

The 'Prehistory' of Gregory of Tours: An Analysis of
Books I-IV of Gregory's *Histories*.

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This thesis is concerned with the structure and agenda of the first four books of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*. Building on the idea that it was the death of Gregory's patron, king Sigibert, at the end of Book IV, that stimulated the writing of the *Histories*, I argue that the agenda of the first four books, the 'Prehistory', relates directly to the events that brought about the Civil War that resulted in Sigibert's death. This focus has previously gone unrecognised. I suggest that there is a strong structural framework to this section of the *Histories*, designed to promote the author's agenda. This confirms that Books I-IV were conceived as one unit, and also heightens the level at which modern scholarship should view Gregory's literary achievement. This in turn should illuminate the state of Merovingian education and society as a whole.

The message behind Gregory's carefully structured 'Prehistory' is an expansion of the Preface to Book V, in which Gregory pleads with his audience, his contemporary kings, to follow the path of God, like their ancestor, Clovis. This will bring peace and an end to greed and Civil War. This path, continually espoused by the agents of the Lord, His bishops, would lead to a successful reign and a healthy kingdom. Failure to listen to Gregory and his colleagues, would lead only to ruin, a message reiterated throughout the Prehistory, and highlighted in the death of king Sigibert.

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Some of the ideas in this thesis, especially those in chapters 3 and 4 were contained in my MA thesis at the Centre for Medieval Studies at York University, 'The themes and context of Book III within the Prehistory of Gregory of Tours.'

Chapter 1: Introduction: Historiographical Background

1.1 Introduction

‘The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.’ So said the English writer Leslie Poles Hartley.¹ He may well have been describing sixth-century Gaul: the Roman Empire had crumbled, ‘Germanic’ warlords now ruled much of the West and little survives of the literature of the time. In northern Gaul in the second half of the sixth century, a bishop of Tours, Georgius Florentius Gregorius, known to posterity as Gregory of Tours, composed eight books of hagiography and ten books of history.² These testaments survive as evidence of the politics, society and theology of this post-imperial world. According to Gregory, and we have to take him at his word as the lone authority on the subject,³ he was born into a family well used to holding episcopal power. There were only five of the previous bishops of Tours to whom he was not related.⁴ In addition the sees of Langres, Lyon and Clermont had been held by members of his family in his recent past.⁵

It is the *Ten Books of History* that concern us here. Gregory was following such authors as Eusebius and Orosius when he turned his attention to the writing of a history. Like Eusebius, he was concerned with issues surrounding the history of

¹ L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (Penguin Classics, 2000) p.5

² The eight books of hagiography are: *The Life of the Fathers*, *The four Books of the Miracles of St. Martin*, *the Miracles of St. Julian*, *The Glory of the Martyrs*, *The Glory of the Confessors*.

³ See I.N. Wood, *Gregory of Tours* (Headstart History Papers: Bangor, 1994), pp.55-6.

⁴ All Latin quotes are taken from Krusch & Levison's edition, and, unless stated, all translations are from Thorpe's English translation, often modified. See also I.N. Wood, ‘The Individuality of Gregory of Tours’, *WGT*, pp.29-46, at p.32.

⁵ R. Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*. (Princeton 1993), pp.52-68.

the Church. Like Orosius he concerned himself with affairs of state.⁶ I will argue that Gregory was thus more political than Eusebius, who was concerned with the legitimacy of the fourth-century church. Gregory however, while building on such issues by citing Eusebius, also wished to explain to the rulers of his day, how they could follow the path of God, and so guarantee success.⁷ I also see Gregory as being much more coherent in his presentation than Orosius. Where he stands out from most of his predecessors is in that Gregory wrote mostly about contemporary society. Even the great Roman historians had largely terminated their accounts before they reached contemporary events.⁸ In general it was probably considered too dangerous an enterprise. How much more dangerous then, one would think, considering the world in which Gregory lived and wrote?

Sixth-century Gaul is known to us largely through the writings of Gregory himself, and so there must be a certain amount of care taken when mining his

⁶ K.A. Mitchell, 'History and Christian Society in Sixth-Century Gaul: an Historiographical Analysis of Gregory of Tours' *Decem Libri Historiarum*', (Unpublished PhD thesis. Michigan State University, 1983), pp. 54, 57. Gregory would have known Eusebius through Rufinus' translation, *eusebii ecclesiastica historia*: T. Mommsen (ed.), in E.Schwarz & T. Mommsen (eds.), *Eusebius, Die Kirchengeschichte*, Vols I-III, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, (Berlin, 1999). Paulus Orosius, K.F.W. Zangemeister (ed.), *CSEL 5. Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII, accedit eiusdem liber apologeticus* (Hildesheim, 1967). For discussions on Rufinus' translation see M. Humphries, 'Rufinus's Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin *Ecclesiastical History*', in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16:2, (2008), 143-164; J.E.L Oulton, 'Rufinus's Translation of the Church History of Eusebius', *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1929): 150-174.

⁷ This theme starts with Book I and continues through the whole unit of four books. See relevant chapters for detailed discussion.

⁸ See for example Tacitus, *Historiae*, thought to culminate with the death of the tyrant Domitian, written many years later; his continuator Ammianus Marcellinus, stops his account with the death of Valens, the predecessor in the East to Theodosius, under whom he was composing his works; *Ammianus Marcellinus*, trans. J.C. Rolfe, 3 vols. (London 1935-9). In *Praef.* XXVI Ammianus discusses the dangers of writing contemporary history; see also J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1989), pp.204-6; T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*, (Cornell, 1998), pp. 183-4.

works, as ‘storehouses of information’,⁹ especially as we usually have remarkably little evidence to support or disprove Gregory’s word.¹⁰ Only Marius of Avenches provides a contemporary historical account in his *Chronicle*, which is much more typical of Late Antique historiography. However, compared to the mountain of information to be found in the *Histories*, it makes brief reading indeed. There perhaps lies the secret to the survival of Gregory’s words; they are very much his own, and altogether enthralling. Nevertheless, it would appear to have been a colourful world, in which he moved among the great and the good of Merovingian society. The Merovingians were the dominant power in Gaul from the time of their greatest king: Clovis (d. c.511).¹¹ This Frankish royal family divided up the kingdom and battled continuously with each other for the upper hand, if not overall control. The details, lurid and entertaining, are to be found within the pages of Gregory’s *Histories*.¹² Gregory’s works are vital for our understanding of this period of early medieval history.

1.2 The Scope of the Thesis

⁹ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, ‘Gregory of Tours and Bede: Their Views on the Personal Qualities of Kings’, in his *Early Medieval History*, (Oxford, 1975), p. 97.

¹⁰ For example *The Chronicle* of Marius of Avenches, T.H. Mommsen (ed.), *MGH AA 11, Chronica a. CCCCLV-DLXXXI, Chronica Minora 2*, (1894), pp.225-39; Venantius Fortunatus, F. Leo (ed.), *MGH AA 4, pt.1/2, Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati presbyteri italici opera poetica/pedestria* (1981).

¹¹ Clovis: *Hist.* 27-43. See also I.N. Wood, ‘Gregory of Tours and Clovis.’ *RBPH* 63 (1985), pp.249-72; E. James, *The Franks*, (Oxford, 1988); G. Kurth, *Clovis*, (Paris, 1978).

¹² For example see Theuderic’s attempted assassination of his brother Chlothar (*Hist.* III.7), or Childebert I’s readiness to take over Theuderic’s kingdom (*Hist.* III.9), or indeed that of Chlothar (*Hist.* IV.17).

A recent article on Gregory, Guy Halsall's deconstruction of the preface to Book V,¹³ was a springboard for the ideas that have evolved into this thesis. Briefly, Halsall suggests that the preface was composed before any other part of the *Histories*, and that Books I-IV followed soon after. The reasoning behind this concerns the events that surround the preface to Book V, namely the death of King Sigibert at the end of a terrible civil war. It is my contention that, just as the preface is constructed in chiasmic style, such a pattern might also govern the lay-out of Books I-IV, which, I will argue, were composed to expand on the issues raised in the preface to Book V. It is my intention then to analyse each of the four books, to highlight any structure that can be ascertained. Whether or not a chiasmic pattern can be observed within this four-book unit, this will be the most detailed study of the structure of these four books to date. Most scholarship has surrounded books V-X, not surprisingly considering the subject matter and the unique nature of such a contemporaneous recording of history. I aim therefore to open up Books I-IV of Gregory's *Histories*, and show how they shine a light on the often confusing nature of Gregory's narrative style: his juxtaposition of political and religious passages in his hotly debated '*mixte confusaeque*' manner. Once Gregory's agenda, as expressed in these early books, is fully understood, his structural and thematic style will clarify what was for so long seen as merely unconscious reporting of the events at hand. As the study is based upon the (generally uncontroversial) idea that Books I-IV of the *Histories* deal with a period before that which was contemporary with Gregory's writing, in other words with what might be termed the *History*

¹³ G. Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*: Its form, Context and Significance', in *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXII, No.496 (2007), 297-317.

proper, composed to explain events as they happened, I have chosen to refer to this four-book unit as the ‘Prehistory’.¹⁴

1.3 The Manuscript Transmission of *Decem Libri Historiarum*

Despite his earnest pleas that one keep his writings intact, Gregory’s *Decem Libri Historiarum* were edited down to six books within a couple of generations of his death. This generally retained those chapters concerned directly with the Frankish kings, and until recently the book has consequently been known, erroneously, as ‘The History of the Franks.’ Due to the complex nature of the manuscript tradition, the debate over Gregory’s original design for the *Histories* has endured. Ruinart, as far back as the seventeenth century, proved that the ten-book version took precedence as chapters from Book VII were to be found in Book IV of the supposed short six-book ‘first’ version.¹⁵ While the majority of scholars now recognise this to be the case, a few dissenters have occasionally been heard, even within the last half-century. These, like Claude Carozzi, would appear to be mostly based in French-speaking scholarship.¹⁶

¹⁴ I owe this name to the title of a seminar in Guy Halsall’s MA option on Gregory.

¹⁵ T. Ruinart, *Praefatio. In novam editionem sancti Gregorii episcopi Turonensis*, in J.-P. Migne (ed.) *Patrologiae cursus completus series Latina*, 71: 15. W. Goffart, ‘From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum* and Back Again: Aspects of the Textual Transmission of Gregory of Tours, in his *Rome’s Fall and After* (London, 1989), pp.255-74, at p.266, sums up the evidence in favour of the ten-book original. ‘The six-book recension is full of references to material present only in the ten-book text: a long doctrinal letter is lacking but announced in the narrative; Gregory alludes to “the institution of St. Gallus, of which we spoke above,” in an omitted chapter; other chapters presuppose omitted information; various connective phrases link with missing chapters.’

¹⁶ C. Carozzi, ‘Le Clovis de Grégoire de Tours’, in *Le Moyen Age* 98 (1992), 169-85. Also see Thorpe (trans.), *History of the Franks*, p.26. Thorpe based his translation on H. Omont and G. Collon (eds.), *Grégoire de Tours. Histoire des Francs. Texte des manuscrits de Corbie et de Bruxelles. Collection des textes pour servir à l’étude et à l’enseignement de l’histoire* Vols 2 & 13 (Paris, 1886-93), which promoted the case of the original six-book redaction; R. Latouche, *Grégoire de Tours, Histoire des Francs, Les classiques de l’histoire de France au moyen âge*, 2 vols. (Paris 1963), pp.11-13. See also n.21.

It is useful to give a brief summary of the surviving manuscript tradition of the *Histories*, in order to facilitate an explanation of how the matter became clouded in debate. The manuscripts have traditionally been split into four main families, A-D, with families E and F constituting mere fragments. Family A consists mainly of a complete ten-book version, only extant in one manuscript from late eleventh-century Monte Cassino.¹⁷ Due to the nature of transmission, the text cannot be used as a template for Gregory's original, although it contains the whole work.¹⁸ A2 is the oldest surviving version of the *Histories*, from the early- to mid-seventh century, but is extremely fragmentary.¹⁹ However, it confirms the language of family B as being the closest to Gregory's original.²⁰ Primarily, family B retains Books I-VI, minus those chapters removed in the seventh-century editing. It is based on a model dating to before 660. Because of its age this family was seen as proof that this six-book version was the original,

¹⁷ Monte Cassino 275. Description: Don M. Inguanez, *Codicum Casinensium manuscriptorum catalogus*, vol. II.1 (Monte Cassino, 1928), p.89; B. Krusch, 'Die handschriftlichen Grundlagen der Historia Francorum Gregors von Tours', *Historische Vierteljahrsschrift* 27 (1932), 673-757 at 706; Krusch, *MGH SRM* I.1, p.xxiii.

¹⁸ M. Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours. History and Society in the Sixth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 193. For a more comprehensive study of the manuscript tradition see M. Heinzelmann, & P. Bourgain, 'L'œuvre de Grégoire de Tours: la diffusion des manuscrits', in N. Gauthier and H. Galinié (eds.) *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois: Actes du congrès international, Tours, 3-5 novembre 1994*. (Revue archéologique du Centre de la France, 13e supplément). (Tours, 1997).

¹⁹ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.196. Extant in three manuscripts, Copenhagen Bibl.Reg. 'Ny Kgl.Saml.' 1878 containing *Hist.* V.1-3; Leiden Bibl. Univ. Lat. 21, *Hist.* V.43-47; and Vatican Reg.Lat.689, *Hist.* IX.27-31, 33, 35-37; Heinzelmann & Bourgain, 'L'œuvre de Grégoire de Tours', p.278; Krusch and Levison, *MGH SRM* I.1, p.XXIV.

²⁰ M. Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours*, (Paris, 1890) based his unsurpassed study of Gregory's language on the B family of manuscripts. K. Zelzer, 'Zur Frage des Autors der Miracula B. Andreae apostolic und zur Sprache des Gregor von Tours,' *Grazer Beiträge. Zeitschrift für die klassischen Altertumswissenschaften*, 6 (1977), 217-41, cited in Goffart, 'From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum*', p.257 n.8, argues that this language and style are that of the seventh-century editor rather than Gregory. However, Heinzelmann believes the B family to 'retain great importance in the establishment of a critical text' as reported by Goffart, 'From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum*, 'Addenda', p.274.

with Gregory adding the extra chapters and Books VII-X at a later date.²¹ The age of this family tradition, led to the B family being used by editors to compile a text as closely as possible, to Gregory's original.²² Family C is dependant on B and often to be found, in an edited ten-book format, with Fredegar's *Chronicle*.²³ Family D preserves a mostly complete ten-book version and the earliest example dates from the tenth century. The manuscripts in this family are the only ones to use the term *History of the Franks*.²⁴

Martin Heinzlmann argues that the redactors of the six-book version used the *capitula* and *tituli* of Gregory's text to plan their edition, in order to produce a history of the Frankish kingdom and its people.²⁵ However, Helmut Reimitz refutes the idea that the six-book version of the *Histories* was created in order to promote it as a History of the Franks, arguing that it is no more a Frankish royal history than was the original.²⁶ Indeed some surviving manuscripts were still

²¹ This view was upheld for example in the recent translation into English and French respectively, by Thorpe (1974) and R. Latouche, *Grégoire de Tours*, cited in Goffart, 'From *Historiae* to *Historia Francorum*', pp. 258-9. R. McKitterick, 'The Scriptoria of Merovingian Gaul: a survey of the evidence', in H.B Clarke and M.Brennan (eds.), *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* BAR International Series 113 (Oxford, 1981), pp.173-207, illuminates the scarcity of evidence for manuscript provenance for this period in Gaul.

²² Heinzlmann, *History and Society*, p.197-8.

²³ *ibid.*, p.197. Fredegar was a seventh-century author, whose *Chronicle* continues on from the end of the six-book Gregorian tradition. Debate continues over his identity, or even identities. See W. Goffart, 'The Fredegar Problem reconsidered.' *Speculum* 38 (1963), pp.206-41; I.N. Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', in A. Scharer & G. Sheilbelreiter (ed.), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1994), pp. 359-66; R. Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken (MGH Studien und Texte*, 44: Hannover, 2007); *id.*, *Fredegar (Historical and Religious Writers of the Latin West*, ed. Patrick J. Geary, vol. 13: Aldershot, 1996).

²⁴ Heinzlmann, *History and Society*, p.193.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.199. For a discussion of the *tituli* and *capitula* see below pp.25-26.

²⁶ H. Reimitz, 'Social Networks and Identities in Frankish Historiography. New Aspects of the Textual History of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*, in R Corradini, M Diesenberger, H. Reimitz

entitled *liber historiae ecclesiasticae*.²⁷ Rather than the seventh-century redaction that he used for his source, it appears that it was Fredegar himself who emphasised the Frankish nature of the text, by multiplying the mention of the term *Franci*.²⁸ It is time, writes Reimitz, that the seventh-century redaction was seen as a carefully crafted text in its own right, with its own literary and historical plan, rather than merely a source for later Frankish historiographers.²⁹

Reimitz supports the argument that Gregory used the *Histories* to promote his own authority by linking his family history with that of the Frankish royal family and the episcopate of Tours.³⁰ I suggest that while certainly indulging in self-promotion, Gregory wished to promote the enrichment of society as whole. His privileged position would allow him to urge the Merovingians towards acts of piety and orthodoxy, to the betterment of all. The purpose, Reimitz claims, of the redactors, was a ‘disassociation of the text from the “individuality of Gregory of Tours”’.³¹ For, not long after his death, the political map of France had changed, with a shift in power towards the northeast, in Austrasia. No longer, argues Reimitz, was the personal history of a powerful south-western aristocratic family relevant, and it was removed.³²

(eds.), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages’ Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Leiden, 2003), pp.229-268 at pp.235-7.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.236. This is of interest in debating the intended audience for the *Histories*.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.241.

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp.243-4.

³⁰ I.N. Wood, ‘Topographies of holy power in sixth-century Gaul’ in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. M de Jong, F. Theuvs and C.van Rhijn, *The Transformation of the Roman World 6* (Leiden, 2001), pp.137-154, cited in Reimitz, ‘Social Networks’, p.245.

³¹ Reimitz, ‘Social Networks’, p.253. See the articles by Wood discussed below for further study of this theme.

However, Gregory's stories retained their value, although subtle nuances may have been changed to redirect the portrayal of the true centre of power. Hence, all the chapters containing references to the bishops of Clermont are removed, and the tale of Quintianus that remains portrays the bishop as reliant on the favour of King Theuderic rather than the Gregorian family network, as implied by Gregory.³³ Reimitz concludes that the fact that the redactors attempt to remove Gregory's role within the *Histories* as the 'scion of an Episcopal dynasty' shows how clear this biographical slant was to the readers of the seventh century.³⁴ Reimitz's explanation appears to me more appropriate, as Heinzelmann's interpretation does not quite fit the evidence of the passages retained in the six-book redaction.

Due to being a rare voice in a historical desert Gregory was referenced and plundered by those historians who were to follow, such as Fredegar, Paul the Deacon and Isidore of Seville.³⁵ I am sure that without the bishop of Tours, early medieval historiography would be a much poorer place, both in terms of evidence and style. Gregory's use of contemporary anecdotal evidence, often

³²Reimitz, 'Social Networks', p.255.

³³ Reimitz, 'Social Networks', p.256-7. *Hist.* II.36.

³⁴ Reimitz, 'Social Networks', p.268.

³⁵ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* III, 29: G. Waitz and L. Bethmann (eds.), *MGH Scriptores Rerum Langobardicum* 1 (Hanover, 1878), pp.13-187; W. Dudley Foulke (trans.) *Paul the Deacon. History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia 1974; originally 1907).; Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*: P. Cazier, (ed.), *CCSL* 111 (Turnhout, 1998). Fredegar: J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (ed. & trans.), *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London, 1960). See also n.26, for Paul and Isidore see W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800). Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon.* (Princeton, 1988).

told with a ready wit and astute eye for a good story has ensured a continued interest in his works.

As I have already mentioned, from the very earliest opportunity Gregory's wishes concerning the *Histories* had been ignored. Within two generations of his death the ten books were edited down to six. Indeed Fredegar appears to have used this version in his work.³⁶ During the Renaissance, Gregory's works were used for nationalistic purposes, the Maurist Dom Ruinart calling the *Histories* the first history of the kingdom of France, in the introduction of his 1699 edition of the *Decem Libri Historiarum*.³⁷ Ever since the mid-eighteenth century it was allegedly the consensus that Gregory was incapable of properly structuring his material and was in fact a perfect reflection of the barbarism he reported. By the nineteenth century Gregory had been firmly categorized as a sincere but naïve historian, incapable of manipulating his material. This view was not hindered by the vernacular nature of Gregory's non-classical Latin, although Ruinart had attempted to challenge this negative impression. There were exceptions, but they were rarely positive: Siegmund Hellmann saw Gregory as 'malicious and tendentious', while Louis Halphen argued that he was prone to 'literary fabrication'.³⁸ Here we see that perhaps the consensus was not quite as monolithic as some modern scholars would have us believe. 'In point of fact, the most salient feature of the scholarship on Gregory is the extent

³⁶ Reimitz, 'Social Networks', p.232.

³⁷ T. Ruinart, *Praefatio*, 71: 15.

³⁸ S. Hellmann 'Studien zum mittelalterlichen Geschichtschreibung, 1. Gregor von Tours', *Historische Zeitschrift* 107 (1911): 1-43; L. Halphen 'Grégoire de Tours, historien de Clovis', in *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge offerts à F. Lot*, (Paris, 1925), pp.235-44, cited in Heinzmann, *History and Society*, p.3. I am indebted to Martin Heinzmann's concise historiography of the early debate on the nature of Gregory's *Histories*.

to which it is varied and polarized'.³⁹ While early Gregorian scholarship may have leant toward a simplistic view of the bishop's literary abilities, modern consensus can be seen to be far more positive about the complexity of his scheme. This will become apparent below, as the historiography of scholarship since World War II will attest.

1.4 Artless recorder or artful manipulator? Previous views on Gregory of Tours and the *Decem Libri Historiarum*

In 1951 J.M Wallace-Hadrill penned a paper concerned with the ways in which historians 'had been using Gregory' in the previous twenty years, adding his own thoughts on the nature of the bishop's work.⁴⁰ Gregory's powerful use of dialogue was seen as unique, his skill in handling the rhetorical *cursus* as admirable and his Latin as intentionally realistic.⁴¹ He was however a 'mediocre theologian':⁴² his vision of the past was that of a Christian moralist. I will discuss Gregory's theological stance within chapter 6, which will show, to the contrary, that he did indeed have a position on the great debates of the fifth-century theological world, namely Grace and Predestination.

In the preface to Book I, Gregory explains that he will write about various wars, comfort those who see the end of the world as nigh and above all give a detailed

³⁹ D. Shanzer, review article, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* by Martin Heinzelmann, translated by Christopher Carroll, *Medieval Prosopography* Vol. 23 (2002), 247-266, where Heinzelmann's view of the historiographical consensus is questioned.

⁴⁰ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work of Gregory of Tours in the light of modern research', in his *The Long-Haired Kings*. (Toronto, 1982), pp.49-50. The article was originally published in 1951.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.50.

⁴² *ibid.*, p.59.

statement about his faith.⁴³ Wallace-Hadrill argues that this purpose does not falter: Gregory became a historian because he saw the Catholic communities of Gaul standing in imminent danger; the congregation of his own church at Tours demanded an explanation.⁴⁴ Wallace-Hadrill maintained that the *Histories* were written for the clergy and pilgrims of Tours as a historical partner to his hagiography,⁴⁵ and both genres should be read together, as a whole.⁴⁶ Indeed Wallace-Hadrill claimed that Gregory only vaguely distinguished between the functions of a historian and a hagiographer. In this respect we find more autobiographical detail in his hagiographical work, than in the *Histories*, as his presence as a witness provided the proof of his tale's veracity.⁴⁷ Such confirmation, Wallace-Hadrill argued, was more important in hagiography than it was for history.⁴⁸ Indeed he also suggested that Gregory manipulated history by bringing Clovis' baptism forward by ten years in order that his greatest victories should occur after his conversion to Catholicism.⁴⁹ Wallace-Hadrill's conclusion that we cannot take either Gregory's chronology or depiction of events for granted, considering the didactic nature of the *Histories*, is surely correct.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.56.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp.57-8.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.69-70.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.51.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp.54-5.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp.54-5. To take this argument to its conclusion would presume that hagiography was more important to Gregory than history. Both genres would appear to me to be put to different uses, each of equal value to the author.

⁴⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.65. For an indication of the debate on the date of Clovis' baptism see M. Spencer, 'Dating the baptism of Clovis 1886-1993', *EME* 3:2 (1994), 97-116; D. Shanzer, 'Dating the baptism of Clovis: the bishop of Vienne vs. the bishop of Tours', *EME* 7:1 (1998), 29-57.

Gregory compared his contemporary kings with Clovis' generation,⁵⁰ admiring, in Wallace-Hadrill's reading, virility in Munderic⁵¹ and Clovis, while painting the Goths and contemporary Merovingians as lacking this strength.⁵² In so doing Gregory compared present vice with past virtue.⁵³ However, these contemporary 'boorish' kings listened to Venantius Fortunatus⁵⁴ and 'developed an appetite for some quite intricate Latin versifying.'⁵⁵ I posit that it was these very kings that Gregory marked out as his target audience for at least Books I-IV of the Histories.

In his study of depictions of 'reality' translated into English two years after Wallace-Hadrill's paper was published, Ernst Auerbach considered the record of the feud between Sichar and Chramnesind⁵⁶ in order to investigate Gregory's Latin style and world-view. What Auerbach rightly perceived was an author

⁵⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.60.

