance, "so that we need not be slothful under the pretext of being patient, nor cruel under cover of being diligent". As the bishop does not mention the book Boniface requested, we must assume he forgot to include it. (Daniel of Winchester did not please everybody. See Letter 115, in which he is castigated in one individual's vision of the afterlife for not baptizing infants).

No. 65

Date: c. 742-c. 746

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Eadburga

Boniface begs the abbess of Thanet to intercede with the Creator of all things on his behalf. He is beset on every hand, with the treachery of false brothers surpassing the malice of the pagans. He also entreats her to pray that the heathen to whom he is preaching may abandon their idol worship and turn to the Lord.

No. 66

Date: c. 742-c. 746

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: a certain nun N

In similar fashion to the previous letter, Boniface implores a nun designated as "N" to pray for him.

No. 67

Date: c. 742-c. 746

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Leobgytha, Tecla, Cynehild, and their sisters

As in the two previous letters, Boniface requests prayer from the above nuns. According to W. Gundlach, Leobgytha was created abbess of Bishofsheim by Boniface, Tecla was abbess of the monastery he established in Kitzingen, and Cynehild was the superior of a convent in Thuringia. Cynehild was also Lully's aunt and mother of Berthgyth, who was the writer of three letters in this collection, see below 143, 147, and 148.

No. 68

Date: 1 Jul. 746

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

Two religious men in Bavaria, Virgilius and Sedonius, have informed the pope that Boniface is urging them to readminister baptism to certain Christians. Apparently these were formerly baptized by a priest entirely ignorant of Latin and who, during the ceremony, made the mistake of saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Daughter, and the Holy Spirit." But because this was not a case of heresy but a matter of simple ignorance, Zacharias forbids Boniface to give such instructions for rebaptism in the future.

No. 69

Date: c. 732-751

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Aethelbald

Boniface commends his messenger Ceola to the king of the Mercians and begs his aid and protection for him in his travels. He thanks the king for assisting his messengers of a years ago and sends as gifts a hawk, two falcons, two shields, and two lances.

No. 70

Date: c. 745-6

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Eadburga

Lully, Boniface's deacon, sends a letter to the abbess of Thanet through Ceola, likely the same bearer as that to Aethelbald from Boniface in the previous letter. In elaborately affectionate language, the writer requests the abbess' prayers to fortify him against the storms of the world. He sends her a silver pen, some cinnamon, and some styrax – a medicinal gum. He wishes any message she may have for him to be sent back via Ceola.

No. 71

Date: c. 732-746

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Dealwine

In similar language to the previous letter, Lully entreats his former teacher Dealwine to pray for him. He sends what he terms "worthless little gifts" that express in unworthy fashion his heart's devotion, and begs Dealwine to send some works of Aldhelm that treat with prose, meter and rhythm.

No. 72

Date: c. 732-746?

Sender: Ingalice

Recipient: Lully

Disparaging his lack of rhetorical skill, the priest Ingalice replies to a letter of Lully that requested his prayers. He sends four knives made by workmen at his own monastery, a bundle of reed pens, and a towel. He and all his brothers, along with their abbot, request that Lully greet Boniface for them.

No. 73

Date: 745-6

Sender: Boniface and other bishops

Recipient: Aethelbald

In this lengthy letter accompanied by much quoting of Scripture, the bishops attempt to recall to virtue the king of the Mercians. After congratulating his liberal almsgiving and the strong hand with which he has established peace in his kingdom, they broach the subject of his evil way of life that has been reported to them. Firstly, he has not taken a lawful wife, but continually commits the crime of adulterous lust, even going so far as to enter convents and violate the nuns of God. Even the pagans, the bishops say, respect marriage: the Saxons compel an adulterous woman to hang herself and then they hang her seducer over her funeral pyre, or she is scourged through the streets of the villages until dead. And among the Wends, although “the vilest and lowest race of men,” a woman refuses to survive her husband, killing herself after his death so she can be burned upon the pyre with him. Adultery also breeds murder, for if these women, nuns or not, bring forth offspring, they usually kill them to hide their crime. If such behaviour continues among the English, God will punish them as he did in Spain, Provence, and Burgundy by the coming of the Saracens. Moreover, Aethelbald is taking after kings before him and is depriving churches of their property and treating monks with violence and extortion. Osred and Ceolred, who also committed these crimes, were visited with miserable and shameful deaths at an early age. The bishops therefore urge the king to take these warnings to heart, to repent, and to reform his life.

No. 74

Date: 744-7

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Herefrith

Boniface informs the priest Herefrith that he is counting on him to convey the above letter (73) to King Aethelbald and to read its admonitory words to the king, adding his own exhortations as he does so. Herefrith has been chosen for this task because he is known to fear God rather than man and because the king has in times past listened to his warnings. Boniface sends a napkin containing a little incense as a token of his affection.

No. 75

Date: 744-7

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Egbert

Boniface thanks the archbishop of York for the gifts and books. He informs him that he has sent a letter of admonition to King Aethelbald of Mercia (see 73) and has ordered that a copy be shown to Egbert for inspection. He asks the archbishop to send him some treatises of Bede, the fame of whose work seems to be spreading beyond the bounds of Northumbria by this time, about a decade after his death. Meanwhile Boniface sends Egbert some letters of Pope Gregory I which he has obtained from the papal archives. He sends as well an altar cloth and a towel for drying the feet.

No. 76

Date: 744-7

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Huetbert

Boniface sends the abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow a goat's hair blanket and asks him to forward to him some of the treatises of Bede (cf. 75). He also requests that he send him a *clocca*, which is a bell, but which E. Emerton translates as cloak, *cloca*. Vagaries of spelling and scribal error aside, I incline to the former translation. Boniface's statement

that the item will be *grande solacium peregrinationis nostrae*, which seems to have influenced Emerton's choice of terminology, cannot be taken literally as a request for a warm garment, as such a phrase was a commonplace when discussing gifts of all kinds. In Letter 71, for example, Lully requests the works of Aldhelm *ad consolationem peregrinationis meae*.

No. 77

Date: 5 Jan. 747

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

The pope informs Boniface that he has sent copies of certain canons concerning the priestly orders, the salvation of souls, and unlawful marriage to Pippin, the Frankish mayor of the palace, who had urgently requested them. Zacharias has advised Pippin that these are to be read out in a synod and Boniface is to attend this assembly. At the same synod, the cases of the ex-bishops Aldebert, Godalsacius, and Clemens are to be given a final investigation; if they refuse to admit their guilt, the three are to be sent on to the apostolic see for final sentencing. (cf. 60, 62, 59)

No. 78

Date: 747

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Cuthbert

After thanking the Archbishop of Canterbury for his letter, his gifts, and a verbal discourse delivered by the bearer Kunibert, Boniface proceeds to share the outcome of the recent Frankish synod (cf. 77). Highlights are as follows:

1. unity in the Catholic faith and subjection to the Roman Church shall remain inviolate for all time.
2. a synod is to be held every year.

3. metropolitan bishops shall exhort suffragan bishops and keep watch over their conduct.
4. bishops must hold meetings in their own dioceses to urge their priests and abbots to carry out synodal decrees.
5. bishops must make every effort to cleanse their dioceses of pagan rites, divination, and the like.
6. servants of God must not hunt, keep hawks or falcons, go about in the woods with dogs, wear showy or martial dress, or carry arms.

What follows is a rather long justification, complete with much Scriptural backing, for rebuking sin in the lives of others, after which Boniface admonishes Cuthbert to clean up the English church. The parade of women travelling to Rome must cease. Many of them perish and most of the rest lose their virtue; there is, he says, hardly a town in Lombardy or Gaul where there is not a courtesan of English stock. Laymen may not use secular force to take over a monastery and rule there. Foolish superstition in dress – specifically wide, embroidered purple stripes – must cease. The vice of drunkenness is far too common in Cuthbert's parishes and the bishops are joining in instead of prohibiting it. Finally, monks must no longer be forced to labour on royal buildings, a thing unheard of anywhere except in England.

No. 79

Date: end of 747

Sender: unknown

Recipient: Andhunus

An unknown writer urges a certain Andhunus or Andhemus to hasten and send the clothing he was supposed to forward from Frisia. He inquires about Boniface, specifically whether he went to the synod of Pippin of the western provinces, or to the synod of the son of Carloman, ie. Drogo. He commends his bearer Hardleih, who is to be sent back at once with a reply.

No. 80

Date: 1 May 748?

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

The pope responds to a number of inquiries from Boniface. He confirms that one who is baptized without the invocation of the Trinity has not properly received the sacrament and needs to be rebaptized. Boniface has found many false priests who have never been ordained, many of whom are vagrants and tonsured runaway serfs. They know not a word of Latin but carry on their ignorant ministry in the huts of farm labourers and the people protect them. These are to be stripped of their priestly functions and utterly rejected. The schismatic Scot (Irishman) by the name of Sampson must be condemned and expelled. The man Virgilius who is stirring up trouble against Boniface with Duke Odilo of Bavaria has been summoned by Zacharias to be examined by the Holy See. The pope reluctantly allows Boniface, in view of his advancing age, to ordain a representative who can take on responsibility where it is needed. He thanks him for the report of the Frankish synod and commiserates with him that the Franks have not kept their word about giving him the city of Cologne for his see, with the result that he is residing at Mainz instead.

No. 81

Date: 747-9

Sender: Aelfwald

Recipient: Boniface

The king of the East Angles, who according to the Chronicle of Melrose reigned from 747 to 749, greets Boniface and assures him that his instructions regarding the celebration of Mass and frequency of prayers are being carried out. Boniface's name is to be remembered in the seven offices of the monasteries and the earthly possessions of the kingdom placed under his control. Boniface is to be their patron and the names of the dead will be published in public prayers. Finally, he commends his bearer.

No. 82

Date: I May 74i

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: various bishops and priests

It appears that a number of the Frankish bishops have contacted the pope regarding some unknown issues. In a lengthy and florid letter, Zacharias praises their concord and faith and refers them to his representative and legate Archbishop Boniface.

No. 83

Date: I May 748

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Frankish noblemen and people

Having heard of their loyalty and upright way of life, the pope admonishes the Frankish people to obey the Lord's precepts, trust those who declare the orthodox catholic faith, and shun false priests and liars. They are also to honour their priests and ensure that no layman holds a clergyman in service, nor is a cleric to attend games or spend his time hunting or hawking. Further, priests from elsewhere must be first accepted by the bishop via a letter of recommendation and their character approved by the bishop. When a member of the nobility erects a monastery and sets a relative over it as abbot or abbess, the same must be consecrated by the bishop and he or she must be taught in the Scriptures before being allowed to rule. The distribution of tithes and offerings in the churches are to be under the control of the bishop. Finally, no unfit person or one of servile birth may receive priestly orders or govern a church. There is no indication of what prompted this letter, but the letter from the Frankish bishops mentioned in Letter 82 may offer a clue. Perhaps the bishops felt they were losing control over such matters as family monasteries.

No. 84

Date: May 748

Sender: Theophylact

Recipient: Boniface

In extravagantly mannered language, this Greek or Syrian archdeacon of the Roman Church advises Boniface that he has conveyed his report to the pope's ear. The pope approves what Boniface has decided to do in the case of schismatics and heretics and rejoices that the Franks and Gauls are embracing the way of faith. The archdeacon sends a gift of cinnamon, pepper, and incense in a sealed packet.

No. 85

Date: c. 746-7

Sender: Theophylact

Recipient: Boniface

The archdeacon greets Boniface, congratulates him on his success, and assures him of his prayers. He commends to him Lully, Boniface's archdeacon, who has been in Rome and is now returning, and sends as a gift spices, cinnamon, and styrax. (Lully sent some of this medicinal gum to Abbess Eadburga, see Letter 70.) As with the previous letter, the archdeacon's language is so florid as to be nearly unintelligible, a fact Emerton blames on his Eastern origin (*Letters of Saint Boniface*, 135, n. 1). This is the period known as the Byzantine Papacy, when there was a strong Byzantine presence in Italy and the papal curia was dominated by Greeks and Syrians; Pope Zacharias himself came from a Greek family in Calabria.

No. 86

Date: 751

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pope Zacharias

In this letter fragment, Boniface commends his priest Lully to the pope and adds that he is bearing confidential messages both verbally and in writing. He complains that he has been unable to fulfill his mandate to either reform or avoid false priests, as he is forced to

rub shoulders with such at the Frankish court. He does however refuse to take holy communion with them. (cf. Letter 63 on the same topic to Daniel of Winchester and 64, which is Daniel's reply). He discusses archbishops, pallia, and the foot-dragging of the Franks who have not fulfilled their promises (cf. 57 and 58). Finally, he advises the pope that in a wilderness area central to the peoples to whom he has been preaching, he is establishing a monastery for a group of monks living under the Rule of St. Benedict. This is the famous monastery of Fulda.

No. 87

Date: 4 Nov. 751

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

The pope answers all the inquiries, both written and verbal, that Boniface's bearers have brought to his attention, see previous letter. Some highlights:

1. if in securing the favour of the Frankish princes, it is necessary to come into personal contact with false priests, there is no reproach in this. (this is also the view of Daniel of Winchester, see 64).
2. the requested privilege for the new monastery at Fulda is granted. (This request was doubtless contained in the missing part of the previous letter).
3. jackdaws, crows, storks, beavers, hares, and wild horses are not to be eaten by Christians.
4. on the 5th day of Easter, three lamps with oil collected from various church receptacles are to burn continuously for three days in a remote corner of the church to symbolize the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. On Holy Saturday fire is to be taken from these lamps for the consecration of the baptismal water.
5. there is no tradition regarding crystals.
6. animals torn by mad wolves or dogs must be kept apart or buried in a pit so they may not in turn infect others.
7. nuns may wash each other's feet on Holy Thursday – or any day – as men do.

8. if men over the age of 30 who wish to be priests cannot be found, the age may be lowered to 25.
9. bacon fat should not be eaten unless smoked or cooked but if one prefers it raw one should wait until after Easter.
10. the church tax of one *solidus* per casata is absolutely to stand as it is needed for alms and church upkeep.
11. Boniface is to endure persecution from the heathen as long as possible, but if it becomes too much to bear, he may move to another city.
12. Slavs living on Christian land must pay rent.

No. 88

Date: 4 Nov. 751

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

This letter supposedly elevates the city of Mainz to an archbishopric with five cities under its jurisdiction, including Cologne, which was the city first offered to Boniface by the Frankish princes (cf. 60 and 80). It is not accepted as genuine by most scholars, as Mainz did not become an archbishopric until 780. Although an archbishop in name, Boniface never had a fixed see.

No. 89

Date: 4 Nov. 751

Sender: Pope Zacharias

Recipient: Boniface

This is the papal charter for the monastery of Fulda. The monastery is to answer directly to the Apostolic See, and not to be under the control of any other church. No outside priest may even celebrate Mass there except by invitation of the abbot. These rights are to remain in perpetuity and no one must ever dare to violate them.

No. 90

Date: Nov. 751

Sender: Benedict

Recipient: Boniface

Benedict, cardinal of Rome, greets Boniface and commiserates with his afflictions from false priests, evil bishops, and lustful clerics, which information he received from the letter's bearer Lully. He commends himself to his prayers and sends gifts: a bath towel, a face towel, and some frankincense.

No. 91

Date: 746-754

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Egbert

Boniface thanks the archbishop of York for the gifts and asks him to send some of the treatises of Bede, especially the homilies and his commentary on the Book of Proverbs (cf. 75 and 76). He asks his advice regarding a priest who after falling into carnal sin repented and was restored to his office by the Franks. Should he withdraw him, which is the correct procedure according to the canons? If he is withdrawn, people will die without baptism due to the scarcity of priests in that district, and furthermore his withdrawal will give rise to scandal and distrust. With the letter Boniface sends two small casks of wine, and suggests that the archbishop "make a merry day with your brothers."

No. 92

Date: c. 752-4

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Gregory

In mannered language and exaggerated protestations of affection that present a strong contrast to Boniface's straightforward addresses, Lully congratulates his former teacher

Gregory on becoming abbot of Utrecht. The letter is replete with the sentiments of *amicitia*: that no earthly space can divide those who truly love each other; a Vergilian quote: “loves conquers all, let us yield to love;” mutual prayers; Lully is the weak left hand to Gregory’s strong right; the apology for prolixity etc., etc. He exhorts Gregory to keep his mind on eternal rather than earthly things and above all to avoid the company of women, for in this way many a strong man has come to ruin.

No. 93

Date: 753-4

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Fulrad

Although addressed to the abbot of St. Denis, begging him to use his influence with King Pippin on his behalf, the letter switches in the middle and speaks to Pippin directly. This is the first letter in which Pippin is addressed as king, although he assumed the throne in 751. Boniface is concerned that after his death – which he feels is imminent – his various disciples will be dispersed. Those living near the borders are already living a meagre existence and cannot obtain clothing without help. He entreats the king to allow Lully to be appointed as his successor. A curious diagram with Greek lettering follows this letter in the MGH.

No. 94

Date: 723-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Bugga

Boniface consoles the abbess, who after leaving the care of monastic rule for a life of contemplation, has experienced even worse troubles than before. Boniface reminds her that tribulations bring patience and that all soldiers of Christ are beset with temporal problems. He asks for her prayers.

No. 95

Date: 723-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Reginbert

Boniface commends the bearer of the letter to Count Reginbert and asks for his protection and assistance as he passes through the count's territory.

No. 96

Date: 723-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Leobgytha

A priest by the name of Torthat has requested that a certain girl be educated. The abbess of Bischofsheim (cf. 29, 67, 100) is willing to undertake this task if Boniface gives his assent. In this letter Boniface assures her that whatever she sees fit to do in this case has his full approval.

No. 97

Date: 723-755

Sender: Cena

Recipient: Boniface

This unknown woman, possibly an abbess somewhere in Francia (Emerton, *Letters of Saint Boniface*, 151), sends some small gifts to Boniface and asks for his prayers. She says she sees him but seldom, but would like to lend her aid to any of his people who come to her country.

No. 98

Date: undated

Sender: Lully

Recipient: a certain abbess and nun

In his usual flowery language, Lully addresses two unknown women, one an abbess and the other a nun. He describes the dangers of his sea voyage when he left his native Britain and his subsequent arrival in Rome – where almost all of his relations repose in death – and reminds the women of how diligently they cared for him when he became sick with a fever. He includes with the letter an acrostic poem or puzzle and credits Boniface with teaching him this art. (The puzzle is now lost, but has been partially reconstructed by MGH editor Ludwig Traube on the basis of Lully's brief description of it in the body of the letter). Following the letter in the manuscript are some very peculiar items, including a long list of Germanic runes that have been written up by W. Grimm, and a short Latin verse that resembles one found in an eighth-century manuscript containing the work of Origen.

No. 99

Date: c. 732-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Denehard

Boniface commends to the priest a serf named Athalhere, who is about to take a wife. He begs Denehard to treat the serf kindly and aid him as if he were a free man.

No. 100

Date: c. 732-755

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Leobgytha

Lully assures the abbess of Bishopsheim that he has not been neglecting her on purpose, but is preoccupied in dealing with the hostility and deceit of the “sons of iniquity” around him. She is to tell the deacon Gundwin, the letter's bearer, what she lacks, and he will pass that information on to Lully. The abbess' complaints were likely due to a real need.

We are reminded of Boniface's remarks in Letter 93 that many of his disciples lived a meagre existence; moreover, as Boniface's relative (cf. 29), it is not surprising that she depended on his ministrations, and those of his followers, for survival.

No. 101

Date: c. 732-755

Sender: Wigbert

Recipient: the monks of Glastonbury

The priest Wigbert notifies the monks in the abbey of Glastonbury that he has reached his destination in the land of the pagan Hessians and Saxons. He adds that when Boniface heard of his arrival he came a long way to meet him and gave him a warm welcome. Wigbert asks their prayers for the success of his labours, arduous and perilous though they be, and entreats them to let his mother Tetta know of his safe arrival. It sounds like he has no plans to return home.

No. 102

Date: 732-755

Sender: Wigbert

Recipient: unknown

The sender, whom we meet in the previous letter as a new arrival from Glastonbury, is having trouble. In this letter fragment, he urgently requests to be remembered in an unknown friend's prayers as he is beaten down by the hammer of worldly temptation.

No. 103

Date: c. 732-755

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Boniface

The writer of this letter entreats his master Boniface to allow him to continue a while longer in Thuringia in order to further pursue his studies. He confesses that since coming there he has not been able to apply himself as he might due to a number of different maladies. Although the correspondent is designated as “N” in the manuscripts, scholarly consensus designates Lully as the author due to its pompous style. An equally overblown poem is attached at the end with borrowings from Venantius Fortunatus, Aldhelm, and Virgil.

No. 104

Date: 746-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Gemmulus

Boniface greets the Roman cardinal and expresses his sorrow that such a wide distance separates them. He assures him of his affection, quoting several biblical verses as well as St. Augustine, and reminds Gemmulus that they will be together in heaven. For letters from Gemmulus to Boniface, see 54 and 62.