⁵¹ *Hist.* III.14. Munderic rebelled against Theuderic and was only defeated by trickery. He died heroically however: '*Evaginatūque deinceps Mundericus gladium, cum suis magnam stragem de populo illo fecit, et usquequo spiritum exclavit, interficere quemcumque adsequi potuisset non distitit*'. This contrasts seriously with Goffart's view of a lack of martial heroism in Gregory's works. Goffart, 'Conspicuously absent: martial heroism in the Histories of Gregory of Tours and its likes', *WGT*, pp.365-393.

⁵² Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.61; see also his *The Long-Haired Kings*, p.195 for Gregory's contemptuous view of his contemporary kings: 'He did not think much of them...and he thought they compared ill with Clovis and his sons'; *id.*, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, 1971), p.18 for his admiration of Clovis' cunning and boldness; p.45 for criticism of Gregory's contemporaries; *id.*, *Early Medieval History*, pp.97-8 for Gregory's depiction of Pilate, Nero and Herod as prototypes for his contemporary kings.

⁵³ Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.62.

⁵⁴ An Italian poet, friend of Gregory and later Bishop of Poitiers, he wrote a panegyric to Chilperic at the time of Gregory's trial that emphasised the king's just nature. *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*, trans. J. George (Liverpool, 1995), pp.73-80.

⁵⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.63.

⁵⁶ *Hist.* VII.47, IX.19.

heavily influenced by the vivid nature of the spontaneous dialogue in the Bible, although I suggest it is debateable as to whether he owed more to the Old Testament, or to the rhythm and atmosphere of the New Testament, as Auerbach stated.⁵⁷ For him, Gregory achieved this through the use of a Latin style dependant on, and indicative of, the vernacular language of his day. This produced a concrete and immediate portrayal of events not to be found elsewhere in the literature of antiquity. Indeed Auerbach saw Gregory's Latin as transitional, confused, imprecise⁵⁸ and brutal;⁵⁹ but also vividly visible in its depiction of events.⁶⁰ This clearly reflects Auerbach's low opinion of sixth-century Gallic culture as a whole.

Auerbach saw Gregory's work as closer to personal memoirs than any Roman historian.⁶¹ Since Ammianus and Augustine there had been a change in writing style: less structured, more decadent, but more real for that. There is less of a literary obstacle between reality and report; it is not so laboured or artificial.⁶² 'Sensory reality... can unfold freely in Gregory', whereas Ammianus was constrained by the literary rules and style of his day. Gregory tried to emulate these rules, but his vernacular style was not up to the challenge of the 'most modest requirements of literary expression.'⁶³

⁵⁷ E. Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, 1953), p.77.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp.71-2.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.75.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.75.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.74.

⁶² *ibid.*, p.82.

If a classical author had bothered to write such as the tale of Sichar and Chramnesind, the arrangement would, Auerbach claimed, have been much clearer. That Gregory dealt with such characters, which are unknown on the great stage of history, in Auerbach's view, showed his limited horizon, a reflection, I suggest, of the times;⁶⁴ his concern was with immediate events, known either first or second hand. He had no political motive, except perhaps the interests of the Church but even there Auerbach denies that Gregory produces any coherent, unifying vision.⁶⁵

In an effort to look at Gregory's 'symbolical thinking' as well as his 'preoccupation with concrete, sensory facts',⁶⁶ Giselle de Nie built upon the work of literary historians in her own innovative analysis of the bishop's work. Rejecting a view of Gregory as mindlessly recording events,⁶⁷ de Nie's interest lay with more recent studies, which she claims have concentrated on social and psychological aspects of Gregory's corpus, rather than mere 'facts'. She explores what she sees as the 'persistent puzzle' of Gregory's mistakes and lack of continuity and the relation they bear to his own society.⁶⁸

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.82.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.73.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.74.

⁶⁶ G. de Nie, *Views From a Many Windowed Tower: studies of imagination in the works of Gregory of Tours*. (Amsterdam, 1987), p.9.

⁶⁷ M.J-J. Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France avant le douzième siècle II* (Paris, 1839), p. 304, cited in de Nie, *Views*, p.11.

⁶⁸ de Nie, *Views*, p.22.

According to de Nie, Gregory selected his material in order to preserve the chronology of events, and because he believed that miracles were the symbolic expression of spiritual truths in a concrete form. His use of the *mixte confusaque* nature of events highlights Man's inability to perceive the divine plan.⁶⁹ Gregory, the 'unconscious poet',⁷⁰ expresses his vision via the 'integration of images rather than the organization of concepts', imagined in a 'non-discursive manner'.⁷¹

Renewal through divine power, de Nie argues, is one of Gregory's central themes.⁷² He has a deep concern for spiritual regeneration, as symbolized by the spring. This same concern can be seen in Pope Gregory I's *Moralia*.⁷³ De Nie claims that both Gregories often saw mirror-like reflections of 'definite spiritual meanings in miraculous natural phenomena.'⁷⁴ This suggestion of God as active in the natural world was well known as an Old Testament tradition, and was used by the Latin Church Fathers.⁷⁵ Elsewhere Gregory of Tours followed historians such as Prudentius and Prosper of Aquitaine in seeing the Ark as an analogy for the Church and the sea as the unstable and dangerous world.⁷⁶ It can

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.69.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.24.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.2.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.86.

⁷³ de Nie, *Views*, pp.87-8; M. Adriaen ed. *S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Job*, CCSL 3 vols., (Turnhout, 1979-85), for example: X.18, X.35. For a discussion of Gregory I's views on renewal see G.B. Ladner, 'Gregory the Great and Gregory VII: A Comparison of their Concepts of Renewal', *Viator* 4 (1973), 1-26.

⁷⁴ de Nie, *Views*, p.76.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.73.

destroy, but also renew: depending on an individual's spiritual quality. One may be saved from the turbulence of the world by Christ in His Church.⁷⁷ In this way one can discern de Nie pre-empting Goffart's argument concerning Gregory's representation of the Lord as ever-present on earth, but through the idiom of nature rather than the saints. Her recognition of Gregory's belief in the possibility of redemption perhaps marks a breakthrough in the understanding of the *Histories* as a didactic aid - in my view - for the Merovingian kings of his day.

Walter Goffart's groundbreaking investigation into Gregory's work, attempts to address the question raised by Wallace-Hadrill and Auerbach, as to whether the bishop manipulated his sources, or merely reported them verbatim.⁷⁸ This enquiry was a significant step forward from de Nie's view of the unconscious poet, but Goffart will be seen to build upon her study of the presence of God in everyday sixth-century Gaul. Goffart intended to get to grips with the reality of Gregory as a historian: his depiction of society, and the agenda behind his reporting of these events.

Goffart argues that Gregory was writing a history of the Church, a discourse that Jerome had stopped short of writing.⁷⁹ Within the context of such a history, Gregory reflects upon the state of both Church and society in his own world.

⁷⁶ Gregory I interpreted the sea as representing the mind. *Moralia* 29.15. Prudentius *Hamartigenia* 517-20, in *Prudentius*, ed. & trans. H.J. Thomson (London, 1949), pp.200-73; Prosper of Aquitaine, *Expositio Psalmorum*, J.P.Migne (ed.) *Patrologia Latina* 51 (Paris, 1861): 277-426, 103.8. It is unknown whether Gregory had read Prosper.

⁷⁷ de Nie, *Views*, p.89.

⁷⁸ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.115.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.227.

Through his depiction of what Goffart sees as the abstract repetition of miracles, in the *Wonders*,⁸⁰ Gregory expresses his view of God as continually active in his world, working miracles through the saints, whose role it was to ‘multiply, almost as nerve ends, God’s capacity to be a living presence among men.’⁸¹ Here Goffart echoes Wallace-Hadrill’s assertion that the two separate works should be seen as complimentary. The constant repetition of the miraculous in and around Tours and Clermont, as expressed in the *Wonders*, showed that the times were not as bad as they might appear. Backed by the omnipresent power of God, Gregory has the strength to look disaster squarely in the eye.⁸² The *Wonders* provide the rock of optimism on which the Church survived the failings of its earthly existence.⁸³ The circumstances of such shortcomings are presented in the *Histories*, events that Goffart suggests Jerome would have termed the ‘dregs of our time’.⁸⁴

Having argued that the bishop wrote a history of the Church, Goffart contends that the nature of Gregory’s view of history was very different from both Orosius and Jerome, who saw in it the rise and fall of Christian society respectively.⁸⁵ In Goffart’s interpretation, Gregory ‘saw no route or direction

⁸⁰ Gregory’s *miracula* are listed under the abbreviations.

⁸¹ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.151.

⁸² *ibid.*, p.230.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.230.

⁸⁴ Jerome, *Vita Malchi, praef.*, J.P.Migne (ed). *Patrologia Latina* XXIII, 55, cited in Goffart, *Narrators*, p.227.

⁸⁵ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.227.

embedded in the chaos of events': history did not go anywhere, it just *was*.⁸⁶ As such, Goffart reasons that the bishop maintained stylistic and thematic relevance for his audience, abandoning plot in favour of individual, unconnected, events.⁸⁷ Gregory depicts characters and events in such a way as to imply how they should be envisaged and interpreted by the audience.⁸⁸ Goffart is therefore suggesting that interpretation was an important process in Gregory's agenda, which was the shaping of a Christian society.⁸⁹ His aim was not, however, to convert the wretched, but to tutor the undecided. Consequently the *Histories* depicted recent history: 'reflecting the leading figures of his age, and not a few lesser ones, in the colours appropriate to their conduct.'⁹⁰

Within the historical context Gregory, like Salvian and Gildas,⁹¹ was critical of his age, but unlike them he did not stand apart, but was at one with his flock, and showed them the way forward through God and His saints.⁹² Through the motifs of 'miracles and slaughters' and the device of bracketing described below, Gregory showed that social discord was wrong. He set out the remedy for what Goffart sees as no steady decline, as in Jerome, merely a continuous

⁸⁶ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.229, p.226.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.152. p.150, 156. Goffart sidesteps the issue of the nature of the audience, terming it simply 'the public'.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.186.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.233.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.233.

⁹¹ Salvian: K.Halm (ed.), *Salviani presbyteri massiliensis libri qui supersunt. MGHA 1/1* (Berlin, 1877); J.F. Sullivan (trans.), *The Writings of Salvian the Presbyter* (Washington, 1962); Gildas: M. Winterbottom (ed. & trans.), *Gildas. The Ruin of Britain and other Documents* (Chichester 1978)

⁹² Goffart, *Narrators*, pp.196-7.

plateau of disappointment. Gregory was not depicting the downfall of the Merovingians against the heights of Clovis.⁹³ All sorts of crimes and miracles happen, but nothing ever changed.⁹⁴ Hence Goffart argues that Gregory had no need of a plot. He portrayed the senseless goals of fallen humanity in a senseless way. The fact that later scholars have found any pattern just shows that Gregory could not be fragmentary enough in his approach.⁹⁵

Goffart does find some pattern in the *Histories*, in the repetition of good versus evil depicted in terms of ‘miracles and slaughters’.⁹⁶ Miracles are portrayed in a romance literary style reserved for the glorious deeds of the saints, such as Avitus’ conversion of the Jews.⁹⁷ The saints, with Christ as their prototype, embodied how man ought to be.⁹⁸ The slaughters are depicted through the use of irony to show the ‘irredeemable sinners in a depraved world.’⁹⁹ The mixture of good and bad deeds suited this anti-rhetorical, blunt style best of all. “There can hardly be a more precise description of Gregory’s procedure,” states Goffart, “than that he painted a distorted verbal picture of the Gaul he lived in so as to show its true moral nature.”¹⁰⁰ Goffart posits that Gregory’s use of satire

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.205.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.184.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.206-7.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.174.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.175; *Hist.* V.11.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.203.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.175.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.199. Goffart in the preface to a later edition of *The Narrators* (Notre Dame, 2005) wished to tone down the emphasis on satire in the *Histories*, as he felt it distracted attention from the remainder of his argument. Preface to later edition of *Narrators*, (2005), p.xxii.

in the *Histories*, succinctly criticised the madness of his contemporary world. This is personified by the theme of a meeting between bad and worse, such as the tale of Munderic and Theuderic,¹⁰¹ and also Clovis' removal of his rival Frankish kings.¹⁰² Goffart argues that Clovis' atrocities are a vision of the king's dark side, unless one believes in the naïve Gregory of traditional scholarship, whereas I will suggest that Clovis's actions should be seen in the light of his depiction as the avenger of God.¹⁰³

Clearly Goffart feels that Gregory has manipulated his material, and can no longer be seen as 'a blunt, sincere and artless recorder of the world around him'.¹⁰⁴ His use of bracketing, for example Chilperic by Salvius, Peter by Lampadius, Chlothar by Martin and Clovis by Ragnachar shows "there is nothing casual about his writing."¹⁰⁵ The death of Chlotild echoes that of Theudebert,¹⁰⁶ once again implying that Gregory was no mere reporter; he thought deeply about his prose. Gregory had no qualms about suppressing the facts in order to imbue his words with more meaning than the evidence would otherwise have warranted.¹⁰⁷ Because of this very shaping of his material,

¹⁰¹ *Hist.* III.14.

¹⁰² *Hist.* II.40-42.

¹⁰³ P. Wynn, 'Wars and Warriors in Gregory of Tours' *Histories* I-IV', *Francia* V.28 (2001): 1-35. Accessed through <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/articles/wynn.htm> (30/03/09).

¹⁰⁴ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.114.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.167. Salvius effectively brackets Book VI: in *Hist* V.50 he foresees the death of Chilperic & in *Hist*.VII.1, his death comes directly after that of Chilperic, contrasting with the latter;; Lampadius and Peter: *Hist.* V.5; Ragnachar is present at Clovis' initial victories and is the last of Clovis' victims: *Hist.* II.27 & 42.

¹⁰⁶ Chlotild, *Hist.* IV.1; Theudebert, *Hist.* III.37.

¹⁰⁷ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.164.

Goffart argues that there is little that can be done with his testimony until his design has been assessed.¹⁰⁸ That assessment is the focus of this thesis. Goffart sees Gregory as an intelligent manipulator of his material, but argues that his view of history, as one long series of calamities, meant there was no great narrative to be told. I find this difficult to reconcile with Gregory's moralistic depiction of Clovis, and the comparisons with the kings of his day, contrary to Goffart's statement above. As Wallace-Hadrill highlighted, Gregory compares present vice with past virtue.¹⁰⁹

Martin Heinzelmänn's approach to the *Histories*, by contrast, is to consider Gregory's place in society and how it affected his writing.¹¹⁰ He deals systematically with Gregory's family, his presence within the *Histories* and, in particular, how the bishop depicted events. Offering a more focused view of the bishop's work, Heinzelmänn's important study is a response to de Nie's call to see Gregory as an important and influential player in sixth-century Gaul. It dismisses Goffart's theory that the *Histories* are a satire without plan, preferring to see this as merely Gregory's sarcastic nature showing through the verse.¹¹¹

Having attempted unsuccessfully to understand the *Histories* through Gregory's autobiographical evidence,¹¹² Heinzelmänn studied the structure and plan of the

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.164.

¹⁰⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.62.

¹¹⁰ Heinzelmänn, *History and Society passim*. A similar approach will be seen in the work of Ian Wood, discussed below.

¹¹¹ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.91.

¹¹² Heinzelmänn, *History and Society*, p.89.

work, establishing a new, focused, image of the bishop as a historian. As a framework, Heinzelmann argues, the Preface to Book I and the ‘epilogue’ (X.31) should be read together. Gregory had used these to justify and legitimise his ‘official’ version of history, binding him to the saints, other bishops of Tours and ultimately St. Peter.¹¹³ These two chapters provide the spiritual setting for the *Histories*. From the credo in the Preface to Book I to the Last Judgement,¹¹⁴ the whole of history is bracketed by Christ.¹¹⁵ Heinzelmann argues that the General Prologue provides an outline of conflicts that Gregory saw as the very nature of history and thus the focus of his work.¹¹⁶ Subsequently the preface to each book presents a guide as to how to read the following text,¹¹⁷ introducing the respective theme of each book while also providing a methodical access to the later books.¹¹⁸ However, I agree with Wynn that the ‘prefaces’ appear to be reflective rather than prophetic.¹¹⁹

Within each book, Heinzelmann attests that Gregory formulated beginning, middle and end chapters such that, taken together, the audience,¹²⁰ would be

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p.121.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.123.

¹¹⁵ The first and tenth books complete the framework of the prologue and epilogue, Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.123.

¹¹⁶ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.119.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.101.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.119.

¹¹⁹ Wynn, ‘Wars and Warriors’; See also I.N. Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p.34, who points out that preface to Book III contains references to Arianism, while the book itself does not.

¹²⁰ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.181 & 191 for the degree to which the *Histories* was aimed specifically at kings; p.205 also states that Gregory’s audience consisted of the ‘educated men of the court circle’, while at p.111 Heinzelmann regards the intended audience for Books I-IV, prior to his redirection of the project, as the clergy at Tours.

able to read the meaning of each book with ease.¹²¹ Heinzelmann maintains that within this framework Gregory used the *mixte confusaque* comparison of the deeds of kings and the agents of God both as a history and a lesson for the future.¹²² This mixture of good and bad reflected Augustine's view of the two cities,¹²³ which, Heinzelmann assumes, Gregory would have learned at least through Orosius. Heinzelmann claims to have discovered a spiritual plan for the *Histories* that had previously been overlooked.¹²⁴

Despite primarily concentrating on the last six books, Heinzelmann does consider Books I-IV briefly.¹²⁵ His views will be more deeply discussed in the relevant chapters, but I provide a brief précis here. Although it has been largely ignored by scholars, and exhibiting a 'very untraditional treatment of biblical and 'ancient' history',¹²⁶ Heinzelmann considers Book I to be most clearly a product of Gregory's theological thinking, and concerned with the persecution of Christ.¹²⁷ Within this context Biblical exemplars of historical situations are presented for the contemplation of the bishop's contemporaries.¹²⁸

¹²¹ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.205.

¹²² *ibid.*, p.102, 124.

¹²³ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*: W.M. Green et al. (ed. & trans.), *On the City of God Against the Pagans: Augustine. The City of God Against the Pagans* (7 vols.; London 1957-72)

¹²⁴ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.203.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p.127-139, p.108. Heinzelmann states that Gregory based this section on Orosius' seven book history.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p.205.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p.127.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.127.

In Book II, Heinzelmann explains, Gregory is primarily concerned with heresy, and Arianism in particular.¹²⁹ He sets out the theme of the heretical persecution of God's chosen agents: bishops such as Bricius and Sidonius Apollinaris, by placing them in end and middle chapters.¹³⁰ While each bishop is beset by his townfolk, which action Gregory sees as heretical,¹³¹ Clovis, as an instrument of God's will, conquers the heretical Arian Goths.¹³² Whilst this is undoubtedly one theme of Book II, I would prefer to follow Halsall in seeing legitimacy as another primary concern.¹³³

Heinzelmann indicates that Book III is a book of transition,¹³⁴ from pagan to Catholic Christian rule in Gaul. The theme of the punishment of heretics continues, as does the victory of the Frankish Catholic kings over their Arian neighbours, victories which are overseen by the eternal presence of St. Martin.¹³⁵ In Book IV Gregory is viewed by Heinzelmann as adapting Orosius - the existence of sin, and its punishment - as the principal theme of history, as personified by the death of king Sigibert.¹³⁶ Finally, the end of Book IV is seen

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p.130.

¹³⁰ For Heinzelmann, the end and middle chapters respectively of a 43 chapter book.

¹³¹ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, pp.132-3.

¹³² *Hist.* II.37.

¹³³ G. Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave, Clovis's succession, and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom', in R. Mathisen & D. Shanzer (eds.), *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul. Revisiting the Sources* (Aldershot, 2001), pp.,116-33, at p.124.

¹³⁴ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.135, following I.N. Wood 'Clermont and Burgundy 511-534.' *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988), 119-25 at p.119.

¹³⁵ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.135.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.138.

by Heinzelmann as a quasi-epilogue of Books I-IV.¹³⁷ I think this can best be seen in the Preface to Book V, once again suggesting that the prefaces are more reflective than prophetic.

From the persecution of Christ and His Church in Book I, through the defeat of heretics in Book II, the consolidation of Christian rule in Book III and the existence of sin and its punishment in Book IV, Heinzelmann clearly perceives Gregory's thematic approach to each book. From this point, Heinzelmann argues that Gregory diverted from this universal history of the world up to the death of Sigibert, in order to depict the role of the Church within society.¹³⁸ This prompted him to continue his work by writing Books V-X. This plan, as seen by Heinzelmann, appears solid enough, but I do not feel there is sufficient evidence to back it up entirely. His generalisations in the case of the theme of each book, taking parts that suit his own agenda and giving them too great an influence, ignore others that might detract from his scheme.

When considering the original structure of the *Histories* it is necessary to take account of the chapter headings and title lists. Heinzelmann's comprehensive study of the *capitula* argues in favour of their authenticity, as within the body of text at the end of the General Preface Gregory mentions the chapter headings which are to follow.¹³⁹ Additionally there are those *capitula* in which Gregory refers to his own actions specifically, as in 'How I am sent as an envoy of King

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, pp.136-9.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, pp.108-115.

¹³⁹ *Hist.*, General Preface, '*cuius capitula deorsum subieci*'.

Guntram to keep the Peace’ *‘De eo, quod ad Gunthchramno regem in leagatione pro custodienda pace directi*

Sumus’,¹⁴⁰ or *‘De visiones, quas rex vel nos de Chilperico vidimus.’*¹⁴¹

Heinzelmann also argues that the *capitula* were written all together, separately from the main body of text. The proof lies in the number of *tituli* that refer to the previous one. For instance *Hist.* II.8 ‘What the historians have written about Aëtius’ is followed by *Hist.* II.9 ‘What they say about the Franks.’¹⁴²

As to what message we can take from the *capitula*, Heinzelmann suggests that Gregory used them to signpost the salient parts of certain chapters, occasionally highlighting his intentions, or a particular aspect of a chapter that otherwise may prove to be obscure. For example in *Hist.* I.36, Constantine figures more prominently than St Martin, but it is the latter that features in the title, ‘The birth of St Martin and the discovery of the Cross.’ This, says Heinzelmann, shows that Martin, not Constantine, is the major figure in this chapter. I must agree that indeed Martin plays a role here bracketing the last quarter of Book I with his birth in chapter 36 and his death at the end of the book, chapter 48. This is a period of celebration for the church, reflected in this bracketing by Martin.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ *Hist.* IX.20, *MGH.SRM.*1.1 p.413, How I am sent as an envoy of King Guntram to keep the Peace’.

¹⁴¹ *Hist.* VIII.5, *MGH.SRM.*1.1 p.368, ‘The Visions of Chilperic which the king and I saw’.

¹⁴² Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.117 n.52.

¹⁴³ For a more developed explanation see chapter 2 below.

However I question the degree to which Gregory's agenda is signposted in the *capitula*; even Heinzelmann can find only occasional examples. Indeed, he finds only the barest structure within the *Histories* as a whole, mostly within each individual book, as seen above. Certainly there are examples of a strong antithetical nature, a didactic motif that Gregory uses throughout the *Histories* as Heinzelmann notes, for example the chapter heading to I.24, 'The Ascension of our Lord, and the death of Pilate and Herod'.¹⁴⁴ Heinzelmann argues that this encapsulates the theme of the persecution of the Church by Rome, predominant in the latter part of Book I. I disagree, as the example of the bracketing by St Martin above indicates.

Heinzelmann contends that Gregory initially intended to write just the first four books, which were to be published in his lifetime. However, upon reflection he decided to continue his work having second thoughts about the purpose of the project.¹⁴⁵ Heinzelmann suggests that all ten books probably underwent their final revision in 594.¹⁴⁶ It is from this period that Gregory views the events depicted in his work. Gregory had edited his material 'in some quite extreme ways'¹⁴⁷ and Heinzelmann implies that often his material had been used without

¹⁴⁴ D. Shanzer, 'History, Romance, Love and Sex in Gregory of Tours' *Decem Libri Historiarum*', *WGT*, pp.395-418, at p.402, 412: Building on Heinzelmann's work regarding Gregory's use of diptychs, Shanzer sees paired antithetical stories with similar themes that reflect on one another: *Hist* I. 44 and I. 47 reflect the motif: 'the layman's chastity is opposed to the weakness of the bishop. Gregory had an axe to grind about Episcopal marriage and his stories should therefore not be taken at face value.

¹⁴⁵ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.206.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.115. Goffart agrees with this view in his recent edition of *Narrators*, p.xxii.

¹⁴⁷ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 2.

a full understanding of context and motif.¹⁴⁸ The bishop's primary motive for the distinctive structure of the *Histories* was 'the appropriate pedagogic and didactic presentation of historical events',¹⁴⁹ to which end he selected various episodes from social and communal life.¹⁵⁰

Covering more contemporary history than any of his predecessors, Gregory, Heinzemann postulates, presents us with a strong impression of a history of a society, rather than a record of historical events.¹⁵¹ Gregory focused on kings and their government,¹⁵² their relationships with the Church,¹⁵³ and the latter's often antithetical role, in the 'moral structure of Christian kingship.'¹⁵⁴ Christ, providing continual instruction through the saints, was to act as exemplar to the whole of society. Within this *ecclesia Dei*, the bishops and kings would guide society together. Gregory's theology seems therefore to be concerned with the everyday practical aspects of governing society.¹⁵⁵ He believed, according to Heinzemann, that a divine command to preach, the principal duty of bishops and prophets, provided him with moral authority. He bequeathed the *Histories* to his successors at Tours, as the lasting instrument of his preaching.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.36.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.36.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.204.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p.204.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p.207.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.204.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp.189-91.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.203.

Published in the same year as Heinzlmann's original study in German, Adriaan Breukelaar's work is the result of the growth of sociological trends among Late Antique historians. He argues that the *Histories* are a literary artefact, instrumental to the establishment of episcopal power in sixth-century Gaul, by defending the 'social territory' of the Gallo-Roman ecclesiastical elite. This is achieved through the promotion of the group's power and authority.¹⁵⁷ Gregory's *Histories* are, Breukelaar asserts, a prominent witness to the ideology by which Gallo-Roman aristocrats, denied a route to power within the Imperial Court administration, legitimised their ecclesiastical patronage.¹⁵⁸ With the support of his fellow bishops Gregory's moral and political ideals could be accepted more readily.¹⁵⁹ By honouring his peer group, one of the foremost motives of the historiographer, their shared identity could be established. 'By writing history the elite glorified itself.'¹⁶⁰

Breukelaar maintains that Gregory's use of simple language reflected his expertise in a tradition common among Christian writers. His use of *rusticas* and the implied inferiority compared to one's subject is easily turned into *humilitas*,¹⁶¹ and makes his message more accessible to his audience, the court

¹⁵⁷ A.H.B Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority in Sixth-Century Gaul. The Histories of Gregory of Tours interpreted in their historical context* (Göttingen, 1994), p.13.

¹⁵⁸ Breukelaar, *Historiography*, p.13.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.131.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.228. P. Brown, 'Gregory of Tours: Introduction' in *WGT*, pp.1-28, at p.19, argues for the need to wrench objectivity from Gregory's subjective viewpoint as both 'the shaping author' and a member of the society on which he reports.

¹⁶¹ Breukelaar, *Historiography*, p.323.

circle and clergy.¹⁶² In the process Gregory manipulated his representation of reality to make it correspond to his message¹⁶³ and presented it in the form of history. The advantage of this genre was the pretence of truth, and Gregory was a master at ‘making his representation of reality look true.’¹⁶⁴ Breukelaar argues that Gregory’s sources were selected for the comparison of good and evil, which he developed through ‘impressive repetition.’¹⁶⁵ More bad than good, perhaps reflecting the tone of the times, the *Histories* are a continuous succession of calamities, as misery’s never-ending story.¹⁶⁶ So for Breukelaar, the message of the *Histories* is clear: ‘Man must convert himself to his destiny, which is Christ. Since the church is the community led by the bishop, this means in concrete terms that one has to trust and obey the bishop.’¹⁶⁷ Hence Gregory’s aim in the composition of the *Histories* is to edify and strengthen the community under Episcopal authority.¹⁶⁸ The central lesson of the *Histories*, *conversio*, meant subservience to the bishop.

Raymond Van Dam’s extended introduction to his translation of Gregory’s *The Miracles of the Bishop St. Martin*, deals with a great many themes that do not directly concern the discussion at hand, other than to highlight the individuality of the bishop of Tours. Van Dam does however suggest that Gregory’s

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p.131. A more detailed discussion of audience will be found in section 1.5, below.

¹⁶³ Breukelaar, *Historiography*, p.335.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.335.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.269. There are similarities here with Goffart’s view of ‘Miracles and Slaughters’, Goffart, *Narrators*, pp.174-83

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.270.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.309.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.310.

insistence that his works be kept intact may imply that behind them lay a common vision, and that similar motifs can be found in both *Historia* and *Miracula*.¹⁶⁹ The latter were meant for the benefit of his own congregation, and pilgrims to Tours.¹⁷⁰ Van Dam highlights how Gregory connected biblical times with his own, through comparisons between Old Testament and contemporary kings and events. He wandered from a strictly chronological narrative, and often used short biographies and miracle stories which need to be told and heard to be properly understood.¹⁷¹ So, like his *Miracula*, Gregory's episodic, interpretive depiction in the *Histories* reveals how underlying morals and religious patterns were more important than historical events.¹⁷² Here I feel that Van Dam senses the underlying structure of the *Histories*: its didactic heart. However, he describes Gregory as more of a pilgrim than a satirist: the latter is too cold for the image we develop of Gregory. He has a goal, but no specific form, requiring passion and insight, synchronising past and present events through the use of episodic experiences. First, last and always, for Van Dam, Gregory was a pilgrim at Tours¹⁷³

Following on from Van Dam's view of Gregory as an individual, Ian Wood's study concentrates on how representative the bishop was of sixth-century Merovingian Gaul. Gregory's views are very much his own. Indeed Wood will

¹⁶⁹ R. Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*. (Princeton 1993), p.147.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.147.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.148.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, p.147.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, pp.148-9.

return to this thesis in his article ‘The Individuality of Gregory of Tours’.¹⁷⁴ According to Chlothar I, Gregory was a member of one of the foremost senatorial families in Gaul.¹⁷⁵ However this statement raises the question of objectivity, as it is reported by Gregory himself. Wood highlights the major problem in any assessment of the bishop’s work: he is his own witness.¹⁷⁶ Ultimately Gregory’s position as a member of the senatorial elite and bishop of Tours makes his view of Merovingian Gaul less that representative. He was at the centre of ‘local and national factional politics’ due to his esteemed family.¹⁷⁷ His work was influenced by his background and the events that occurred within his lifetime.¹⁷⁸ Hence the chronology of composition of the work would have a profound influence on its content.¹⁷⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, it is only Book IV that may have been compromised by Gregory’s involvement in such dramas as the Trial at Berny-Rivière, where he was accused of slandering Chilperic’s queen, Fredegund.¹⁸⁰ His earlier work, concerned with the period before his election as bishop would, in Wood’s view, remain unaffected by any fears about what he could and could not say.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ Wood, ‘Individuality’.

¹⁷⁵ *Hist*, 4.15.

¹⁷⁶ Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, pp.55-6.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.45.

¹⁷⁸ A similar approach had been taken by Heinzelmann; see above.

¹⁷⁹ Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, pp.4, 48-55. He sees Books I-V as composed by 580.

¹⁸⁰ Chilperic was, at the time of the trial, the king who ruled over Gregory’s see.

¹⁸¹ Wood expands on this theme within his article ‘The secret histories of Gregory of Tours.’ *RBPH* 71 (1993), 253-270. See also Brown, ‘Introduction’, pp.26-7.

Considering his position and the nature of his sources, particularly for the period from 511-561, where the majority of his information appears to originate in family memoirs,¹⁸² it is hardly surprising that he should write what Wood describes as both family and religious history. This feeling is heightened by the large number of his relatives who held episcopal office. Langres and Lyons had both been family sees, only five bishops of Tours had not been Gregory's relations. Family and religious history were therefore entwined for Gregory. The relationship between his family and the Merovingian royal family only served to exacerbate the individuality of his position, and the subjectivity of the *Histories*.¹⁸³ For example Gregory's election to the bishopric had the backing of such powerful patrons as King Sigibert, Queen Brunhild and Bishop Egidius of Rheims. Wood suggests that their portrayal within the *Histories* may then be more 'discreet' than perhaps would otherwise be the case.¹⁸⁴

Further to the case for the *Histories* being of a religious nature Wood sees Gregory as an interested theologian, though not reliant on argument for conversion. His writings on Arianism, petering out as the *Histories* proceed, cause Wood to conclude that Gregory 'responded to precise pressures and specific issues.'¹⁸⁵ His interests were wide-ranging and intellectual rather than dogmatic and limited. Wood points at the preface of Book I, where Gregory states that he will be concerned with three types of conflict, those concerning

¹⁸² Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, pp.38-9. See also his 'Clermont and Burgundy 511-534.' *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988), 119-25, for a more detailed account of his reliance on family history and hearsay.

¹⁸³ See Wood, 'Topographies of holy power'; *id.*, 'Individuality'.

¹⁸⁴ Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p.11.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, pp.33, 35.

kings, martyrs and churches. Note that two of these are religious. Second, at the end of the preface, Gregory places his work within the field of Christian historiography by citing Jerome, Eusebius and Orosius as his sources.¹⁸⁶ Third, Books I and II cover the period of Creation to the death of the first Catholic King of the Franks: Clovis. This was a vital period for Gregory.¹⁸⁷ So, despite Gregory's concentration on the Franks from Book II onwards, Wood asserts that we should read the *Histories* as a whole, and recognise the inherent ecclesiastical and religious elements therein.¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, on the question of structure, Wood indicates that Gregory's portrayal of his trial is placed at the end of Book V, the halfway point of the *Histories*. Likewise it is alluded to at the halfway point of the four books of the *Miracles of St. Martin*.¹⁸⁹ Wood does not expand on this observation, but it would appear that he recognises Gregory's use of structure within the *Histories*. Indeed he later argues that Gregory wished his works to be kept intact, in order that his carefully structured meaning should not be lost.¹⁹⁰

More recently, Wood has argued that Gregory was very unusual for his age, but also that perhaps the unusual was the norm in Gaul in the sixth century.¹⁹¹ However Wood concludes that Gregory's views are his own, and that they

¹⁸⁶ Their influence would appear to have been more stylistic than religious.

¹⁸⁷ Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p.22.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.16-17.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.58-9.

¹⁹¹ Wood, 'Individuality', p.36.

‘varied as politics demanded and as the bishop’s own spiritual affiliations changed. He is too much of an individual to be a reliable guide to the norms of the sixth century.’¹⁹² Nevertheless Wood produces a thorough examination of Gregory’s family, his writings, their flavour and content. Through the haze of subjectivity, Wood sees the bishop as a ‘sly manipulator of religious and political information.’¹⁹³ It is apparent therefore that any discussion of the Merovingian world as witnessed by Gregory must be entered with care.

In 2002 an edited collection of papers on Gregory of Tours was published under the title *The World of Gregory of Tours*.¹⁹⁴ These papers originated in conferences held in 1994 to mark the fourteenth centenary of his death. Several of the articles will have a bearing on my argument in later chapters, while only a few are directly relevant here; these are summarised below.

In the introduction to this collection Peter Brown argues that Gregory was reliant on sources that often reflected what was memorable rather than important. Brown declares that we have to ascertain what these stories, oft-repeated, meant to Gregory’s contemporaries, and their political and social expectations.¹⁹⁵ By retelling these stories using a succinct style, Gregory stimulates his audience into their own cure, utilising their imagination to

¹⁹² *ibid.*, p.46.

¹⁹³ Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p.iii.

¹⁹⁴ *WGT*.

¹⁹⁵ Brown, ‘Introduction’, p.17.

awaken ‘the slumbering powers that brought the triumphant solidity of paradise itself into sixth-century Gaul.’¹⁹⁶

Monroe sees in Gregory an image of the end of the Roman world, as the bishop actively rejects a Roman identity of justice for a Christian one.¹⁹⁷ For Gregory, God was the final source of justice as the only true judge, man being fallible. Secular authority was therefore subservient to the divine.¹⁹⁸ Thus, drawing examples from the Bible and Epistles of Paul, Gregory showed the kings that they should copy the actions of Hebrew kings and not Roman emperors.¹⁹⁹ Monroe maintains that Gregory’s ideas of *iustitia* are faith, charity and vengeance.²⁰⁰ Hence the depiction of Theudebert in *Hist.* III.25 as reigning with justice: he was respectful towards bishops, liberal towards churches and generous to the poor.²⁰¹

In his article Conrad Leyser argues that Gregory’s position as bishop was unstable, hence his use of other networks of support that a bishop might seek both to cultivate and publicise.²⁰² The correct and judicial ability to unmask and deal with the significant threat of charlatans such as wandering apostles could

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.8.

¹⁹⁷ W. Monroe, ‘*Via Iustitiae*: The Biblical Sources of Justice in Gregory of Tours’, *WGT*, pp.99-112, at p.101.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.109.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.111-112.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.111.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.105. For Gregory’s treatment of Theudebert, see chapter 4, below.

²⁰² C.A. Leyser, “‘Divine power Flowed From this Book’: Ascetic Language and Episcopal Authority in Gregory of Tours’ *Life of the Fathers*”, in *WGT* (London, 2002), p.285.

only enhance a bishop's prestige.²⁰³ Gregory's dealings with Senoch the Hermit show how his intervention could help them both increase their reputation.²⁰⁴ Leyser's argument bears upon the discussion of the nature and purpose of Gregory's writing in his conclusion that, through his narrative, 'Gregory manages to establish himself as a respected civic leader whose words carried weight and authority.'²⁰⁵ The implication is that Leyser sees the people of Tours as the audience for the *Histories*.

Felice Lifshitz's article highlights how the view of Gregory as a manipulator has been unevenly used, decrying the self-promotion that makes him a liability as a historian.²⁰⁶ Lifshitz argues that scholarship has been selective in its interpretation of Gregory's work, dependant on his narrative motif. That which is written in a realistic style is believed to be real, and that which is written in a non-realistic style, including dream visions and miracles, and which contradicts the former 'real' evidence, is seen to be invalid in a historical sense.²⁰⁷ The example used is the consideration of the bishop's description of the apostolic origins of various sees in Gaul.²⁰⁸ What he achieves in his version of the conversion of Gaul, until now, seen as realistic, is to place Tours and Clermont, both important in his family history and his own prestige, in the same frame as

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p.291.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, pp.293-4. Senoch was a hermit and holy man who embraced Gregory upon his arrival in Tours, therefore proclaiming his acceptance of the bishop's legitimacy. *VP* 15.

²⁰⁵ Leyser, 'Divine Power', p.294.

²⁰⁶ F. Lifshitz, 'Apostolicity Themes in Gaul: The *Histories* of Gregory and the "Hagiography" of Bayeux', *WGT*, pp.211-28, at p.218.

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.214.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.217.

older sees such as that in Arles. Gregory also places his family in a key position in the Christian genealogy of Gaul, by linking it to one of the martyrs of Lyons.²⁰⁹ Above all Gregory's version of events must, in my view, be treated with the utmost caution and respect, whatever the narrative motif.

Kathleen Mitchell considers that Books I and II of the *Histories*, as well as covering Judaeo-Christian history up to Clovis, introduce the eight later books. Through Christian imagery Gregory narrows the focus gradually down to his own time and place. Place was crucial to Gregory, who wished to present Tours as 'central to the Gallo-Frankish world.'²¹⁰ Mitchell argues that when Gregory depicts Clovis as receiving the diadem from Anastasius in Tours, the king establishes the city as the primary religious, political, and, military centre of the *regnum*.²¹¹ Further, by presenting the Gallic martyrs and St. Martin as the peers of the martyrs and saints of Jerusalem and Rome Gregory, Mitchell claims, wanted to emphasise that Tours was the equal of anywhere else within the Christian world. Therefore he could concentrate on local events because 'both biblical and Christian history had pointed toward its establishment and glorification.'²¹²

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.218.

²¹⁰ K. Mitchell, 'Marking the Bounds: The Distant Past in Gregory's History', *WGT*, pp.295-306, p.295.

²¹¹ *ibid.*, p.305.

²¹² *ibid.*, p.299.

It will no doubt become clear that my thesis owes a great debt to Guy Halsall's article on the structure, context and relevance of the Preface to Book V.²¹³ This proves the source for my own questions and insights. Halsall's article builds on the extent to which Gregory's complexity and intellect has been uncovered in the last half century. Much of that scholarship has been covered above. Contemplating the work on Gregory's carefully structured narrative, revealing the bishop to be a cunning manipulator of source material, Halsall argues that the Preface to Book V holds a special place in the development of the *Histories*: the first chapter written by Gregory. By looking at the context of the composition of the preface in detail, it should be possible, Halsall claims, to highlight such areas as the nature of sixth-century literary culture, Gregory's thoughts and influences, his political knowledge, and the 'much-debated chronology' of the bishop's work.²¹⁴ In addition, the article aims to shine a light on the place of bishops in Early Merovingian politics and warfare.²¹⁵

Halsall contends that Gregory wrote the Preface to Book V in a chiasmic format, much used in the Bible, as exemplified by the prologue to St. John's Gospel: '*In principio erat Uerbum et Uerbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Uerbum; Hoc est in principio apud Deum.*' '*In principio erat Uerbum et Uerbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Uerbum; Hoc est in principio apud Deum.*'²¹⁶ Sentences are constructed and placed so that they form a mirror of their companion sentences

²¹³ Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V'.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.297.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ John, I.1-2. '*In principio erat Uerbum et Uerbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Uerbum; Hoc est in principio apud Deum.*'

on the other side of a crux, or point of reflection, usually at the middle of the piece.²¹⁷ This central point will contain the key theme of the work. Halsall demonstrates that such a system has been used to construct the Preface to Book V. The focal point of the Preface is then identified as the greed of the kings causes the outbreak of civil war, and the subsequent loss of the grace of God.²¹⁸ Subordinate to this theme, Gregory also spells out the difference between good (spiritual) and bad (material) civil war, and the qualities that denote a good or bad king. The themes are constructed in such a way as to ‘draw attention to the Merovingians’ miserliness, covetousness and lack of peace’, through the focus of the crux.²¹⁹

The point is reinforced by other passages in close proximity to the Preface to Book V, strongly suggesting this to be the focal point of the work. For example, the end of Book IV deals with the death of Sigibert in the civil war between the sons of Chlothar I. In Book V Merovech, the ambitious son of Chilperic, is in conflict with his father and seeks sanctuary in St. Martin’s in Tours. Merovech was actually in Tours in Easter 576, and it was to him that, Halsall argues, the Preface to Book V was originally addressed, probably in the form of a letter.²²⁰ Crucially for Halsall’s thesis, Gregory finishes the preface with a call to a singular king ‘*O rex*’ rather than addressing kings ‘*O regis*’ as he had

²¹⁷ D. Howlett *The Book of Letters of Saint Patrick the Bishop* (Dublin, 1994)..

²¹⁸ Halsall ‘The Preface to Book V’, pp.302-3.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.303.

²²⁰ *ibid.*, p.313.

throughout, supporting the argument for a single recipient of the original verse.²²¹

Halsall finds precedents for Gregory's message in the works of Sallust and Augustine,²²² although the age-old question of whether Gregory was aware of Augustinian thought remains unanswered.²²³ Both Sallust and Eusebius used the theme of *pronoia*, 'linking the fortunes of kingdoms to the people's morals', while Augustine highlighted the tension between concord and discord, which sits at the very heart of Gregory's argument. The Psalms, in particular Psalm 72, bear the foundations of Gregorian thought on the nature of kingship.²²⁴ If all the prefaces are taken together they present a unified argument. This is, as Halsall says, roughly analogous with Goffart's analysis of the *Histories* as a vehicle for Gregory's belief in the comparison of earthly and saintly deeds and the ubiquity of God on earth.²²⁵

The events described at the end of Book IV clearly, in Halsall's view, prompted Gregory to begin the *Histories*. Books I-IV form a unit with a significant death at the end of each book. St. Martin, Clovis, Theudebert I and Sigibert were all important to Gregory. In addition he chose to use their deaths 'to periodize

²²¹ *ibid.*, p.313.

²²² Halsall 'The Preface to Book V', p.304; J.C. Rolfe (ed. and trans.), *Sallust* (London, 1921), Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, V.12.

²²³ See chapter 6 for further discussion of this issue.

²²⁴ Halsall 'The Preface to Book V', p.305.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p.306.

Christian History in his chronology at the end of Book IV.²²⁶ This four-book unit followed the writing of the preface to Book V, while Gregory perhaps continued Book V simultaneously.²²⁷

Halsall suggests that Gregory may have used Eusebius as a model for the placing of this focal passage at this point. Eusebius had written a history of ten books, which Gregory knew through the translation of Rufinus. Like Eusebius' work, some manuscripts of the *Histories* bear the title *Historia Ecclesiae*. Perhaps Gregory intended to write just such a church history.²²⁸ However, more significantly, the preface to Book V of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* is the longest of the work, and contains a similar message to the parallel passage in Gregory's *Histories*. Similarities can also be seen in Book I of each work. Ultimately, Halsall states that Gregory placed this message in the preface to Book V as the focal point of the *Histories*, because that message, 'which he had delivered personally to the kings of Gaul,' encapsulated the whole work.²²⁹

As the breadth of the study of Gregory's *Histories* has increased, so too has our understanding of the potential complexity of the work. Each of the above scholars has brought their own interests and agendas to the table, often reflecting their own times, just as Gregory reflected his. That such diversity can be found in the pages of the *Histories* is, I suggest, a testament to the contextual

²²⁶ *ibid.*, p.312.

²²⁷ *ibid.*, p.313.

²²⁸ Halsall 'The Preface to Book V', p.316. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.227.

²²⁹ Halsall 'The Preface to Book V', p.318.

layers envisioned by the bishop. In order to achieve such depth the author must have been more manipulative of his material than was envisaged, at least until the mid-twentieth century. Indeed we can see in the survey above how Gregory has slowly emerged from the murky past of seventh-century editors, Carolingian propagandists, Renaissance nationalists and several hundred years of elitist scholarship. Despite the small blip in the form of Auerbach's patronising view of the bishop, engendered by the rustic nature of his Latin, scholarship in the last half-century or more has embraced the intellect of the *Histories*' author with ever-increasing zeal.

Wallace-Hadrill saw the *Histories* as a companion to Gregory's hagiography, intended for the clergy in Tours. The work also played the role of commentary on his own time, comparing contemporary kings with their ancestors. Auerbach saw the bishop as limited in scope and learning, and as such was symbolic of his age. This was perhaps the last of the 'old school' views on the barbarity of Gaul in the sixth century. As our view of Gregory has improved, so too has that of the social and political landscape that he inhabited. No longer can it be called 'The Dark Ages'. An indication of just how far Gregory had been rehabilitated by scholarship could be found in de Nie's study of the man she dubbed 'an unconscious poet.' Here too Gregory is seen as deliberately choosing his style. However, despite clearly admiring Gregory's use of imagery, de Nie's view still holds more than a hint of the patronising tone reminiscent of earlier scholars, who perceived Gregory as a far more direct recorder of a barbaric time.

It was left to Goffart to restore the momentum of a positive view of the *Histories*. Although he saw no plan in the bishop's mind, or detailed structure in his history, Gregory was finally recognised as being a conscious manipulator of his material. Indeed it is to Goffart that we are indebted for the recognition of Gregory's didactic message: that God is active in the world at all times, through his agents. This message is portrayed through repetition and the juxtaposition of saintly and mortal deeds. Subsequently Heinzlmann built on work carried out by Goffart and Thürlemann,²³⁰ in establishing that Gregory had indeed created a structure within the *Histories*, in contrast to the apparent random nature of the placement of individual passages. This structure was basic, but real nevertheless. Its purpose was the promotion of the Church of Christ.

Breukelaar takes this idea further, as he regards Gregory as a propagandist for the ecclesiastical elite in Gaul, within the Church of Christ, and Tours in particular, using his writings to stave off the perceived threat from the Merovingian dynasty. Clearly by now Gregory is seen as a conscious manipulator of his sources with an agenda and structure to his work.

Van Dam appears to have 'returned' to the view of Gregory as hagiographer rather than historian. However, the subject matter is dealt with in a far more sympathetic and constructive way than previously. Ian Wood has embraced the image of Gregory as very much an individual, unrepresentative of his time, but main witness to it nonetheless. His *Histories* is at once family, political and

²³⁰ F. Thürlemann, *Der historische Diskurs bei Gregor von Tours. Topoi und Wirklichkeit* (Geist und Werk der Zeiten 39), (Bern, 1974), pp.86-94, cited in Heinzlmann, *History and Society*, pp.148-52; Goffart, *Narrators*.

religious in nature. The collected works under the umbrella of the celebrations of the fourteen hundredth anniversary of Gregory's death continue Wood's article-based approach to the myriad questions raised by Gregory's work, and not least by its position as the sole authority on the uniquely covered contemporary source material, dealing with them by specific episode or theme. Finally, Halsall's article on the Preface to Book V at once gives the *Histories* more solidity by encompassing the process of composition within the events of the civil war of 575/6, and also credits Gregory with more style than has hitherto usually been thought.

Wallace-Hadrill had an inkling that Gregory was manipulating his sources, and this has become the predominant view among scholars today. Ian Wood and Martin Heinzelmann have indicated that Gregory had some kind of structure underlying his otherwise chaotic presentation of events within the *Histories*. Gregory was nevertheless much more skilled in literary motifs and the manipulation of his sources than has hitherto been recognized. Heinzelmann is correct when he talks of the internal structure of books within the work, but he does not go far enough in his investigation of this framework upon which Gregory hangs his stories. I will argue that the bishop chooses his material very carefully in order to fit his agenda, which may well have changed through the composition of the work. I suggest that within Books I-IV Gregory builds upon the themes apparent in the preface to Book V. In fact I will argue that Books I-IV are an expansion of the preface, written to explain fully how the events surrounding it in the *Histories*, namely the death of Theuderic and Sigibert in the heinous civil war, came about. More importantly Gregory is interested in

showing what lessons can be learned from these days of fear and chaos, namely that the kings have strayed from the path of God, and are therefore doomed to failure.