No. 105

Date: 748-755

Sender: Aethelbert II

Recipient: Boniface

When Abbess Bugga returned from her pilgrimage to Rome (cf. 15 and 27), where she spent time visiting the holy shrines with Boniface, she had a meeting with her relative, King Aethelbert II of Kent, and informed him that Boniface had agreed to instruct him and bless him with his prayers. Now the king is taking the opportunity of writing to Boniface, seeing that the latter’s agents are in Britain and will be returning soon to the mainland. The king is sending his own bearer, the monk Ethelun, with them. He also sends gifts: a silver drinking cup lined with gold weighing three and a half pounds, and two woolen cloaks. In return Aethelbert asks Boniface to send him a pair of falcons

capable of catching cranes, as there are very few of such hawks in Kent. (cf. 69, in which Boniface sent two pairs of hunting birds to King Ceola of Mercia).

No. 106

Date: 750-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Optatus

Boniface greets the abbot of Monte Cassino and begs that there be an intimate brotherly love between them that includes mutual prayers for the living plus prayers and Masses for those who have died.

No. 107

Date: 753-755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pippin

Boniface thanks the king for assenting to his petition, likely that mentioned in Letter 93 regarding the fate of his disciples after his death and the appointment of Lully as his successor. He asks permission to attend the upcoming assembly. He also advises that a certain servant Ansfrid, who had fled from Boniface to the king seeking justice, is a liar, and he begs the king not to listen to such falsehoods in future.

No. 108

Date: 754-5?

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pope Stephen II

Boniface introduces himself to the new pope and implores that he might claim the same intimate connection with him that he had with his predecessors, Gregory II and III and Zacharias. He apologizes for his tardiness in addressing him, explaining that he has been

preoccupied with the restoration of churches that have been burned down. He complains that the heathen have pillaged and destroyed over thirty churches in this way.

No. 109

Date: 755

Sender: Boniface

Recipient: Pope Stephen II

Boniface asks the pope to settle a dispute between himself and the bishop of Cologne over the bishopric of Utrecht. The castle of the city and a ruined church was given by the Frankish King Dagobert I (fl. 623-639) to the diocese of Cologne, on the condition that its bishop convert the Frisians. Boniface claims that the bishop of Cologne never did convert the Frisians, who had to wait until Pope Sergius (687-701) sent Willibrord to preach to them, and that this renders Cologne's claim null and void. He will, however, submit himself to the pope's decision.

No. 110

Date: undated

Sender: Lully

Recipient: the priest Fulrad and the Frankish bishops

Without a trace of his usual affected style, Lully complains about the wrong-doings of a certain Willefrid and a priest named Enraed whom the former has brought in without Lully's consent and who refuses to accept his governance. When Lully excommunicated Enraed, Willefrid took up his cause and defended him. Further, the two working in tandem have stolen and sold slaves, livestock, gold, silver, arms, and clothing that the faithful have donated to Lully's churches. Lully lists these in great detail, including the names of the slaves and the values of the stolen goods. He leaves the judgment of the two malefactors to the Frankish bishops and Fulrad, likely the abbot of St. Denis of that name. (cf. 93).

No. 111

Date: end of 755

Sender: Cuthbert

Recipient: Lully and his associates

The archbishop of Canterbury consoles his correspondents upon the death of Boniface. In England there is to be an annual celebration of his martyrdom and he is to be a special patron there along with St. Gregory (Pope Gregory I) and St. Augustine (of Canterbury). He requests that they keep up their mutual prayers now that Boniface is gone, and urges them to aspire diligently to his holy standard. The *vita Bonifatii*, written by his disciple Willibald, tells us that he was ambushed and killed by the inhabitants of East Friesland, along with fifty-two of his companions, at the age of seventy-four.

No. 112

Date: end of 755

Sender: Milred

Recipient: Lully

The bishop of Worcester recalls the visit he made just over a year ago, when he saw Boniface in the flesh. He now sends his condolences on the latter's death and reminds Lully that his mentor is now in heaven as a faithful intercessor for those left behind. Milred entreats Lully to pray for him and instruct him as Boniface used to do, adding that he is sending a fuller version of these thoughts as a verbal message which the bearers will deliver. He includes some unspecified gifts. At the end he states that he is not sending the requested book because Cuthbert of Canterbury has not yet returned it.

No. 113

Date: 755-6

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Denehard and others

Lully instructs Denehard, Eanbert, Winbert, Sigehere, and Sigewald to advise all the faithful, cleric and lay, to pray for a cessation of rains and flooding in Thuringia where he is staying. They are to observe fasts for one week, abstaining from meat and mead, and the monks and nuns are to chant fifty Psalms daily. They are to remember to use the Masses reserved for times of stormy weather. Masses are also to be said for the deceased Bishop Romanus of Meaux and two laymen, Megenfrith and Hraban.

No. 114

Date: c. 755-6

Sender: Cineheard

Recipient: Lully

The bishop of Winchester replies to a letter of Lully who had requested that he pray and celebrate Masses for a number of people who have died. Cineheard sends back to Lully a list of his own people for the same favour. Both emphasized that the people be mentioned by name in these rituals. He also requests any books Lully may be aware of that would be useful to them but that are unknown to them, especially medical books from overseas which are difficult to obtain. The bishop includes gifts of clothing: tunics of both wool and linen, boots, and other items sewn in the style worn in his area.

No. 115

Date: after 757

Sender: unknown

Recipient: unknown

This is a fragmentary account of a vision experienced by an unknown person while lying ill. It is uncertain whether the individual is a man or a woman. The narrator is another unknown person, probably a monk, who is recounting to still another unknown the details of the vision. In the style of Dante over five centuries later, the vision contains well-known people in various stages of torment as well as several different levels of heaven, each more beautiful than the last. Highlights include: immoral queens Cuthberga and

Wiala in the penitential pits; a banished count tortured with a hooked device; Aethelbald, “the royal tyrant” who died in 757, also in the pits; the abbot of the letter’s recipient in the same place, along with a great multitude of children who had died without baptism under Bishop Daniel of Winchester (a close friend of Boniface, see 11, 23, 63, 64). The narrator indicates that souls in the pits would one day be released and that the celebration of Mass was most efficacious for this. He does not dare repeat, however, the punishments due those still living who will not repent of their debaucheries.

No. 116

Date: 764

Sender: Cuthbert

Recipient: Lully

The abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow thanks Lully for the gifts of a piece of silk to wrap Bede’s remains and a coloured cloak for himself. The latter he has donated to the church of St. Paul as an altar cloth. Lully had requested the works of Bede, and Cuthbert and his *pueri* have done their best to copy them out, but cold hands due to the harsh winter have prevented their getting anything done beyond the *vitae* of St. Cuthbert (bishop of Lindisfarne, d. 687). He sends these with two fine pieces of cloth and a cloak. The abbot adds an incident that happened six years earlier: his priest Hunvin was on his way to Rome and was to deliver a present of twenty small knives and an otter-skin cloak to Lully. Unfortunately, Hunvin died when he reached Benevento, and Cuthbert never did find out what happened to the gifts. Now he rather apologetically asks Lully to send him a skilled worker in glass – of which art they are completely ignorant – and a player on the harp they call the *rotta*.

No. 117

Date: 759-765

Sender: Bregowin

Recipient: Lully

The archbishop of Canterbury (759-765) commends his messenger Hildebert to Lully and reminds him of the conversation they had when they met in Rome. Although turbulence both in Britain and Gaul have delayed his efforts, he wishes to pursue an intimate and spiritual friendship with Lully and to greet all the associates of the martyr Boniface now that things are safer. He suggests they pray, say Masses for each other, and send gifts back and forth. Meanwhile he sends via his priest Ishard a casket made of bone to be used during Mass. At the end he states that the Abbess Bugga has died and was buried on the sixth Kalends of January; before she died, she urged him to convey this information to Lully, since Boniface was her patron.

No. 118

Date: 756-768

Sender: Pippin

Recipient: Lully

The king of the Franks commissions Lully to be in charge of a thanksgiving celebration to God for an abundant and fertile year. Each bishop is to organize litanies – prayers, Masses, and processions – and although a fast is not mandated, it is strongly recommended. Each lay person, whether willing or no, is to give their tithe and alms, so that the paupers may be fed.

No. 119

Date: 24 May 773

Sender: Eanwulf

Recipient: Lully

This unknown abbot replies to a letter from Lully. He is thrilled to receive a letter from a man of such erudition and sanctity and desires to merit his friendship. When Lully dies, he says, he will write his name alongside those of his bishops and the brothers of the monastery who have preceded him. A strange diagram with Greek letters, similar to that found at the end of Letter 93, is appended without explanation to this letter in the MGH.

No. 120

Date: 25 May 773

Sender: Eanwulf

Recipient: Charlemagne

The abbot congratulates Charlemagne on his ascent to the throne of the Franks and urges him to propagate the Christian faith among those peoples subject to him. According to D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents 500-1042*, 186, most of the letter is identical to one of Pope Gregory the Great's to King Aethelbert of Kent (not in this inventory). The same scholar believes that it was prompted by the previous year's victories over the Old Saxons. A small diagram accompanies the letter in the MGH.

No. 121

Date: 769-774

Sender: Alhred and Osgifu

Recipient: Lully

The king and queen of Northumbria reply to Lully's letter and thank him for the gifts. They have written a list of their friends and relations, which has not survived with the letter, whom they wish to be commended in prayers and in celebrations of Mass; they will do the same for the list of people Lully has sent them. They are careful to add that all the names are to be written down, commenting on the "safe-keeping of writing" and the "everlasting memorial of writing." (cf. 114) The couple beg Lully to commend their embassies to Charlemagne and they send as gifts twelve cloaks and a gold ring to be used for an endowment.

No. 122

Date: 760-778

Sender: Aeadulf

Recipient: Lully

The bishop of Rochester sends greetings from himself and King Aeardvulf of Kent. He reminds Lully that those who are unable to greet each other in person due to long distances are able to keep in touch through letters so they don't suffer anxiety over how their friends are doing. He sends a gift of a red woollen cloak and asks him both to send a letter and to pass on verbally through the bearer, the faithful priest Laearoredus, anything he wishes. He asks for Masses to be said and prayers to be given for some nuns who have passed on, promising the same in return for any people close to Lully.

No. 123

Date: 755-780

Sender: Cineheard

Recipient: Lully

The bishop of Winchester thanks Lully for the gifts he sent and for remembering him. He prays that Lully may retain his faithfulness to the end even though he is beaten down with tribulation; this, he says, is what all saints have to put up with. He sends an article of clothing from his own wardrobe as a gift.

No. 124

Date: 767-781

Sender: Coena (or Ethelbert)

Recipient: Lully

The archbishop of York responds to a letter he has received from Lully. He thanks him for his counsel in the past and requests his prayers. At the same time, he encourages him to persevere, reminding him that an eternal reward awaits him if he does. He discusses some books that Lully has enquired about obtaining and that are unknown to him, and notes that he is aware of others written about the cosmos that he does not have. The only copies in his collection are those containing pictures and illuminated letters, and all he has been able to send so far are those copied by himself as scribes have not been readily

available. At the end he includes a poem with phrases quarried from Venantius Fortunatus, Bede, and Sedulius.

No. 125

Date: 767-781

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Coena (or Ethelbert)

Lully reminds the archbishop of York of their old friendship and complains about the new laws and customs made by the rulers that cause afflictions for the church. He is sick in both mind and body and is eager to leave the world behind. He sends the archbishop a piece of the best quality silk and asks for the works of Bede to be sent to him, including the commentaries on the books of Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Mark's Gospel. Lully sends as well a list, now lost, of friends and brothers who have died and requests Coena's prayers.

No. 126

Date: 767-781

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Cuthbert

Lully is beset with infirmity. It is clear he is not just exaggerating his problems because his Latin is also a shadow of its former self: high-flown and mannered no longer, it outlines briefly and simply what he has to say. He is not planning on dying just yet, however, as he requests some of the works of Bede. On the top of the list is *de aedificio templi*. In return Lully sends to the abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow a silk altar-cloth and attaches a list, now lost, of his departed brothers and friends.

No. 127

Date: 767-781

Sender: Cuthbert

Recipient: Lully

The abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow thanks Lully for the letter and the gifts. He has added the list of names of departed brothers that Lully sent to his own list that names the departed brothers of Wearmouth and Jarrow and promises that he will say Masses for them all. He also sends Bede's book on the building of the temple. This letter appears to be a reply to the one previous (126) except that Lully's gift of a silk altar-cloth has become a towel and a piece of linen.

No. 128

Date: 755-786

Sender: Lully

Recipient: Suitha and her subjects

Lully excommunicates Abbess Suitha and all her people because she allowed two of her nuns to travel into distant regions without his permission. When the women return, they are not to be received in the monastery but must remain outside and perform penance on bread and water. Suitha herself must abstain from all meat and any drink sweetened with honey. It is unclear what the real crime is here. As the abbess gave permission, the women cannot be convicted of disobeying her and have done no wrong. Lully mentions *voluptas laicorum*, so perhaps relatives of the women convinced their abbess to let them go on a pilgrimage or visit. At any rate, it appears that Lully feels his authority has been flouted.

No. 129

Date: 755-786

Sender: Tyccea and Deacon Aldbercht

Recipient: Lully

Tyccea replies to a letter he has recently received from Lully. He is very pleased that Lully has offered to pray for him and points out that both Christ and St. Peter have

commanded that Christians love and pray for another. Tyccea offers to do the same for Lully. The last third of the letter is an addendum by a deacon named Aldbercht, who asks Lully to take him up as a friend and patron; he also asks for his prayers.

No. 130

Date: 755-786

Sender: Magingaoz

Recipient: Lully

The bishop of Würzburg requests Lully's aid after the death of his sister, who was the abbess of a religious community. The community is not doing well after her death, and the bishop fears that it will not survive unless some firm leadership is brought in as soon as possible. Some are recommending the bishop's veiled nieces, but Magingaoz feels they do not have the maturity to handle such a weighty task. However, as he can find no one else, he implores Lully to give him counsel and come up with a good solution. Note the familial connections in this whole affair.

No. 131

Date: 755-786

Sender: Botwin

Recipient: Lully

The abbot of Ripon replies with thanks to a letter from Lully. He discusses their mutual prayers and patronage and sends a gift of six cloaks.

No. 132

Date: 755-786

Sender: Wigbert

Recipient: Lully

Lully is ill and has notified Abbot Wigbert that he will be coming to his monastery to recover. Hearing this news, Wigbert had his monks chant all the Psalms, while the priests

said five Masses each on his behalf. He assures Lully that they will take care of him as if he were their own brother. Note: this is not the Wigbert that came with Boniface – that individual died c. 747.

No. 133

Date: 755-786

Sender: Doto

Recipient: Lully

The emphasis on mutual prayers in these late letters in the Boniface and Lully collection is moving more and more in the direction of the modern chain letter. Here the abbot and monks of St. Peter's (of Luxeuil, according to Mabillon) entreat Lully not only to pray for them, but to also send their names to all his friends so they might pray for the congregation at St. Peter's as well. In return, they request a list of Lully's friends, living and dead, so they can pray for them. "Prayers" in this context refers to commemorations during the Mass.

No. 134

Date: 755-786

Sender: Magingaoz

Recipient: Lully

The bishop of Würzburg is confused about whether a woman who has lapsed into adultery should be taken back by her husband. He complains that he has consulted several sources and they all say different things. Isidore and Jerome say that such a woman has defiled the marriage contract and should not be taken back. In this they have the backing of Scripture and the words of Jesus. Augustine, however, says that Jesus' teaching that a wife can be dismissed for fornication were given *in extremo* because of human weakness and that the husband should take back the adulterous wife. Pope Leo's opinion was that if a husband was captured by enemies so that his return was despaired

of, his wife was permitted to marry another; if the first returned, she could be restored to her first husband. The bishop asks Lully to clarify this issue for him.

No. 135

Date: 755-786

Sender: a certain monk

Recipient: Lully

In this very short letter, an unknown monk reminds Lully of the old friendship they had in the city of Malmesbury under Abbot Eaba. His current abbot Hereca and the whole community greet Lully and ask that he remember them.

No. 136

Date: 755-786

Sender: Magingaoz

Recipient: Lully

A certain person known to Magingaoz bishop of Würzburg wishes to enter the religious life but there exists a secular impediment to his doing so. (The impediment is never stated). The man contacted Lully, requesting his help in forestalling the problem, and Lully then contacted Magingaoz. The latter, however, believes the man is entering this path presumptuously and that he lacks the necessary stability and fortitude to pursue it successfully. The bishop wishes Lully and himself to send a joint letter, or if that is not possible, that Lully compose a suitable letter that expresses the solidarity of the religious community on this matter.

No. 137

Date: 755-786

Sender: Wigbert

Recipient: Lully

The priest Wigbert reports to Lully that he has returned home safely after his visit with him. At home friends and relatives have taken up the chores of spring: lambing and planting grain. He states that he would like Lully to commission him to go and convert the Saxons, as he knows there are many who are hastening to do that very thing.

Hrothuin, who has done the writing of the letter, adds a note at the end reminding Lully that he was formerly with him and is now writing, reading, and teaching with Wigbert.

No. 138

Date: 755-786

Sender: Wigbert

Recipient: Lully

Wigbert congratulates Lully on his return to health. It seems that this Anglo-Saxon priest traveled back and forth, possibly annually, from his home in England to Lully's place of residence on the mainland. This letter, like the previous one, reports to Lully that he has arrived safely after his trip across the sea. He has given gifts to Lully's friends and they have promised to keep praying for Lully and his community and to write their names in their churches for mention in the celebration of Mass. The bearer of this letter will further clarify this verbally. This time Wigbert tells Lully that his friends and relations do not want him to return back to Germanic territory, and he asks that his vow to do so be absolved. He will receive land and an inheritance if he stays. He adds however that his first loyalty is to Lully and he will do what he requests. Hrothuin, whom we met in the previous letter, again greets Lully and asks that he forgive his poor writing and lack of skill. The letter ends with the sentence: *Macharius polaris aulae pantocrator clemens diu vos incolomes custodire dignetur*. Macharius is the Latinized form of the Greek name Makarios. A patriarch of Antioch of that name was exiled and deposed at the sixth ecumenical council for his monothelite beliefs, which he refused to relinquish (see *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 10). *Pantokrator* is a Greek term for Christ meaning "ruler of all." The line is likely greetings from a Greek individual who along with Hrothuin added his good wishes at the end of the letter. A possible translation would in that case

be: May the all-powerful yet clement Ruler of the celestial realm deign to preserve you unharmed for many years. Macharius.

No. 139

Date: 757-786

Sender: Cynewulf and his bishops

Recipient: Lully

In a very short letter, the king of the West Saxons, along with his bishops and his nobles, greet Lully and advise that they would like to commence mutual prayers. They commend to him the bearer of the letter.

No. 140

Date: 757-786

Sender: unknown

Recipient: unknown

An unknown writer addresses his sister whom the depths of the sea have separated from him. As the end of the world is at hand, he believes, he entreats her to remember the words that passed between them at their parting. At the end he adds a poem in two parts. The first section is in typical dactylic hexameter. The last six lines are metrically dactylic hexameter combined with what appears to be a more Germanic style that includes half-lines, alliteration and internal rhyme. Because of their poignancy, I have translated them here into English:

The life of justice in the heavens flaming,
 The saints with glorious light forever shining,
 heavenly suns in the kingdom of our Father.
 And through Jerusalem with voice resounding,
 They praise the Lord and call out without end,
 with their mouth through sacred air perpetually singing.

Ceaseless songs they celebrate to Christ,
 whom every chorus of martyrs will adore,
 rejoicing in the Lord, heart's praise outpouring,
 with gratitude to man and praise to God,
 a joyful chorus marvelously extolling.
 Dear sister, I embrace you with the highest love.

Greetings little virgin	sure fighter in Christ's army,
How dear you are to me	and all your works.
I cover you with praises,	redoubling your thanks to me.
And with trembling I beg you,	little ewe lamb, for the love of Christ,
return your vows with fervour	to the Highest in the heavens.
And what we said together	keep lively in your memory.

No. 141

Date: undated

Sender: unknown

Recipient: unknown

In this reply to a previous letter, a greeting is sent from relatives and friends to one who is separated from them. They pray that God will console him and that they might one day all be together again in heaven.

No. 142

Date: undated

Sender: unknown

Recipient: unknown

The writer commends his recipient for his persistent devotion to him and thanks him for the *adminiculum* (prop or support) of divine Scripture that he sent. He requests any and

all manuscripts he is able to copy to be sent to him. In return, he will faithfully perform whatever the other commands. He asks for his prayers.

No. 143

Date: undated

Sender: Berthgyth

Recipient: Balthard

In pathetic terms, Berthgyth berates her brother Balthard because he has not come to see her after so long. He is her only living relative and she mourns day and night because she is separated from him. According to Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 30, the brother and sister are the children of Cynehild, who was Lully's aunt. Although in the MGH the brother and sister are not named, due to its similar content to 147 and 148 following, most scholars agree that this letter is from Berthgyth to her brother Balthard.