This obviously puts Gregory in a position of power over the kings, as the agent of God advising how they can redeem themselves. The question is whether the kings will listen, or whether they will ignore the advice of an agent of God to their peril, like several of their ancestors, whom Gregory describes in detail. This raises questions about Gregory's motives, and Breukelaar for one has seen the bishop as very much self-serving. I think this is being too harsh on Gregory, in the same way that Van Dam thought that Goffart was being unjust to see in the *Histories* the mark of a satirist. As a prominent member of society Gregory would obviously benefit from any improvements in the condition of the kingdom. Also it is true that by presenting God as the cure to the ills of the Merovingian kings the church would undoubtedly benefit. However if he had been merely interested in the protection and advancement of his class, as Breukelaar suggests, he need not have depicted the problems of the kingdom at large. He could have concentrated solely on the issues at stakes for the kings themselves: failure in conquest chief among them. So I suggest that, through a careful structuring of the chapters within the *Histories*, possibly based on an extension of Biblical chiastic style, Gregory wished to explain to the kings that their failures rebounded on their kingdom, and God was the cure to all.

Gregory was, then, I will argue, a far deeper thinker than he has hitherto been given credit. This applies also to his theology. As I show that Gregory believed

he could teach the Merovingians the error of their ways, he appears to offer an insight into his beliefs on redemption, predestination and free will. These issues will be dealt with in detail later.

1.5 Audience for the *Histories*. Precedence for audience, agenda and style

Opinion has been divided on the question of Gregory's intended audience for the *Histories*, from clergy and pilgrims at Tours,²³¹ to a wider geographical audience of bishops and royalty, or both.²³² Leaving aside the issue of whether the intended and actual audience were one and the same,²³³ my study argues that Gregory wrote at least Books I-IV for his contemporary kings. The subject matter of the books indicates such a conclusion.²³⁴

At this stage it is prudent to talk of precedents for Gregory's direct rebuke and warning to 'his' kings. The roots of Gregory's behaviour can be found in Christian apologetic. The earliest known examples of *apologia* were delivered in defence of Christianity, to the emperor Hadrian by Quadratus, bishop of

²³¹ Van Dam, *Saints*, p.147; Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.69-70. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.194, infers that the prominence of Clermont in books I-III suggests an audience with knowledge of the area.

²³² Breukelaar, *Historiography*, pp.116-129. Goffart and Heinzelmann do not broach the subject of audience to any significant degree, although Goffart, *Narrators*, p.171, taking his cue from Gregory's claim in the General Preface that many people had complained that the 'writing of literature has declined to the point where it has virtually disappeared altogether', argues that this was his audience's major preoccupation.

²³³ R. McKitterick, 'The Written Word and Oral Communication: Rome's Legacy to the Franks', in her *The Frankish Kings and Culture in the Early Middle Ages* (Variorum, 1995), p.91 questions the extent to which audiences may differ from those intended over time and changing modes of presentation. As we have so little information regarding the initial stages of composition of the *Histories*, and considering Halsall's theory that the preface to Book V was possibly a sermon in its initial form, there remain questions regarding such issues that must be addressed, but which fall outside the remit of this thesis.

²³⁴ See full discussion below, chapters 3-6.

Athens, and the philosopher Aristedes. These documents survive only in part, through Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Justin Martyr wrote similarly to Antoninus Pius, while Melito and Apollinaris, bishops of Sardis and Hierapolis respectively addressed Marcus Aurelius, and Tertullian appealed to the senate.²³⁵ Eusebius describes all these works as *apologia*.²³⁶ All of the above, except for that of Tertullian, are retained in Rufinus's translation of Eusebius, known to Gregory. In fact the bishop of Tours utilised both of Eusebius's historical works, the *H.E.* and the *Chronicle* in Book I of the *Histories*. Whilst Eusebius's historical works were fine and groundbreaking pieces, they grew out of his apologetic interests. 'History, for Eusebius, had become a kind of apologetic, an alternative method of proof that Christianity was true.'²³⁷ For instance, in his *Chronicle* he wished to show that the Jewish traditions upon which Christianity was built were older, and thus more venerable, than their pagan rivals.²³⁸

Gregory clearly based the early part of his *Histories* on Eusebius's and Jerome's historical works. I argue that he also continued the apologetic nature of the *H.E.* and the *Chronicle*, in defence of the Catholic faith, whose precepts were being discarded by his contemporary kings. Gregory sets out his credo in the Preface

²³⁵ Quadratus and Aristedes, *H.E.* 4.3; Justin, *H.E.* 4.11-12; Melito, Bishop of Sardis, *H.E.* 4.13; and Tertullian, *H.E.* 5.5. Rufinus retains the detail of all but the last reference in his translation of Eusebius, which Gregory is known to have read.

²³⁶ F.M. Young, 'Classical Genres in Christian guise; Christian genres in classical guise', in F.M. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*. (Cambridge, 2004), pp.251-8, at p.254.

²³⁷ Young, 'Classical Genres', p.253.

²³⁸ A. Louth, 'Eusebius and the birth of church history', in Young, Ayres & Louth (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, pp.266-74, at p.270.

to Book I.²³⁹ He stands tall against his kings in the Preface to Book V.²⁴⁰ In between are numerous examples of his didactic agenda, directly addressed, like the apologists before him, to the rulers of his day.²⁴¹ Gregory, having read Rufinus's translation of Eusebius, would have been familiar with these

²³⁹ *Hist. Praef.I, MGH.SRM.1.1 pp. 3-4* 'Credo ergo in Deum patrem omnipotentem. Credo in Iesum Christum, filium eius unicum, dominum nostrum, natum a patre, non factum, non post tempora, sed ante cunctum tempus semper fuisse cum patre. Nec enim pater dici potuerat, nisi haberit filium; neque filius esset, si patrem utique non haberet. Illos vero, qui dicunt: 'Erat quando non erat', execrabiliter rennuo et ab ecclesia segregare contestor. Credo Christum hunc verbum esse patris, per quem facta sunt omnia. Hunc verbum carne factum credo, cuius passionem mundus redemptus est, et humanitatem, non deitatem subiacuisse passione, credo. Credo, eum tertia die resurrexisse, hominem perditum liberasse, ascendisse caelos, sedere a dexteram Patris, venturum ac iudicaturum vivos et mortuos. Credo sanctum Spiritum a Patre et Filio processisse, non minorem et quasi ante non esset, sed aequalem et semper cum Patre et Filio coaeternum deum, cumsubstantialem natura, aequalem omnipotentia, consemperiternum esse essentia et nunquam sine Patre fuisse vel Filio, neque minorem Patri vel Filio. Credo hanc Trinitatem sanctam in distinctione subsistere personarum, et aliam quidem personam Patris, aliam Fili, aliam Spiritus sancti. In qua Trinitate unam Deitatem, unam potentiam, unam essentiam esse, confiteor. Credo beatam Mariam, ut virginem ante partum, ita virginem et post partum. Credo animam immortalem, nec tamen partem habere Deitatis. Et omnia quae a 318 episcopis Nicaene instituta sunt credo fideliter.'

²⁴⁰ *Hist. Praef.V, MGH.SRM 1.1 pp.193-194* *Taedit me bellorum civilium diversitatis, quae Francorum gentem et regnum valde proterunt, memorare; in quo, quod peius est, tempore illud quod Dominus de dolorum praedixit initium iam videmus: Consurgit pater in filium, filius in patrem, frater in fratrem, proximus in propinquum. Debebant enim eos exempla anteriorum regum terrere, qui, ut divisi, statim ab inimicis sunt interempti. Quotiens et ipsa urbs urbium et totius mundi capud ingens bella civilia diruit; quae cessante, rursus quasi ab humo surrexit. Utinam et vos, o regis, in his proelia, in quibus parentes vestri desudaverunt, exercimini, ut gentes, vestra pace conterritae, vestris viribus praemirentur! Recordamini, quid capud victuriarum vestrarum Chlodovechus fecerit, qui adversos reges interficet, noxias gentes elisit, patrias subiugavit, quarum regnum vobis integrum inlesumque reliquit! Et cum hoc facerit, neque aurum neque argentum, sicut nunc est in thesauris vestris, habebat. Quid agetis? Quid quaeritis? Quid non habundatis? In domibus dilitiae supercrescunt, in prumtuariis vinum, triticum oleumque redundat, in thesauris aurum atque argentum coacervatur. Unum vobis deest, quod, pacem non habentes, Dei gratiam indegetis. Cur unus tollit alteri suum? Cur alter concupiscit alienum? Cavete illo, quaeso, apostoli: Si ab invicem mordetis et comeditis, vidite, ne ab invicem consummami. Scrutamini diligenter veterum scripta, et videbitis, quid civilia bella parturiant. Requirete, quod de Carthaginensibus scribat Orhosius, qui, cum post septingentos annos subversam dicat civitatem et regionem eorum, addidit: Quae res eam tamdiu servavit? Concordia. Quae res eam post tanta distruxit tempora? Discordias. Cavete discordiam, cavete bella civilia, quae vos populumque vestrum expugnant. Quid aliud sperandum erit, nisi cum exercitus vester caeciderit, vos sine solatio relicti atque a gentibus adversis oppressi protinus conruatis? Si tibi, o rex, bellum civili delectat, illud quod apostolus in hominem agi meminit exerce, ut spiritus concupiscat adversus carnem et vitia virtutibus caedant; et tu liber capite tuo, id est Christo, servias, qui quondam radicem malorum servieras conpeditus.'*

²⁴¹ See for example Gregory's depiction of Cain and Abel, *Hist. I.2*, corresponding to the slaughter of Sigibert in IV.51, or the series of chapters showing the peaks and depths of Merovingian marital policy, *Hist. 25-28*: below, chapter 5.

examples of *apologia* mentioned above. He would have been comfortable with a direct appeal to the emperor or king.

There are further examples of the role of bishops in chastising the secular leader of their day; Ambrose of Milan is perhaps the most renowned. Although we have no evidence to suggest that Gregory had read Ambrose, there is enough evidence within the latter's work to provide additional precedent for Gregory's didactic attitude towards his kings. It has been argued that Ambrose provides an '*exemplum* of an outspoken bishop courageously doing his duty of recalling a ruler to his moral obligations.'²⁴² In a letter to emperor Theodosius I, Ambrose writes that it is the part of a bishop to say what he thinks, even unto the emperor.²⁴³ He then proceeds to warn the emperor of the error of his ways.²⁴⁴ In a letter to his sister, Ambrose included a sermon that he gave before Theodosius, concluding with a public demand to the emperor, that he forgive the accused in the matter of the destruction of a synagogue in Callinicum.²⁴⁵ In his letter on the massacre at Thessalonica Ambrose rebukes Theodosius for his actions, demanding penance,²⁴⁶ the result of which is described in his obituary

²⁴² J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (trans.), *Ambrose of Milan. Political Letters and Speeches* (Liverpool, 2005), p.262.

²⁴³ M. Zelzer, (ed.), *Sancti Ambrosii opera : pars X : epistulae et acta. Epistularum liber decimus, Epistulae extra collectionem, Gesta concili Aquileiensis CSEL 82.3.* (Vienna, 1968-1996), Ep.74.2. '*Sed neque imperiale est libertatem dicendi denegare, neque sacerdotale, quod sentias, non dicere. Nihil enim in vobis imperatoribus tam populare et tam amabile est, quam libertatem etiam in iis diligere, qui obsequio militiae vobis subditi sunt. Siquidem hoc interest inter bonos et malos principes, quod boni libertatem amant, servitutem improbi. Nihil etiam in sacerdote tam periculosum apud Deum, tam turpe apud homines, quam quod sentiat, non libere denuntiare.*' Liebeschuetz (trans.), *Ambrose*, p.97.

²⁴⁴ Ambrose, *Ep.* 74.6-33, *Ep. ex. 1a, passim.*

²⁴⁵ Ambrose, *Ep. ex.* 1.27-28; Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose*, pp.122-123.

to the emperor.²⁴⁷ Ambrose outlines that ‘*Multifarie Deus noster admonet, signis coelestibus, prophetarum praeceptis: visionibus etiam peccatorum vult nos intelligere; quo rogemus eum, ut perturbationes auferat, pacem vobis imperantibus servet, fides Ecclesiae et tranquillitas perseveret, cui prodest christianos et pios esse imperatores.*’²⁴⁸ There are remarkable parallels with Gregory’s focus within the *Histories*.²⁴⁹

Gregory also had the examples of Ambrose’s contemporary Martin of Tours, and the earlier career of Hilary of Poitiers to draw upon. Most closely related to Gregory’s experience as bishop of Tours, is the record to be found within Sulpicius Severus’ *Life of St. Martin*, of Martin’s meeting with Emperor Maximus. Martin stands up to the emperor, as an equal or superior, rather than a supplicant.²⁵⁰ This was the opposite of the obsequious solicitation offered by

²⁴⁶ Ambrose, *Ep. ex.* 11.11. ‘*Homo es, et tibi venit tentatio, vince eam. Peccatum non tollitur nisi lacrymis et poenitentia. Nec angelus potest, nec archangelus; Dominus ipse, qui solus potest dicere: Ego vobiscum sum; si peccaverimus, nisi poenitentiam deferentibus non relaxat.*’ Rufinus mentioned this episode in his continuation of Eusebius’ *HE.* 11.18. However, he attributed the rebuke of Theodosius to the clergy of Italy rather than Ambrose. Hence Gregory, who had read Rufinus, would have been aware of the action, if not the original perpetrator. ‘*Ob hoc cum a sacerdotibus Italiae argueretur, agnovit delictum, culpamque cum lacrymis professus, publicam poenitentiam in conspectu totius Ecclesiae exegit: et in hoc sibi tempus adscriptum, absque regali fastigio patienter implevit.*’

²⁴⁷ O. Faller, (ed.), *De Obitu Theodosii*, CSEL 73, 34. ‘*Stravit omne, quo utebatur insigne regium, deflevit in Ecclesia publice peccatum suum, quod ei aliorum fraude obreperat: gemitu et lacrymis oravit veniam.*’

²⁴⁸ Ambrose, *Ep. ex.* 11.14. ‘[T]hrough the warnings of prophets...he wishes us to learn that we are to pray to him to put an end to disorder, to preserve peace for...our emperors, and to uphold the faith and tranquillity of the Church, for which it is a benefit that the emperors are Christian and pious.’ Trans. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose*, p.268.

²⁴⁹ See for example his depiction of Theudebert I in *Hist.* III.25. ‘*At ille in regno firmatus, magnum se atque in omni bonitate praecipuum reddidit. Erat enim regnum cum iustitia regens, sacerdotes venerans, ecclesias munerans, pauperes relevans et multa multis beneficia pia ac dulcissima accommodans voluntate.*’

²⁵⁰ Sulp. Sev., *VSM*, 20. ‘*foeda circa principem omnium adulatio notaretur, seque degeneri inconstantia regiae clientelae sacerdotalis dignitas subdidisset, in solo Martino apostolica auctoritas permanebat: nam et si pro aliquibus supplicandum regi fuit, imperavit potius quam rogavit.*’ K. Halm (ed.), *CSEL* 1 (Vienna, 1866); F.R. Hoare (trans.), ‘Sulpicius Severus: The

other clergy towards the usurper. Such an image could not fail to make an impression on Gregory as Tours' bishop. Indeed in his depiction of Martin's meeting with Maximus, there is more than a suggestion that Tours' patron saint has some role to play in the usurper's fall at the hands of Theodosius.²⁵¹ Hilary of Poitiers' disagreement with Constantius II, for whatever reason,²⁵² led to his exile, from where he composed a provocative letter to the emperor outlining what he should do concerning the Arian 'heretics'.²⁵³ In Gregory's version of events included in Book I of the *Histories* the implication is that Hilary sealed his return from exile through the books he had sent to Constantius.²⁵⁴

There are definite precedents for both Gregory's direct address to the Merovingian kings, and its message; from the apologetics Quadratus and Eusebius, to Hilary and Martin, all of whom would have been known to Gregory. As circumstances have changed, as Christianity became the main religion of the West, then the message would change, from defence of Christianity, to that of Catholicism. Within the pages of the *Histories* Gregory

Life of Saint Martin of Tours', in T.F.X. Noble & T. Head (ed.) *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania, 1995), pp.1-29.

²⁵¹ *Hist.* I.43. 'Ad hunc Maximum beatus Martinus iam episcopus venit. In loco ergo Gratiani Theodosius ille, qui totam spem in Deum posuerat, totum suscepit imperium. Qui deinceps divinis affatibus fretus, Maximum spoliatum imperio interfecit.'

²⁵² D.G. Hunter, 'Fourth-century Latin writers: Hilary, Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Ambrose', in Young, Ayres & Louth (ed.), *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*. pp.302-17, at p.302; For the view that Hilary was exiled for his support of the usurper Silvanus see H.C. Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II: Untersuchungen zur dritten Phase des arianischen Streites (337-361)* (Berlin, 1984), pp.210-43; D.H. Williams, 'A Reassessment of the Early Career and Exile of Hilary of Poitiers', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42 (1991), 202-17. For a recent proponent of the traditional view that Hilary was exiled due to his refusal to denounce Athanasius, see T.D. Barnes, 'Hilary of Poitiers in His Exile', *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992), 129-40.

²⁵³ L. Wickham, *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church* (Liverpool, 1997).

²⁵⁴ *Hist.* I.38. 'ibique libros pro fide catholica scribens, Constantio misit; qui quarto exilii anno eum absolvi iubens, ad propria redire permisit.'

defends his beliefs against the heresy of Arianism, as well as spelling out what was required of a Catholic ruler of the Franks.²⁵⁵ In this I argue that he is the successor of the early apologetics.

With regard to the structure of Books I-IV, I will argue that they were arranged in a chiasmic manner, reflecting the form and issues raised in the preface to Book V. There were certainly precedents with regard to such a structure, based on chiasmic forms, which were prevalent within the Bible.²⁵⁶ It was Gregory's greatest source, and he adopted motifs and styles to be found within its pages. Gregory had also read Prudentius, who may also have used chiasmic structure in some of his poetry.²⁵⁷ Hence it is not without precedent to find such a structure in Gregory's own works. However the question remains as to whether his audience would be able to decipher the structure of these books, as they were composed by the bishop of Tours.

One could argue that such a representation of biblical style would be more readily recognized by members of the clergy. Breukelaar argues that the *Histories* were intended for the bishops, so that they might communicate its

²⁵⁵ For examples of Gregory's attacks on Arianism see *Hist.* II.2,3,4,37. For the epitome of a Catholic ruler see Gregory's depiction of Theudebert I, *Hist.* III.25; Theodosius I, *Hist.* I.42; Tiberius II, *Hist.* IV.40; Breukelaar, *Historiography*, p.125.

²⁵⁶ D. Howlett, 'Biblical Style in early Insular Latin', in P.Szarmach (ed.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture Studies in Medieval Culture* 20 (Kalamazoo, 1986), pp.127-147; *id.*, *Letters of Saint Patrick*; M. Bonnet, *Le Latin de Gregoire de Tours*, p.720; J. Verdon, *Gregoire de Tours: Le Père de l'Histoire de la France* (Le Coteau, 1989), p.106; Halsall, 'Preface to Book V', pp.297-306.

²⁵⁷ P. Pieroni, 'Zu Prudentius, Hamartigenia 824', *Philologus: Zeitschrift Für Antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption* 149:1 (2005), 180-1.

message to the people, who might then influence the deeds of their kings.²⁵⁸ However there are problems with this theory. First, this supposes a dynamic between ruler and ruled that only occasionally appears within the books of the *Histories*.²⁵⁹ Second, one must ask why Gregory would move in such an indirect manner, when a passage such as the preface to Book V indicates his ability and willingness to speak directly to his intended audience, without the possibilities for misunderstanding available under third-party interpretation. Indeed it is possible to note parallels between Martin's actions at the court of Magnus Maximus, and Gregory's at that of Chilperic, in the trial of Praetextatus of Rouen.²⁶⁰ One has to wonder at the level of trust Gregory felt for his fellow bishops in their dealings with royalty.

The reputation of Merovingian kings left to us by Carolingian, and indeed Gregory's own records, might suggest that they were incapable of understanding such a complex literary idea as chiasmus.²⁶¹ However, Chilperic had pretensions to be a poet,²⁶² and as Wallace-Hadrill has pointed out, the Merovingians were entertained by the likes of Venantius Fortunatus, they were

²⁵⁸ Breukelaar, *Historiography*, p.126.

²⁵⁹ *Hist.* II.10, Theuderic has to appease his troops with the promise of booty; *Hist.* IV.14, Chlothar must do likewise, but is defeated by the Saxons, as his cause is not just.

²⁶⁰ *Hist.* V.18.

²⁶¹ For discussion of the historiography of the barbarian kings and their alleged lack of culture, and for a definitive rejection of the notion, see Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and culture in the Early Medieval West* (London, 2007). The classic on the topic is, obviously, P. Riché, *Education et Culture dans l'Occident Barbare* (Paris, 1962). See also *id.*, *Écoles et Enseignement dans le Haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 1989), and the essays in Riché's Festschrift, M. Sot (ed.), *Haut Moyen Age: Culture, Éducation et Société* (Paris, 1990).

²⁶² *Hist.* V.44. Chilperic had failed to imitate the poet Sedulius.

no barbarians.²⁶³ Gregory himself challenged the kings to study old writings carefully, and then to look up what Orosius had to say about the Carthaginians.²⁶⁴ He clearly expected the Merovingians to have access to such texts and to be able to understand them. It is not difficult to glimpse a society, at least at its zenith, which could not only produce such complex individual works as Gregory's history, but could also grasp their full didactic, structural and stylistic impact. Gregory was not alone in his knowledge of literary devices.²⁶⁵ The agenda to be found within the pages of Books I-IV can only have been composed for the edification of kings. It is probable that Gregory wrote in a style in which he felt comfortable, using biblical and poetic inspirations, hoping to inspire the kings to both literary and moral advancement.

There were certainly precedents for Gregory's direct appeal, as a Metropolitan of Gaul and a member of the court circle, to his contemporary kings, as there are for the focus of that appeal. His addition of such a structure for such a piece may well prove to be very much his own spark of originality.

1. 6 The Date of Composition

The issue of the date of composition of Books I-IV of the *Histories* has been the subject of repeated debate, and has important ramifications for my thesis. Of those scholars who tackle the question of dating there is a consensus that these

²⁶³ Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Work', p.63. Opinion has moved on from Auerbach's view of a Dark-Age society, see above.

²⁶⁴ *Hist.* Praef V.

²⁶⁵ His friend Venantius Fortunatus wrote poetry in various styles. All bishops at least should have been more than superficially familiar with scripture and its stylistic nuances.

books were written as a unit to a greater or lesser degree. Goffart, de Nie and Heinzelmann follow Büchner in dating these books to 575/6. Halsall argues that as the Preface to Book V was written around Easter 576, Books I-IV would have followed soon after. This would agree with Wood's view that the four books were penned between 576 and 580.²⁶⁶ Breukelaar, while considering the information for Books III and IV to have been collected prior to 575, argues for the whole work being written in the period 587-592. As for the later books, while making it clear that the homogeneity of the work renders pointless any attempt to uncover the chronology of composition, Goffart and Heinzelmann agree that Books V-X were probably revised during the mid 590's.

1.7 Conclusion

As I have shown, there has been a sea change in the way scholarship has perceived Gregory the writer over the last few decades. While, in the sense that scholars have always disagreed over the *Histories*, nothing has changed, the arguments have now moved on apace. Where once there was no recognition of a structure to Gregory's narrative, now Heinzelmann has made it clear that the bishop cleverly organised his material in set ways. Heinzelmann argues that he has the key to Gregory's intent, and to some extent he has, but the door is double locked and he has only turned the key once. As structure has become apparent, so the question of Gregory's agenda is raised. The debate ranges from Goffart's view that the *Histories'* structure of mixed moral tales highlights Gregory's attempt to show the opposites of good and bad, heavenly and earthly deeds, to Breukelaar's of the political and social concept of *Bischofsherrschaft*.

²⁶⁶ This is the dating I favour myself, although there is no reason why, as Breukelaar suggests, the work as a whole was not under periodic revision.

This latter concept promotes the position of the clergy within the ruling elite of Merovingian Gaul. Others see Gregory not as a political animal, but as an ‘unconscious poet.’²⁶⁷

It becomes more certain with every new study that the bishop used the *Histories* as a series of moral tales for the instruction of his audience. Steadily the complexity of Gregory’s structure is becoming apparent, and it is my intention to show how carefully and completely Gregory builds the early section of the *Histories* into a map with which to show the path of God’s Will.

²⁶⁷ de Nie, *Views*, p.24.

Chapter 2: An Overview of the Structure of Books I-IV

At first glance the work of the *Histories* appears to be somewhat haphazard in structure. However, the work of Martin Heinzelmann and more recently, Guy Halsall, has allowed us to glimpse a tidy and organized mind behind the outward depiction of chaos and disorder. Within the four books of the ‘Prehistory’, Gregory can be seen to be carefully positioning core chapters along the lines first expressed by Heinzelmann, in that first, middle and end chapters carry motifs central to the focus of each book.²⁶⁸ I will show that it is possible to recognise this structure in all four books.

Further, it can be noted that Gregory’s use of cardinal chapters as reference points for his audience goes deeper than previously discovered. Not only are the chapters so utilised positioned more precisely than Heinzelmann theorized, but the bishop also uses the quartile chapters of each book to highlight his message, and to carry sub-themes. As an instance, in Book IV the quartile chapters 13 and 39 feature events that evoke the atmosphere of rebellion within Chlothar’s reign, and the open rivalry between church and state respectively.

On yet another level, Gregory uses these chapters as a framework, controlling the historical and thematic narrative. For an in-depth explanation of this and the structural organization highlighted above, I shall lay bare Gregory’s construction of Book I with these motifs in mind.

²⁶⁸ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, pp.127-39.

2.1 Cardinal Chapters: Beginning, middle and end chapters of Books I-IV.

Book I consists of forty-eight chapters, with a preface.²⁶⁹ Chapter one portrays the Creation in Christ and the fall of man. Chapter forty-eight details the death of St Martin of Tours, whom Gregory presents as the foremost agent of God. According to Heinzelmann's thesis, these two chapters are pivotal to an understanding of Gregory's focus within the book, and so they prove. Hence, within the text of Book I, Gregory's narrative covers the whole of history up to and including the death of the most important Bishop of Tours, and Gregory's ultimate power base, Martin.²⁷⁰ The degree to which Gregory has engineered his material to suit the needs of his agenda, rather than history, can be observed through the time span covered within the book, and the events chosen for the bracketing (beginning and end) and central chapters of the book.

At the halfway point of his Book I narrative, in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five, Gregory carefully placed the resurrection of Christ and Peter's arrival in Rome, respectively. The Creation, in Christ, His death and rebirth, the birth of the Church and the death of (to Gregory) its most important subsequent leader, Martin,²⁷¹ provide a framework for the narrative and for the meditation of the audience. The first half of the book covers the period from the Creation to the Ascension. The second half details the growth of the Church from Peter to Martin. Thus the book revolves around Christ and His agents on earth. The first

²⁶⁹ I shall leave the preface for the moment; its role will become clearer once I have highlighted the way in which Gregory structured his composition.

²⁷⁰ There has been a certain amount of debate as to Gregory's division of the narrative, and the point at which his study could be seen to turn to contemporary events. See Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, pp.108-15.

²⁷¹ In Gregory's eyes at least.

half covers the time of prophecy of the coming of Christ, while the second details the realisation of His earthly agency, the Church.

Also to be found at the centre of the book are two of Gregory's 'favourite' historical villains: Nero and Herod²⁷². They play the role of counterpoint to the religious zenith of Christ and Peter,²⁷³ as Gregory underpins the higher plane of spirituality with reference to the evil deeds of man. These two persecutors epitomise the bishop's view of a bad king, while great figures in Christian views of history, such as David, Solomon and Constantine, exemplify 'the good king'.²⁷⁴ Strikingly these 'good' figures can be found within the quartile chapters of Book I, surrounding the arch-evil representations of Nero and Herod and suggesting that Gregory manipulated his framework to a hitherto unrecognised degree.²⁷⁵

At the centre point of the first half of Book I Gregory presents his audience with the image of kings David and Solomon. David, in chapter twelve, the end of the first quarter of the book, represents the genesis of kingship for the chosen people of God. Solomon, in chapter thirteen, directly after the crux of the first half of Book I,²⁷⁶ personifies the wisdom of kingship, and acts as an exemplar to those to whom Gregory is preaching: the Merovingian kings. Furthermore, at

²⁷² *Hist.* I.24-25: the last chapter of the second and first chapter of the third quarters of Book I.

²⁷³ Christ's ascension comes in the end chapter of the first half of Book I (*Hist.* I.24), while Peter's ministry comes in the first chapter of the third quarter (*Hist.* I.25).

²⁷⁴ For Gregory's views on the possible synchronicity of holy men and bad rulers see *Hist.* III.praef.

²⁷⁵ David: *Hist.* I.12 (end chapter of the first quarter); Solomon: *Hist.* I.13 (first chapter of the second quarter); Constantine: *Hist.* I.36 (end chapter of third quarter).

²⁷⁶ Such a position held a great deal of importance in chiasmic schematics.

the crux of the second half of Book I we find Constantine I, signifying the end of persecution and the prelude to a new era of celebration and consolidation for the Church. Gregory's careful placement of such major religious and secular figures cannot be purely coincidental. The central theme of Book I, as emphasised by the cardinal chapters discussed here, is the history of man's relationship with God and His agents, which has a major bearing on the message of the 'Prehistory' as a whole. The body of evidence points to the careful manipulation of the source material, and of the structure of the *Histories'* first four books.

The text of Book I is thus divided equally into four distinct sections. First Gregory portrays biblical events up to the establishment of kingship, (chapters 1-12), which includes several examples of the wayward nature of mankind in the face of the will of God, a state that the author sees repeated throughout history. The repeated attempts of the Israelite leaders to persuade their people to obey the will of God will be dissected in more detail below.²⁷⁷ Next, Gregory covers the time from the first king of Israel to the Passion of the King of Kings, (chapters 13-24). The nature of kingship was a vital topic for the *Histories*, aimed as it was at the Merovingian kings. From the time of Peter to that of Constantine (chapters 25-36) Gregory paints a picture of the persecution of the Church, before ending with its celebration and dominance over the persecutors (chapters 37-48). These two themes will also be seen to play a major role in the remainder of the 'Prehistory', as will become clear in Books III and IV. Not only are these four sections of Book I distinct in their subject matter, but they

²⁷⁷ See chapter 3, below.

also illuminate the subjects close to Gregory's heart that he will cover in Books II-IV.

2.2 Book II.

The cardinal chapters of Book II mould the contents of that book in much the same way as we have seen was the case for Book I. The first chapter deals with the friction between St. Martin, in a posthumous account of his life, and his successor St. Bricius. At the core of this chapter is a debate about legitimacy. Martin backs Bricius as his successor, but the latter must negotiate a series of trials in order finally to take up the office, having been falsely accused of adultery. This punishment is brought upon Bricius because of his lack of respect for the foremost agent of God, his predecessor Martin. Bricius's legitimacy lies solely in the hands of God, and contrition must be made in order to seek repentance.

The climax of Book II concerns the unification of the Franks under the rule of Clovis. There has been conflict here also; only this time it is bloody war and conquest. Legitimacy is provided again by the Will of God, acting through his agent Clovis, who smites his enemies, shown to be depraved and full of sin. Book II is bracketed by conflict, which can only be resolved through God. After Clovis's death his widow, Chlotild, retired to the life of a religious at Tours, enfolding the book in the geographical locale that was the author's seat of power. The effect is to make events within Book II appear more relevant to the bishop's narrative agenda, but also to reiterate the supremacy of the church over kings.

At the centre of the book²⁷⁸ (II.22) lies a brief sketch of the saintly Apollinaris, a man for whom Gregory had the greatest respect. This chapter plays the role of counterpoint to the theme of conflict highlighted in the end chapters. However, directly following the crux of Book II Gregory returns to his theme,²⁷⁹ with a report on the attempt by two rebellious priests to remove Apollinaris from office. This fails, by the will of God, and Apollinaris's legitimacy as His agent is confirmed.

Book II is the most difficult to read in terms of structure. However, there is a clear theme of legitimacy throughout the book, concerned as it is with the arrival in Gaul of the Franks and the rise of the Merovingians. What Gregory achieves through his framework for this book, is the melding of Church and State, emphasising the effects of the former on the latter, in order to raise Clovis to a position as an archetype of David and Solomon.

Within this framework, Gregory describes how Gaul became the new Promised Land,²⁸⁰ and the Franks the chosen people.²⁸¹ The opening chapters mirror the first section of Book I. The sins of the people of Gaul are highlighted in contrast

²⁷⁸ *Hist.* II.22. There are 43 chapters in Book II so this chapter is its crux, with 21 chapters on each side.

²⁷⁹ I have mentioned above how this was a vital position in chiasmic format.

²⁸⁰ Breukelaar, *Historiography*, p.222, says that Gregory does not see Gaul as a land promised to the Franks but as God's chosen country. I am not sure I agree, not least because I believe there is much more of the Old Testament Joshua about Clovis than does Breukelaar (*ibid.*).

²⁸¹ This suggests that the comments of M.D. Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in Y. Hen & M. Innes (ed.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2000), pp.114-61, at p.123, may not entirely be correct.

to the strength and piety of their spiritual leaders (chapters 5-7). One is reminded of the continual regression to be found among the children of Israel, despite the encouragement of the likes of Abraham and David. As in Book I Gregory then moves to discuss the origin and nature of kingship among the Franks, drawing on historical sources in the manner of his forerunner Eusebius, and highlighting such figures as Aëtius and Childeric, Clovis's father.²⁸² Childeric brackets a brief discourse on the growth of the church in areas best known to the author, such as Clermont and Tours,²⁸³ before Gregory returns to the moral themes of vice and virtue and their attendant consequence for legitimacy. These chapters are bracketed by Euric, King of the Goths.²⁸⁴ This leads neatly to the main section of the book, an almost hagiographical description of Clovis' life (chapters 27-43).

Clovis personifies the virtues of kingship that Gregory has discussed in both Book I and Book II. He also draws together the prominence of the monarchy and the growth of the church under the auspices of his symbolic conversion to the orthodox faith. The unification of the Franks under God's banner and the king's death bring to an end the first half of the four-book unit. This mirrors Christ's death in Book I, passing the mantle of archetype from Christ to Martin to Clovis, and consecrating the latter's life as a semi-mythical culmination of prophecy, befitting the originator of the bloodline of the Merovingian kings.

²⁸² *Hist.* II.8-10, II.12

²⁸³ *Hist.* II.12, 18-19.

²⁸⁴ *Hist.* II.20, 25. It is interesting to ponder why Gregory should bracket discussions such as these with kings like Childeric and Euric. It is possible that this is the first suggestion of the synchronicity the nature of a ruler and the fortunes of his subjects that gains prominence in Books III and IV.

Christ's death comes half-way through Book I, while Clovis' comes half-way through the four-book unit of the 'Prehistory'.

2.3 Book III

As the end of Book II can be seen to echo the end of section 2 of Book I, Book III can be argued to emulate Book I's third section, which dealt with the early days of the church under persecution.

Book III is a concise comparison of the reigns of two kings: father and son, Theuderic and Theudebert. The cardinal chapters emphasise this theme. In chapter one the kingdom is split between the four sons of Clovis; Chlodomer, Chlothar, Childebert and Theuderic. The last, the eldest, had a son, Theudebert, '*elegantem atque utilem*.'²⁸⁵ As I will show,²⁸⁶ from the very outset Gregory makes pains to compare father with son, and link both to the memory of Clovis. In the final chapter of Book III Gregory utilises poetic metaphor in describing the harshest winter on record. This clearly reflects the mood of the realm at the death of the shining king Theudebert in the previous chapter. The hope that was offered in the first chapter, where the four Merovingian brothers are described as courageous and powerful, is dashed against the background of division that haunts the second half of the 'Prehistory', and which lies at the heart of Gregory's agenda.

²⁸⁵ Hist. III.1, *MGH.SRM* 1.1, p.97. 'an elegant and able young man' Thorpe, p.162.

²⁸⁶ See chapter 4, below.

The central chapter (ch.19) contains a eulogy to Gregory of Langres,²⁸⁷ and thus acts as a counterpoint to the events of the end chapters. By positioning this blessed man in the chapter that, within the Book's framework, is sandwiched between cardinal chapters concerned with kingship, Gregory hints at the threat to unity if kings lord it over the agents of God. Directly before this chapter, Queen Chlotild brings the depiction of the reign of Theuderic to a climax when she acts as accomplice in the murder of her own grandsons.²⁸⁸ In the chapter following that concerned with Gregory of Langres, Theuderic hands the book over to his son, with the news of the latter's betrothal.

So, Book III is neatly divided more or less equally between the reigns of father and son, reigns which could not be more different. Within part one of the book, that dedicated to the reign of Theuderic, Gregory compiles a brief study of the dangers of women taking an active role in political life.²⁸⁹ This is followed by a study of Merovingian intervention in Thuringia and Burgundy²⁹⁰, which indirectly results in Theuderic's invasion of the Auvergne.²⁹¹ This action alienates the bishop of Tours, whose family hail from the area, and blackens the image of the king, as do the actions of Chlotild as summarised above. In stark contrast in the section devoted to Theudebert, Chlotild once again finds the favour of the Lord by forestalling a battle between her sons. Of course this

²⁸⁷ Gregory seems to have harboured special affection for his direct ancestor, possibly even adopting his name when he entered the Church. Heinzlmann, *History and Society*, p.17.

²⁸⁸ III.18. See below chapter 4.

²⁸⁹ *Hist.* III.2, III.4-6.

²⁹⁰ *Hist.* III.6-11.

²⁹¹ *Hist.* III.12-14.

presents Theudebert's reign in a positive light, as do the majority of the king's own actions: he is successful in war,²⁹² generous²⁹³ and pious.²⁹⁴

Within the pages of Book III we are presented with a comparison between a good and a bad king, the definition of Gregory's view on which can be found in Book II. Therefore, the depictions of Theuderic and his son must be judged in comparison to that of Clovis. The same must be said of the image of Merovingian kingship we find in Book IV. The persecution perpetrated by 'bad' king Theuderic mirrors those enacted upon the early church by pagan emperors in section III of Book I. Theudebert embodies the salvation of the church as personified by Constantine at the end of that section.

2.4 Book IV

In Book IV Gregory contrasts present times with the past in most emphatic manner. If the plan was for the four books to follow the four sections of Book I, then this book should have seen the triumph of piety over persecution. However, this is not the case. Chapter 1 concerns Chlothild's death. Described as '*bonisque operibus*' she is buried beside her husband.²⁹⁵ The last trace of the era of unity under Clovis is extinguished. The piety to witnessed under Theudebert has also faded. The final chapter of Book IV serves to strengthen this view, as Sigibert dies, ostensibly at the hands of agents sent by his brother's wife, Fredegund. Gregory's patron dies because he fails to heed the advice of an

²⁹² *Hist.* III.21, III.32.

²⁹³ *Hist.* III.24, III.25, III.34.

²⁹⁴ *Hist.* III.25, III.34.

²⁹⁵ *Hist.* IV.1, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.135. 'great in good works'.

agent of the Lord.²⁹⁶ The kingdom is plagued by civil war, in which regicide and fratricide abound. This is the culmination of the division described at the start of Book III, and the opposite of the unity shown at the climax of Book II and once again recalled at the start of Book IV.

The central chapter of the book reinforces the message of Book II - the need for sexual probity to ensure political legitimacy - as King Charibert is excommunicated for bigamy. He soon dies, clearly felled by the Lord's wrath. The heights reached by Clovis, who listened to his bishops and was faithful to his wife, are compared with the depths to which his descendants have plunged, mired in debauchery and impiety and deaf to advice from God's agents. Once again the audience pauses to reflect on the lessons of Book II, brought to the fore by the failure to heed them of the kings in Book IV.

Book IV is divided into three main sections. The first details the reign of Chlothar, culminating in the unification of all four kingdoms under his banner as the sole survivor of four brothers. However, this unity was short-lived, indeed Gregory makes no mention of it. In fact, he spends rather more time on the rebellion of Chlothar's son, Chramn, whom he depicted as an ill-advised young man, significantly, in the first quartile chapter (IV.13). The rebellion is put down only by the most extreme measures and forms the background to the poor image we retain of Chlothar himself. Significantly Chramn is burnt in a hut just as Valens had been in Book I, section IV.

²⁹⁶ See chapter 4, below.

Following the death of Chlothar the kingdom was split between his four sons along the lines of the original division upon the death of Clovis. Directly upon succession the four brothers engage in civil war, which affects the whole of Merovingian society.

Clear comparisons are to be made between the successions of Clovis's sons and grandsons. As Gregory approaches the climax of his four-book 'Prehistory', events become more polarized in order to heighten the effect of his comparisons between saint and sinner. The result is a manipulated chaos that brings to a head the whirlwind of events that led to tragedy.

Within the fourth quartile chapter, (IV.39), Gregory details a story in which aristocracy and clergy are at each other's throats. This proves to be symptomatic of the whole of Frankish society, which has strayed from the path of God, just as had the people of Gaul at the start of Book II. The kings were responsible for setting a proper example, but they had failed. Just as in Book I, where the iniquities of Cain lead to the crimes of the whole of humanity, the greed and debauchery of the kings is reflected in that of society as a whole. There is very little in Book IV that stems the tide of disharmony.

The epitome of this fall from grace can be witnessed in the central section, which separates the reigns of Chlothar and his sons. Gregory uses the central chapters of the book to compare the four brothers through a discussion of the marital relations of each. Only Sigibert emerges with any merit, significantly in the first chapter after the crux of Book IV, especially in comparison to his brother Charibert in the central chapter itself. By placing his patron here,

Gregory opens the second half of the book with a positive image of the king. This imagery seems to hark back to the days of Clovis and Chlotild. However, this is a false dawn of hope for salvation, as we see from the events of the final chapter, wherein the brothers fall on each other in an orgy of greed.

2.5 Book I as key to the 'Prehistory'

The structure of Book I provides a key to the framework and agenda of the whole 'Prehistory'.²⁹⁷ Gregory uses the history of the Israelites as a template for the history of the Franks. The first quarter of Book I describes biblical events before the kings of Israel and the second quarter is concerned mostly with the role of kingship, from its advent in David to the ascension of Christ, the King of Kings. As Book II concerns the establishment of Frankish kingship in Gaul, then it is safe to say that Book I describes historical events before the advent of the Frankish monarchy. Therefore, through a typological connection, Book I section 2²⁹⁸ relates to Book II, implying that the first section relates to Book I itself: the aforementioned days prior to kingship. The third quarter of Book I²⁹⁹ deals with the persecution handed out to the early church, the manifestation of God's will on earth. Persecution is also a major theme in Book III, as Theuderic descends upon his own lands, the Auvergne, and wreaks havoc. However, just as in Book I, section 3, where Constantine brings peace to the church, so in Book III Theudebert brings peace to his kingdom.

²⁹⁷ See Figs 1 –4 below.

²⁹⁸ The second quarter, chapters I.13-24

²⁹⁹ *Hist.* I.25-36.

Within the first three books Gregory has tied the fate of the Merovingians to biblical and ancient Christian history. Gaul is likened to the Promised Land and the Franks to the Israelites. This is achieved through his thematic divisions of Book I, which relate to the themes to be found in Books II and III. The connection between the fourth quarter of Book I³⁰⁰ and Book IV, wherein Gregory details the most contemporary of Merovingian history, proves to be somewhat more complicated. Whereas the era of St Martin, as described in the final section of Book I, was a time of celebration and fulfilment for the church, Book IV details a far darker outcome for the people of Gregory's Gaul. It should be a time of triumph and unity, but it is one of discord and disaster. The marriage of Brunhild and Sigibert is set up as though it ought to inaugurate a period of good rule, as under Martin's contemporary, Theodosius, or as a new Clovis and Chlothild perhaps, but Sigibert's reign turns out to be a sorry disappointment.³⁰¹ The starkness of the author's message is heightened by counterpoint and contrast and leads therefore to the sermon of the Preface to Book V.

³⁰⁰ *Hist.* I.37-48.

³⁰¹ This is described in *Hist.* IV.27, the first chapter of the second half of the book (IV.26 being its central chapter or crux). The same place, structurally in Book I (i.e. at the start of its fourth section) is occupied with praise of the emperor Theodosius, 'who put his trust in God': *Hist.* I.43.

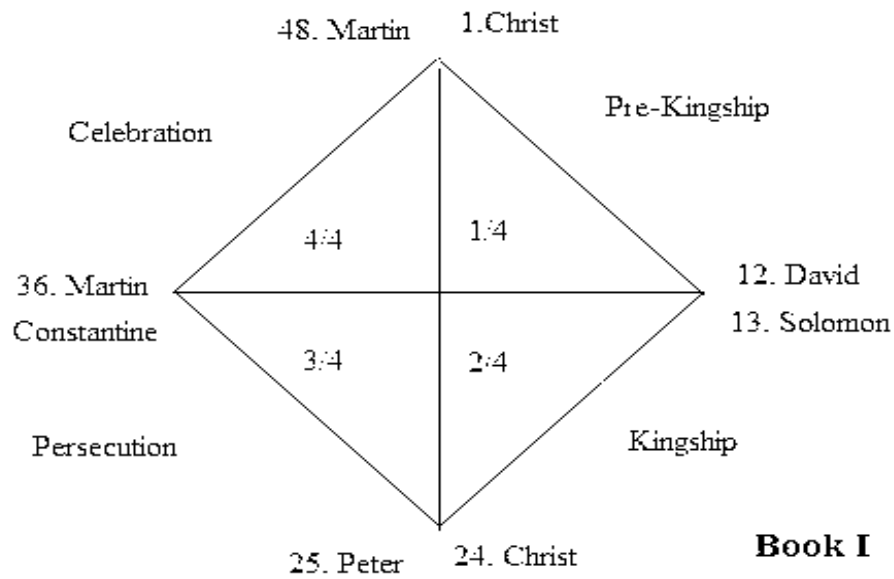


Fig. 1.

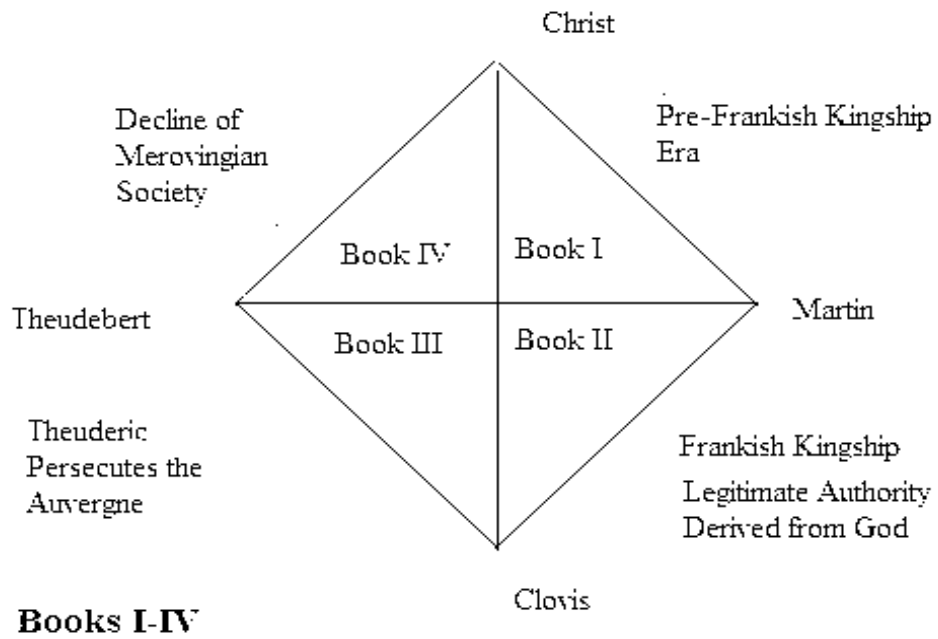


Fig. 2.

This leads us to yet another level of Gregory's complex structure. Books I-IV are framed by a chiasmic structure that controls the events depicted within their collective pages, just as the beginning, end and middle chapters of each book can be seen to do. The end and middle chapters of the complete 'Prehistory' can be seen to present an overarching framework that supports the arguments so far expressed in this thesis, concerning the bishop's preoccupation and agenda.

2.6 Chiasmic structure of Books I-IV.

In chapter one Gregory portrays the fall of man against the background of the glory of the Creation. This is closely followed by the slaying of Abel by Cain. Their names are not mentioned, but Gregory's audience would have had no difficulty in recognizing them from the Bible. This anonymity purveys a sense of timelessness to the fratricide, a sense that is compounded in the very next sentence, the start of chapter three, with the words '*Exhinc cunctum genus in facinus execrabile ruit*'³⁰²

If we move forward to the very climax of Book IV, we find ourselves on familiar territory. Gregory's patron, King Sigibert, moves forward in order to overthrow his brother, Chilperic. However, in the very moment of victory, Sigibert is slain by agents of Chilperic's wife, Fredegund. Sigibert's death is a clear case of divine justice, as he had ignored the warning of Germanus of Paris that such an action as he intended against his brother would lead to his own death. That his fall should be at the hands of Fredegund will raise issues

³⁰² I.3. *Hist.* I.3, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.6 'From that moment onwards, the entire human race never ceased to commit one execrable crime after another.' Thorpe, p.70.

concerning the role of women in Frankish politics that will be considered in detail below.³⁰³ However, for my purposes here, it is clear that Gregory neatly recalls the events at the start of Book I, the slaying of brother by brother that symbolises the descent of man from the path of righteousness. Sigibert, set on that course, would suffer for his sins. The events at the start of Book I are reflected in those at the end of Book IV. The four-book unit is once again seen to be connected.

At the centre of the four-book unit, and so enclosed by examples of division, we find the figure of Clovis. The personification of unity, the great Catholic king is placed within the crux of the four-book unit, playing the counterpoint to the feuding to be found at either end of history. This confirms the presence of a chiasmic structure over-arching the four books. Further evidence is provided by the fact that the very next chapter details the division of Clovis's kingdom between his four sons. In chiasmic structure, the place immediately after the crux is one of importance. So Gregory re-enforces the theme of unity and division in this way.

With the death of Clovis at the end of Book II, Gregory draws parallels with the death of Christ³⁰⁴ at the end of section two of Book I. Both deaths occur at a midway point: Christ of Book I and Clovis of Books I-IV. This confirms that Books I-IV as a unit should be compared to Book I. The prophetic essence of

³⁰³ See below, chapter 5.

³⁰⁴ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.133, notes that Gregory describes Clovis' birth in the words used by Luke to describe the annunciation of the birth of Christ. Luke I.31-33.

history up to the unification of the Franks under Clovis³⁰⁵ can be compared to that found in Book I leading to the foundation of the Church. Clovis carries on the archetype of Christ, and the Franks correspond to the church: God's agents on the earth.³⁰⁶ However, as we have seen, this only lasts as long as they are at one with His other agents: the bishops of the Church.