No. 144

Date: undated

Sender: an unknown abbot

Recipient: unknown

This short note gives permission to an unknown person to return to the monastery in which they originally took up residence as a monk and to remain there.

No. 145

Date: undated

Sender: unknown

Recipient: unknown

One person asks another to send the books to him as previously discussed.

No. 146

Date: undated

Sender: an unknown monk

Recipient: unknown

One person encourages another, who has been talking about leaving, to stay and finish what they have started. He gives details of the poverty he experiences while living under a Rule and quotes an old Saxon saying that disparages faint-hearted behaviour:

Oft dædlata dôme foreldit,
sigisîtha gahvem swyltit thî âna.

In Latin as translated by E. Dümmler:

Saepe ignavus gloriam amittit,
victoriam quamcunque moritur ideo solus.

In English, my translation:

Often the faint-hearted loses glory;
victory passes him by so he dies alone.

No. 147

Date: undated

Sender: Berthgyth

Recipient: Balthard

Here again Berthgyth pleads with her brother to either come and visit her or arrange for her to visit him. At the end is a poem of ten lines that shows similarities to that appended to Letter 140 and it is tempting to speculate that the latter was written from Balthard to Berthgyth. A line of corrupt Latin mixed with Hebrew follows the poem: *Elonqueel et Michael, Acaddai, Adonai, Allevatia, Alleluia*.

No. 148

Date: undated

Sender: Berthgyth

Recipient: Balthard

Berthgyth thanks her brother for his letter and gifts. But because she wishes above all to see him personally, she begs him to come and visit her, or better still, to send for her to come to him, so that she might end her life where their parents' bodies rest. She sends a gift of a ribbon or band and appends a poem at the end asking for his prayers.

No. 150

Date: undated

Sender: unknown monks

Recipient: unknown monks

Some monks request that all those living in a certain monastery remember in sacred prayers, i.e. Masses, the names of their fellow monks who have recently died. They include a list of these names and ask further that the recipients pass the list on to the other monasteries. They remark that they do this when they receive lists of names from others. This letter highlights the custom of commemorating the names of the dead in the Mass that seemed to become fashionable around this time and the growth of which we can trace in this collection.

Variae

No. 1.45

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Boethius

Gundobad king of Burgundy has requested two time-keeping devices from the king of the Goths, one that measures time by flowing water (clepsydra), and another that uses the light of the sun (sundial). The description of neither is clear in the letter. Theoderic, through the pen of Cassiodorus, praises Boethius' learning in all things philosophical, mathematical, and mechanical, before turning the acquisition and delivery of the above machines over to him.

No. 1.46

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Gundobad

This is the letter that accompanied the clocks to Burgundy. Theoderic states that it is right for the Burgundians to possess what they have often seen in Rome. He praises their desire to lay aside their barbarous nature, and adds that men are like the beasts if they measure the passage of time only by their bellies.

No. 2.40

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Boethius

The Frankish king Clovis I has requested a harpist from Theoderic, who delegates to Boethius the task of supplying one. The writer goes on at great length on all aspects of music, adding the sentiment that “it is always agreeable to talk of learning with the learned.” He is sure that the music of the harpist Boethius chooses will charm the beast-like hearts of the Franks.

No. 2.41

Date: 504

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Clovis I

Theoderic congratulates the king of the Franks on his recent victories over the Alemanni, cautioning him, however, not to pursue refugees who have fled to Gothic territory, as a prosperous war is one that ends moderately. He refers to the ties of affinity between them, Theoderic having married Clovis’ sister. The Gothic king has also advised his messengers to introduce the harpist mentioned in the previous letter and to carry back a

reply from Clovis. As Hodgkin notes, Gregory of Tours makes no mention of Clovis' campaign against the Alemanni. It is referred to, however, in Ennodius' panegyric on Theoderic and in the History of Agathias, a Greek historian who continued on where Procopius left off. See Hodgkin, *Letters of Cassiodorus*, 195.

No. 3.1

Date: 506

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Alaric

Theoderic tries to dissuade the Visigothic King Alaric II from war with the Franks and informs him that his legates will also urge Gundobad king of the Burgundians to intervene on behalf of peace. As Clovis I overthrew the Visigoths at the Battle of Vouillé in 507, it would appear that Theoderic's plea fell on deaf ears. The date of the letter is uncertain, however, and some argue for an earlier date than 506 and a successful peacemaking mission by Theoderic at that time. (Hodgkin, *Letters of Cassiodorus*, 197). War between the two could certainly not have been averted for long considering Clovis' ambitions.

No. 3.2

Date: 506

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Gundobad

Here we have the letter to the Burgundian king referred to in the previous letter. The writer repeats much of what he said to Alaric, referring to himself and Gundobad as *senes* who must moderate Clovis and Alaric, the *reges iuvenes*. (Clovis was about twelve years younger than Theoderic). This letter and the verbal message that accompanied it had no discernible effect on Gundobad's policies.

No. 3.3

Date: 506

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: kings of the Heruli, Warni, and Thuringians

Theoderic's legates move on and make further attempts to avert war, this time warning these neighbours of Clovis that they will not be safe unless all join together and compel him – how, we are not told – to desist from his attacks on Alaric. This prediction came true for the Thuringians in 531 when they in turn were conquered by the Franks.

No. 3.4

Date: 506

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Clovis I

Speaking, as he says, like a father and friend, Theoderic implores Clovis to put aside war with Alaric and allow the Gothic king to mediate between them. Whatever Theoderic's motives, his plea had no effect on Clovis or his future actions, as the Frankish king did not want to make peace with Alaric, but rather to expand his kingdom into Visigothic territory.

No. 3.16

Date: 509-10

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Gemellus

Clovis conquered the Visigothic Alaric II in 507 but was able to hold only Aquitaine during his lifetime. The south-eastern provinces were taken under the jurisdiction of Theoderic the Goth who acted as regent during the infancy of Alaric's son Amalaric. In this letter Theoderic appoints Senator Gemellus as governor over these Gallic provinces, advising him to show himself such a ruler as a Roman Prince ought to appoint so that Gaul will rejoice to have been conquered. Hodgkin argued that Cassiodorus intended this

speech to be an echo of one Sidonius Apollinaris used in his panegyric to Marjorian. (Hodgkin, *Letters of Cassiodorus*, 205.)

No. 3.17

Date: 510

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: all the Gaulish provinces

Theoderic informs the people of Gaul (the southeast provinces – see comments under 3.16) that thanks to his intervention they have been restored to their ancient freedoms after cringing under the aimless turbulence of barbarism. (By this he means the short-lived Frankish hegemony). They may bring out the treasures they had been obliged to hide from the Franks, for *romanitas* and its principles are again at the fore: the reign of law; the morals of the toga; kindness instead of cruelty; the triumph of public right; chance of promotion for the rich and noble; and exaltation of men not by bodily strength, but according to reason. He advises them that he is sending the worthy Gemellus to be their governor.

No. 3.32

Date: 511

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Gemellus

Gemellus was appointed governor of the Gallic provinces in the previous year (cf. 3.16 and 17). Theoderic informs him that the city of Arles – which has apparently petitioned for tax relief – is freed from the obligation of taxes for the duration of the fourth Indiction (Sep. 1, 510 to Aug. 31, 511), since they were reduced to poverty from the siege they endured on the king's behalf. Next year, however, it will be taxes as usual.

No. 3.34

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: inhabitants of Marseilles

Theoderic appoints Count Marabad governor over the city of Marseilles. He orders the inhabitants to welcome and obey him.

No. 3.40

Date: 510

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: all the provincials settled in Gaul

The king grants an exemption from taxes for the fourth Indiction to all districts in Gaul ravaged by the incursions of the enemy, i.e. the Franks. Any part untouched by these ravages however must contribute to the upkeep of Theoderic's army (cf. 3.32).

No. 3.41

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Gemellus

Theoderic instructs the governor of Gothic Gaul (cf. 3.16, 3.17, 3.32) to arrange for the army's grain shipment to be carried from the granaries of Marseilles to the forts on the Durance River. The latter is a tributary of the Rhône that branches east at Avignon for some miles before turning north to Briançon. The availability of the river for this purpose suggests that the Durance marked the boundary between the Burgundian Kingdom and the territory controlled by the Ostrogoths.

No. 3.42

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: all the provincials in Gaul

Here the king repeals his decree that the unravaged part of Gaul must contribute to military expenses (3.40.) Instead, Theoderic will foot the bill himself and will hand over the money to the dukes and governors for distribution to the army.

No. 3.44

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: all the landowners of Arles

The king directs a sum of money for the repair of the walls and towers of the city of Arles. As soon as the weather is suitable for shipping, he will also send a supply of grain to make up for what was lost during the recent war (cf. 3.32 to Gemellus).

No. 4.5

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Amabilis

Theoderic has heard that there is a famine in the Gallic provinces. He directs Count Amabilis to contract with shipmasters along the western coast of Italy – Lucania, Campania, and Thuscia – to sell provisions only to the Gauls. They are at liberty to ask their own price, as he assures them that there is no better customer for a grain merchant than a hungry man.

No. 5.10 and 5.11

Date: undated

Sender: Theoderic/Cassiodorus

Recipient: Veranus and the Gepidae

A copy of this letter was sent both to Veranus, a Sajo or armed retainer, and the troops he commanded, called Gepidae. The latter are a subgroup of the Goths who were apparently

driven out of their homeland by Theoderic in 504. It is unclear exactly who Cassiodorus is referring to here; he could mean actual Gepidae, in which case the letter should be dated prior to 504, or he could simply be using a flowery term for Ostrogothic troops or a mixed group. In any event, Veranus and his troops have been ordered to march to Gaul to defend it – from whom is not clear. Theoderic does not wish them to plunder the land they are passing through, so announces that he will pay them three *solidi* per week so they may buy provisions along the way. Hodgkin, *Letters of Cassiodorus*, 271, notes that this rate of pay was unheard of for common soldiers.

No. 11.1

Date: 534

Sender: Cassiodorus

Recipient: the senate of the city of Rome

Cassiodorus has been promoted to the Praetorian Prefecture and writes this letter to announce the fact and to commend himself to the Roman Senate. Along the way it turns into a panegyric to Amalasuintha, Theoderic's daughter and regent for her son Amalaric. Of interest to us is its passing reference to the recent Gothic expedition against the Franks, "overmighty and haughty, who had leaped unawares upon so many nations..." The Franks had apparently declined conflict with the Goths, and the Frankish king Theuderic I, eldest son of Clovis I, had succumbed to disease earlier in 534, an event Cassiodorus trumpets as an act of Divine Providence on behalf of the Gothic army. In a brief discussion of the same incident, Gregory of Tours mentions that since Clovis' death, the Goths had occupied much of the territory he had conquered, retaking Arles in the process (*LH* 3.21-23).

Venantii Fortunati opera poetica

No. 1.17

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Placidina

Fortunatus addresses Placidina, wife of Bishop Leontius II of Bordeaux, and sends some small watery gifts – probably fresh fish or shellfish that he caught himself. Placidina was a great-granddaughter of Sidonius Apollinaris and is mentioned in other of Fortunatus' poems as sharing in her husband's building activity (cf. 1.6, 1.12, 1.14, 1.15, none of which are included in this inventory; see also *PLRE*, Vol. 3b, s.v. Placidina). The poet here plays the role of the rather inept but lovable bumbler – a bit like Chaucer in his self-portrayals – in comparison to the outstanding qualities of his addressee.

No. 2.9

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: the clergy of Paris

Marc Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, vol. 1, 63, n. 57, states that this poem was composed sometime after Fortunatus' journey to Paris in the winter of 566-567. After beginning with the *topos* of his own incompetence, he praises the dignity and beauty of the Paris services and especially the saintly qualities of their bishop Germanus, whom he calls another Aaron adorned with piety rather than sumptuous robes. Near the end of the poem there is a lengthy description of the music of the chant led and inspired by Germanus. Considering that musicologists know virtually nothing regarding performance practice before the Carolingian era, this passage is extremely significant. Many different kinds of instruments are mentioned as accompanying human voices of both sexes and all ages in what sounds like polyphony, but could also be alternating tropes by instruments of different timbres. We can, however, add to Fortunatus' talents an appreciation and understanding of music. He portrays himself as a player on the lyre and likely performed many of his poems to music.

No. 3.1

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Eufronius

This is not a poem, but a prose letter. Eufronius was bishop of Tours immediately before Gregory and it was he who installed the relic of the Holy Cross in Radegund's monastery at Poitiers when Bishop Maroveus refused to do so. Fortunatus says nothing of substance in the letter; he simply thanks the bishop for his letter, praises him in the usual flowery phrases, and commends himself to the prayers of the bishop and his protector and predecessor St. Martin.

No. 3.2

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Eufronius

Eufronius was an important patron to Fortunatus, and may have been the one who gave the poet the crucial letter of introduction to Pascentius of Poitiers where he made the acquaintance of Radegund. (see George, *VF: A Latin Poet*, 29–30). This could be the letter that Fortunatus returns florid thanks for above (3.1). Here the poet praises the bishop in formal language, citing his benevolence, generosity and humility. He asks the bishop to pray for him before the tomb of St. Martin.

No. 3.3

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Eufronius

This poem to Eufronius is a little different than the two above as it is less formal and emphasizes in particular the quality of sincerity and trustworthy speech in the recipient. Fortunatus also praises Eufronius as a protective shepherd for his flock and names him St. Martin's particular choice for the see of Tours.

No. 3.4

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

This is an extremely prolix and high-flown piece of prose to the bishop of Nantes – referred to as *ultimus orbis* – that is full of allusions from Greek myth. Fortunatus is answering a letter previously sent to him by the bishop, and the poet praises Felix’s eloquence and actually quotes bits of the letter. Nothing is straightforward here: Homer is described as “the prophetic spring of the Smyrnian fount,” for example. The letter ends with a four-line verse in praise of Felix, which I have freely translated as follows:

Greek nor Latin tongue alike

Can pay the debt they owe your worth.

We venerate you in our prayers and sing your praises, Felix,

Eternal by the brightness of your thought.

No. 3.5

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

Felix was known for building the cathedral of Nantes. This poem addressed to him is an acrostic on the letters of Fortunatus’ own name; i.e. the first line begins with *fida*, the second *ordo*, the third *restituis* and so on, with ten lines in all. Fortunatus praises the bishop for his efforts against the depredations of the Britons, who were migrating to Armorica (Brittany) in large numbers and wreaking havoc in the area around Nantes and Rennes. (Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, 92, n. 26). This situation was also mentioned by Gregory of Tours, *LH* 4.4.

No. 3.8

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

A *dies festiva* has arrived and Fortunatus' mini-panegyric to Felix praises the bishop's dual claim to greatness: his noble bloodline and his deeds as bishop of Nantes. Armorica is again referred to as the uttermost end of the earth (cf. 3.4) and the bishop's verbal skill in repelling the Britons is here emphasized, something that is only hinted at in 3.5. Felix has brought a *nova Roma* to Nantes and his chaste marriage to the church has produced an entire populace of offspring whom he now protects as the shepherd guards the sheep. The poet's final sentiment is that the bishop's name (*felix* = happy, lucky, fruitful) might be true for him both in mind and faith.

No. 3.9

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

This poem is considered by Marc Reydellet to be Fortunatus' best, and it is difficult not to concur with this assessment. (see Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, vol. 1, 99, n.50). It was likely written on the occasion of the baptism by Felix of some Saxons on Easter Day, an event that is mentioned by Gregory of Tours (*LH* 2.19), although here both Saxon and baptism are mentioned only briefly toward the end. Given more weight is the triumph of Christ over hell and his rescue of its human occupants. This doctrine of the Harrowing of Hell, *anastasis* in Greek, is a doctrine with its roots in Scripture that had been further developed by at least the second century. The beauty of the poem lies in its graceful descriptions of returning spring to the earth: the trees let down their hair after the severe hairstyle of winter, and the wild flowers are the eyes of the meadows. Fortunatus places himself in the picture as a humble sparrow singing in the bushes.

No. 3.10

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

Fortunatus praises Felix for deflecting a river to make it more useful for irrigating crops; the bishop becomes the new Achilles whose deeds would have made Homer even more famous for reciting them. The actual task seems to have been accomplished by building a dike of earth taken from the new streambed.

No. 3.11

Date: c. 566

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Nicetius

Fortunatus praises Nicetius of Trier as the apostolic shepherd who cares for, feeds and heals the ills of his sheep. The poet makes an interesting statement regarding exiles: returning captives seize their *lares* upon reentering their homes, while Nicetius seized the heavens. This does not mean that classical pagan cult was still a feature in Merovingian Gaul, but rather implies the emotional attachment one feels towards one's home. The usage is common in both prose and verse from the Late Republic on. Nicetius was indeed exiled in 560 by Chlothar I, whom he excommunicated, but was restored the next year by Chlothar's son Sigibert after his father's death. This tribute was likely written shortly after the bishop's return. Fortunatus also wrote a poem praising the bishop's castle on the Moselle, cf. 3.12. (not in this inventory).

No. 3.13

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Vilicus

Fortunatus praises the bishop of Metz in florid language, describing him as fortifying his city with the weapons of prayer and personal merits, the latter of which include nourishing his people, feeding guests, and housing exiles. The wicked cannot withstand

the efforts of Vilicus the Builder. Vilicus gave warm support to the poet when he first came to Gaul, cf. 6.8.22 (not in this inventory).

No. 3.13 a–d

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Vilicus

Fortunatus writes four short poems to the bishop of Metz; these run only one or two sentences each. They seem to have been composed to compliment the host after a meal.

- a. Vilicus is the noble shepherd who sustains both the minds and bodies of his flock.
- b. Vilicus is the shepherd and Venantius is the sheep who desires bread rather than pasture.
- c. This verse describes the painting on the table: a bird stands under a vine-shoot pecking at grapes, which produce the famous Falernian wine from Italy.
- d. The final verses compliment the great array of fish on the table and compare Vilicus to St. Peter the fisherman.

No. 3.14

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Carentinus

This is a routine tribute to the bishop of Cologne. Fortunatus speaks about his role as the shepherd of his flock, a follower of the apostle Paul, and the nourisher of his people both physically and spiritually. He also praises the bishop's activities as a builder and restorer of churches.

No. 3.15

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Egidius

Fortunatus praises the bishop of Rheims in flowery language for his eloquence and his care of the flock. He describes the bishop as more shining than Lucifer, the morning star. (There seems to be no parallel in the poet's mind between Lucifer the morning star and Satan, although Christian writers as early as Tertullian and Origen made this connection). The bishop is also praised as one who restores *lares* to the exile, a metaphor Fortunatus uses more than once. (see 3.11).

No. 3.16

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Hilarius

In this poem of only six lines, Fortunatus wishes Hilarius good health and expresses the hope that he will enjoy the verses. This is likely the same Hilarius who is mentioned in 3.28 and who is the subject of the epitaph 4.12 (not in this inventory). The latter supplies the information that Hilarius was a noble who became a priest after his wife died.

No. 3.17

Date: 587-609

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Bertechramnus

Bertechramnus or Bertram was bishop of Le Mans from 587 until 623. Fortunatus describes meeting the bishop as the latter goes about his business in his *reda*, a cart pulled by two pairs of horses. The bishop apparently reached down and pulled Fortunatus

into the cart and set him down in his own seat. In the same way, says the writer, the mother swallow covers and warms her fledglings.

No. 3.18

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Bertechramnus

The bishop of Le Mans has sent Fortunatus some epigrams and our poet responds in kind. He describes the bishop's verses as foaming and billowing, with the page pouring forth words like a fountain: "scarcely did venerable Rome hear in the forum of Trajan poems of such shining pomp and splendour." But there is a problem in the metre, he says, and in some places the poem is forced to limp and lament. The jocular nature of the exchange is confirmed at the end by his hope that Camena, the muse of poetry, will continue to compel them to exchange "welcome jests."

No. 3.19

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agricola

This short poem is actually a tribute to the recipient's father, whom Fortunatus seems to have known well. The poet hopes that the son will also honour him with his friendship and favour. This Agricola cannot be identified with the two men by this name in *LH* 4.24 and 5.45.

No. 3.20

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

This Felix is not bishop of Nantes, who received several epistles from the poet, but the bishop of Bourges. The poem concerns a golden pyx, or container for the Host, that the bishop has bestowed for the church's use. Fortunatus says that it outdoes Solomon both in art – because it is more beautiful – and in faith – because the Christian faith replaces the Jewish faith.

No. 3.21

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Avitus

Fortunatus returns thanks on behalf of Radegund and Agnes for unspecified gifts sent to them by the bishop of Clermont. He also mentions gifts he himself has received and calls Avitus his patron and himself the bishop's *alumnus*. In Roman times this term designated a fosterling exposed at birth and subsequently taken up and raised by somebody else.

This is the Avitus who was involved in the conversion of the Jews of Clermont as reported by Gregory of Tours in *LH* 5.11. Fortunatus commemorates this event in 5.5 below.

No. 3.22 and 3.22a

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Avitus

- a. Fortunatus thanks the bishop of Clermont for favours. He excuses his rough style and language and asks the bishop to regard only his good intentions.
- b. Inspired by some unspecified *maxima occasio*, the poet praises the merits of the bishop and commends to him Agnes and Radegund.