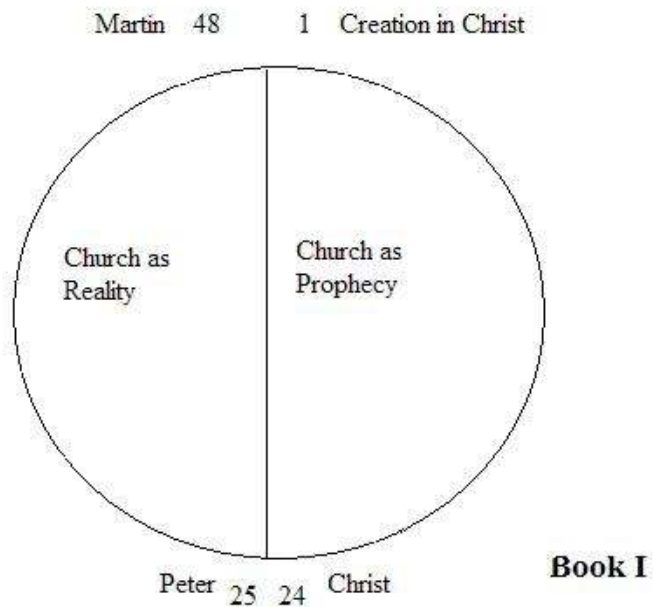


Fig. 3 Division of Book I with respect to the presentation of the Church.

³⁰⁵ This has implications for Gregory's perception of the Merovingian realm. It implies that it was foreseen and pre-ordained. It also implies that it was the height of the dynasty, which it was. This underpins the argument about the latter kings being compared to Clovis. This also suggests that the Franks should be compared to the chosen people.

³⁰⁶ See Figs 3 & 4 below.

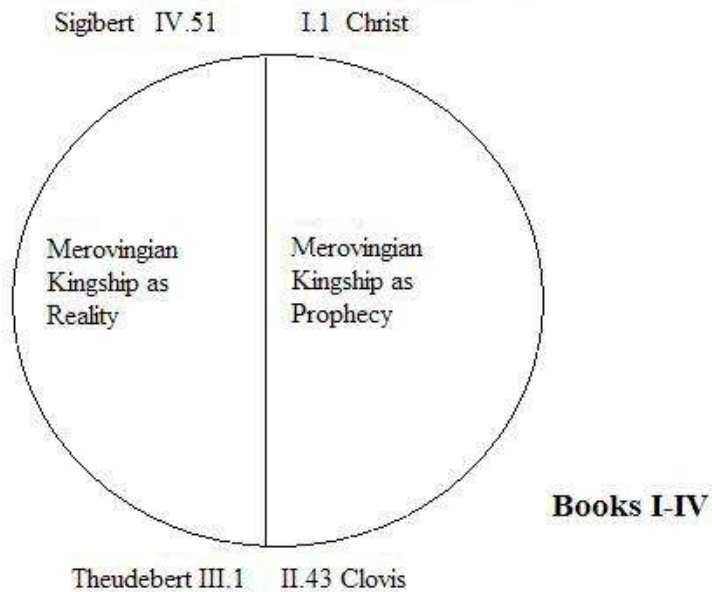


Fig. 4 Division of books I-IV with respect to the presentation of the Merovingian dynasty.

2.7 Conclusion

The evidence presented above demonstrates that Gregory had a distinct plan to the ‘Prehistory’. This is clear from the complexity and thoroughness of the structural framework of the four books. Not only do they each have distinct agendas, which are highlighted by the cardinal chapters, but all four books also interlock with each other as can be seen from the chiasmic plan of the four-book unit.

This brief study of the structure of the books illuminates Gregory’s use of beginning, middle and end chapters within each book to draw out the main themes. Man’s relationship with God, the essence of legitimacy, the reality of

rule, its responsibilities and the consequences when authority corrupts are central to Gregory's didactic message to his contemporary kings.

I will now look at the evidence to be found in the four books in detail, to show how royalty, aristocracy and clergy all react in Gregory's typological world, and how their actions reinforce both the author's view of the past, but also the Merovingian society of his day.

Chapter 3: Gregory of Tours' Presentation of Kingship (1): Kingship up to Clovis

In a three-chapter section at the centre of the 'Prehistory', Gregory presents a clear set of virtues and vices that demarcates his view of a good or bad king. These are the chapters that see unity brought to the Frankish kingdom under Clovis, the first Catholic king of France, and deal with the sins of greed, pride and debauchery rather than, as previously thought, describing the atrocious actions of a barbarian. Within these chapters each vice is personified by a separate rival to Clovis's power, each to be despatched at the hand of a king resplendent in generosity, sexual probity, strength of arms, cunning and vengeance.³⁰⁷ These virtues do not appear for the first time in the image of Clovis provided by Gregory; he has seeded them in the earlier chapters of the 'Prehistory', where they lie dormant, awaiting the dawning of understanding that enfolds the reader upon meditation of the life of Clovis in Book II.³⁰⁸

Here I will detail the manner in which Gregory depicts kingly figures, be they spiritual leaders, emperors or kings, from the pages of scripture and history. In order to assess the author's agenda, it is necessary to ask whether he passes judgement on these kingly figures, and if so, what is it that colours his view? It will become clear, unsurprisingly perhaps, that Gregory's portrayal of a king is intimately related to his depiction of that king's relationship with God. In order to be successful one must respect the authority of the Lord. Through his methodology, typological and framed by the structure of the 'Prehistory',

³⁰⁷ Certain of these traits may appear incongruous, but reflect the Old Testament template for kingship utilised by Gregory. For Gregory's biblical influences see for example Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.92.

³⁰⁸ I have shown above how Clovis lies at the centre of the 'Prehistory'. Above, chapter 2.

Gregory presents good and bad exemplars for the contemplation of his audience: his contemporary kings.³⁰⁹

3.1 Biblical Precedent

Right from the outset of Book I, Gregory stresses the primacy of God's authority. I have shown how Christ brackets Book I.³¹⁰ The preface to the book includes a lengthy discussion of the author's orthodox belief, and Chapter One begins with the decree that all of history is within Christ.³¹¹ The Fall of Man, in the person of Adam, through a lack of respect for divine authority is the first major event after the Creation. This serves as a focus for the agenda of the work as a whole. Adam personifies the whole of humanity, leaders and led, an example of what to expect if one displeases the Lord. Murder soon follows (with, importantly brother murdering brother in the story of Cain and Abel),³¹² and as Man descends rapidly into sin³¹³ God encompasses the destruction and rebirth of mankind with the Flood. Not only are we witness to God's anger, but also we see the first expression of divinely inspired leadership in the person of Noah.

'Dominus ergo commotus contra iniquitates populi, non in suis semitisgradientes, diluvium mittit cunctamque animam viventem de superficie terrae diluvium inundante delivit tantum Noe fidelissimum ac

³⁰⁹ See above, chapter 1.

³¹⁰ See above, chapter 2.

³¹¹ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.160.

³¹² *Hist.* I.2.

³¹³ *Hist.* I.3

*peculiarum sibi sique tipus speciem praeferentem cum sua vel trium
natorum coniugibus posteritates reparandae gratia in arca reservavit.’*³¹⁴

Gregory implies that God had decided to start again, with a new Adam in Noah ‘who was made in His image’. This reflects God’s ability to control nature, as a means of redrawing the destiny of mankind. God did not want to control men’s actions and beliefs directly, he wished them to choose the right path through free will. This is confirmed with the subsequent debate in which Gregory defends the actions of the Lord against the attacks of the heretics.

*‘Cognoscant ergo, quia Deus noster non ut homo irascitur: commovetur enim ut terreat, pellet ut revocet, irascitur ut emendit.’*³¹⁵

God acted through nature in order to affect the minds of men, rather than merely instilling the will to follow His path.³¹⁶ He wished Man to make up his own mind, but was willing to provide a gentle reminder every now and then; guidance, as if to a child. Gregory argues that the Ark should be seen as an allegory for Mother Church, *‘nos ab imminentibus malis materno gestamini*

³¹⁴ *Hist. I.4, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.6.* ‘The Lord was therefore filled with anger by the iniquities of a people which did not walk in His ways. He sent the Flood, and the deluge which came down removed every living soul from the surface of the earth. In the Ark the Lord saved only Noah, *His most faithful servant who was made in His image*, with his own wife, his three sons and their wives, for the sake of preserving the human race for the future.’ (emphasis added) Thorpe, p.70.

³¹⁵ *Hist. I.4, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.6* ‘They should realize that God did not show anger as a man would do: He is moved to anger so that He may fill us with awe, He drives us forth so that He may call us back, He is enraged *so that He may reform us.*’ (emphasis added) Thorpe, p.70

³¹⁶ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.189 refers to ‘nature in God’s direct care.’

fovens,³¹⁷ thereby firmly establishing the authority of the church as a source of redemption, a major object of his preaching to the Merovingian kings. Thus the church, its agents and its possessions should receive the same respect that was due to God.

The effective nature of divine authority is further established with the destruction of the Tower of Babel. This foils the effort of men to place themselves on an equal footing with the Creator, through their own actions.³¹⁸ The story of Babel is a warning to Gregory's audience that they should not seek to play God, but should respect His will.

Once again the Lord attempts to guide the people to redemption through the person of Abraham. As the vessel of the revelation of the incarnation of Christ, Abraham carried the mantle of divine authority, in the face of the unbelievers.³¹⁹ Fleeing captivity under the leadership of Moses,³²⁰ the Israelites are given laws, enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua³²¹ before asking '*regem, sicut reliquae gentes habent, a domino postolant; accipiunt Saul, deinde David.*'

³²² Neither law nor king can they find for themselves, they must be provided by

³¹⁷ *Hist. I.4, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.7*'protecting us in her maternal bosom from the evils which threaten us'. Thorpe, p.71.

³¹⁸ *Hist. I.6*

³¹⁹ *Hist. I.7.* Was God acting through Abraham, or inspiring him to follow His path? This is an important question for Gregory's theology, which is dealt with below, ch.6.

³²⁰ *Hist. I.10,* where Gregory discusses at length his belief that the crossing of the Red Sea was an allegory for the many paths to heaven, through baptism.

³²¹ *Hist. I.11*

³²² *Hist. I.12, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.13*'the Lord if they might have a King, as other peoples have, and they received first Saul and then David.' Thorpe, p.77.

God. The Lord and His agents came first, kings second, both in history, and in Gregory's narrative. This lies at the heart of his agenda.

Gregory has recounted four examples of leadership before he reaches David, his first exemplar of a good king; all had failed. As explained above, the birth of kingship is to be found around the first quartile chapter of Book I. It is therefore to be considered a significant moment within the 'Prehistory'. While the author does not remark on this at that point, in the retrospective Preface to Book II it is clear that the audience is to consider David as a strong man, '*quem Fortem manu dicunt*'.³²³ By placing this description in the preface, Gregory manages to link the first two books with this theme of a strong warrior-leader of men. This passes on the prowess of David to the strong men of Book II, namely Aëtius and Clovis, as I will show below.

Before moving onto Book II, mention must be made of those leadership figures who appear in Book I to reinforce Gregory's values. Although receiving only a brief mention, Joshua must surely be considered a 'role model' for Clovis, especially in light of the latter's depiction as standing outside the walls of Angoulême as they collapsed before him.³²⁴ Linkages to Jericho are left to Gregory's audience. The entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land under Joshua begins a three-chapter cycle of positive leadership, which culminates with the depiction of Solomon in chapter thirteen. His description as the wisest

³²³ *Hist. II. Praef. MGH.SRM. 1.1*, p.36 'whom they called strong in hand', , Goffart, *Narrators*, p.172. Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.124 implies the connection to be assumed between David and Clovis.

³²⁴ *Hist. I.11*, Joshua; *Hist. II.37*. Clovis. Wynn, *Wars and Warriors*,

of all men highlights another virtue that Gregory wishes to propound.³²⁵ Strength must go hand in hand with wisdom, and the appearance of David and Solomon either side of the first quartile of the first book emphasizes this in structural terms.

Structural integrity is maintained as Gregory's next positive kingly exemplar is Constantine who is presented in chapter thirty-six, the three-quarter point of Book I.³²⁶ Whilst he brought peace to the church his historical position as first Christian Roman emperor is played down, in favour of the birth of St Martin and the discovery of the True Cross. Constantine's murder of son and wife is mentioned, but not commented upon.³²⁷ More is made of Theodosius I, who '*Hic Theodosius omnem spem suam atque fidutiam in Dei misericordiam ponit; qui multas gentes non tam gladio quam vigilis et oratione conpescuit, rem publicam confirmavit*',³²⁸ and brought the tyrant Maximus to justice with the help of God.³²⁹ Theodosius's exploits are placed around the halfway point of the last quarter of the book. Once again Gregory appears conscious of structural

³²⁵ Wisdom will be seen to be a major virtue of King Theudebert, *Hist.* III.25. See below, chapter 4.

³²⁶ The 36th out of the 48 chapters in Book I, and thus at the end of the Book's third quarter.

³²⁷*Hist.* I.36. Gregory uses antithetical *capitula* to highlight the importance of this chapter, 'The Birth of St Martin and the Finding of the True Cross'. Constantine is not mentioned, but takes centre stage at the start and end of the chapter, bracketing Martin. Heinzelmann remarks how such *capitula* could betray Gregory's true focus for the chapter, when the text would not lead the audience to such an assumption. Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.117.

³²⁸*Hist.* I.42, *MGH.SRM* 1.1, p.28. 'put all his hope and all his trust in the mercy of God. He held many peoples in check, more by vigils and prayer than by the sword, and so he strengthened the Roman state'. Thorpe, p.92. Putting your trust in God was very important for Gregory. For example see *Hist.* V.30, *MGH.SRM* 1.1, p.235. where emperor Tiberius II had no fear of his enemies as he had put his trust in God, '*qui in Deo spem posuerat*'. Conversely, Chilperic never understood that 'victory lies in the hand of God', '*patrationem victuriarum in manu Dei consistere*.' *Hist.* VI.41. *MGH.SRM* 1.1, p.313. thorpe, p.375. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.217, sees this depiction of Theodosius as 'Gregory's closest approximation of a Roman hero.'

³²⁹*Hist.* I.43.

control at an even more focused level. Through that control he once again depicts the subordination of kings to a saint and to God.³³⁰

The depiction of Theudebert in III.25 continues Gregory's theme, epitomized by his portrayal of Clovis in Book II that victories are won by trusting in God, building churches and beneficence to the clergy. Trusting in God is the message of one of Gregory's favourite biblical passages: Psalm 70 (Vulgate; King James, Ps.71). This theme is reiterated later in the *Histories* when Guntram addresses his troops:

'How can we expect to win a victory nowadays...when we no longer keep to the conventions of our forefathers? They used to build churches, for they placed all their hope in God, doing honour to His martyrs and respecting His priesthood.'³³¹

Thus we see that the institution of kingship was born through the will of God. Successful kings are those who respect this divine authority.³³² It is the free will

³³⁰ Gregory seems to make little connection between the pagan emperors and good kingship, representing a key shift from the immediately post-imperial world to that of the author.

³³¹ *LH VIII.30. Gregory*, trans. Thorpe, p. 460-1; Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 63.

³³² On Merovingian kingship, see, e.g.,: P.S. Barnwell, *Emperor, Prefects and Kings. The Roman West 365-565* (London, 1992), ch.8; B. Brennan, 'The image of Frankish kings in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus.' *Journal of Medieval History* 10 (1984), 1-11; A. Callander Murray *post vocantur merovingii: Fredegar, Merovech and 'sacral kingship'* in A. Callander Murray (ed.) *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, 1998), pp.121-5; P. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988), pp.117-23; E. James, *The Origins of France. From Clovis to the Capetians, 500-1000* (London, 1982), ch.5; *id.* *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), pp.162-82; M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium and the early medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.328-42; B. Reynolds, 'The mind of Baddo. Assassination in Merovingian politics.' *Journal of Medieval History* 11 (1987), 117-24; J.M.Wallace-Hadrill, 'The long-haired kings' in his *The*

of each individual to choose his path. Prior to kingship any positive action by mankind had been inspired by the intervention of God. If left to his own devices, Man would fall from the path of righteousness. Under the leadership of kings, man is more capable of choosing good from ill. Kings must accept the responsibility laid at their feet, for the good of society. Gregory's philosophical viewpoint has two consequences. First it places the weight of conscience on the shoulders of men. It is up to each individual how he behaves and whether he follows the tenets of the Lord's teaching. Second, the Church and its agents, saints and bishops, as the successors of Christ, would illuminate the path, which the faithful must follow. The agents would perform everyday services to both the faithful and the lapsed, in order to help remind them of their duties to God. Divine authority was absolute, and flowed through the body of the church.

3.2 Bad Exemplars

In comparison to these depictions of examples of good kingship, Gregory warns what would befall those who acted against the will of God. He defines the vices of greed, pride and debauchery that lie at the centre of his agenda, themes that will recur to dramatic effect throughout the four-book unit, within the early pages of the *Histories*. We should first consider Nero and Herod. Placed in I.24-25, at the centre of Book I, they represent all that is evil, and act as a counterpoint to the presence of Christ and Peter in those same two chapters. Herod is punished for his persecution of the Apostles, '*intumescens ac scatens*

Long-Haired Kings, esp. parts ii & iii. *id.*, 'Gregory of Tours and Bede. Their views on the personal qualities of kings.' *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 2 (1968), 31-44 (reprinted in his *Early Medieval History*, pp.96-114); I.N. Wood, 'Kings, kingdoms and consent.' in P.H. Sawyer & I.N. Wood (eds.), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), pp.6-29; *id.*, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London, 1994), cc.4 & 6.

*vermibus, accepto cultro, ut malum purgaret, propriae se manus ictu liberavit.*³³³

Nero's character reference is somewhat harsher:

*'nam Nero ille luxoriosus, vanus atque superbus vivorum succuba et rursus vivorum appetitor, matris, sororum, ac proximarum quaeque mulierum spurcissimus violator, ad complendam malitiae suae molem primus contra Christi cultum persecutionem excitat in credentes.'*³³⁴

Possessed of vanity, arrogance and debauchery and indulging in persecution, there can be no doubt that in Gregory's mind this was the vilest of men. Gregory emphasises the degree to which Nero and Herod should be reviled, by referring to them at various points of the *Histories*. *'numquam Neronem vel Herodem tale facinus perpetrasse, ut homo vivens sepulchro reconderetur.'* as did Bishop Cautinus.³³⁵ King Chilperic is also likened to these exemplars, in what has been seen as a *damnatio memoriae*.³³⁶

³³³ *Hist.* I.24, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.19. 'swollen up and swarming with vermin, he took a knife to cure his disease and so killed himself with his own hand.' Thorpe, p.84. Krusch, *MGH SRM.* 1.1, p.19 rightly attributes this account to Rufinus, drawn by Gregory from *EH* I.8, 5-14 and II. 10, 9.

³³⁴ *Hist.* I.25, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.20. 'This vain and arrogant debauchee, who submitted himself to the blandishments of other men and then lusted after them in his turn, this filthy seducer of his own mother, his sisters and any other women who were closely related to him, was the first to persecute the true believers and to satisfy his boundless hatred for the cult of Christ.' Thorpe, p.84.

³³⁵ *Hist.* IV.12, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.143. 'Not even Nero or Herod...had committed such a crime as to bury a man alive'. Thorpe, p.207.

³³⁶ Halsall, 'Nero and Herod'. This may have some implications for Halsall's argument. Nevertheless, although the diatribe is tied into a long-running theme in the *Histories* – to which

The Alamannic king Chroc is presented as an example of overweening pride, and receives his just desserts, *'non inmerito poenas, quas sanctis Dei intulerat, luens.'*³³⁷ The emperor Valens, an Arian although Gregory makes no mention of it, forces monks into military service. He is burned alive. *'Sique ultio divina ob sanctorum effuso sanguinem tandem emissa processit.'*³³⁸ So we see that in Book I Gregory lays out several unmistakable examples of good and bad kingship, judged mainly on the basis of the individual's relationship with God. This motif continues into Book II.

3.3 Historical Precedent

The first positive leadership figure to be found in Book II is that of Aëtius. Presented as the saviour of Orleans in II.7, acting as an agent of divine justice, he routed the Huns under Attila, who were besieging the city. With the help of the Goths, Aëtius then defeated the Huns in open battle, protected by the prayers of his devout wife. The character reference provided by Renatus Frigeridus, quoted by Gregory, reinforces the positive image already gained, and may be the source of Gregory's portrayal of the man:

GT could point –checking earlier examples as Gregory instructed the reader to do would not seem to support it.

³³⁷ *Hist.* I.34, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.26. 'paying the penalty which he deserved for the sufferings which he had inflicted on God's elect.' Thorpe, p.90.

³³⁸ *Hist.* I.41, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.28. 'In this way God's vengeance caught up with him in the end for the blood of the saintly men which he had shed.' Thorpe, p.92. This comment is Gregory's own view of the events, the account of which he draws directly from Jerome. Surprisingly Gregory does not mention Valens's Arian faith, which Jerome notes with the emperor's baptism by the Arian bishop Eudoxius.

‘Medii corporis, virilis habitudinis, decenter formatus, quo neque infirmitudini esset neque oneri, animo alacer, membris vegetus, eques prumptissimus, sagittarum iacta peritus, contu inpiger, bellis aptissimus, pacis artibus celebris, nullius avaritae, minimae cupiditatis, bonis animi praeditus, ne impulsoribus quidem pravis ab instituto suo devians, iniuriarum patientissimus, laboris adpetens, inpavidus periculorum, famis, sitis, vigiliarum tolerantissimus. Cui ab ineunte aetate praedictum liquet, quantae potentiae fati ditinaretur temporibus suis locisque celebrandus.’

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This description of Aëtius includes many attributes that Gregory will highlight in later good kings, particularly Clovis. Strength of arms, magnanimity and skill in the arts of peace, would ultimately allow Clovis to bring peace to the Franks, just as Constantine was seen to bring peace to the church, through conversion and unification. The importance of a devout wife is also significant, within Gregory’s typology of good rulership. If Gregory had placed the above quotation in the ‘Life’ of Clovis, with which he ended Book II, as a description of the king himself, it would not appear out of place. It is possible that Gregory took inspiration for his depiction of Clovis from Frigeridus’s account of Aëtius. Certainly one can see similarities between the presentations of these two

³³⁹ *Hist.* II.8, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.51 ‘Aëtius was of medium build, manly in his habits and well proportioned, in which there was neither infirmity nor excess His intelligence was keen, he was full of energy, a superb horseman, a fine shot with an arrow and tireless with the lance. He was extremely able as a soldier and he was skilled in the arts of peace. There was no avarice in him and even less cupidity. He was magnanimous in his behaviour and never swayed in his judgement by the advice of unworthy counsellors. He bore adversity with great patience, was ready for any exacting enterprise, he scorned danger and was able to endure hunger, thirst and vigils. From his earliest youth it was clear that he was destined by fate to hold high position and that much would be heard of him when his time came and occasion offered.’ Thorpe, p.119.

warriors that will be repeated in the image of Mummolus in Book IV.³⁴⁰ In contrast, these virtues are almost entirely lacking in Gregory's contemporary Merovingian kings.

With the arrival of Aëtius the focus of Book II shifts to a discussion of kingship. Aëtius is successful in war, a strong man, like David, but also he is cunning,³⁴¹ like Solomon, which will become a quality Gregory saves for two of his favourite kings, Clovis and Sigibert. Aëtius also has the backing of a pious wife, whose prayers for her husband's safe return are answered. There are definite parallels here with Chlotild,³⁴² reinforcing the comparison with her husband Clovis.

Having provided a checklist of the desirable attributes of an upstanding king, Gregory then uses documentary evidence, in a manner akin to the work of Eusebius, to investigate the origins of Frankish kingship.³⁴³ His conclusions provide support for the legitimacy of Clovis's claim to rule. However, the

³⁴⁰ Wynn, *Wars and Warriors*, for similarities between Mummolus and Aëtius. Wynn also stresses the association between Aëtius and Clovis, through the common usage of association with the term *victoria*. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.218, while recognising the way in which Aëtius is built up using the Frigeridus quote, argues that Gregory knocks the *vir fortis* down to size straight away, by quickly reporting his death at the hands of Valentinian. Goffart appears to make nothing of the trumped up charge on which Aëtius is unjustly dispatched, which Gregory uses to elicit the sympathy of the audience. He sees Gregory as darker than Bede, for instance, in his depiction of Clovis in the chapters detailing the unification of the Franks, *Hist.* II.40-42, discussed above.

³⁴¹ *Hist.* II.7: the general tricks his allies, the Goths and Franks, to leave the field, keeping the booty for himself.

³⁴² Wynn, *Wars and Warriors*, sees Aëtius's wife as based upon Chlotild. M. Banniard, 'L'aménagement de l'histoire chez Grégoire de Tours: à propos de l'invasion de 451', *Romanobarbarica* 3 (1978), 5-38, at p.12, n.30, highlights the incompatibility of Gregory's portrait of Aëtius's wife, and that of Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina* V.126-274.

³⁴³ *Hist.* II.9.

author reminds us that at this point the Franks were embedded in the vices of paganism, through comparisons with the worst excesses of the Hebrews as they turned to idolatry.³⁴⁴ The implication is that the Franks will become worthy, just as had the Israelites.³⁴⁵

Continuing this theme of the unworthy nature of mankind, Gregory next tells us of the emperor Avitus, whose licentious behaviour was his downfall.³⁴⁶ This is the first quartile chapter of Book II, and enforces the idea of sexual probity for political legitimacy, a theme that we will see repeated.³⁴⁷ Indeed, Childeric, a king of the Franks was deposed due to his immoral behaviour with the daughters of his subjects.³⁴⁸ However, while in exile his behaviour was justified, as he was the most capable man of his time.³⁴⁹ There is little doubt that the depiction of Childeric as provided by Gregory must have been heavily coloured by the fact that he was the father of Clovis, who is signposted here as '*magnus et pugnator egregius*.'³⁵⁰ Hence Childeric is returned to power, in order to pave the way for his famous son. A further, high-profile, example of what befalls

³⁴⁴ *Hist.* II.10.