No. 3.23 and 3.23a

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agericus

a. The first poem in this set was written to Bishop Agericus of Verdun on the occasion of the dedication either of a new church or one that had been renovated. It seems that Fortunatus was present because he describes the light pouring into *haec aula* and mentions that lamps will replace the daylight when darkness falls. He praises the bishop's pastoral care, but emphasizes his building activities above all.

b. The second poem is a mini-panegyric with effusive praise and elaborate metaphors for the bishop's saintly qualities. Fortunatus compares him to Phoebus in his brilliance. He also praises his purity, his sincerity, and his eloquence and learning.

No. 3.24

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Anfion

As the last two lines mention that Bishop Leontius agrees with the sentiments expressed in the poem, it is reasonable to assume that Anfion was a priest of the same city, i.e. Bordeaux. Fortunatus praises the man's piety, intelligence, and generosity.

No. 3.25

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Paternus

Fortunatus has received a manuscript for correction from Abbot Paternus and is now sending it back along with this poetic epistle, which acts as a cover letter. He expresses the hope that he has not overlooked anything and that when the abbot reads the corrected manuscript he might remember the poet.

No. 3.26

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Rucco

Fortunatus' poem 9.10 below indicates that Rucco is the nickname given to Ragnemod who became bishop of Paris in 576 upon the death of Germanus. As the poet is away travelling on the "Britannic wave," the letter is full of waves, storms and winds, none of which, he states, are able to drive away the image of his dear friend from his mind.

No. 3.27

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Archdeacon of Meaux – unnamed

Fortunatus thanks the archdeacon for a gift of must, which is partially fermented grape juice.

No. 3.28

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: John

Fortunatus sends this verse to the deacon John as a token of their friendship, also greeting at the same time Anthemius and Hilarius. There is no consensus as to who John is, although Reydellet mentions two possibilities: the son of the merchant Julian who is the subject of Epitaph 23 in Book 4 (not in this inventory), and a John mentioned by Gregory of Tours in *de gloria martyri* who was cured of leprosy by a dip in the Jordan river (*Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, 127, n. 135). Anthemius is a deacon of Tours (*ibid.*, Vol. 1, 127 n. 137) and the subject of the following poem; Hilarius is likely the subject of 3.16 and 4.12, an epitaph that is not included in this inventory.

No. 3.29

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Anthemius

The poet expresses his disappointment at finding the deacon Anthemius asleep when he dropped by before his departure; not wanting to wake him, he was unable to speak with him and now must make do with a few written words. In the last two lines he expresses the sentiment that he would rather receive friendship than clothes or money from those he loves.

No. 3.30

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Sindulfus

This intriguing poem is one of only three in Fortunatus' entire corpus that contains couplets with a repetitive echo effect: in each couplet, the first half-line of the first line is repeated exactly in the second half of the second line. The other two poems with this scheme are 8.2 and *appendix carminum* 19; as the former cannot be classified as a letter it is not included in this inventory. The poem also differs in other respects from Fortunatus' usual offerings: rather than praising the recipient's qualities, he holds up the examples of the farmer, the sailor and the soldier, all of whom labour for future reward. Sindulfus is encouraged to emulate this.

No. 5.1

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Martin

The addressee is the bishop of Braga, now a city in Portugal. This prose letter consists of eleven paragraphs of the most mannered and flowery rhetoric imaginable, complete with extended metaphors, theological and classical allusions, wordplay, and extravagant praise for Martin's merits alongside the most abject self-abasement. After a long wait, Fortunatus has received a letter from the bishop through his "son" Domitius. He compares it to a fine Falernian wine given to a rustic guest at a banquet who is uncertain he can sustain such richness, but who in the end succumbs to its charms. Near the end he commends Radegund, Agnes, and himself to Martin's prayers. This is reasonable, he asserts, seeing that a portion of their own St. Martin now lies in Braga. This last statement refers to the translation of a portion of the relics of St. Martin to Braga from Tours, an event that took place at the same time that the present Martin became bishop there. The same event is related by Gregory of Tours in his *virtutes Martini*.

No. 5.2

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Martin

Using metaphors of spring and the renewal of the earth, Fortunatus hails the deeds of the bishop of Braga in a formal panegyric that is unusual in that it is poetic in form rather than prosaic. He names him the new Martin in the line of Sts. Peter, Paul, and Martin, and the saviour of Galicia. He also passes on the greetings of Agnes and Radegund and asks Martin to watch over them as part of his flock. Martin, a Pannonian who had close ties to Gaul, converted the Arian Sueves to Catholicism. Gregory of Tours reports that he was the author of the verses over the south portal of the church of St. Martin at Tours (*LH* 5.37).

No. 5.5

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Gregory of Tours had asked Fortunatus to write a poem celebrating Bishop Avitus' role in the conversion of the Jews of Clermont, an event reported by Gregory in *LH* 5.11; this piece is the result. The first part of the work is a prose preface in which the poet professes himself unequal to the task. He then describes in verse the events both of Easter, when the Jews submitted to conversion to Christianity, and the following Pentecost, when they were baptized. Avitus is the hero throughout. Fortunatus puts in his mouth a sermon to the Jews and suggests that his eternal reward will be greater than that of Abraham and Moses. He tells Gregory at the end that, under duress, the poem took him only two days to compose. Other poems to Avitus are 3.21, 3.22, 3.22a.

No. 5.6 and 5.6a

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Syagrius

This letter and the acrostic poem, or *carmen figuratum*, that accompany it are, in my opinion, Fortunatus' most amazing creation, not only because of the artistry and verbal gymnastics involved but also because the prose portion explains the poet's thought processes and struggles as he wrote the piece, for which he claims he had no model. The motivation for writing was apparently a father, distressed by the captivity of his son, who came to Fortunatus for help. Bishop Syagrius of Autun played a key role in the problem's solution, although how is not made clear. (Note that this is the same Syagrius who was later sponsored by Brunhild and who received the pallium from Pope Gregory I at the queen's urging cf. *registrum Gregorii*, 8.4, 9.214, 9.223). To persuade the bishop to help, and to reward him for his trouble, the poet created a poem of thirty-three lines that each consist of thirty-three letters, representing the years Christ spent on earth. The middle letter of the Latin alphabet – M – stands at the exact centre; the two outside vertical edges are stand-alone verses, as is the middle vertical line; the two diagonals running in descending order from each corner also stand by themselves. These special lines appear to have been painted red so they would stand out. The poem itself starts in the Garden of Eden and tells the Gospel story, ending with praise of Syagrius. At the end of the prose

text Fortunatus asks the bishop to have the acrostic painted on the wall over his threshold, an exhibition it certainly deserved.

No. 5.7

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

Fortunatus accepts an invitation to visit the bishop of Nantes in Cariatum – now the town of St. Luce – on the Loire. He praises Felix and describes the bishop's pleasant estate where he has clearly been a guest before. He assures Felix that it is the bishop's person that makes such a visit so agreeable.

No. 5.8

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus welcomes Gregory back to Tours after a journey. He applauds his safe return in answer to the prayers of the people and commends himself and his servant to his guidance.

No. 5.8 a–b

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

a: Fortunatus greets Gregory and commends himself to him. He expresses his devoted love to him and praises his liberality, his bounty, his guidance and his protection.

b: Although the caption says the poem thanks Gregory for the gift of a book, the poem mentions only verses, seemingly composed by Gregory himself after reading Scripture; this could be some sort of poetic paraphrase. He calls down the blessings of God – here named as the Thunderer – upon the bishop and commends his bearer Prodomeris to him.

No. 5.9

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Gregory had invited Fortunatus to visit him at Tours but the latter must postpone the journey because he has promised his company to a bishop in another city. Meanwhile he commends himself to Gregory and adds the greetings of Radegund and Agnes.

No. 5.10

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Gregory of Tours had earlier sent and commended a woman to Fortunatus; now that she is returning, the poet requests that Gregory take her up like a father. There is no mention of the purpose of the woman's journey from Tours to Poitiers and back.

No. 5.11

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus has been to visit Gregory of Tours and has just returned home to Poitiers. Part of his journey was difficult and icy, but with the aid of the cross and St. Martin he made

he arrived safely; the trip was obviously taken in winter. The poet sends greetings from Radegund and Agnes and expresses the hope that he will see Gregory again soon.

No. 5.12

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

This is a short and simple letter of greeting to Gregory. It praises his merits and speaks of their mutual friendship.

No. 5.13

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus thanks Gregory for the apples and grafting slips, which he names “the parents with the offspring.” Although absent, Gregory is present through his gifts, the poet writes, and he hopes that he will one day pluck the apples of Paradise.

No. 5.14

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

This is one of several poetic accounts of Fortunatus lending aid to someone in need. At a shrine of St. Martin he discovered a mother and father mourning the loss of their daughter, sold into slavery because of theft, although they claim there is no evidence of this. Her father is unable to supply oathswearers to clear his name because he is poor and has no money to pay them. Fortunatus asks Gregory to investigate the matter and return the child to her parents if what they say is true.

No. 5.15

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Lending aid once again, Fortunatus commends a traveller to Gregory, asking that the bishop act as the man's pastor and homeland.

No. 5.16

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus sends Gregory a letter of greeting and friendship, praising his merits and asking for his aid.

No. 5.17

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

The poet greets Gregory and replies to his letter, rejoicing that his friend is safe and well.

No. 5.18

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: the pontiffs of the Church

In a poem that must have been written in his early days in Gaul, Fortunatus commends himself to the pontiffs of Gaul as an Italian, a wanderer and a guest. He styles himself an exile and seeks their prayers and solace.

No. 5.19

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Aredius

Fortunatus greets the abbot on behalf of himself, Radegund and Agnes. He asks for his prayers, begs the abbot to greet his holy mother (Radegund), and implores him to send a message back with the bearer of the letter. Abbot Aredius – Yrieix in French – is spoken of by Gregory of Tours in *LH* 10.29 as well as in a number of the latter's books of miracles. The abbot founded a church and a monastery in the village of Attanum.

No. 6.9

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Dynamius

Fortunatus likely encountered Dynamius of Marseilles at the wedding of Sigibert and Brunhild that took place in Metz in 566. This was the poet's first event of importance upon arriving in the Frankish kingdom and the success of the panegyric he delivered to the royal couple was a springboard for his later success. At this point it has been two years since Fortunatus has seen Dynamius and the poet expresses extravagantly how much he misses him, begs him for a letter, and expresses his desire for his hasty return. This is the same Dynamius to whom Pope Gregory I directed a letter and relics (3.33) and whose letters appear in the *epistolae Austrasicae* (12 & 17). The recipient of *reg. Gregorii* 7.12 and 7.33 is unlikely to be the same individual, although it could be a relative.

No. 6.10

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Dynamius

In extravagant and flowery verse, Fortunatus expresses his love and esteem for Dynamius. Because of the heat, the poet has had himself bled, and he describes the bandages he is forced to wear that impair his ability to write. He needs repose, he says, after such an ordeal, but his affection for Dynamius causes him to neglect his own care. He speaks of receiving verses under an assumed name, but is easily able to recognize that the author behind these is Dynamius; he hopes for more of the same. Finally, he asks Dynamius to greet mutual friends for him, including Felix, Sapaudus, Theodore, Iovinus Rector of Provence, Helias, and Albinus, all of whom are possibly members of a literary circle.

No. 7.1

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gogo

Gogo was one of Sigibert's counselors and the envoy who fetched the latter's young bride Brunhild from Spain. He was apparently well-versed in Vergil and wrote in an elevated prose as shown in his four letters that survive in the *epistolae Austrasicae*. Fortunatus praises his eloquence – which he compares to that of Orpheus – his wisdom, his brilliance, and his noble appearance, as well as his virtues as a faithful servant of Sigibert.

No. 7.2

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gogo

This poem is likely an occasional piece, given impromptu after a dinner to amuse the guests. Another possibility is that it was sent to the host after the meal as an amusing thank you and on the strength of this I have included it in the letter category. The poet praises Gogo as satisfying his guest with both words – like Cicero – and food – like

Apicius, a first-century Roman gourmet. The poet humourously describes beef, chicken and goose fighting the battle of the horns and feathers in his belly while he prepares to sleep it off.

No. 7.3

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gogo

This six-line poem appears to document some misunderstanding between Fortunatus and Gogo. The poet mentions an unknown problem that happened at Rheims that damaged both Gogo's "cause" and their relationship. He ends on the more positive note that this will not permanently affect their friendship.

No. 7.4

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gogo

It is summer and Fortunatus fancifully imagines where his friend is and what he is doing. Along the way describes many of the rivers and their environs in Austrasia where Gogo might be enjoying himself fishing or hunting. We hear of many animals who are likely meeting their deaths at Gogo's hand. (Included in this list is the aurochs, the wild ancestor of European domesticated cattle that had been hunted to extinction by the 17th century). Is Gogo cultivating his estates? Or is he pursuing justice and taking care of the poor at court with his associate Lupus? Fortunatus does not know, but wishes to be commended to them both.

No. 7.8

Date: 568-578

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Lupus

This is likely the same Lupus as mentioned in 7.4 to Gogo, above. Gregory of Tours names him Duke of Champagne and according to Reydellet, he was the brother of Magnulf (see below 7.10) and one of the most influential people in Austrasia (cf. *PLRE*, Vol. 3b). Fortunatus calls to mind the duke's friendship toward him when he first came to Gaul and how Lupus acted like a father toward him. Upon hearing that Lupus is safe and in good health, therefore, Fortunatus feels as does somebody coming across a stream and cool grass in the fierce heat of summer: he rejoices and breaks into song. He describes his intense feelings of affection for the man and praises his eloquence, wisdom and disposition. The poet also accords to Lupus proficiency in both arms and the law.

No. 7.9

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Lupus

Fortunatus is very pleased to have received a letter from Lupus and expresses his gratitude for the duke's care and concern. The poet tells him that in the nine years since he left Italy, he has received no word from any of his relatives. Fortunatus also mentions a verbal message from the bearer of the duke's letter.

No. 7.10

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Magnulf

Magnulf is brother to the above Lupus, Duke of Champagne. The poet claims to have heard about Magnulf's deeds from one Sigismund, probably the recipient of letters 7.20 and 7.21. He praises his forceful but equitable style of administration, which prevents trouble from getting a foothold and which brings to mind the deeds of the ancients.

Finally, he apologizes for his brevity with the excuse that the bearer is standing over his shoulder wishing to be off.

No. 7.11

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Iovinus

Iovinus is a patrician and Rector of Provence, a position later taken over by Dynamius. Fortunatus complains that he has sent many writings to him in prose and received no reply. He begs him for the refreshment of a return letter.

No. 7.12

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Iovinus

Fortunatus sends another plea to Iovinus to write to him and this time pulls out all the stops. The resultant poem is complete with classical allusions, Christian theology, and metaphors of the absent one's image. He starts out with the inevitability of death; for the warrior, the poet, the orator and the musician "the paths of glory lead but to the grave," as the English poet Thomas Gray expressed the same sentiment over a thousand years later. The only salvation is in Christ, intones the poet, whose saints' tombs breathe forth sweet odours, proving that they are just. The poet spends fully half the poem begging Iovinus to reply to him, naming himself as his client and reminding him of their meeting in Germania. Because he suspects that Iovinus is busy about his estates, he develops an elaborate metaphor where Iovinus makes a furrow in Fortunatus' fallow heart with the plow of his words and sows seeds there that produce an abundant crop of greenery. Iovinus is a member of the putative literary circle that Fortunatus greets through his poem to Dynamius (6.10).

No. 7.13

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Felix

These four lines appear to be a fragment of a much longer work to the Felix who later became bishop of Tarvisium (cf. Gregory of Tours, *vita Martini* 4.666; this is modern-day Treviso). It could also be a quatrain introducing a prose letter that has since been lost.

No. 7.17

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gunduarius

Fortunatus praises Gunduarius as the capable and faithful administrator of the queen's estates – this probably refers to Brunhild, wife of Sigibert. He comments on the man's open and honest mind that operates without deceit.

No. 7.18

Date 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Flavus

Once again, Fortunatus begs for a word from someone who is ignoring him, in spite of communications sent both in verse and in prose every time a bearer was anywhere handy. The poet asks Flavus if the supply of papyrus has dried up, and urges him to write on birch bark or sticks if he has to. And if he is tired of Latin, well then Hebrew, Greek, or even runes will do just fine too.

No. 7.19

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Flavus and Evodius

This poem addresses Flavus, who is the recipient of the previous letter, and his brother. Fortunatus expresses his esteem for both equally; seeing one brother reminds him of the other, as a mirror gives back a reflection of its model. He himself wishes to be an equal third to those two already joined through the same parents.

No. 7.20

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Sigismund

Sigismund was perhaps an officer in the service of the Austrasian King Sigibert (*PLRE*, Vol. 3b). Fortunatus begs him to reply and give him all the news regarding his health, his lodgings, who is invading Italy, and what the Frankish army is doing. He claims that he gives travelers no peace, but peppers all with questions regarding his Sigismund's welfare.

No. 7.21

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Sigismund and Alagisle

Alagisle, like his brother Sigismund in the previous letter, was likely in the service of King Sigibert, as Fortunatus mentions their honour increasing by the king's reward. The poet thanks the Rhine for sending him such *parentes*, suggesting that the pair seems to have visited Poitiers. The poem highlights in flowery terms the enjoyment Fortunatus has in their friendship.

No. 7.22

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Boso

This Boso must be differentiated from other men of the same name, namely King Guntram's military commander (*LH* 7.38, 9.31) and the Duke Guntram Boso, Sigibert's military commander. The addressee of this letter was King Sigibert's referendary, an officer who was the king's secretary and had charge of the royal signet ring with which documents were signed and sealed. This poem may have been written soon after Fortunatus arrived at the Austrasian court, since the poet asks to be commended to the king. He also prays that the Almighty may protect Boso.

No. 7.23

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Paternus

This Paternus, an abbot to whom poem 3.25 is also dedicated, must not be confused with the bishop of Avranches of the same name whose *vita* Fortunatus composed. Here in a short poem the writer is clearly thanking Paternus for some gift he has received, as he speaks of the abbot as a father who distributes good things in return for service.

No. 7.25

Date: 566-576

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Galactorius

Galactorius was a count of Bordeaux under King Guntram. This poem to him was written after the one relating to the count's accession (10.19) but has been wrongly placed before it in the collection. Fortunatus expresses in flowery terms his desire to go to Bordeaux but complains that the Himalayan-like waves of the Garonne river hold him back. Toward the

end the poet writes of paying out the debt he owes with this poem. If he means the debt of friendship, this is a pleasantry of the language of *amicitia*. The last two lines are very curious, however, and imply that Fortunatus actually owes taxes to the count and is remitting them with a poem. He cheekily suggests further that if his payment is overabundant that he be sent sealing-wax, i.e. a letter, by return mail.

No. 8.5

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Here the poet praises Radegund for her denial of worldly wealth and power, since she has renounced the joys of an earthly kingdom to please the king of the heavenly realm. He also lauds her ascetic zeal. In comparison with many of his communications with Radegund, this one seems rather formal and for that reason is perhaps one of the earliest.

No. 8.6

Date: 579-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

These verses to Radegund accompany a gift of violets. Fortunatus says he would rather have sent lilies or roses, but the season is not right; furthermore, the purple colour of the humble violet proves its nobility and it has a regal scent. Radegund is equal to the violet in her royal glory and the sweet scent of her merits.

No. 8.7

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

This is a poem full of pleasure in the sight and scent of the spring flowers that Radegund and Agnes have used to decorate the altar of the church. Fortunatus uses the metaphor of the rivalry of the Blues and Greens – the circus factions in Constantinople – to describe the competition among the flowers as they vie with each other for the viewer’s attention.

No. 8.8

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus sends golden crocuses and purple violets to the powerful queen to whom “gold and purple are as nothing.” He praises her for turning her back on the world in order to lay hold of future light and prays that she will draw him after her into Paradise when his time comes. At the end of the poem we receive a hint that Radegund has withdrawn on her annual Lenten retreat, as the poet mournfully expresses a desire for her return to the “outside.”

No. 8.9

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Radegund is about to embark on her annual Lenten retreat and Fortunatus has written a farewell poem to her. Although she will be confined in a cave, he says, in actuality those left outside are the ones who will be enclosed. The month will seem longer than a year without her, but he will follow her in spirit and pray that she will return unharmed for an Easter that will be doubly joyful.

No. 8.10

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

It is Easter and Radegund has returned from her Lenten retreat. Fortunatus is full of joy at seeing her again. Using one of his favourite metaphors, that of sowing and reaping, he declares that although it is still early spring and the shoots are just peeping above the ground, for him it is already full harvest because she has come back.

No. 8.11

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

While the poet was lying ill with a high fever and painful joints, his friend Gregory's priest Leo arrived with a message inviting him to come to the festival of St. Martin at Tours. Shortly after the priest's arrival, the fever broke and Fortunatus now greets Gregory with health. He does not make clear, however, whether he intends to make the journey to Tours.

No. 8.12 and 8.12a

Date: 588-590

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

The poem and the letter following concern themselves with the revolt at Holy Cross monastery in Poitiers, recounted by Gregory of Tours *LH* 9.39. Fortunatus, who lives in Poitiers, expresses his shock at this occurrence and says that distress forbids him from discussing the details. He encourages Gregory to "labour in the love of piety" so that he might represent St. Martin, whose position he holds.

The letter is written in a more formal style than the above poem. The writer begs Gregory's help in calming the participants and restoring order. He reminds Gregory that

Radegund had sought the help of Gregory and other bishops for the stability of her establishment, see *LH* 9.39 and 9.42, where her letters to the bishops of Gaul are quoted in full. These are also summarized below. Radegund had died in 587.

No. 8.13

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus writes to Gregory in the name of Justina, who is Gregory's niece and the prioress of Holy Cross. During the revolt she was dragged out by the mob when she was mistaken for the abbess Leubovera (*LH* 10.15). Justina thanks Gregory for bringing her grandmother, Gregory's mother Armentaria, to Poitiers so she could see her once again.

No. 8.14

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus greets his friend and thanks God for some good news that he has received in Gregory's letter. He commends himself to the bishop's prayers.

No. 8.15

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

This is another greeting to Fortunatus' friend Gregory of Tours. The poet calls him a lofty summit, a light of the Auvergne, a mountain higher than the Alps, and a tower for the people, whom he venerates as a worthy successor to St. Martin. He ends by commending his humble self to his patron Gregory.

No. 8.16

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

This six-line poem of salutation and friendship lauds Gregory as venerable and dear to the writer. Fortunatus also commends himself to Gregory and asks him to pray for him.

No. 8.17

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

A bearer is available and Fortunatus takes the opportunity of sending a brief greeting to his friend. He asks Gregory to commend him to God, whom he calls the Thunderer.

No. 8.18

Date: 579-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus responds to a communication he has received from Gregory. The language is ambiguous, perhaps purposefully: the poet is either praising the bishop's eloquence in extravagant terms or decrying the fact that his own eloquence is not enough to praise the bishop adequately. Perhaps he wishes to do both

No. 8.19

Date: 579-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Gregory and Fortunatus seem to have often exchanged poetic greetings. This is a reply to one of Gregory's that contained the offer of a gift "where the river Vienne flows past and the sailor is able to view the ploughed acres as he sings out the rhythm to the rowers." In other words, Gregory has given him the use of a waterfront villa. This possibly included its revenues as well.

No. 8.20

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

The subject of this poem, like the one previous, is the estate given to Fortunatus by Gregory of Tours. Here the poet praises Gregory anew as the proper successor to St. Martin: as the saint gave part of his cloak to the beggar, so Gregory shares his land with Fortunatus. Toward the end we discover that the villa is on loan to the poet and when requested, he must return it to Gregory's use.

No. 8.21

Date: 579-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Fortunatus thanks Gregory for the gift of skins, as now the sandals that Gregory also sent can be strapped up and the soles of his feet covered with snowy white skins. In exchange, he prays that the Lord may grant Gregory a white robe in the hereafter.

No. 9.6

Date: 579-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

Gregory of Tours has asked Fortunatus for some Sapphic verses and the poet is delaying this task as he claims he has long forgotten any skill he had in this metre. Meanwhile, he sends other verses and this poem is the cover letter, so to speak, for these. He compares Gregory to his namesake of Nazianzus and promises that the Sapphic verses will be sent as soon as he has managed to compose them.

No. 9.7

Date: 579-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory

This poem comprises twenty-two Sapphic verses, which were promised in the previous epistle. Partway through, Fortunatus speaks of a handbook of metre which Gregory has sent him and which has likely prompted the request for this style of verse. It is twenty years, he says, since he composed in this metre and he protests his lack of skill and his uneasiness. He begs his little poem to greet Gregory and asks that he pray for him. Agnes and Radegund add their greetings to it, as does Justina, Gregory's niece, who became abbess of Holy Cross when Agnes died. The poem is unfinished as we have it and trails off with a line of prose.

No. 9.8

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Baudoald

This poem, sent to the bishop of Meaux, is identical to one sent to Gregory of Tours (5.12) and is therefore an example of Fortunatus either accidentally or purposefully recycling his material. As a generic praise poem, it could be easily applied to almost anybody.

No. 9.9

Date: 565-568

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Sidonius

This poem commemorates the re-establishment of the episcopal see of Mayence after a vacancy of some duration and celebrates the accession of its third bishop Sidonius (Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 1, 189, n.87). Fortunatus praises the merits of the bishop in typical fashion: no wolf can steal any sheep under his leadership; he feeds the people while he himself fasts; he clothes the naked and releases captives; he is learned and eloquent; he transforms old temples into places of Christian worship. The poet also remarks that the bishop has brought together the waters of the Rhine; Felix of Nantes received praise for a similar accomplishment in 3.10.

No. 9.10

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Ragnemod

This is the first of a group of letters that were all destined for individuals in Paris. Here Fortunatus greets and wishes long life to his old friend Ragnemod, nicknamed Rucco, who has succeeded St. Germanus as bishop of Paris. The poem also returns thanks in the name of Radegund and Agnes for the gift of a white marble platter that the bishop had sent to them. It is not clear whether the dish is for the use of the church – perhaps in the Eucharist – or for more personal use. A row of precious stones is also mentioned that Reydellet believes was destined for the cross of Poitiers. See also 3.26, the poet's other offering to this bishop.

No. 9.11

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Droctoveus

Droctoveus was abbot of St. Vincent of Paris, now St. Germain-des-Prés, having been called there when Childebert I built a new abbey for St. Germanus. Fortunatus praises his addressee for despising the world and desiring the heavens. He begs the abbot to pray to God on his behalf.

No. 9.12

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Faramod

Faramod was a chancellor at the court of Chilperic. He is possibly the same person as the priest Faramod, brother of Ragnemod of Paris, who was the recipient of poem 9.10 above (*PLRE*, Vol. 3a); Gregory of Tours describes Faramod's unsuccessful bid to succeed his brother in the episcopate (*LH* 10.26). Fortunatus greets him and asks to be commended to the rulers Chilperic and Fredegund. He requests that Faramod thank them for their acts of benevolence, and asks that a letter be returned with the bearer.

No. 9.13

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Lupus and Vualdo

Fortunatus requests that his addressees commend him to their bishop, bring a greeting to the kings, and salute Droctoveus, Mummolus, Caesarius, and Constantine.

No. 9.16

Date: 577-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Chrodin

Chrodin, duke under the Austrasian kings Sigibert and later his son Childebert II (*PLRE*, Vol. 3a, s.v. Chrodin), is commended by Gregory of Tours as one generous to paupers

(*LH* 6.20). Here Fortunatus praises his noble ancestry, his generosity, his agreeable nature, and the justice that he dispenses equally to all. The poet states that Chrodin is dear to both Italy and Germania, to Franks (*gentibus*) and to Romans (*romanis*). Reydellet (*Venance Fortunat* Vol. 3, 38, n. 112) argues that this is merely a normal sentiment for an Italian reared on the imperial idea, but it is clear that the distinction still retained some meaning, if only a literary one, at this time.

No. 10.2

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Salutaris

With this prose piece, Fortunatus consoles his friend on the death of his ten-year-old daughter, who was on the verge of marriage. He discusses how death came into the world through the sin of Adam and Eve and how no one is able to escape its clutches: the biblical patriarchs, women, earthly kings, even Christ himself. Who is surprised that a girl was taken by that very event that a woman brought into the world? The father should not mourn overmuch, but take as an example the patience of Job at the loss of his sons; at least his daughter went as a virgin to God, unlike some who are snatched after their first earthly embrace. She has undoubtedly been taken up to the marriage bed of God and as the father is privy neither to God's designs nor to the depths of his daughter's desires, perhaps she wished it that way and was not found wanting. Salutaris was probably a Gallo-Roman noble (*PLRE*, Vol. 3b).

No. 10.3

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: the lords and clergy of the land

Fortunatus writes in a very florid style in this address to the court on Radegund's behalf. He denigrates his own eloquence in comparison to that of his audience, using the

metaphor of sweet white wheat bread alongside coarse and disgusting barley bread. He extends the food analogy longer than strictly necessary, bringing in quails and beef as well, making this letter a further example of his interest in and enjoyment of food in general. Radegund's servant is bearing the letter, and Fortunatus asks the lords to bring her petitions – which here are verbal and not contained in the letter – to the attention of the kings; in return she will pray to the Lord of heaven on their behalf.

No. 10.4

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: wife of Salutaris

This prose letter, like 10.2, concerns the death of Salutaris' ten-year-old daughter. Marc Reydellet believes that although she is never named, this one was written to the girl's mother, and that it was written in the name of Radegund. The first point can be sustained, as there is reference to the girl being born from the recipient's womb, but there is no evidence that the letter is meant to be from Radegund. Because he is close to the family, Fortunatus participates in the mother's grief, but advises moderation and a terminus to sorrow. He assures her that her daughter is with Christ and that men will not cease to praise her merits on earth.

No. 10.12 a–d

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Gregory, Romulf, Gallienus, Florentinus

Fortunatus has here written four separate poems to four different people of consequence, seeking help on a matter which obviously affected him deeply. The daughter of the bearer of the letter has been taken captive for a reason that is not given. The poet pleads with his recipients to help the father regain his child. (This is not the only time Fortunatus has written poetic epistles to assist people in need: see also 5.14, 5.6, and 10.13). While the

four poems are all similar in style and content, the poet tailors each to the individual he is addressing. These are:

- a. Gregory of Tours
- b. Romulf, Count of the Palace of Childebert II
- c. Gallienus, an otherwise unknown official
- d. Florentinus, Mayor of the Palace of Brunhild

According to *LH* 9.30, on one occasion Childebert sent Romulf and Florentinus out as tax inspectors, first to Poitiers and then to Tours. The citizens of Poitiers paid up, but Gregory describes how when they arrived in Tours he himself protested to the two that for many years his city had been tax free out of respect for St. Martin. His protest was ultimately successful and the proposed tax was repealed by the king.

No. 10.13

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: various bishops

Fortunatus writes to a number of bishops seeking help for a traveller from Italy who is unfamiliar with Gaul. He praises the bishops and appeals to their role as guardians of the sheepfold in urging them to assist this lost sheep. (The traveller would then carry a copy of the letter and use it to introduce and commend himself and his needs to the bishops to whom it was addressed). Fortunatus may have been extra eager in this case to help a fellow countryman, but there is plenty of evidence that he took an active role in helping people in need.

No. 10.15

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Armentaria

Armentaria is the mother of Fortunatus' friend Gregory of Tours. The poet calls her more fortunate in her one son than the mother of the Maccabees in her seven sons. (These were Jewish martyrs who became Christian saints). The poem is obviously meant to be read by Gregory as well and is really a praise poem for him through his mother.

No. 10.16

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Sigoald

Fortunatus sends a poem of congratulation to Sigoald upon his becoming a count. He recalls the man's help to him when he first entered Gaul as a stranger in the days of King Sigibert, when Sigoald acted as his escort into Gaul and supplied him with a horse, food, and protection. Now that Sigibert's son Childebert is king, the poet hopes that Sigoald's fortunes will increase still further until he is a duke.

No. 10.17

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Sigoald

In this second address to Sigoald, Fortunatus praises the count's work of feeding the poor in the name of King Childebert. The rich man who gives to the poor, he says, receives more value in eternal reward than the poor receives in the earthly nourishment he is given. These acts of mercy redound to the credit of the king, whose ancestors Fortunatus praises and to whose future prosperity he links his continued support of the poor.

No. 10.19

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Galactorius

Fortunatus congratulates another new count of Bordeaux who has, by the sound of the poem, risen up from humbler beginnings. Examples are given of others, such as Justinian and St. Martin, who did the same. Fortunatus hopes for Galactorius, as he did for Sigoald, that the kings will allow him to rise still further and attain the rank of duke.

No. 11.2

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Radegund has retreated for her annual Lenten seclusion, and Fortunatus mourns that his light is taken away from his gaze even though the weather is fine. He expresses the wish that the days fly by until she returns to the outside again. It is impossible to say whether Radegund would actually receive this letter while in retreat; perhaps it had to wait until Easter to be read.

No. 11.3

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus has written this in honour of the birthday of Agnes, the daughter not from Radegund's body, but from grace. He wishes both women many happy returns of the day, with health and long life before they are joined together in heaven. As the word *natalicio* in the title signifies "birthday party," the poem may have been written to be read out at a gathering in the abbess' honour. See also 11.5, which was written to Agnes herself on the same occasion.

No. 11.4

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus adds his voice to Agnes' pleas that Radegund take the strengthening wine that they are urging on her. She seems to be ill and to be refusing wine in line with some ascetic purpose; that, at least, is how the poet is presenting the situation. He points out that even St. Paul encouraged his disciple Timothy to take wine for the sake of his stomach.

No. 11.5

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

This poem seems to be of a pair with 11.3, which was written to Radegund on Agnes' birthday, although we cannot be certain that the two poems are applicable to the same birthday. Agnes seems to be depressed: she is neither eating nor speaking, even to Radegund, and it is tempting to speculate that this is because more birthdays have overtaken her than she is comfortable with. Her gloom affects the poet and makes him miserable.

No. 11.6

Date: 588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus protests great sisterly affection for Agnes, an affection which may have given rise to scandal at some point, which he is refuting in this poem. There is some debate whether Radegund was alive at the time of writing, since she is referred to as *beata*, which suggests that it was written after her death in 587. Reydellet points out that an accusation of scandal between Fortunatus and Agnes would have been harder to support while Radegund was alive and I find this a compelling argument (see Reydellet, *Venance*

Fortunat, Vol. 3, 188, n.49). This poem contains the only named reference to a relative of Fortunatus, his sister Titiana.

No. 11.7

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes and Radegund

As Fortunatus complains of being alone and longing for the presence of his dear women friends, we can assume that both Agnes and Radegund are inaccessible to him: either he is away traveling or they are in retreat. I suspect the latter because while Fortunatus often expresses how much he misses them while he himself is away, these sentiments do not include the loneliness or sadness expressed here.

No. 11.8

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus thanks Agnes in flowery fashion for the gift of food, “a meal of the sisters,” which nourishes his body even as her love nourishes his soul. Many different words for food are used and the emphasis on filling and saturation casts suspicion on the supposed asceticism prevalent at Holy Cross. Our poet, at least, was no ascetic.

No. 11.9

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

This poem is likewise thanks for the gift of food. This was no light snack. Fortunatus describes gardens of vegetables with honey sauce and mountains of meats and seafood,

all of which he has now eaten. While again we must allow for a normal exaggeration of poetic gratitude and for Fortunatus' own gregarious personality, we still receive the impression not only of enormous quantities of food, but that such amounts are good and are to be equated with warmth and affection.

No. 11.10

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

This is further evidence that Fortunatus loved food and took great enjoyment from its pleasures and appearance. Here he describes meats, vegetables in rich fat, vegetables in honey, chicken, fruit and milk. Agnes and Radegund seemed to supply him with food on a regular basis, suggesting that some arrangement was in place between the poet and Holy Cross. There is no lack of varied nutrition in the dinner described and clearly no lack of resources at the monastery.

No. 11.12

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Reydellet believes that in this poem Fortunatus has adopted the conceit that Agnes' spiritual gifts are food to him (see *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 3, 122, no. 59). They are "dishes poured over with honey," and as there is a great quantity left over, he is distributing food to others, i.e. this poem.

No. 11.13

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

Fortunatus sends this verse to accompany a wicker basket filled with chestnuts that he sends to Agnes and Radegund. He has woven the basket with his own hands.

No. 11.14

Date: 585

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Agnes has sent a gift of clotted cream to Fortunatus and this verse thanks her for it in a very charming way: Agnes' fingerprints have been left on the cream and Fortunatus suggests that she has been taught sculpture by the famous Athenian craftsman Daedalus. It also brings the image of her hand to him, he says, even though the mold – her hand – is absent.

No. 11.15

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus thanks Radegund and Agnes for the milk they sent him. This is what St. Paul ordered to be given to the infirm, he points out. It is unclear whether he is really ill, posturing, or simply making an observation.

No. 11.16

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus is ill and under the care of his doctor. Agnes knew this and prepared suitable food for his lunch, which apparently she brought to him herself. But his doctor told him nothing and “inflicted the savage wound” of not letting him see her; it sounds like he did

not get the food either. Fortunatus found out later what happened and begs her forgiveness as it was the doctor's fault, he assures her, not his.

No. 11.17

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

This small poem was written to accompany a gift made with his own hands, although we are not told what that is. He expresses the sentiment that between those who love each other, the greatest pleasure comes from the smallest gifts.

No. 11.18

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

This verse accompanies a gift to Agnes and Radegund of sloes, the small black fruit of the blackthorn. As he urges these offerings on them, his language suggests that the women are unfamiliar with them and might be a little hesitant to try them.

No. 11.19

Date: 585

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus thanks Agnes for the dishes she has sent and especially for the milk. His doctor has forbidden him to touch such things at the present time, but he has enjoyed just looking at them. He wishes he could eat them, however.

No. 11.20

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Once again, the subject of this verse to Agnes is food, this time eggs and plums, which the poet describes as the white and the black. Being an amiable and compliant sort, Fortunatus has obeyed her order to eat two eggs by eating four. He states further that he hopes to be able to obey such orders even more in the future.

No. 11.24

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

This is a note accompanying an unnamed small gift. Fortunatus expresses the hope that the office of Compline is not yet finished so that the women might receive these. (Compline is the last office of the liturgical day, sung in the middle evening after Vespers and before Matins; after this, the nuns would retire to rest and the monastery would be closed until the next day). As in 11.17, Fortunatus emphasizes that a small gift demonstrates the greater love.

No: 11.25

Date: 585

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

This letter describes a journey by river where Fortunatus often found himself buffeted about by storms. Among other stops, he visited the bishop Domitianus of Angers and attended the festival of St. Albinus, a former bishop of Angers whose *vita* he later wrote. He then travelled on to an unknown destination, promising to tell them further about it

when he comes back. Fortunatus obviously enjoys regaling the cloistered women with his adventures, which he quite possibly exaggerates for dramatic effect.

No: 11.26

Date: 585

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: unknown

There is no indication to whom this poem is addressed; Judith George believes it is Radegund. Most of the poem describes harsh winter conditions with ice, snow and north wind. Near the end the poet pleads that his recipient conjure up a spirit of warmth, which along with assiduous prayer will create happiness for him. George suggests that the weather conditions are a metaphor for Fortunatus' feelings, as this is a technique he uses elsewhere (cf. 7.8). If this is the case, and if it is also the case that the poem is addressed to Radegund, then, George argues, we might interpret it as tension between the two that the poet is helpless to resolve. While this interpretation is certainly possible, we simply do not have enough information for a solid interpretation of the poem.

Note: The following poems are taken from the *appendix carminum*, a collection that is separate from the eleven books published by the author or his friends. The manuscript that contains this collection is Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 13048. See Introduction for more information.

No. *appendix carminum* 1

Date: 560? 570?

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Amalfrid

This poem is ostensibly by Radegund and addresses her cousin Amalfrid, who fled to Byzantium after the Franks overthrew his (and her) homeland of Thuringia. The poem was likely sent to reinforce Radegund's request for relics from the emperor and empress.

In it the writer, using motifs from both classical Roman and Germanic poetry, laments the death of her brother and the destruction of Thuringia by her former husband Chlothar I and his elder brother Theuderic. There is ongoing debate whether this poem and that of *app. carm.* 3 following were composed by Radegund or by Venantius Fortunatus.

Frederick Leo, Fortunatus' editor in the MGH believes the latter. On the other hand, Karen Cherewatuk, "Radegund," 21-45, and Peter Dronke, *Women Writers*, 27-8, argue that the writer was indeed Radegund, or at least that it was a collaborative effort. George, *VF: Poems*, 116, presents the poems as being written by Venantius to represent Radegund, a view that Reydellet seems to endorse without explicit comment. I also incline to this last view but acknowledge that the issue is a thorny one to disentangle. Radegund did write some poetry, as Fortunatus on occasion replies to her verses and begs her for more (cf. *app. carm.* 31).

No. *appendix carminum* 2

Date: 570

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Justin II and Sophia

This is a formal offering of thanks in the rhetorical tradition. The emperor and empress of Byzantium have responded to Radegund's request for relics (cf. *LH* 9.40) with a fragment of the True Cross housed in a magnificent reliquary, along with a gospel book and other relics. Fortunatus praises Justin and Sophia – whom he names the new Constantine and Helena – as champions of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, which Justin restored upon his accession after the fiasco of the Three Chapters controversy. He portrays Radegund as prostrating herself day and night in thanksgiving to God for the relics, and once again differentiates between Romans there and barbarians here (see 9.16), all of whom celebrate the splendid rule of the emperor and empress.

No. *appendix carminum* 3

Date: ante 570?