³⁴⁵ *Hist.* II.11,

³⁴⁶ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.211.

³⁴⁷ This is identified as the theme of Book II by G. Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave, Clovis' Succession, and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom' in R.W. Mathisen & D. Shanzer (eds.) *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul* (Aldershot, 2001), p.116-33. In Childeric's story we also possibly see his redemption through a powerful woman, with the previously debauched monarch becoming upright thereafter (a possible precursor to the relationship between Clovis and Chlothild (and perhaps to the dashed potential of Sigibert's marriage to Brunhild)? Women are important in decision-making in Book II.

³⁴⁸ *Hist.* II.12.

³⁴⁹ According to his latest conquest, Queen Basina. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.210, makes it clear that this woman is as predatory as Childeric.

³⁵⁰ *Hist.* II.12, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.62 'great man and a famous soldier.'

those who cross the Lord can be seen in the fate of Athanaric, king of the Goths. A persecutor of the faithful, he felt the weight of *'iudicio Dei'* and was expelled from his kingdom.³⁵¹

There is a degree of repetition, within Book II, of the themes and structure of Book I. Just as there had been a chaotic and blustery start to the establishment of the faith in Book I until the arrival of kingship, so similar events can be witnessed in Book II. The persecution of the faithful in Book II³⁵² parallels the evident frustration of God and his agents in Book I. The 'sins of the people' encompass those that had infested man since the beginning of Creation. With the arrival of Aëtius, and the theme of kingship, this motif dies down, just as it had in Book I with the presentation of David and Solomon.³⁵³

The majority of the remainder of Book II, from Aëtius and Childeric to Clovis is taken up by ecclesiastical matters. These will be covered in the following chapter. Here I wish to concentrate on the man who would come to dominate the *Histories*: Clovis.

3.4 Clovis

Clovis bestrides the *Histories*, as the archetypal good king.³⁵⁴ As such I will spend more time on a discussion of his life and how it fits with Gregory's

³⁵¹ *Hist.* II.4, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.45. 'God's judgement'. This is placed out of chronological order by Gregory.

³⁵² See chapter 5, below.

³⁵³ Parallels can also be drawn between Noah and the Flood, and Aetius and the 'flood' of the Hunnic invasion.

agenda than on any other one king. It will be clear that all of Clovis's descendants stand in comparison to the great king himself. Clovis's life covers the last section of Book II, culminating with his death and burial right at the climax of the book. This, as we have seen, places him at the centre, the crux, of the four-book unit. At his death, the Franks are unified under his rule. Directly after, the kingdom is split into four, bringing civil war and rebellion.

Gregory's portrayal of Clovis is almost hagiographical in nature. Covering the last seventeen chapters (27-43) of Book II, the depiction of the king's life takes up nearly one third of the book. With the death of his father, Childeric, Clovis assumes the mantle of authority, possibly as young as fifteen.³⁵⁵ Gregory is vague about these early beginnings, reporting that he fought and slew the son of Aegidius, one Syagrius, whom Gregory dubbed '*Romanorum rex*'.³⁵⁶ He was aided in this endeavour by Ragnachar, '*quia et ipse regnum tenebat*'.³⁵⁷ This opening chapter of Clovis's *Vita* serves to introduce the relationship Clovis maintains with the church, and for Gregory this must have been quite ambiguous. On the one hand the king is seen as any other pagan, pillaging the church. Until, that is, he is addressed by the bishop of the ransacked church, when the plunderer becomes strangely diplomatic. He offers to hand back part

³⁵⁴ Discussion of Clovis has been vigorous. For Gregory's view of the king, see Wood, 'Gregory of Tours and Clovis'; C. Carozzi, 'Le Clovis de Grégoire de Tours' in *Le Moyen Age* 98 (1992), pp. 169-85; M. Heinzelmann, 'Clovis dans le discours hagiographique du VI au IX siècle', *Bibliothèque de l'école de chartes*, 154 (1996), 87-112; *id.*, 'Heresy in Books I and II of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*, in A. Callender Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall*, pp.67-82, at pp.68-72; Wynn, 'Wars and Warriors', *passim*. For more general studies concerning Clovis see G. Kurth, *Clovis*, (Paris, 1978).

³⁵⁵ See Halsall, 'Childeric's grave', for a discussion of the problems of the chronology of Clovis' succession (and of his reign overall) and, at p.117, of taking Gregory's statement of Clovis' age literally.

³⁵⁶ *Hist. II.27, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.71.* 'King of the Romans'.

³⁵⁷ *Hist. II.27, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.71.* 'who also had high authority'. Thorpe, p.139.

of the booty, in a scene that at once raises him above the crowd of barbarian interlopers such as Athanaric, for example, and also reaffirms the king's authority. For a king authority derives from God and carries great responsibility. Clovis is here seen to have one ear already cocked to the wishes of the Lord. He already shows wisdom akin to Solomon's, who '*Ad ille terrenas divitias posponens*'.³⁵⁸ At the climax of this chapter, when the king's authority has been questioned, Clovis splits the skull of a rebellious soldier, who had earlier split the ewer which Clovis had hoped to return to the church. So he is seen in one aspect as asserting his own authority, but also as avenging the destruction done to church property.

Building on this scene, there follows a three-chapter section in which Clovis is converted to Catholicism and baptized. This is a vital event in the king's life, as portrayed by Gregory, allowing the bishop to promote Clovis as the first Catholic ruler of the Franks, and bringer of unification. There has been much written about the baptism,³⁵⁹ and there is no need to cover old ground. However,

³⁵⁸ *Hist.* I.13, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.14. 'scorned earthly riches'. Thorpe, p.77.

³⁵⁹ The traditional debate over the date of Clovis's baptism is covered in M. Spencer, 'Dating the Baptism of Clovis, 1886-1993', *EME* 3.2, 97-116. See also G. Tessier, *Le Baptême de Clovis* (Paris, 1964), pp.117-26 for a critique of the scholarly debate in the early twentieth century. The argument for an early date of baptism derives primarily from the authority of Gregory himself (Spencer, 'Dating the Baptism', p.97), while the faction in favour of a later date, as propounded by Wood, 'Gregory of Tours and Clovis', invokes contemporary evidence from Avitus of Vienne and Cassiodorus. For this view, see D. Shanzer, 'Dating the baptism of Clovis: the bishop of Vienne vs the bishop of Tours', *EME* 7:1, 29-57. Perhaps answering a call that Gregory's dates must be 'confirmed wherever possible by outside evidence' (Spencer, 'Dating the Baptism', p.99), Shanzer produces a damning critique not only of Gregory's text, but Avitus's *Epistula* 46 and Cassiodorus's *Variae*. Gregory is shown to have only a vague idea as to the date of the Alamannic campaign, at which he supposedly converted to Christianity while on the battlefield, in a manner akin to Constantine. Within the text of Book II of the *Histories*, the implication is that this conversion was quickly followed by the king's baptism. Shanzer states that through his use of the adverb *aliquando*, 'Gregory is telling us very clearly that *he did not know when the battle against the Alamanni took place*, that is he did not know its absolute chronology. And if he did not know its absolute chronology, what reason is there to trust his relative chronology...reeking of pious *imitatio Constantini*, as it does?' This takes the

it perhaps needs to be pointed out that Clovis, a man of action, would need proof of the omnipotence of his new God, and that is provided through his salvation from a seemingly impossible military position, which would have been his first recorded defeat.³⁶⁰ Chlotild had paved the way for his conversion through argument and ceremonial, but it was the king himself who made the final decision to call upon Christ in his hour of need.³⁶¹ With much ceremonial the king is baptized, along with his family and subjects.³⁶² This is the longest conversion set-piece of the *Histories*, highlighting the role its subject will take as the Catholic ruler of a united, peaceful kingdom. So far every chapter of Clovis's life has been tied up with the church to a greater or lesser degree, and the king has become an agent of the Lord, as we shall see shortly.

congratulatory *Variae* 2.41, written to Clovis on the occasion of his recent victory over the Alamanni, as dating from 506-7. Combined with a reading of Avitus's *Epistula* 46 to the Frankish king, as referring to events occurring in the Gothic war of 507-8, Shanzer places Clovis's baptism at Christmas 508. He was not, however, a pagan at this time, but rather an Arian, like his foes. For Avitus, R. Peiper (ed.), *Alcimi Ecdici Aviti Viennensis episcopi Opera quae supersunt*, MGH AA 6.2 (Munich, 1883), pp.75-76; D. Shanzer & I.N. Wood (trans.), *The Letters of Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Select prose* (Liverpool, 2002); Cassiodorus Senator, *Variae* II 41, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH AA 12 (Munich, 1892); S.J. Barnish (trans.), *Cassiodorus: Variae* (Liverpool 1992). Wood has recently made a very clear statement of his view: I.N. Wood, 'Les Wisigoths et la question arienne', in L. Bourgeois (ed.), *Wisigoths et France autour de la bataille de Vouillé (507): Recherches Récentes sur le haut Moyen Âge dans le Centre-Ouest de la France*, (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 2010), pp.19-22, at p.19: 'Il est pratiquement certain que le baptême de Clovis n'eut pas lieu avant Noël 508'. I am grateful to Guy Halsall for this reference.

³⁶⁰ *Hist.* II.30. This chapter of conversion follows one of theological discussion, *Hist.* II.29, and precedes that of baptism, *Hist.* II.31. Gregory has used chapters in triplets throughout the 'Prehistory'. Here it suggests the power of the Trinity, orthodox Catholic thought, over heretical Arian beliefs. There is more than a suggestion that Clovis may have converted from Arianism, rather than paganism; Shanzer, 'Dating the baptism of Clovis', p.37 suggests that the tone of Avitus's letter to Clovis, *Epistula* 46, supports the theory that the bishop of Vienne saw the king as an all-too-recent-heretic'; this supports Wood's theory ('Gregory of Tours and Clovis', pp.266-7) that 'Clovis went through an intermediate stage as an Arian catechumen', contradicting 'the silence of Gregory of Tours.' Shanzer, p.37, n.56, does mitigate the statement by denying that this meant Clovis had necessarily undergone Arian baptism. Shanzer argues that Gregory was deliberately suppressing facts.

³⁶¹ Clovis is reported as worshipping Roman gods, in what may be a display of Gregory's knowledge of the classical pantheon.

³⁶² This is in stark contrast to the Burgundian king Gundobad in II.34, the opening chapter of the last quarter of Book II.

Next Gregory reflects on Clovis's Burgundian campaign, in which the division among the Arian kings is emphasised, as a contrast to future Frankish unity. This is followed by his Gothic campaign, which is a vital moment in Gregory's portrayal of Clovis. In the build-up to the Battle of Vouillé, in which Clovis defeats Alaric's heretic Goths, the Frankish king is seen to personify the complex relationship a good king has with his subjects and with the Lord. Gregory presents Clovis as a pious Catholic offended by the presence of the Arian Goths occupying '*partem...Galliarum*.'³⁶³ Hence he decides that '*Eamus cum Dei adiutorium, et superatis redegamus terram in ditione nostra*.'³⁶⁴ On the march to the battlefield the army would pass through the lands of St. Martin. Clovis orders that the hospitality of the saint should not be abused, and that only the bare minimum of fodder and water should be requisitioned. When a soldier over-steps the mark, Clovis kills him instantly.³⁶⁵ Expressing his piety and responsibility for the actions of his men in such a manner, Clovis proves himself worthy of the Lord's help in the upcoming battle. Also, of course, Clovis shows himself to have progressed from the pagan plunderer of chapter twenty-seven. Indeed, he is quoted as saying; '*Et ubi erit spes victuriae, si beato Martino offendimus*.'³⁶⁶ Messengers then sent by the king bearing gifts to St. Martin's

³⁶³ *Hist. II.37, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.85* 'part of the Gauls.'

³⁶⁴ *Hist. II.37 MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.85* 'with God's help let us go and conquer them and bring the land under our authority.' Thorpe, p.151. Gregory seems to have known Clovis's letter to the bishops of Aquitaine: A. Boretius (ed.) *MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum I.1* (Hanover, 1886), no.1, pp.1-2; A Callander Murray (trans.), *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul* (Peterborough, Ontario, 2000), p.267-8. Wood, 'Les Wisigoths et la question arienne', p.19.

³⁶⁵ For the problems of early medieval 'march discipline' and attempts to curtail them, see G. Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, c.450-900* (London, 2003), pp.152-3.

church are greeted with the words of Psalm 18, '*Praecinxisti me, Domine, virtutem ad bellum, subplantasti insurgentes in me subtus me et inimicorum meorum dedisti mihi dorsum et odientes me disperdedisti.*'³⁶⁷ Clovis's authority is confirmed.

Not content with this however, Gregory then tells how the army was held up by a swollen river, with no obvious way across. Clovis prayed for some sign, and God provided a huge deer, that led the army to ford the river. This motif is repeated in the tale of Mummolus, and that of Sigibert.³⁶⁸ Furthermore, a pillar of fire rose from the church of St. Hilary, moving towards the king, '*lumine beati confessoris adiutus Helarii, liberias hereticas acies, contra quas saepe idem sacerdos pro fide conflixerat, debellaret.*'³⁶⁹ Once again Clovis declared that no booty should be plundered from this area of saintly influence. There could now be no doubt that Clovis had the backing of divine authority for the battle about to commence, and the Goths were duly defeated. Returning eventually to Tours he gave many gifts to the church of St. Martin.

Conquest brought about through conversion builds to the climax of the king's life in a three-chapter section that details Clovis campaign to unify the Frankish

³⁶⁶ *Hist.* II.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.85. 'It is no good expecting to win this fight if we offend Saint Martin.' Thorpe, p.152.

³⁶⁷ *Hist.* II.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.85. 'For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies: that I might destroy them that hate me.' Thorpe, p.152.

³⁶⁸ *Hist.* IV.44 (Mummolus); IV.49 (Sigibert).

³⁶⁹ *Hist.* II.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.86. 'a sign that with the support of the blessed saint he might the more easily overcome the heretic host, against which Hilary himself had so often done battle for the faith.' Thorpe, p.152. On the importance of fire and light in Gregory's writing and thinking, see De Nie, *Views*, pp.133-211.

people under his banner. Being placed after the king's external wars highlights the sense of importance that Gregory accords the unification of the Franks. It ensures that these events occur under the aegis of a successful Catholic king, with a reputation for foreign victories. Importantly, a count of chapters situates this section at the very centre of Books I-IV. Structurally this is a central theme of the 'Prehistory' and deserves detailed study.

3.5 Unification of the Franks

In Book II, chapters 40-42, of Gregory of Tours' *Histories* we are presented with the deaths of three of Clovis's rival Frankish kings. These chapters have been seen as evidence of Clovis's particularly barbaric unification of the Franks, an image that, at first sight, would not sit well with his image as the first Catholic king of France.³⁷⁰

Taken at face value, Gregory's writings provide an ambiguous portrait of a barbaric, yet Catholic, king. When the subtleties of Gregory's didactic programme are taken into account a new picture can emerge. I suggest that chapters 40-42 of Book II of the *Histories*, concerning the deaths of Sigibert the Lamé, Chararic and Ragnachar should be seen as central to Gregory of Tours' didactic message: Those who stray from God's path and occupy themselves with debauchery, avarice, and pride will find that it is to no avail. Those who seek humility, chastity and the doing of good works will be eternally rewarded and will die a peaceful death. Gregory wishes us to see that God is still active

³⁷⁰ E. James, *The Franks*, pp. 88-91; W. M. Daly, 'Clovis: How barbaric, how pagan?', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp.619-664, at p.620. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.218 considers the whole series 'unedifying'. I first discussed these issues in my MA thesis, 'The themes and context of Book III within the Prehistory of Gregory of Tours.' Unpublished MA thesis, (York, 2004).

among men, through the relics of his many saints.³⁷¹ Clovis, because of his unique position as the first Catholic king of France, is presented by Gregory as another agent of God; His avenger. His miracle is the unification of the Frankish nation and the suppression of Arianism, as personified by the Goths.³⁷² Unification is enacted through the defeat of three rival kings, each personifying a sin. By defeating the kings, Clovis eradicated the sins of pride, greed and debauchery, and in so doing symbolically cleanses the Frankish kingdom of the ‘sin’ of disunity.

3.5.1 Greed

Histories II. 40 concerns the assassinations of Clovis’s fellow king, Sigibert the Lambe and his son Chloderic, and Clovis’s subsequent take over of Sigibert’s people. The events, as reported by Gregory, go like this: Clovis suggested that Chloderic might like to do away with his father, King Sigibert, and take over his kingdom. For his trouble Chloderic would gain an alliance with Clovis. Chloderic did as suggested and then offered Clovis part of the treasure that he had inherited, which Clovis turned down. However, he did ask that his messengers be allowed to see the treasure, and in so doing they tricked Chloderic into presenting his skull for the blow of an axe, whilst he was up to his elbows in gold coins. Clovis then appeared before the inhabitants of Cologne, reporting what had happened, but denying any part in the deeds, and

³⁷¹ See Gregory, *VSM*, for repeated examples of the actions of just one saint; Goffart, *Narrators*, p.151.

³⁷² Wood, ‘Gregory of Tours and Clovis’, p. 256. Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, pp.17-18 discusses how Gregory promoted Martin as an anti-arian saint, when in fact he had been ‘aloof’ to such arguments. A. Scott McKinley, ‘The first two centuries of Saint Martin of Tours.’ *EME* 14 (2006), pp.173-200.

suggested that the former people of Sigibert should adopt himself as their leader, which they duly did. Gregory finished the tale with '*Prosternebat enim cotidiae Deus hostes eius sub manu ipsius et augebat regnum eius, eo quod ambularet recto corde coram eo et faceret quae placita erant in oculis eius.*'³⁷³

Rather than looking solely at the dramatic events of this tale, but by looking at the way in which they are presented, it is possible to posit an alternative reading of this chapter, which sees it as something more than an example of Clovis' treachery and ambition. Clovis avoids the crime of regicide by suggesting that Chloderic kill his father. If Chloderic had been a good man he would have refused. This is a test, and he fails. Clovis is the catalyst, not the active party. This can be said of the whole affair. Chloderic is led astray by his lust for power and is not in control of his actions. Unbalanced by his emotions he has his father assassinated. In this way he commits both regicide and parricide. There really is no hope for Chloderic and indeed we are told that '*Sed iudicio Dei in foveam, quam patri hostiliter fodit, incessit.*'³⁷⁴ The use of biblical imagery³⁷⁵ only serves to reinforce the point that God is acting through his agent, Clovis. It also represents just one of many examples of Gregory's reliance on scripture as a

³⁷³ *Hist. II. 40, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.91.* 'Day in day out God submitted the enemies of Clovis to his domination and increased his kingdom, for he walked before him with an upright heart and did what was pleasing in His sight.' Thorpe, p.156. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.218 finds this quote ambiguous. 'If really meant to justify Clovis's murderous duplicity, its purpose would have been better served by quietly glossing over this phase of the reign. Gregory took the opposite course, intensifying the horror beyond any need of relating the facts. His comment, in conspicuously biblical language, casts our minds back to the Old Testament and its highly ambiguous kings who walked before God with an upright heart but who were hardly Christians.' The episodes seem far less ambiguous to me. For the increasing use of the Old testament as a source of kingly exemplars in Gregory's day, see Y. Hen, 'The uses of the Bible and the perception of kingship in Merovingian Gaul.' *EME 7.3* (1998), pp.277-89

³⁷⁴ *Hist. II.40, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.90* 'by the judgement of God Chloderic fell into the pit which he had dug for his father.' Thorpe, p.155.

³⁷⁵ Proverbs. XXVI, 27.

model for his own work.³⁷⁶ As Chloderic indulges his lust for power and wealth, Clovis's envoys kill him as he literally wallows in the wages of his sin. That this has come about is Chloderic's fault; his lust for power has betrayed him and God has judged him. That judgement is carried out through Clovis, God's avenger. This becomes apparent when Clovis wins over the people of Cologne and persuades the Franks to submit to his rule. He is raised on a shield, like Roman emperors before him, having 'walked before Him with an upright heart' and having done 'what was pleasing in His sight.'³⁷⁷ God is with him. Here he is presented as a latter day David, uniting the Franks, the new Israelites, under the aegis of the Lord. Edward James suggests that Gregory was being ironic here, but when one appreciates of the real significance of the passage, this is clearly not the case.³⁷⁸

If there is a message from this chapter then it is surely this: Clovis is presented as an avenging king in the Old Testament fashion, smiting those who are judged by God, just as in *Histories* II.37 he is depicted as a latter day Joshua, when the walls of Angoulême '*ut in eius contemplatione muri sponte corruerent*.'³⁷⁹ Sigibert is the innocent here, Chloderic is at fault. He kills his father, and lusts after wealth and power, but falls into that very pit that he has dug for his father. The message is clear: one cannot prosper through material greed and killing one's own kin, reflecting major themes of the preface to Book V. Only through

³⁷⁶ For example see Halsall, 'The preface to Book V', p.305, for examples of Gregory's use of the Psalms.

³⁷⁷ *Hist.* II. 40; 1Kings III, 6; 2 Chronicles XX, 32.

³⁷⁸ James, *The Franks*, p.88.

³⁷⁹ *Hist.* II.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.88 'collapsed of their own weight as he looked at them.' Thorpe, p.154.

respect for God can one succeed. Chloderic is punished and Clovis reaps the reward for his piety. Clovis indeed has the utmost respect for the Lord, as he has submitted to Catholicism, or so Gregory would have us believe.³⁸⁰ Through this Clovis can smite his enemies and increase his power. Heinzelmann suggests that heresy is one of the dominant themes of Book II³⁸¹ and Clovis plays the counterpoint to this theme by achieving victory while all those with heretical beliefs, be they pagan or Arian, are crushed beneath his pious fist. His baptism saves him and raises him above the barbarians who stand against Frankish dominion. This goes hand in hand with Clovis's moral integrity as an exemplar for his descendants.

Gregory's message and use of structure is reinforced through similar chapters at important stages of the *Histories*. Importantly, later on it is another Sigibert who digs the pit this time, for his brother, having not listened to the advice of God's representative, St. Germanus, bishop of Paris. He pays dearly for his folly, being assassinated.³⁸² This is a pivotal tale: Sigibert was Gregory's patron. This appears at the end of Book IV, immediately prior to the keynote Preface to Book V, and parallels the story of Cain and Abel at the start of Book I, which Gregory sees repeated throughout history.³⁸³ This event is the climax of the civil war afflicting the Merovingians, and the probable impetus for Gregory's composition of the *Histories*. It is the culmination of all that is wrong with

³⁸⁰ See nn. 56-57, above, on Clovis's baptism.

³⁸¹ M. Heinzelmann, 'Heresy' .

³⁸² *Hist.* IV. 51.

³⁸³ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 91.

Gregory's world: it is also a mirror image of *Histories* II.40. Here, Sigibert is at fault, not the victim. Here he is raised on a shield by those men who have newly flocked to his banner from Chilperic, another Frankish king. The parallel with Clovis is striking: Sigibert is killed, while Clovis, likewise proclaimed king and raised on a shield by his new subjects goes on to eternal glory. As the first of these passages appears near the end of Book II and the second at the end of Book IV, it is apparent that the death of Sigibert the Lambe appears half way through Gregory's initial four-book discourse. This passage then also underlines Martin Heinzelmann's observation of Gregory's literary trait of reiterating his important messages at half way points,³⁸⁴ here extended to Books I-IV as a unit, further supporting the theory presented here, that there is a unifying structure to these four books.

3.5.2 Pride

In *Histories* II. 41 we see another side of Gregory's depiction of Clovis. Initially it seems we are reading from the age-old script of revenge.³⁸⁵ Chararic, a king of the Salian Franks, had failed to support Clovis in his war with Syagrius, preferring to stand to one side, awaiting the victor. This, we are told, incurred Clovis's wrath.³⁸⁶ Taking Chararic prisoner, he had him tonsured and ordained a priest, and his son a deacon. Humiliated, Chararic wept, while his son threatened Clovis, and so the two were beheaded. The vignette ended with the inevitable takeover of their kingdom, their treasure and their people.

³⁸⁴ *Hist.* Ch. 3.

³⁸⁵ Wood, 'Gregory of Tours and Clovis', p.253 sees this as possibly introduced to explain an unjustifiable act.

³⁸⁶ *Hist.* II. 41.

There can be little doubt that we are witness here to the furthering of Clovis's ambition to expand his territory and power. However, whereas in the preceding chapter we see his cunning, here we see his magnanimity. This chapter shows Clovis as Christian diplomat, fully aware of the political sensibilities of his actions. That he tonsured his prisoners is a clear indication that Clovis is to be perceived as having been baptised, otherwise this would surely not have been an option. As it is, instead of killing his enemies out of hand, he offers them life. Rather than removing their heads as a means of eliminating the political threat they pose, he removes their hair, achieving the same aim in his new Christian political world. That they do not accept this offer is no fault of Clovis's, but can be put down to their pride and in a thoroughly pragmatic way he has them executed.