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Artachis

See my remarks under *app. carm.* 1 with regard to this poem's authorship. It appears that Radegund has received a reply from Byzantium to the effect that Amalfrid has died. Radegund now writes back expressing her grief to Artachis, another relative in Constantinople, who is likely Amalfrid's son. A gift of silk thread, a rich and rare gift indeed, accompanied the reply from Byzantium, which had itself only recently begun producing silk (see Procopius, Gothic Wars 4.17; George, *VF: Poems*, 117, n. 26). While personal and a reminder to Artachis of Radegund's relationship to him, there is also a public aspect to both this poem and *app. carm.* 1. As George notes, they were written with an eye to impressing those in Constantinople with the appropriateness of Gaul as a civilized home for important relics.

No. *appendix carminum* 5

Date: 587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Childebert II

This is a mini-panegyric, probably written around the time of the Treaty of Andelot between Childebert and Guntram, when the future of Childebert and Brunhild's kingdom seemed assured. While epistologically borderline, it does end with a personal commendation to the king for the poet and his bearer Audulf which warrants its inclusion. The poem contains some linguistic gymnastics which are worth noting: *ornamentorum ornatus ornatius ornans* in line 3 and *florum flos florens florea flore fluens* in line 10 are two of the most flamboyant.

No. *appendix carminum* 6

Date: 587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Brunhild

This mini-panegyric forms a pair with the previous one and is for Childebert's mother Brunhild, again around the time of the Treaty of Andelot. Fortunatus mentions that Gaul possesses Brunhild's son and Spain her daughter. (It is not clear to which daughter the poet is referring. Ingund, who had married the Visigothic Hermenegild a few years earlier, had been captured by the Greeks along with her young son Athanagild and died en route to Constantinople, see *epistolae Austrasicae* 25-39 and 43-47. There was talk of Brunhild's other daughter Chlodosind marrying Hermenegild's brother Reccared but apparently nothing came of this, see *LH* 9.16 and 20). At the end the poet includes a personal note and commends himself and his bearer Audulf to the queen.

No. *appendix carminum* 10

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

This small poem is difficult to interpret, but all agree that there has been a quarrel among the three friends that requires reconciliation. The poet has either heard a rumour that Radegund and Agnes are going to invite him to dinner and he wants a note to confirm that they are now reconciled, he has been invited and similarly wants a confirmation, or he is taking the first step toward reconciliation by inviting himself for dinner.

No. *appendix carminum* 11

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

The incomplete lines and jagged phrases in this poem lead us to believe that it is a fragment. According to Reydellet, it was found in the poet's working papers after his death and it is valuable because it illustrates how he formed his poetry. The occasion described in the poem is Christmas and presents, including cheese, chicken, and decorated vessels, have arrived for Fortunatus throughout the day:.

No. *appendix carminum* 12

Date: 566-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: unknown woman

Fortunatus addresses a poem of veneration to an unknown woman, deprecating his own ability and commending himself to her as a servant. The recipient cannot be Radegund for two reasons. Firstly, the reference in the poem to the woman's parents and grandmother makes no sense in Radegund's case as her family were Thuringians who had been dead for years. Furthermore, they were completely unknown to Fortunatus. Secondly, the tone of this poem is formal and tentative in contrast to the familiar tone the poet adopts with Radegund and Agnes. The image of the grandmother's character appearing in the granddaughter brings to mind a similar sentiment in the letter to Gregory's niece Justina (cf. 8.13). The "spiritual daughter" of line 13 is unknown.

No. *appendix carminum* 13

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

Fortunatus, aware that Radegund had requested and received the Rule of Caesarius from the Younger Caesaria (cf. *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 11), compares Radegund and Agnes to the two Caesarias, and Holy Cross at Poitiers to Caesarius' monastery for women at Arles. There is a hint toward the end of the poem that the two women have had some sort of disagreement, as the poet urges them to let go of any grudges and bind their hearts together through Christ. He reminds them that Caesaria the Elder would also request this. Both Caesarias, Elder and Younger, had died before Venantius Fortunatus arrived in Gaul.

No. *appendix carminum* 14

Date: 576-600

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: unknown women

The recipients of this poem are a matter of debate and in this way it is like *app. carm.* 12. It differs, however, in its tone, which is relaxed and familiar. Three women – two mothers and one sister – are addressed with the place of honour going to the youngest. The women of Gregory of Tours' family spring to mind, but it is doubtful that Gregory's mother Armentaria was still alive when Justina was prioress of Holy Cross. That aside, the occasion described is an Easter dinner which Fortunatus attended. The poem may have been delivered at the end of the meal or sent as a thank you later.

No. *appendix carminum* 15

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

In a tiny poem of six lines, Fortunatus offers the two women an evening greeting. He hopes that they spend the night in sweet repose in answer to the prayers of their son and brother, and that angels address them in their dreams. He expresses his wish for a couple of lines in return.

No. *appendix carminum* 16

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund or Agnes

It is not clear whether this poem was written to Agnes or Radegund. I incline to the former because the tone is so familiar, but cannot rule out the latter. Fortunatus compares this world, where his beloved is removed from his sight when night falls, and heaven, where those who love each other need never part. He expresses his desire to write many poems for her for many years to come.

No. *appendix carminum* 17

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: the sisters at Holy Cross

Fortunatus is a little envious because the sisters at Holy Cross get to keep Radegund with them inside the monastery while he is left outside, although he realizes that he and they must share her. This raises interesting questions regarding the dichotomy between Radegund's ascetic life inside the monastery and what seems to be her much freer life of association with Fortunatus, which may have taken place in separate quarters within the monastery complex.

No. *appendix carminum* 18

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus laments that he is absent for Agnes' birthday celebration. (This could also be the anniversary of her election as abbess per Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 3, 195, n. 95). He has no proper gift for his sister, but is sending along with this poem some of the local mulberries. He wishes her long life alongside their common mother Radegund.

No. *appendix carminum* 19

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund or Agnes

While this poem celebrates a festal day, we are not told what this is, nor is it clear to whom it was addressed, Radegund or Agnes. While the poem has an intimacy that seems to indicate it was written for Agnes, Fortunatus describes his recipient's voice in terms of honey and the honeycomb, a metaphor he is fond of using for Radegund. The poem has

the song-like quality also found in 3.30 and 8.2 (not included here), which is produced by repeating the beginning of each couplet at the end of its second line for an echo effect.

No. *appendix carminum* 20

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund or Agnes

In this light-hearted poem, Fortunatus asks either Radegund or Agnes how she spent her day, as her happiness and pleasure make him all the more happy. He desires a reply and asks her to detain his bearer until morning if need be.

No. *appendix carminum* 21

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus is distressed because he did not get to see Radegund or hear her voice the day before. When this happens, he says, he is like a lamb who has lost its mother and who then wanders aimlessly, finding pleasure in nothing, until it finds her. The presence of Agnes has partially consoled him, but only when he is able to see them both at once is he a whole person. He prays that St. Martin and St. Hilary might aid them and that God might protect them.

No. *appendix carminum* 22

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus mourns his absence from Radegund, describing how he would do her bidding if he was there with her. He playfully assures her that he would consider burning his

hands in the kitchen and washing the dishes as pure joy, if only he could be with her. (This is all the more amusing when we read *app. carm.* 28 below, in which Fortunatus portrays himself sitting idly by while Radegund rushes about doing all the work of cooking). He tells her that he is sending some gifts from Marcellus – a statement that supports the authenticity of his *vita* of the man – and asks for her honeysweet words in return.

No. *appendix carminum* 23

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

This is a beautiful poem written to Agnes while the poet is absent from her. Life is uncertain and no one knows if tomorrow will even come, but hope is ever-present: tomorrow may not only arrive, but its sun may melt the snow that today weighs down the tops of the trees. He urges Agnes to wisely fix her hope on Christ whom she can never lose and who will protect her even in her sleep. Then when the Bridegroom comes she will go forth with her lamp lit (Matt. 25:2) accompanied by her sisters Thecla (an apocryphal disciple of St. Paul) and Susanna (a martyr under Diocletian). His final sentiment is a wish that she remember him when she reads this letter.

No. *appendix carminum* 24

Date: 570-588

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Because of what Reydellet terms the “disconcerting alternation” of singular and plural second person pronouns, it has been argued that some lines of this poem are addressed to Agnes only, some to Agnes and Radegund, and some to Agnes and some unknown person. I incline to Reydellet’s argument that the whole is for Agnes. Many of Fortunatus’ poems, as do other letters of the period, show a remarkable insouciance when

it comes to singular and plural pronouns, a usage that can only sometimes be explained away by metrical considerations. The poem is difficult to interpret in other ways as well. Fortunatus speaks of his distress that he has upset Radegund by his delay in returning and begs Agnes' forgiveness as well, but we have no idea whether this represents reality or whether the poet is simply striking a mock-tragic pose to amuse the women.

No. *appendix carminum* 25

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

While he is absent on one of his frequent journeys, Fortunatus sends a small letter to his "mothers and mistresses" to prove his affection for them. He reminds them that prayer holds them mutually present with him while they are physically apart.

No. *appendix carminum* 26

Date: 585

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

Fortunatus sends a small verse to accompany a humble offering of three apples wrapped in paper. He describes himself as one of a trinity: a son and a brother carrying three gifts to the other two.

No. *appendix carminum* 27

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Agnes

Fortunatus sends Agnes a cross hung on a pendant and accompanies the gift with this poem. The cross will benefit them both, he says, because when she wears it, Christ will

stretch out his hand to her. It will also protect them both and govern both their hearts. He also greets their common mother, Radegund, and wishes them both long life.

No. *appendix carminum* 28

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus portrays Radegund sweating and bustling about while she lays the fire and cooks food for the sisters. She is helped in this labour by her “daughter,” who is probably not Agnes, since the abbess was not required to do kitchen work (*regula virginum Caesarii Arelatensis* 14). The poet meanwhile seems to be sitting by watching them work. He protests that he would like to help, but he is too slow and besides, he finds the workload daunting. He assures Radegund that she will be able to rest when she gets to heaven (cf. *app. carm.* 22).

No. *appendix carminum* 29

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

Fortunatus is on an island, perhaps on a Lenten retreat of his own (Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat*, Vol. 3, 197, n. 123). He describes in colourful terms the pounding of the waves, the hot sun, the icy waters. In the middle of the poem he poses a cluster of riddles for the amusement of his readers: (*a*) on the island are three gifts of God; (*b*) the sterile sand bears rich fruit; (*c*) this fruit nourishes men worthy of heaven. Probable guesses for these (per Reydellet) are land, sea and sky for the three gifts; shellfish buried in the sand are the fruit it bears; monks from the three monasteries nearby harvest the shellfish. Our poet tells the women he will be back when the banquet of the Most High God takes place, in other words, Easter. He asks to be commended to the sisters, and brother Simplicius, who seems to be away on some errand for the women.

No. *appendix carminum* 30

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund and Agnes

As is clear from many of his poems, Fortunatus is very fond of food. Here he has shown up at Holy Cross just when a time of fasting is about to begin and he reacts in mock terror. On the chance their fasting is contagious, he will run away and hide in a cavern so that hunger will not overcome his belly. On the other hand, he says, if fasting fills them with piety and grace, he need not fear, as these qualities will no doubt cause them to feed him all the more!

No. *appendix carminum* 31

Date: 570-587

Sender: Venantius Fortunatus

Recipient: Radegund

Fortunatus is responding to some verses composed by Radegund on “little tablets,” perhaps for some festive occasion, although this is not made explicit here. The poet calls her verses honey and himself an empty honeycomb; her words are his food. At the end, the poet asks to be commended to the sisters’ prayers. Unfortunately, none of Radegund’s verses have survived.

vita Eligii

Date: 655-682

Sender: Dado

Recipient: Chrodobert of Tours or Paris

This letter and the one following are found in Bk. 2.81 of the *vita*. Bishop Dado of Rouen has written a *vita* of Eligius, the recently-departed bishop of Noyon. He sends it to Chrodobert with this covering letter, asking him to emend it and then return it to him.

Note that Dado and Eligius were both part of Desiderius of Cahors' epistolographical circle. The bishops occupying the sees of Paris and Tours around this time were both named Chrodobert. Some scholars believe they were one and the same person, and that the bishop of Paris later became bishop of Tours, see discussion Chapter 3, Section 5.

Date: 655-682

Sender: Chrodobert of Tours of Paris (see above comments)

Recipient: Dado

Chrodobert replies to Dado's request in the previous letter by assuring the latter that the *vita Eligii* he has written is complete in every way. He therefore has emended nothing of Dado's work, but has instead had copies made for himself and his brothers and sent the volume back to the writer intact.

vita sancti Amandi episcopi auctore Milone

Date: 649

Sender: Pope Martin I

Recipient: Amandus

This letter was added to the original *vita Amandi* by the late 9th century monk Milo of Saint-Amand in Maastricht, Amandus' episcopal see. The pope lists the heresies seen in recent years before specifically castigating the heretic Paul (II), Patriarch of Constantinople from 641 to 653. The pope sends a copy of the *gesta* of his recent synod dealing with these issues (Lateran Council of 649) along with a circular letter. He urges Amandus to similarly convene a synod of all Gallic bishops, collect signatures from all participants, and with the assent of King Sigibert (III), send an embassy of bishops to the apostolic see confirming their adherence to the pope's position. At the end of the letter, Martin remarks that due to the devastation Rome has suffered, his library is empty of all codices. It is impossible, he states, to describe how quickly the city has gone downhill.

vita sancti Desiderii

Date: ante 630

Sender: Herchenefreda

Recipient: Desiderius

This letter from the mother of Bishop Desiderius of Cahors forms Chapter 9 of his *vita*. She advises him to perform only good works and not to do nor consent to evil. He is also to remain faithful to the king and to love the king's followers as well as God. He should live in such a way that those around him may have no reason to disparage him in any way.

Date: ante 630

Sender: Herchenefreda

Recipient: Desiderius

This letter forms Chapter 10 of the *vita Desiderii*. Herchenefreda advises her son to labour always for his soul's progress by holding all people with charity, guarding his chastity, being cautious in his speech and quickly emending any wrongdoing accidentally committed. She also wishes him to often read the letter she sent previously. If Desiderius lets her know what items he needs when he visits the palace, she will send them immediately.

Date: ante 630

Sender: Herchenefreda

Recipient: Desiderius

Herchenefreda sends an emotional letter to Desiderius after her son Rusticus has been killed by "faithless men." This forms Chapter 11 of the *vita*. She mourns that her husband is also dead as well as her other son Siagrius, and she worries that something will happen to Desiderius. She feels she will die from grief and prays that God will receive her soul. She asks Desiderius to send her bearer Doderius back with all speed. Rusticus was

previously bishop of Cahors and Desiderius was elected to that position after his brother's murder with the consent of the king and the support of the citizens of Cahors.

Date: 630

Sender: Dagobert I

Recipient: the bishops, dukes and people of Gaul

The king of the Franks informs the people of Gaul that due to his godly character and priestly way of life, Desiderius has been elected to the bishopric of Cahors. Desiderius has been the king's treasurer for many years, but the king is willing to take a hit as it were, since because all have acclaimed him, it is clear that Desiderius is the right choice for the job. This letter is Chapter 13 of the *vita Desiderii*.

Date: 630

Sender: Dagobert I

Recipient: Sulpicius

In Chapter 14 of the *vita Desiderii*, the writer presents a letter from King Dagobert that informs Archbishop Sulpicius of Bourges that Desiderius is his new suffragan bishop after the death of his brother Rusticus. The king mentions that Desiderius has been his treasurer since the time of his adolescence. He invites Sulpicius to the consecration of the new bishop, which will be held at Easter, and asks him to send letters of invitation to the other bishops in his province.

vita Remigii episcopi Remensis

Date: c. 500

Sender: Pope Hormisdas

Recipient: Remigius

The pope congratulates the bishop of Rheims on the conversion and baptism of King Clovis I and his people, and confers on him the rights and privileges of a metropolitan

bishop. He particularly enjoins upon Remigius the responsibility of convening and moderating councils with his suffragan bishops. The bishop is to ensure that reports of these councils are sent to the pope.

libri historiarum of Gregory of Tours

Date: 540-550

Sender: the bishops of Gaul

Recipient: Radegund

Radegund had sent a petition to the above seeking their corroboration and approval both that the nuns in her monastery at Poitiers follow the Rule of Caesarius of Arles and having committed themselves to this, must never under any circumstance be allowed to leave. Any who do leave will be under anathema and those who are misguided enough to elope and marry will be separated and forced to undergo a strict penance. The bishops bind themselves and their successors to enforcing this, naming Radegund an associate of the holy Martin, and Martin close to an apostle. This letter is found complete in Gregory of Tours *LH* 9.39, who claims that it was sent by the following bishops “in the days of his predecessors:” Eufronius, Praetextatus, Germanus, Felix, Domitianus, Victorius and Domnolus.

Date: 560-567

Sender: Radegund

Recipient: the bishops of Gaul

This letter is given in full in Gregory of Tours’ *LH* 9.42. It was read out by the Mother Superior at the time of the revolt at Holy Cross, but had been written in the early days of the nunnery at Poitiers. It is basically a petition, written in legal language, to the bishops to protect and maintain the nunnery as Radegund established it. It forbids any change after her death or at any time, and calls down the wrath of God on any who attempt to alienate its property or interfere with it in any way. Note: this is not the letter to which the previous letter is a reply.

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Index of Epistolographical Prosopography

The following index is alphabetical by personal name. Provided is a list of letters to and from each individual letter writer, the collection from which each is taken, and the number of the epistle within each collection. Please note: because the collections of Gregory the Great and Venantius Fortunatus contain only letters sent by these individuals, this index lists these only under the names of their recipients.

Abbo, bishop of Metz, d. 643: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.13 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors; I.9 from Desiderius.

Adonis, bishop of Vienne d. 875: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 21, 22 from Pope Nicolaus I.

Aeardulf, bishop of Rochester 747–778: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 122 to Lully.

Aelfwald, king of East Angles 713–49: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 81 to Boniface.

Aeonius, bishop of Arles, d. 501/2: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 22 from Pope Gelasius; 23, 24 from Pope Symmachus.

Aethelbald, king of Mercia 715–57: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 69, 73 from Boniface.

Aethelbert II, king of Kent 725–762: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 105 to Boniface.

Aetherius, bishop of Lyons died c. 602: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 11.40, 13.6 from Pope Gregory I; 6.52 jointly with Pelagius, bishop of Tours and Serenus, bishop of Marseilles from Gregory; 9.219 jointly with Syagrius of Autun, Virgilius of Arles, and Desiderius of Vienne from Gregory.

Agapitus I, pope 535–6: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 36, 37 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles; *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 15, 16 to Caesarius.

Agatho, pope 678–681: *epistolae viennenses spuriae* 10 to Edictus, bishop of Vienne.

Agericus, bishop of Verdun 554–88: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.23, 3.23a from Venantius Fortunatus.

Agnes, abbess of Holy Cross at Poitiers 557–86: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 11.8, 11.14, 11.19, 11.6, 11.5, 11.10, 11.15, 11.16, 11.17, 11.18, 11.20, 11.9, 11.12, *appendix carminum* 18, 23, 24, 27 from Venantius Fortunatus; 11.7, 11.13, 11.24, 11.25, *app. carm.* 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19, 25, 26, 29, 30 jointly with Radegund from

- Fortunatus; *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 11 under the name Richild, jointly with Radegund from Caesaria the Younger.
- Agricola, praetorian prefect of Gaul: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 8 from Honorius and Theodosius II, Roman emperors.
- Agricola, bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône (prob.) 532–580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.19 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Agroecius, bishop of Antibes c. 527: *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 19 from Caesarius and other bishops.
- Alagisle, prob. officer under Sigibert I c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.21 jointly with Sigismund, also an officer under the same king.
- Alaric II, king of the Visigoths 485–507: *Variae* III.1 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Aldbercht, deacon, and Tyccea c. 770: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 129 to Lully.
- Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury 675–709: *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* 1 to Leutherius, bishop of Winchester; 10 to Cellanus, abbot of Péronne; 9 from Cellanus, abbot of Péronne.
- Aldherius, abbot c. 750: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 38 from Boniface.
- Alexander, bishop of Vienne c. 908: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 23 from Pope Sergius III.
- Alhred, king of Northumbria 765–74 and queen Osgifu: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 121 to Lully.
- Amabilis, count in Italy c. 520: *Variae* IV.5 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Amalfrid, cousin of Radegund in Constantinople c. 560: *Venantii Fortunati opera appendix carminum* 1 from Radegund and/or Venantius Fortunatus.
- Amandus, bishop of Maastricht 647?–675?: *vita sancti Amandi episcopi auctore Milone* from Pope Martin I.
- Anastasia, wife of Byzantine emperor Tiberius II and mother-in-law of Maurice d. 593: *epistolae Austrasicae* 29, 30, 44 from Brunhild, queen of the Franks.
- Andhunus, c. 747: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 79 from an unknown writer.
- Anfion, priest of Bordeaux c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.24 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Anthemius, deacon c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.29 from Venantius Fortunatus.

- Arbogast, count–elect of Trier c. 460: *epistolae Austrasicae* 22 from Auspicius, bishop of Toul.
- Aredius, abbot d. 591: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 5.19 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Aregius, bishop of Gap 579–610?: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.220, 11.42, 11.44 from Pope Gregory I.
- Arigius, ruler of Marseilles c. 596: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.59 from Pope Gregory I; 9.212 jointly with Wantilonus from Gregory.
- Armentaria, mother of Gregory of Tours: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 10.15 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Artachis, relative of Radegund in Constantinople c. 560: *Venantii Fortunati opera appendix carminum* 3 from Radegund and/or Venantius Fortunatus.
- Asclepiodotus, patrician of Gaul c. 600: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.226, 11.43 from Pope Gregory I.
- Aspasia, abbess c. 650: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.14 from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Athanagild, son of Ingund and Hermenegild; grandson of Queen Brunhild c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 27 from Brunhild; 28 from Childebert II, king of the Franks.
- Aunarius, bishop of Auxerre 573–603: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 7 to Stephanus, priest; 9, 10 from Pope Pelagius II; 8 from Stephanus, priest.
- Aurelianus, bishop of Arles 523–551: *epistolae Austrasicae* 10 to King Theudebert I: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 44, 45 from Pope Vigilius.
- Aurelianus, c. 600: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.218 from Pope Gregory I.
- Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, d. 430: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 2 from Pope Zosimus.
- Austrobertus, bishop of Vienne early 8th C: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 13 from Pope Gregory II; 14 from Pope Zacharias.
- Auxanius, bishop of Arles 543–6: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 39, 41, 42 from Pope Vigilius.
- Avitus, bishop of Vienne c. 494–523: *Aviti episcopi Viennensis epistolae* 46 to King

- Clovis I; *collectio Avellana* 136 to Pope Hormisdas; 137 from Pope Hormisdas; *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 2 to Caesarius bishop of Arles.
- Avitus, bishop of Clermont d. 600: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.21, 3.22, 3.22a from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Aviulfus, bishop of Valence c. 650: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.3 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Balthard, cousin of Lully c. 760: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 143, 147, 148 from his sister Berthgyth.
- Baudoald, bishop of Meaux c. 580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.8 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Benedict, Roman cardinal c. 751: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 90 to Boniface.
- Bernard, bishop of Vienne 810–42: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 20 from Pope Eugenius II; 19 from Pope Paschal I.
- Bertechramnus/Bertram, bishop of Le Mans 587–623: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.17, 3.18 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Bertegysle, abbot c. 630: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.2 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Bertericus, bishop of Vienne c. 775: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 17 from Pope Hadrian I.
- Berthgyth, cousin and assistant of Lully c. 760: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 143, 147, and 148 to her brother Balthard.
- Boba, abbess c. 660: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 16 from Chrodobert, bishop of Tours.
- Boethius, Italian philosopher, senator, and consul d. 524/5: *Variae* I.45, II.40 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Boniface, missionary to the Germans 716–754: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 9 to Nithardus; 50, 59, 86 to Pope Zacharias; 51, 57, 58, 60, 68, 77, 80, 87, 88, 89 from Zacharias; 27, 94 to Abbess Bugga; 15 from Bugga; 14 from Bugga jointly with her mother Eangyth; 10, 30, 35, 65 to Eadburga, abbess of Thanet; 31 to an unknown spiritual brother; 32 to Pethelm, bishop of Whithorn Priory; 33 to Nothelm, archbishop of Canterbury; 34 to Abbot Duddo; 38 to Abbot Aldherius;

40 to the monks of Fritzlar; 41 to his people in Germany; 46 to the English people; 48 to Grifo, son of Charles Martel; 63 to Daniel, bishop of Winchester; 23, 64 from Daniel, 66 to an unknown nun; 67 to Leobgytha, Tecla, and Cynehild; 69, 73 to Aethelbald, king of Mercia; 74 to Herefrith, priest; 75, 91 to Egbert, Archbishop of York; 76 to Huetbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow; 78 to Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury; 93 to Fulrad, abbot of St. Denis; 95 to Reginbert, count; 96 to Leobgytha, abbess of Bishopsheim; 29 from Leobgytha; 99 to Denehard, priest; 104 to Gemmulus, Roman cardinal; 54, 62 from Gemmulus 106 to Optatus, abbot of Monte Cassino; 96 to Leobgytha, abbess of Bischofsheim; 107 to Pippin; 108, 109 to Pope Stephen II; 13 from Abbess Egburga; 81 from Aelfwald, king of the East Angles; 105 from Aethelbert II, king of Kent; 90 from Benedict, Roman cardinal; 97 from Abbess Cena; 12, 24, 26 from Pope Gregory II; 28, 45 from Pope Gregory III; 103 from Lully; 36 from Abbot Sigebald of Chertsey; 84, 85 from Theophylact, Roman archdeacon; 47 from Torhthelm, bishop of Leicester.

Boniface II, pope 530–532: *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 20 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles.

Boniface III, pope 607 or Sabinian, pope 604–6: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 3 from Columbanus.

Boniface IV, pope 608–615: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 12 to Florianus, bishop of Arles; 13 to King Theuderic II; *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 5, 6 from Columbanus.

Boso, referendary of King Sigibert c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.22 from Venantius Fortunatus.

Botwin, abbot of Ripon d. 786: *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 131 to Lully.

Bregowin, archbishop of Canterbury 759–765: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 117 to Lully.

Brunhild, queen of the Franks 567–613: *epistolae Austrasicae* 26 to Mauricius, Byzantine emperor; 27 to Athanagild; 29, 30, 44 to Anastasia, wife of Byzantine emperor Tiberius II and mother-in-law of Mauricius; 9 from Germanus, bishop of Paris; *Venantii Fortunati opera appendix carminum* 6 from Venantius

- Fortunatus; *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.5, 6.58, 6.60, 8.4, 9.213, 9.214, 11.46, 11.48, 11.49, 13.5 from Pope Gregory I.
- Bugga, abbess, died c. 750: *S. Bonifatii et Lully epistolae* 14 with her mother Eangyth to Boniface; 15 to Boniface; 27, 94 from Boniface.
- Bulgar, count of Septimania c. 610: *epistolae wisigoticae* 11, 12, 13 to a Frankish bishop.
- Burchard, Denehard, Lully, monks under Boniface: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 49 to Abbess Cuneburga. Burchard later became bishop of Würzburg, Lully bishop of Mainz.
- Burchard, bishop of Würzburg 741–754: 53 from Pope Zacharias.
- Byzantine Exarch, Smaragdus or Romanus 585 or 590: *epistolae Austrasicae* 40, 41 to King Childebert II.
- Caesaria the Elder, abbess of monastery of women at Arles d. 524: *Caesarii episcopi Arelatenses epistolae* 21 from her brother Caesarius, bishop of Arles.
- Caesaria the Younger, abbess of monastery at Arles 524–559: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 11 to Radegund and Richild (Agnes).
- Caesarius, bishop of Arles 502–542: *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 7a, 8a to Pope Symmachus; 7b, 8b from Symmachus; 14b to all the bishops of Gaul; 3 to Ruricius, bishop of Limoges; 4, 5 from Ruricius; 21 to his sister, Caesaria the Elder; 19 to Agroecius, bishop of Antibes; 15, 16 from Pope Agapitus; 2 from Avitus, bishop of Vienne; 20 from Pope Boniface II; 1 from Ennodius, bishop of Pavia; 11 from Pope Felix IV; 9, 10, 18 from Pope Hormisdas; 14a from Pope John II; 17 from Pope Vigilius. (Many of these are duplicated in the *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* – see Appendix of Summaries).
- Caesarius, bishop of Clermont c. 627: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.13 from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Calixtus II, pope d. 1124: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 30 to the canons and clerics of Vienne.
- Candidus, administrator of papal estates in Gaul c. 595: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.10, 7.21, 9.222 from Pope Gregory I.
- Carentinus, bishop of Cologne c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.14 from Venantius Fortunatus.

- Carloman, king of the Franks 768–771: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 56 to all Christians.
- Cassiodorus, Roman administrator under Theodoric the Great, died c. 585: *Variae* XI.1 to the Roman senate.
- Cellanus, abbot of Péronne c. 705: *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* 9 to Aldhelm, abbot Malmesbury; 10 from Aldhelm.
- Cena, unknown abbess c. 750: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 97 to Boniface.
- Ceraunius, bishop of Paris 614–25: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 14 from Warnechar, mayor of the palace.
- Chaenulf c. 650: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.14 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Chaming, duke in Francia ante 575: *epistolae Austrasicae* 13 from Gogo, tutor of Childebert II, king of Austrasia.
- Charlemagne, king of the Franks 768–814: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 120 from Abbot Eanwulf; *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 16 from Pope Paul I. Note: this letter's designation is problematic – see Appendix of Summaries.
- Charles Martel d. 741: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 22 to all the people; 20 from Pope Gregory II.
- Childebert I, king of the Franks 511–58: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 3 from Leo, bishop of Sens; *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 48, 51, 52, 54 from Pope Pelagius I.
- Childebert II, king of the Franks 575–596: *epistolae Austrasicae* 48 to an unnamed Italian patrician; 35 to John, council member in Constantinople; 25, 47 to Mauricius, Byzantine emperor; 42 from Mauricius; 28 to his nephew Athanagild; 45 to John patriarch of Constantinople; 32 to Honoratus, the pope's representative at the Byzantine court; 33 to Domitianus bishop of Malta; 34 to Theodore; 36 to Meganto, a Constantinopolitan official; 37 to Paul, father of the Byzantine Exarch; 39 to the patrician Venantius (not Fortunatus); 42 to Theodosius, son of the Byzantine emperor; 46 to Laurentius bishop of Milan; 48 to Grasulf duke of Histria; 40, 41 from the Byzantine exarch; *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 5.60, 6.6 from Pope Gregory I; *Venantii Fortunati opera appendix carminum* 5 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Chlodosind, wife of Alboin, king of the Lombards and daughter of Chlothar I, king of the

- Franks c. 568: *epistolae Austrasicae* 8 from Nicetius, bishop of Trier.
- Chlodulf, bishop of Metz c. 656– c. 696: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.8 from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Chlothar II, king of the Franks 584–629: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 11.51 from Pope Gregory I.
- Chrodin, Frankish duke c. 580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.16 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Chrodoberth, bishop of Tours c. 653–674: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 16 to Abbess Boba; *additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium* 1, 4, 5 to Importunus, bishop of Paris; 2, 3 from Importunus; *vita Eligii* to Dado of Rouen.
- Cineheard, bishop of Winchester 754–80: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 114, 123 to Lully.
- Clovis I, king of the Franks 481–511: *Aviti episcopi Viennensis epistolae* 46 from Avitus, bishop of Vienne; *epistolae Austrasicae* 1, 2 from Remigius, bishop of Rheims; *Variae* II.41, III.4 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Columbanus, Irish missionary and founder of Luxeuil and Bobbio, d. 615: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 1 to Pope Gregory I; 2 to a Gallican synod; 3 to either Pope Sabinian or Pope Boniface III; 4 to his monks; 5 to Boniface IV and his clergy; 6 to Boniface IV; 7 to an unknown young man; 8 to Hunaldus; 9 to Sethus; 10 to Fedolius; 11 to a friend.
- Conon, abbot of Lérins c. 600: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 11.9 from Pope Gregory I.
- Constantinus I, pope 708–715: *epistolae viennenses spuriae* 12 to Eoaldus bishop of Vienne.
- Constantius, bishop of Albi c. 625 – c. 647: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.15 to Desiderius bishop of Cahors; II.4 jointly with Dado, bishop of Rouen to Desiderius.
- Cornelius, pope 251–3: *epistolae viennenses spuriae* 5 to Lupicinus, bishop of Vienne.
- Cuneburga, abbess of an English house c. 740: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 49 from Denehard, Lully and Burchard, monks and assistants to Boniface.
- Cuthbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow c. 764 – c. 781: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 116, 127 to Lully; 126 from Lully.

- Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury d. 758: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 111 to Lully and his associates; 78 from Boniface.
- Cynehild, abbess of convent in Thuringia c. 745: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 67 jointly with Leobgytha, abbess of Bishopsheim, Tecla abbess in Kitzingen and their sisters from Boniface.
- Cynewulf, king of Wessex 757–786 and his bishops: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 139 to Lully.
- Cyprianus, bishop of Toulon c. 524–533: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 1 to Maximus, bishop of Geneva.
- Dado, bishop of Rouen 640–686: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.4 jointly with Constantius, bishop of Albi to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors; I.10 from Desiderius; *vita Eligii* to Chrodobert of Tours or Paris.
- Dagobert I, king of the Franks 623–39: in *Vita Sancti Desiderii* to all the people of Gaul; to Sulpicius, archbishop of Berry; *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.5 from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Daniel, bishop of Winchester 705–744: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 11 to all Christians; 23, 64 to Boniface; 63 from Boniface.
- Dealwine, teacher of Lully: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 71 from Lully.
- Denehard, Lully, Burchard, monks under Boniface: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 49 to Abbess Cuneburga. Burchard later became bishop of Würzburg, Lully bishop of Mainz.
- Denehard, priest: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 99, 113 from Boniface.
- Desiderius, bishop of Cahors 630–655: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.1 to Salustius, bishop of Agen; I.5 to King Dagobert I; I.7 to Medoald, bishop of Trier; I.12 to Sulpicius, archbishop of Berry; II.1, II.10 from Sulpicius; I.9 to Abbo, bishop of Metz; II.13 from Abbo; I.11 to Paul, bishop of Verdun; II.11, II.12 from Paul; I.13 to Caesarius, bishop of Clermont; I.14 to Abbess Aspasia; I.15 to Felix bishop of Limoges; II.21 from Felix; I.8 to Chlodulf, later bishop of Metz; II.8 to everybody of importance in Spain; I.3, I.4 to Sigibert III, king of Austrasia; II.17, II.9 from Sigibert; I.10 to Dado, bishop of Rouen; I.6, I.2 to Grimoald, mayor of the palace; II.3 from Aviulfus, bishop of Valence; II.2 from Abbot Bertegysle;

- II.14 from Chaenulf; II.15 from Constantius, bishop of Albi; II.4 from Constantius and Dado, bishop of Rouen; II.6 from Eligius, bishop of Noyon; II.20 from Gallus, bishop of Clermont; II.18 from Palladius, bishop of Auxerre; II.7 from Rauracius, bishop of Nevers; II.16, II.19 from Verus, bishop of Rodez; *vita sancti Desiderii*, 3 letters from Herchenefreda, mother of Desiderius.
- Desiderius, bishop of Vienne d. 607: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.158, 9.221, 11.34 from Pope Gregory I; 6.55 jointly with Syagrius of Autun from Gregory I; 9.219 jointly with Syagrius of Autun, Aetherius of Lyons, and Virgilius of Arles from Gregory.
- Dionysius, bishop of Vienne died c. 193: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 3 from Pope Victor I.
- Domitianus, bishop of Malta c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 33 from Childebert II, king of the Franks.
- Doto, abbot of St. Peter's of Luxeuil c. 770: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 133 to Lully.
- Droctoveus, abbot of St. Germain-des-Prés died c. 580: *Venantii Fortunai opera* 9.11 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Duddo, abbot c. 735: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 34 from Boniface.
- Dynamius, rector of Provence c. 580: *epistolae Austrasicae* 12 to an unknown friend; 17 to Vilicus; *Venantii Fortunati opera* 6.10 from Venantius Fortunatus; *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 3.33, 6.9 from Pope Gregory I; 7.33 jointly with his wife Aureliana from Gregory.
- Eadburga, abbess of Thanet c. 740: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 10, 30, 35, 65 from Boniface; 70 from Lully.
- Eangyth, abbess and her daughter Heaburg/Bugga c. 720: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 14 to Wynfrith/Boniface.
- Eanwulf, abbot c. 773: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 119 to Lully; 120 to Charlemagne.
- Edictus, bishop of Vienne c. 680: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 10 from Pope Agatho.
- Egbert, archbishop of York 734–66: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 75, 91 from Boniface.
- Egburga, abbess c. 720: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 13 to Wynfrith/Boniface.
- Egidius, bishop of Rheims 573–590: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.15 from Venantius Fortunatus.

- Eligius, bishop of Noyon 642–660: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.6 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Ennodius, bishop of Pavia 514–521: *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 1 to Caesarius.
- Eoaldus, bishop of Vienne d. 716: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 11 from Pope John VI or VII; 12 from Pope Constantinus I.
- Eufronius, bishop of Tours 556–73: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Eumerius, bishop of Nantes c. 540: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 2 from Troianus, bishop of Saintes.
- Eugenius II, pope 824–7: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 20 to Bernard, bishop of Vienne.
- Evodius, c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.19 jointly with his brother Flavus from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Falco, bishop of Liège c. 530: *epistolae Austrasicae* 4 from Remigius, bishop of Rheims.
- Faramod, chancellor of King Chilperic c. 580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.12 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Fedolius c. 612: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 10 from Columbanus.
- Felix, bishop of Limoges c. 650: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.21 to Desiderius; I.15 from Desiderius.
- Felix, bishop of Nantes 549–84: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.4, 3.5, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 5.7, 7.13 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Felix, bishop of Bourges c. 580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.20 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Felix, bishop of Treviso c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.13 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Felix IV, pope 526–30: *epistolae arelatenses genuinae* 31 and *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 11 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles.
- Flavus, c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.18 from Venantius Fortunatus; 7.19 jointly with his brother Evodius from Fortunatus.

- Florentinus, c. 600: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 10.12 jointly with Gregory, bishop of Tours, Romulf, and Gallienus from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Florianus, abbot of Romenus c. 550: *epistolae austrasicae* 5, 6 to Nicetius, bishop of Trier.
- Florianus, bishop of Arles c. 613: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 12 from Pope Boniface IV.
- Fulrad, abbot of St. Denis 750–84: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 93 from Boniface.; 110 jointly with the Frankish bishops from Lully.
- Galactorius, count of Bordeaux c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.25, 10.19 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Gallienus, c. 600: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 10.12 jointly with Gregory, bishop of Tours, Romulf, and Florentinus from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Gallus II, bishop of Clermont c. 650: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.20.
- Gayroinus, abbot of Flavigny c. 750: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 19 from Pippin, mayor of the palace.
- Gelasius, pope 492–6: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 22 to Aeonius, bishop of Arles.
- Gemellus, Roman senator c. 510: *Variae* III.16, III.32, III.41 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Gemmulus, Roman cardinal c. 742: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 54, 62 to Boniface; 104 from Boniface.
- Germanus, bishop of Paris 555–576: *epistolae Austrasicae* 9 to Brunhild, queen of the Franks.
- Gogo, tutor of Childebert II and counselor of Sigibert I ante 575: *epistolae Austrasicae* 13 to Chaming, duke; 16 to Trasericus, bishop of Toul; 22 to Peter, bishop of Metz; *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Grasulf, duke of Hstria c. 580: *epistolae Austrasicae* 48 from Childebert II, king of the Franks. (This was written by Gogo, Childebert's tutor and guardian, on the king's behalf during his minority).
- Gregory, bishop of Tours 573–94: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 5.5a–b, 5.8, 5.8a–b, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17, 8.11, 8.12, 8.12a, 8.13, 8.14, 8.15,

- 8.16, 8.17, 8.18, 8.19, 8.20, 8.21, 9.6, 9.7 from Venantius Fortunatus; 10.12 jointly with Romulf, Gallienus, and Florentinus from Fortunatus.
- Gregory, abbot of Utrecht died c. 775: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 92 from Lully.
- Gregory I, pope 590–604: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 1 from Columbanus
- Gregory II, pope 715–31: *S. Bonifatii et Lullii epistolae* 17 to all German Christians; 21 to the Old Saxons; 12, 24, 26 to Boniface; 18, 19, 25 to the people of Thuringia; 20 to Charles Martel; *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 13 to Austrobertus, bishop of Vienne.
- Gregory III, pope 731–41: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 28, 45 to Boniface; 42 to all bishops priests, and abbots; 43 to the people of Germany; 44 to the bishops of the Bavarians and Alemanni.
- Gregory VII, pope 1073–85: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 25 to the clergy and people of the Viennese church; 26 to Warmundus, bishop of Vienne.
- Grifo, son of Charles Martel 726–53: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 48 from Boniface.
- Grimoald, mayor of the palace (Austrasia) 643–656: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.2, I.6 from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Guido, bishop of Vienne 1088–1119, pope (Callixtus II) 1119–1124: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 29 from Pope Paschall II.
- Gundobad, king of Burgundy d. 516: *Variae* I.46, III.2 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Gunduarius, administrator under King Sigibert c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.17 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Hadrian I, pope 772–795: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 17 to Bertericus, bishop of Vienne.
- Heraclius, bishop of Sens d. 515: *epistolae Austrasicae* 3 jointly with Leo and Theodosius, bishop of Auxerre, from Remigius, bishop of Rheims.
- Herchenefreda, mother of Desiderius of Cahors: three letters from the *vita sancti Desiderii* to Desiderius.
- Herefrith, priest c. 745: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 74 from Boniface.
- Hilarius, a Frankish noble who later became a priest c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera*

- 3.16 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Hilarus, bishop of Narbonne I c. 417: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 3 from Pope Zosimus.
- Hilarus, pope 461–68: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 15, 16, 17, 19 to Leontius, bishop of Arles; 18, 20, 21 to the bishops of Gaul.
- Honoratus, Byzantine envoy or herald c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 32 from Childebert II, king of Austrasia.
- Honorius, Roman emperor d. 423 and Theodosius II, emperor 408–50: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 8 to Agricola, praetorian prefect of Gaul.
- Hormisdas, pope 514–23: *collectio Avellana* 137 to Avitus, bishop of Vienne; *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 30 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles; *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 9, 10, 18 to Caesarius; *vita Remigii episcopi Remensis* c. 20 to Remigius; *collectio Avellana* 136 from Avitus, bishop of Vienne.
- Huetbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow 715–?: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 76 from Boniface.
- Hunaldus, c. 612: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 8 from Columbanus.
- Importunus, bishop of Paris c. 665: *additamentum e codice formularum Senonensium* 2, 3 to Chrodobert, bishop of Tours; 1, 4, 5 from Chrodobert.
- Ingalice, priest c. 740: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 72 to Lully.
- John, patriarch of Constantinople c. 585: *epistolae Austrasicae* 31, 45 from Childebert II, king of Austrasia.
- John, deacon c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.28 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- John, quaestor in Constantinople c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 35 from Childebert II, king of Austrasia.
- John II, pope 533–5: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 34 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles; 32 to the bishops of Gaul; 33 to the clergy of the church of Riez; *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 14a to Caesarius; 13 to the clergy of the church of Riez; 12 to the bishops of Gaul.
- John VI, pope 701–5 or John VII, pope 705–7: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 11 to Eoaldus, bishop of Vienne.

- Jovinus, rector of Provence c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.11, 7.12 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Justin II and Sophia, Byzantine rulers c. 565–78: *Venantii Fortunati opera appendix carminum* 2 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Justinian, emperor of Byzantium c. 565: *epistolae Austrasicae* 7 from Nicetius, bishop of Trier; 18 from Theudebald, king of the Franks; 19, 20 from Theudebert I, king of the Franks.
- Justus, bishop of Vienne c. 150: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 2 from Pope Pius I.
- Koena, archbishop of York d. 781: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 124 to Lully; 125 from Lully.
- Laurentius II, bishop of Milan 573–92: *epistolae Austrasicae* 46 from Childebert II, king of Austrasia.
- Leo, bishop c. 512: *epistolae Austrasicae* 3 jointly with Heraclius, bishop of Sens, and Theodosius, bishop of Auxerre, from Remigius, bishop of Rheims.
- Leo, bishop of Sens d. 541: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 3 to Childebert I, king of the Franks.
- Leo I, pope 440–61: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 9, 13 to the bishops of Gaul; 10, 11, 14 to Ravennius, bishop of Arles; 12 from the Gallic bishops; *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 8 to the bishops of the province of Vienne.
- Leo III, pope 795–816: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 18 to Volferius, bishop of Vienne.
- Leo IX, pope 1049–54: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 24 to Leodegar, bishop of Vienne.
- Leobgytha, abbess of Bishopsheim c. 750: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 29 to Boniface; 96 from Boniface; 100 from Lully; 67 jointly with Tecla, Cynehild abbess in Thuringia, and their sisters from Boniface.
- Leodegar, bishop of Vienne 1030–70: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 24 from Pope Leo IX.
- Leontius, bishop of Arles c. 462: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 15, 16, 17, 19 from Pope Hilarus.
- Leudegar, bishop of Autun 659–79: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 17 to Sigrada, his mother.

Leutherius, bishop of Winchester 670–6: *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* 1 from Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury.

Lully, Boniface's successor as bishop of Mainz c. 755: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 98 to an unknown abbess and nun; 103 to Boniface; 70 to Eadburga, abbess of Thanet; 71 to Dealwine; 92 to Gregory, abbot of Utrecht; 100 to Leobgytha, abbess of Bishopsheim; 110 to Fulrad and the Frankish bishops; 113 to Denehard and others; 125 to Koaena, archbishop of York; 124 from Koaena; 126 to Cuthbert, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow; 116, 127 from Cuthbert; 128 to Suitha, abbess; 49 with Denehard and Burchard to Abbess Cuneburga. (Burchard later became bishop of Würzburg); 135 from an unknown monk; 122 from Aearulf, bishop of Rochester; 121 from Alhred and Osgifu, king and queen of Northumbria; 131 from Botwin, abbot of Ripon; 117 from Bregowin, archbishop of Canterbury; 114, 123 from Cineheard, bishop of Winchester; 139 from Cynewulf, king of Wessex and his bishops; 133 from Doto, abbot of Luxeuil; 119 from Abbot Eanwulf; 72 from Ingalice, priest; 130, 134, 136 from Magingaoz, bishop of Würzburg; 112 from Milred, bishop of Worcester; 118 from Pippin, king of the Franks; 129 from Tyceea and Aldbercht, deacon; 132 from Abbot Wigbert; 137, 138 from the priest Wigbert; 111 from Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury.

Lupicinus, bishop of Vienne c. 251: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 5 from Pope Cornelius.

Lupus, duke of Champagne c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.8, 7.9 from Venantius Fortunatus.

Lupus, abbot of St. Martin's at Autun c. 602: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 13.11.

Lupus, deacon c. 580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.13 jointly with deacon Vualdo from Venantius Fortunatus.

Magingaoz, bishop of Würzburg c. 760: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 130, 134, 136 to Lully.

Magnericus, bishop of Trier 573–96: *epistolae Austrasicae* 14 from Venantius Fortunatus.

Magnulf, brother of Lupus, duke of Champagne c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.10 from Venantius Fortunatus.

Mapinius, bishop of Rheims c. 550: *epistolae Austrasicae* 11 to Nicetius, bishop of Trier;

- 14 to Vilicus, bishop of Metz.
- Martin, bishop of Braga 573–580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 5.1, 5.2 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Martin I, pope 649–53: *vita sancti Amandi auctore Milone* to Amandus, bishop of Maastricht.
- Mauricius, Byzantine emperor 582–602: *epistolae Austrasicae* 42 to Childebert II, king of the Franks; 25, 47 from Childebert; 26 from Brunhild, queen of the Franks.
- Maximus, bishop of Geneva c. 530: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 1 from Cyprianus, bishop of Toulon.
- Medoald, bishop of Trier 626–45: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* I.7 from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Meganto, curator in Constantinople c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 36 from Childebert II, king of the Franks.
- Mellitus, abbot c. 601: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 11.56 from Pope Gregory I.
- Milred, bishop of Worcester d. 775: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 112 to Lully.
- Nicetius, bishop of Trier died c. 566: *epistolae Austrasicae* 7 to Justinian, Byzantine emperor; 8 to Chlodosind, daughter of Chlothar I, king of the Franks and wife of Alboin, king of the Lombards; 5, 6 from Florianus, abbot of Romenus; 11 from Mapinius, bishop of Rheims; 21 from Rufus, bishop of Turin; *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.11 from Venantius Fortunatus; 24 from an unknown writer.
- Nicolaus I, pope 858–867: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 21, 22 to Adonis, bishop of Vienne.
- Nithardus c. 715: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 9 from Boniface.
- Nothelm, archbishop of Canterbury 735–9: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 33 from Boniface.
- Optatus, abbot of Monte Cassino c. 750: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 106 from Boniface.
- Osfigu, queen of Northumbria and Alhred, king 765–74: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 121 to Lully.
- Palladius, bishop of Saintes c. 570–90: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.50 from Pope Gregory I.

- Palladius, bishop of Auxerre c. 650: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.18 to Desiderius bishop of Cahors.
- Paracoda, bishop of Vienne c. 190: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 4 from Pope Victor I.
- Paschal I, pope 817–24: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 19 to Bernard, bishop of Vienne.
- Paschal II, pope 1099–1118: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 29 to Guido, bishop of Vienne.
- Paternus, abbot c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.25, 7.23 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Patroclus, bishop of Arles c. 417: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 4, 6 from Pope Zosimus.
- Paul I, pope 757–767: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 16 to King Charles.
- Paul, bishop of Verdun c. 630–49: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.11, II.12 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors; I.11 from Desiderius.
- Pehthelm, bishop of Candida Casa (Whithorn Priory) c. 735: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 32 from Boniface.
- Paul, father of the exarch Smaragdus in Ravenna c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 37 from Childebert II, king of the Franks.
- Pelagius, bishop of Tours 595–602: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.52 jointly with Serenus, bishop of Marseilles and Aetherius, bishop of Lyons from Pope Gregory I.
- Pelagius I, pope 556–61: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 5 to Sapaudus, bishop of Arles; 6 to Valerianus, patrician; *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 46, 47, 49, 50, 53 to Sapaudus, bishop of Arles; 48, 51, 52, 54 to Childebert I, king of the Franks; 55 to various bishops; 56 to all Christians.
- Pelagius II, pope 579–90: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 9, 10 to Aunarius, bishop of Auxerre.
- Peter, deacon of the church of Vienne c. 1120: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 30 from Pope Callixtus II.
- Petrus, bishop of Metz 568–78: *epistolae Austrasicae* 22 from Gogo, tutor of King Childebert II during his minority.
- Pippin, king of the Franks 751–768: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 19 to Gayroinus, abbot of Flavigny; *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 118 to Lully; 107 from Boniface.

- Pius I, pope c. 150: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 1 to Verus, bishop of Vienne;
2 to Iustus, bishop of Vienne.
- Placidina, wife of Leontius II, bishop of Bordeaux c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* I.17
from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Proculus, bishop of Vienne c. 755: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 15 from Pope Stephen
II.
- Protasius, bishop of Aix-en-Provence 595–636: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.56
from Pope Gregory I.
- Radegund, erstwhile wife of Chlothar I and queen of the Franks, later founder of Holy
Cross monastery at Poitiers c. 520–586: her letter to the Gallic bishops quoted in
Gregory of Tours' *Histories* IX.42 and another from the Gallic bishops in IX.39;
Venantii Fortunati opera appendix carminum 1 to Amalfrid; *appendix carminum*
3 to Artachis; 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9, 8.10, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, App. Carm. 20, 21, 22,
28, 31 from Venantius Fortunatus; 11.7, 11.13, 11.24, 11.25, App. Carm. 10, 11,
13, 15, 16, 19, 25, 26, 29, 30 jointly with Agnes, abbess of Holy Cross, from
Fortunatus; *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 11 jointly with Agnes, abbess of
Holy Cross (under the name Richild) from Caesaria the Younger.
- Ragnemod, bishop of Paris 577–91: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.10 from Venantius
Fortunatus; 3.26 under the nickname Rucco from Fortunatus.
- Rauracius, bishop of Nevers died c. 653: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.7 to Desiderius,
bishop of Cahors.
- Ravennius, bishop of Arles 449–455? 461?: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 10, 11, 14
from Pope Leo I.
- Reginbert, count c. 750: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 95 from Boniface.
- Remigius, bishop of Rheims d. 553: *epistolae Austrasicae* 1, 2 to Clovis I, king of the
Franks; 3 to Heraclius, Leo and Theodosius, bishops; 4 to Falco, bishop of Liège;
vita Remigii episcopi Remensis c. 20 from Pope Hormisdas.
- Respecta, abbess of St. Cassian in Marseilles c. 596: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 7.12
from Pope Gregory I.
- Romulf, c. 600: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 10.12 jointly with Gregory, bishop of Tours,
Gallienus, and Florentinus from Venantius Fortunatus.

- Rufus, bishop of Turin c. 550: *epistolae Austrasicae* 21 to Nicetius, bishop of Trier.
- Ruricius, bishop of Limoges died 510: *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 4, 5 to Caesarius; 3 from Caesarius.
- Sabinian, pope 604–6 or Boniface III, pope 607: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 3 from Columbanus.
- Salustius, bishop of Agen c. 629: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* from Desiderius, bishop of Cahors.
- Salutaris, unknown *vir illustris* c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 10.2 from Venantius Fortunatus; 10.4 addresses Salutaris' unnamed wife.
- Sapaudus, bishop of Arles 551–c. 585: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 5 from Pope Pelagius I; *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 46, 47, 49, 50, 53 from Pelagius.
- Senator, abbot of hospice in Autun c. 602: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 13.9 from Pope Gregory I.
- Serenus, bishop of Marseilles c. 596: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.209, 11.10 from Pope Gregory I; 6.52 jointly with Pelagius, bishop of Tours and Aetherius, bishop of Lyons from Gregory I.
- Sergius III, pope d. 911: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 23 to Alexander, archbishop of Vienne.
- Sethus, c. 615: *Columbani abbatis Luxoviensis et Bobbiensis epistolae* 9 from Columbanus.
- Sidonius, bishop of Mayence c. 565: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.9 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Sigebald, abbot of Chertsey c. 740: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 36 to Boniface.
- Sigibert III, king of the Franks died c. 660: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.9, II.17 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors; I.3, I.4 from Desiderius.
- Sigismund, prob. officer of King Sigibert I c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 7.20 from Venantius Fortunatus; 7.21 jointly with Alagisle from Fortunatus.
- Sigoald, count c. 590: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 10.16, 10.17 from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Sigrada, mother of Leudegar, bishop of Autun: *epistolae aevi merovingici collectae* 17 from Leudegar.
- Silvester I, pope 314–35: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 6 to the Gallic bishops.

Simplicius, bishop of Vienne c. 417: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 7 from Pope Zosimus.

Sindulfus, deacon c. 570: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.30 from Venantius Fortunatus.

Stephanus, priest c. 600: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 8 to Aunarius, bishop of Auxerre; 7 from Aunarius.

Stephen, abbot of Lérins c. 596: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 6.57 from Pope Gregory I.

Stephen II, pope 752–7: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 15 to Proculus, bishop of Vienne; *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 108, 109 from Boniface.

Suitha, abbess c. 770: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 128 from Lully.

Sulpicius, bishop of Berry: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.5 to Verus, bishop of Rodez; II.1, II.10 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors; I.12 from Desiderius; letter quoted in *Vita sancti Desiderii* from Dagobert, king of the Franks.

Syagrius, bishop of Autun d. 600: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.215, 9.223, 9.224 from Pope Gregory I; 6.55 jointly with Desiderius, bishop of Vienne, from Gregory; 9.219 jointly with Aetherius of Lyons, Virgilius of Arles, and Desiderius of Vienne from Gregory; 9.225 jointly with Virgilius of Arles from Gregory; *Venantii Fortunati opera* 5.6 & 6.a from Venantius Fortunatus.

Symmachus, pope 498–514: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 23, 24 to Aeonius, bishop of Arles; 25 to the Gallic bishops; 27, 29 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles; 26, 28 from Caesarius; *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 7b, 8b to Caesarius; 6 to the Gallic bishops; 7a, 8a from Caesarius; *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 9 to the Gallic bishops.

Talasía, abbess of St. Mary in Autun c. 602: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 13.10 from Pope Gregory I.

Tecla, abbess of monastery at Kitzingen c. 745: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 67 jointly with Leobgytha, abbess of Bishopsheim, Cynehild, abbess in Thuringia and their sisters from Boniface.

Theoderic, king of the Ostrogoths d. 526: *Variae* III.16, III.32, III.41 to Gemellus, senator; III.17 to all the Gallic provinces; I.45, II.40 to Boethius; I.46, III.2 to Gundobad, king of Burgundy; II.41, III.4 to Clovis, king of the Franks; III.1 to Alaric II, king of the Visigoths; III.3 to the kings of the Heruli, Warni, and

- Thuringians; III.34 to the people of Marseilles; III.40, III.42 to the people of Gaul; III.44 to the landowners of Arles; IV.5 to Amabilis, count; V.10, V.11 to Veranus and the Gepidae.
- Theudebert I, king of Austrasia c. 534–47: *epistolae Austrasicae* 20 to Justinian, Byzantine emperor; 10 from Aurelianus, bishop of Arles.
- Theudebert II, king of the Franks 596–612: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 11.50 from Pope Gregory I; 6.51, 9.227, 9.216 jointly with his brother Theuderic II from Gregory.
- Theuderic II, king of the Franks 596–613: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 13 from Pope Boniface IV; *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 11.47, 13.7 from Pope Gregory I; 6.51, 9.227, 9.216 jointly with his brother Theudebert II from Gregory.
- Theodore, bishop of Marseilles c. 591: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 1.45 jointly with Virgilius, bishop of Marseilles, from Pope Gregory I.
- Theodore, official at Constantinople c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 34 from King Childebert II.
- Theodosius, son of Byzantine emperor Mauricius c. 585: *epistolae Austrasicae* 42 from King Childebert II.
- Theophylact, Roman archdeacon c. 746–7: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 84, 85 to Boniface.
- Theudebald, king of Austrasia 547–55: *epistolae Austrasicae* 18, 19 to Justinian, Byzantine emperor.
- Theodosius, bishop of Auxerre c. 512: *epistolae Austrasicae* 3 jointly with Heraclius, bishop of Sens, and Leo, unknown bishop, from Remigius, bishop of Rheims.
- Theodosius II, Roman emperor 408–50 and Honorius, emperor d. 423: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 8 to Agricola, Praetorian Prefect.
- Torhthelm, bishop of Leicester 737–64: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 47 to Boniface.
- Trasericus, bishop of Toul c. 570: *epistolae Austrasicae* 16 from Gogo, tutor of King Childebert II.
- Troianus, bishop of Saintes c. 532: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 2 to Eumerius, bishop of Nantes.
- Tyceca and Aldbercht, deacon c. 770: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 129 to Lully.

- Urban II, pope 1088–99: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 27 to bishops subject to Vienne; 28 to the people of Vienne.
- Valerianus, patrician c. 560: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 6 from Pope Pelagius I.
- Venantius, patrician in Constantinople c. 584: *epistolae Austrasicae* 39 from King Childebert II.
- Veranus, commander of the Gepidae ante 504: *Variae* V.10 and V.11 from Theoderic, king of the Goths.
- Verus, bishop of Rodez ante 630: *epistolae Desiderii episcopi* II.16, II.19 to Desiderius, bishop of Cahors; II.5 from Sulpicius, bishop of Berry.
- Verus, bishop of Vienne c. 150: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 1 from Pope Pius I.
- Victor I, pope 189–199: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 3 to Dionysius, bishop of Vienne; 4 to Paracoda, bishop of Vienne.
- Vigilius, pope 537–55: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 38 to Caesarius, bishop of Arles; 39, 41, 42 to Auxanius, bishop of Arles; 43 to the bishops under Childebert I; 40 to the bishops of Gaul; 44, 45 to Aurelianus, bishop of Arles; *Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis epistolae* 17 to Caesarius.
- Vilicus, bishop of Metz c. 550: *epistolae Austrasicae* 17 from Dynamius, rector of Provence; 14 from Mapinius, bishop of Rheims; *Venantii Fortunati opera* 3.13, 3.13a–d from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Virgilius, bishop of Arles d. 610: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 5.58, 6.54, 9.217, 11.38, 11.45, from Pope Gregory I; 1.45 jointly with Theodore, bishop of Marseilles, from Gregory; 9.225 jointly with Syagrius, bishop of Autun from Gregory; 9.219 jointly with Syagrius of Autun, Aetherius of Lyons, and Desiderius of Vienne from Gregory.
- Volferius, bishop of Vienne c. 800: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 18 from Pope Leo III.
- Vualdo, deacon c. 580: *Venantii Fortunati opera* 9.13 jointly with deacon Lupus from Venantius Fortunatus.
- Wantilonus, c. 599: *registrum epistolarum Gregorii* 9.212 jointly with Arigius, Gallic patrician, from Pope Gregory I.
- Warmundus, bishop of Vienne c. 1077: *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 26 from Pope Gregory VII.

- Warnechar, mayor of the palace of Austrasia and Burgundy 612–7: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 14 to Ceraunius, bishop of Paris.
- Wigbert, priest d. 747: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 101 to the monks of Glastonbury; 102 to an unknown friend.
- Wigbert, abbot c. 780: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 132 to Lully.
- Wigbert, priest c. 780: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 137, 138 to Lully.
- Witta, bishop of Büraburg 742–48: *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 52 from Pope Zacharius.
- Zacharias, pope 741–52: *epistolae aevi merowingici collectae* 18 to the bishops and priests of the Franks; *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 14 to Austrobertus, bishop of Vienne; *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epistolae* 51, 57, 58, 60, 68, 77, 80, 87, 88, 89 to Boniface; 50, 59, 86 from Boniface; 61, 83 to the people of Gaul; 82 to various bishops and priests; 52 to Witta, bishop of Buraburg; 53 to Burchard, bishop of Würzburg.
- Zosimus, pope 417–8: *epistolae Arelatenses genuinae* 1 to the bishops of Gaul; 2 to Aurelius and all the bishops in Africa, Gaul, and Spain; 3 to Hilary, bishop of Narbonne I; 4, 6 to Patroclus, bishop of Arles; 5 to the bishops of Vienne and Narbonne II; 7 to the clergy and people of Marseilles; *epistolae Viennenses spuriae* 7 to Simplicius, bishop of Vienne.