A parallel can be drawn with the murder of Chlodomer's sons by King Chlothar.³⁸⁷ In a chapter that shows how far Clovis's sons have fallen, it is left to Chlotild to decide whether Chlodomer's sons, her own grandsons, will be killed or just shorn of their hair, thus giving up their birthright. Her pride triumphs and the boys are slain, but a third survives by cutting his own hair and becoming a religious. Thus while all those too proud and avaricious to submit suffered for their sins, the sole boy who '*postpositum regnum terrenum*' survived and '*bonisque operibus insistens*'.³⁸⁸ Pride and righteousness do not go hand in hand. This chapter reinforces the message of II.41 and is placed at the

³⁸⁷ *Hist.* III. 18.

³⁸⁸ *Hist.* III. 18, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.119. 'had no wish for earthly dominion' 'devoted himself to good works.' Thorpe, p.182.

very middle of Book III. As such it carries great significance for Gregory's agenda and the events of the 'Chararic' chapter. Once again we see that a chapter at the centre of the four-book unit, II.41, has a parallel in a chapter placed at a primary position within another book. Gregory's structure is intricately woven.

We need not consider Clovis barbaric because he sought vengeance against Chararic in this way. Many a tale is told in Gregory's works of divine or saintly vengeance, such as that perpetrated by St. Nicetius of Lyons.³⁸⁹ When God, on his own or working through His agents, believes that death is a just punishment, it comes swiftly. Clovis, the agent of God, so dispatches Chararic and his son. They gave up the chance of a new life, serving God, and must pay the price. On a pragmatic level, the tale of Macliaw the Breton shows the danger of not finishing off one's enemy. He becomes a religious in order to escape his foes, but when the time is right he renounces his vows and takes up his position as Count.³⁹⁰ Clovis did not make the mistake of allowing Chararic or his son to do the same.

A major aspect of the theme of this chapter is surely the inference to Clovis's Catholic values. Gregory uses the events herein to consolidate the image of his Catholic exemplar. He has stepped from the pagan world into the light, and so can afford to act in a magnanimous manner. It is also possible that he was at a stage in his career where he did not fear the likes of Chararic and his son. By

³⁸⁹ *Hist.* IV.36.

³⁹⁰ *Hist.* IV.4.

this stage of his depiction by Gregory, Clovis has moved on from the blood and thunder of his early days. Now he uses his powers of deduction to trick Chloderic, while in the run up to Vouillé it is clear that he is coming to grips with the political necessity of having the saints on his side. A deer leads him to a ford. Clovis has made the transition from barbaric pagan to catholic statesman.

In Gregory's scheme, Chararic comes across as weak and indecisive. First of all he sits by and watches Clovis fight Syagrius. This may well have been an expedient course of action in the circumstances, but considering the role of Clovis in Gregory's work, and his special treatment therein, we can be excused for being persuaded that Chararic was in the wrong. Then, apparently fuelled by remembrance of this slight, Clovis returns for revenge, and Chararic bursts into tears at the humiliation of being tonsured.³⁹¹ His son on the other hand is none too ready to give up his inheritance. As with the previous story of Chloderic and Sigibert the Lamé, it is the son who embodies the vigour of the Franks, as opposed to the fathers who appear somewhat like Gregory's depiction of the cowardly Goths. All three kings in this cycle are weak in one way or another. Sigibert, physically maimed whilst fighting the Alamans at Zúlpich with Clovis, is now presented almost in the past tense. Events are passing him by. He presumably could not make it to Vouillé due to his infirmity, so he sends his son instead. Perhaps Clovis scented a weakness in his old ally, which occasioned the events in II.40. Chararic is indecisive and weak of character, while Ragnachar, as we shall see, has a weakness of the flesh and the mind. This depiction of at least two of three rival kings as weak in a manner

³⁹¹ *Hist.* II, 41, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p. 91. '*Cumque Chararicus de humilitate sua conquireret et fleret*'.

reserved also for Gregory's image of Arian kings suggests that perhaps they were rivals not only to Clovis claim on the Frankish kingdoms, but also to his claim to be the first Catholic king of the Franks.

We do not know the religion of these Frankish kings. Indeed we do not know Clovis's religion at this point either.³⁹² We are clearly led to believe that Clovis has been baptised, and is now acting as the sole Catholic king of the Franks. Upright before God, he smites those in his path. However, for Chararic to be tonsured might imply that he and his son were already christian. This implies that Clovis was not the only christian Frankish king at this time. It is possible that any three of these kings were Catholic before Clovis. However, Chararic is painted in a way that reflects much of Gregory's anti-Arian polemic, which sways us from this path of enquiry, underpinning Clovis's position. As to Ragnachar, as we shall see, his fate was already sealed.

3.5.3 Debauchery

Histories II. 42 concerns the take over of the Franks under the rule of Ragnachar. It is clear that Gregory is writing at some distance from the incident, as the chapter starts '*Erat autem tunc Ragnacharius rex apud Camaracum tam effrenis in luxoria, ut vix vel propinquis quidem parentibus indulgeret.*'³⁹³ The language used here certainly implies that Gregory was not immediately familiar with the life of King Ragnachar; information was presumably limited. It also

³⁹² See above, nn.56-57.

³⁹³ *Hist.* II. 42, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.92. 'There lived in Cambrai at his time a King called Ragnachar who was so sunk in debauchery that he could not even keep his hands off the women of his own family.' Thorpe, p.156.

appears to be presented in a mythical, legendary, and biblical manner, serving to distance the author, and therefore the reader from the events at hand, whilst emphasising moral themes. This suggests that the events are less important than the message they portray. The chapter unfolds as follows: Ragnachar was unpopular with his people due to his loose living. Clovis bribed Ragnachar's closest bodyguards, presumably having been made aware that there was unrest in the kingdom and therefore a chance for him to further his career. Thus bribed, the *leudes* of Ragnachar invited Clovis into the kingdom. Clovis was victorious; Ragnachar was arrested by his own troops and killed by Clovis, and his brother with him. The bodyguard discovered that they had been bribed with counterfeit gold but, intimidated by Clovis, were happy to escape with their lives. A further brother, Rignomer was killed and Clovis took over the kingdom.

It has been suggested that Ragnachar's debauchery can be seen as similar to that of Clovis's father Childeric, who was deposed by his Franks for seducing the daughters of his subjects.³⁹⁴ Perhaps more pertinently, Book II opens with the tale of St. Bricius, who is accused of getting a washerwoman pregnant, and cast out of his bishopric by the angry inhabitants.³⁹⁵ The fate of Ragnachar provides a fine counterpoint to the start of Book II, and serves to highlight the leitmotif of the book, of moral excellence and in particular sexual integrity as essential for political legitimacy.³⁹⁶ As Jo Ann McNamara comments: 'The distinction between the sexually active and the sexually abstinent...forms an implicit

³⁹⁴ Shanzer, 'History, Romance, Love, and Sex', p. 411; *Hist.* II. 12.

³⁹⁵ *Hist.* II. 1. It is possible that this story relates to pro- and anti-Martinian factions gaining control within the episcopacy of Tours at different times. G. Halsall, *pers comms*.

³⁹⁶ Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave', p. 124.

complement to [Gregory's] division of the world between the wicked and the righteous.³⁹⁷ In Ragnachar's case the charge is incest, far more serious than anything of which Childeric is accused, and Clovis plays the role of agent of divine punishment. It is clear, however, that Ragnachar went further than either Childeric or St. Bricius, and as such his fate was determined.

As parallels to the tale of Ragnachar, Childeric and St. Bricius have already been mentioned. Still in Book II, Senator Avitus is deposed because '*luxuriosae agere volens*'³⁹⁸ and Duke Victorious is stoned to death for his loose living and '*in amore mulierum luxuriosus*'³⁹⁹ Again this happens at the halfway point of Book II, reinforcing its message, as mentioned above. It is immediately followed by the tale of Eparchius, who is sorely tempted by the devil but is delivered from lust by the power of the cross. This piece serves to act as a contrast to the previous chapter and also to refer to Clovis's victory over depravity and heresy at the end of the book. In Book IV, King Charibert dies having been excommunicated for marrying his wife's sister, who is herself '*percussa iudicio Dei*'⁴⁰⁰ This too occurs at the half-way point of that book. However the figure most like Ragnachar in the *Histories* is Nero, presented, again in the middle of Book I, as an incestuous fornicator and persecutor of Christians.⁴⁰¹ Both he and Herod die by their own hand, in successive chapters.

³⁹⁷ J.A. McNamara, 'Chastity as a Third Gender in the History and Hagiography of Gregory of Tours', *WGT*, pp. 199-210, at p.201

³⁹⁸ *Hist.* II. 11, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.60. 'his way of life was too libidinous'. Thorpe, p.128.

³⁹⁹ *Hist.* II. 20, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.66. 'irregular affairs with women.' Thorpe, p. 133; Halsall, 'Childeric's Grave', p. 124.

⁴⁰⁰ *Hist.* IV. 26, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.159. 'struck by the judgement of God.' Thorpe, p.220.

Again Gregory's typological view of history can be seen at work, as well as his use of beginning, end and middle chapters of books as couriers of his major thematic discourse.

Additionally, in II.29, Chlotild tries to persuade Clovis to turn away from his pagan gods. Those mentioned are Roman, not Germanic. These are presumably not Clovis's gods but are included to make a point. Jupiter in particular is seen as incestuous.⁴⁰² The parallel with Ragnachar is striking. By association he is being portrayed as a latter-day pagan, wallowing in the filth and debauchery so redolent of Jupiter. This serves to reinforce both the theme of heresy as discussed by Heinzelmann,⁴⁰³ and the theme of sexual integrity running through Book II, bringing both to a climax at the end of the book, at the hands of morally and sexually upright Clovis, the Orthodox King of the Franks. Clovis punishes heretics and the amoral alike. As a message to his descendants, Gregory's contemporaries, it could hardly be bettered.

Although Clovis took advantage of the situation in Ragnachar's kingdom, by bribery, he is not to be held accountable. He was merely carrying out the judgement of God upon those who live a debauched and immoral life. That Ragnachar was betrayed by those who would normally be most trusted, as indeed was Sigibert in chapter 40, serves to draw our attention away from Clovis's role in the proceedings. Ragnachar had brought this on himself by living the life of Jupiter, to the point that his own bodyguard betrayed him. It is

⁴⁰¹ *Hist.* I. 25.

⁴⁰² *Hist.* II. 29.

⁴⁰³ Heinzelmann, 'Heresy' *passim*.

then fitting that this bodyguard should be paid for their betrayal in counterfeit coin, as Clovis is quite clearly not to be seen as condoning their actions, even if he has taken advantage of the situation.

3.6 Structural Motifs

Having seen that elsewhere in the *Histories* Gregory used complex literary devices to achieve his point,⁴⁰⁴ a closer look at Clovis's life as recounted by Gregory merely adds to the argument that the bishop's writing should not be taken at face value. Ragnachar appears in II.27, the beginning of Gregory's description of the life of Clovis, as his only named supporter against Syagrius. This same Ragnachar is the last named of Clovis's relatives to suffer at his hands. [Ragnachar clearly does not progress as does Clovis, and should then be seen as a comparison.] Indeed Clovis is bracketed by Ragnachar, just as Book VI of the *Histories* is bracketed by St Salvius and the preface to Book V by Sigibert.⁴⁰⁵ Furthermore the episodic nature of Clovis's narrative, likened to a hagiography,⁴⁰⁶ makes manipulation of the sources all the more likely. Clovis became king at fifteen, reigned for thirty years and died at forty-five, five years after the battle of Vouillé. In the fifth year of his reign he defeated Syagrius, in the tenth year the Thuringians, and in the fifteenth he defeated the Alamanni with Christ's help, and was thus converted and baptised. Strangely however Gregory also states that the events of chapter II.37 occurred also in the fifteenth year of his reign, including the Battle of Vouillé. The figures do not add up, and

⁴⁰⁴ *Hist.* V. Pref; Halsall, 'The preface to Book V', *passim*.

⁴⁰⁵ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.167; Heinzlmann, 'History and Society', p. 49.

⁴⁰⁶ Heinzlmann, *History and Society*, pp.132-5.

are numbered exclusively in multiples of five.⁴⁰⁷ If Clovis was forty when he defeated Alaric, this would leave only five years in which he could unite the Franks by murdering his rivals. One wonders to what extent this is realistic. The episodic presentation of garnering of authority, baptism, foreign conquest and then internal unification, seems decidedly artificial.⁴⁰⁸

3.7 Summary

The Life of Clovis presented at the end of Book II is ensconced in Gregory's need to portray the king as the Catholic unifier of Gaul. Hence the imagery used, and material manipulated presents the most edifying portrait of the king who the author would utilise as an exemplar for his contemporary kings. It is now necessary to investigate Gregory's portrayal of later kings in comparison with the depiction of Clovis.

⁴⁰⁷ Carozzi, 'Clovis', *passim*, sees the five yearly dating within the life of Clovis as artificial and part of Gregory's desire to paint Clovis in roman imperial traditions by copying the *quinquennalia* and *decennalia* celebrations of later roman emperors, using the life of Constantine, as a template. Shanzer, 'Dating the baptism of Clovis', p.53 casts doubt on the authenticity of the quinquennial dates, arguing that Gregory's use of *aliquando* (see n. 56, above), 'directly contradicts' *actum anno 15 regis sui* in *Hist.* II.30. Questions regarding the authorship of this phrase were raised by Krusch, *MGH SRM* I.1, p.76, n.2, supporting Bonnet, *Gregoire de Tours*, p.465. G. Kurth, *Études franques* 2 Vols (Paris and Brussels, 1919), II.213, regarded the dates as originating in quinquennial annals of Tours. Some of the regnal dates appear to be interpolations. Halsall, 'Childeric's grave' suggests that Gregory was using the poetic device of the *lustrum*, a unit of five years and indeed such five-year blocks seem to have been very important in ageing people in Merovingian Gaul. See M. Handley, *Death, Society and Culture: Inscriptions and Epitaphs in Gaul and Spain, AD 300-750* (BAR (I) 1135; Oxford, 2003). The dates assigned to events in Clovis' reign are, however, all based ultimately on taking Gregory's statement that Clovis reigned for thirty years, then deducting 30 from the date of Clovis' death (511) and finally adding multiples of five to the ensuing date of 481. See Halsall, 'Childeric's grave', for the weakness of this methodology. Ironically, if one took the latest *terminus post quem* from the coins in Childeric's burial (491) as the date of his death and of Clovis accession (what Halsall calls the 'short chronology': Childeric's Grave', p.119) and added fifteen, one would end up very close to the 507 date for Vouillé, which is established on the basis of the *Fragmentary Chronicle of Saragossa*: T. Mommsen (ed.), *MGH AA.* 11, *Chronica Minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, vol.2, (Berlin, 1894), pp.221-223

⁴⁰⁸ James, *The Franks*, p.88.

Chapter 4: Gregory of Tours' Presentation of Kingship (2): Kingship under Clovis' Successors

4.1 Theuderic and Theudebert: a comparison.

With Clovis's death the kingdom was split between his four sons. The eldest, Theuderic is introduced in II.28⁴⁰⁹, which mostly concerns the political preamble to the marriage of Clovis and Chlotild. Almost as an afterthought, Gregory mentions Clovis' son, Theuderic. Not an auspicious start for Theuderic, especially when we compare his debut - Clovis'*habens iam de concubina filium nomine Theudericum.*'⁴¹⁰ - with that of his own son Theudebert at the start of Book III: '*Habebat iam tunc Theudoricus filium nomen Theudobertum, elegantem atque utilem.*'⁴¹¹ The similarity in expression is striking, as is the suggestion that Theuderic is not the equal of his son. This is a theme that runs throughout Book III.⁴¹² So having outlined the biblical and historical exemplars for Clovis, the epitome of a good king, in this book Gregory takes the opportunity to display and compare the virtues and vices he observes in a good and a bad king. He also compares both to his archetype, Clovis.

Theuderic dominates the narrative of the first half of Book III. However, the glowing picture Gregory paints of Theuderic's son Theudebert steals the role of

⁴⁰⁹ *Hist.* II.28

⁴¹⁰ *Hist.* II.28, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.74. 'already had a son called Theuderic by one of his mistresses' Thorpe, p.141.

⁴¹¹ *Hist.* III.1, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.97. 'Theuderic already had a son called Theudebert, an elegant and able young man.' Thorpe, p.162.

⁴¹² I suggest that, just as Gregory presents antithetical statements within the prologues, as a guide to a reading of the books themselves (Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.119), this comparison between kings is just such an exercise in antithetical discourse.

central character of the Book.⁴¹³ The contrast between father and son mirrors that between Clovis and Theuderic. This suggests that there is more than mere historical reportage involved here and a closer investigation into Theuderic's presentation and role illuminates Gregory's agenda. In order to explore this thesis, this chapter will compare Theuderic with his father and son, both of whom represent the epitome of Catholic kingship. It will become clear that Gregory here demonstrates his well-documented use of antithetical rhetoric, which can be clearly seen in the prologue to Books II and III.⁴¹⁴ Hence we find Theuderic sandwiched between father and son, providing an example of what would befall the Merovingian dynasty in the long run if they did not heed Gregory's advice, as encapsulated in the Preface to Book V.

Chapter three presents a vivid picture of the difference between father and son within Book III. The Dane, Chlochilaich, plunders Theuderic's lands.⁴¹⁵ The king sends his son, Theudebert, to defeat the invaders. Theuderic uses his son in this way again in chapter seven, where Theudebert regains the family silver embarrassingly given away by his father in recompense for trying to kill Theuderic's half-brother Chlothar.⁴¹⁶ This will be dealt with in more detail below. So within the first seven chapters of Book III there are three

⁴¹³ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 136; R. Collins, 'Theodebert I, 'Rex Magnus Francorum'', in C.P. Wormald *et al* (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), pp.7-33, is the prime analysis of Theudebert's reign.

⁴¹⁴ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, pp. 119-127.

⁴¹⁵ *Hist.* III.3.

⁴¹⁶ *Hist.* III.7; I. N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 50 suggests a date of c.531 for this event.

comparisons between Theuderic and Theudebert, and in all three cases it is the son who comes off better.

This motif is reaffirmed in III.21, where we begin to see the takeover of Theuderic's kingdom by his son. This chapter encompasses all that Book III represents in Gregory's thematic study. It starts: '*Gothi vero cum post Chlodovechi mortem multa de id quae ille adquesierat pervasissent*'.⁴¹⁷ In III.21 Clovis has died, and the unity of Gaul is under threat from the Goths. They have made inroads while it is implied that the second generation of Catholic kings had been idle. Gregory continues: '*Theudoricus Theudebertum, (Chlothacharius vero Guntharium, seniore filium suum,) ad haec requirenda transmittunt*'.⁴¹⁸ In chapter three we saw how Theuderic sent his son to fight the Danish invasion, and here again it is repeated. Theudebert has already defended his father's land from foreign invasion and here he re-conquers land previously taken by his grandfather, Clovis. In this Theudebert eclipses his impotent father and picks up his grandfather's mantle. This is a major theme of Book III, and is encapsulated in this chapter. The first twenty chapters of Book III are almost a hiatus in Merovingian success. Chapter 21 shows that Theudebert was Clovis's natural successor. By repeating the start of Book III, Gregory states that Theuderic's primary role is as a contrast to Clovis and Theudebert, as though his reign was a false start. This underpins Gregory's typological view of

⁴¹⁷ *Hist.* III.21, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.121 'Since the death of Clovis the Goths had occupied much of the territory which he had conquered.' Thorpe, p.183

⁴¹⁸ *Hist.* III.21, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.121 'Theuderic now sent his son Theudebert to win this back....' Thorpe, p.183.

history.⁴¹⁹ Both father and son start out in a similar vein but their paths diverge due to their varying piety. This is predicted by the way in which each king makes his debut; one is feted for good works while the other is mentioned almost in passing.⁴²⁰

To further highlight the extent to which Gregory selects and modifies his material, III.21 is surely chronologically misplaced, as it is difficult to see how Childebert could have invaded Spain to save his sister in III.10 if the Goths still held much of southern Gaul.⁴²¹ Gregory has moved the events described in chapter 21 to significantly alter his portrayal of Theudebert, to denigrate Theuderic and so fulfil his comparative agenda.

III.23 marks the hand over of power from father to son in a relatively peaceful succession: Theuderic dies in his bed, and Theudebert buys off his uncles. This compares favourably to the Burgundian and Thuringian successions, in which Theuderic had been involved.⁴²² The Merovingians may be straying from the path of righteousness, but they are still the chosen people,⁴²³ and Theudebert comes to lead them to victory. Gregory takes this opportunity to provide yet another example of comparison between the two kings. Theuderic kills his relative Sigivald, apparently out-of-hand, while ordering his son to kill the son of Sigivald, also called Sigivald. Theudebert cannot bring himself to murder the

⁴¹⁹ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 148.

⁴²⁰ *Hist.* II.28, III.1.

⁴²¹ G. Halsall, *pers comm.*

⁴²² *Hist.* III.4-8.

⁴²³ Mitchell, 'Marking the Bounds', p. 295.

innocent young man who was his godson. By this act of compassion Theudebert, whom Gregory calls ‘...*in omni bonitate praecipuum...*’,⁴²⁴ once again eclipses his father as a good king. The comparison is then compounded when Theudebert restores the younger Sigivald’s property along with a handsome treasure.⁴²⁵ An example of Gregory’s Christian philosophy, it cannot be a coincidence. Theudebert outshines his father through mercy and benevolence. Father has killed father but son has saved son. That both father and son had the same name, Sigivald, heightens the contrast. This comparative lesson occurs at exactly the moment that the kingdom is relieved of the incompetent king and gains the rightful heir to Clovis’ godliness. It also marks a contrast with the quote in the Preface to Book V, that kin shall fight kin.⁴²⁶

The comparative theme is reinforced in III.34, where Theuderic is accused of having done ‘...*multas iniurias...*’⁴²⁷ to Desideratus, Bishop of Verdun. Theudebert on the other hand is charitable and generous. He loans Desideratus seven thousand gold pieces, and then declines to take back the loan, preferring to make it a gift instead. Theuderic is long dead and there is no need to mention him here, except to reiterate the comparison.

In order to enhance the contrast between Theuderic and his son further, Theudebert is built up by the military campaign in III.32,⁴²⁸ which is falsely

⁴²⁴ *Hist.* III.25, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.123, ‘distinguished by every virtue’. Thorpe, p.185

⁴²⁵ *Hist.* III.24.

⁴²⁶ *Hist.* V.Pref.

⁴²⁷ *Hist.* III.34, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.129. ‘much harm’. Thorpe, p.190.

ascribed to his reign, when in fact it occurred during that of his son Theudebald. Gregory has moved the campaign led by Buccelin back in time. This embellishes Theudebert's military career, and portrays him as the successor to Clovis, the archetypical Frankish warrior king. Whether Gregory was familiar with the real facts and chose to distort them, or whether he was just confused, we cannot now tell. That Gregory intentionally moved Buccelin's success from association with Theudebald, of whom he did not approve,⁴²⁹ to Theudebert, who comes second only to Clovis as Gregory's model historical king, seems more likely. He does not deny that Buccelin died in the reign of Theudebald, but his great achievement is attributed to the godliness of another. Not only does this serve to compare Theudebert with his father, who as we saw earlier (III.3, III.21) relies on his son in terms of military action, but it also allows Gregory to make a comparison between Theudebert and his son Theudebald in Book IV, one that parallels the comparison between Clovis and Theuderic in III.21. In both cases the father is more successful than the son, another indication of decline in these instances. This also highlights Gregory's willingness to distort the facts to enhance his message, as the next section will show.

Gregory's manipulation of his material is also revealed by the portrayal of Theuderic and his son in the *Histories*, which differs considerably from the picture presented in Gregory's other works. This verifies the suggestion that Gregory has edited his evidence in the *Histories* in order to present the desired picture. Twice in the *Life of the Fathers* Theuderic comes into contact with an

⁴²⁸ *Hist.* III.32.

⁴²⁹ *Hist.* IV.9.

agent of God and harkens unto the Lord's word. Firstly, whilst besieging Clermont:

‘at the very moment when he thought that he would breach the walls of the town, [he] was softened by the mercy of the Lord and the prayers of his bishop whom he had thought to send into exile.’⁴³⁰

Theuderic is also overcome with fear in the night and tries to run off, only being restrained with difficulty. Presumably he was terrified that his actions would stir the Lord's wrath. This, coupled with the prayers of Quintianus, God's agent, and the wise words of his duke, Hilping, caused Theuderic to undergo a change of heart and forbid anyone to be harmed within eight miles of the town.⁴³¹ The second incident also occurs during Theuderic's campaign in the Auvergne, when he is persuaded to release his captives by the intervention of Portianus, ‘and thereafter he did what the saint requested.’⁴³² On these two occasions Theuderic can be seen to be listening to the agents of God: Quintianus and Portianus. Both saints emerge with their image enhanced, having turned the king toward the path of righteousness. Here then is Gregory's message within the *Life of the Fathers*, that God is ever present, acting through his saints, to right the wrongs of the people. Gregory has carefully selected his material in both this work and the *Histories* to reinforce his point. While, in the *Life of the Fathers* kings are seen to listen to the saints, the *Histories* are littered with

⁴³⁰ *VP* IV.2.

⁴³¹ *VP* IV.2.

⁴³² *VP* V.2.

examples of holy men who are ignored by kings at their peril: Sigismund ignores an old man,⁴³³ Chlodomer ignores Abbot Avitus⁴³⁴ and Sigibert ignores St. Germanus of Paris,⁴³⁵ and they all pay the ultimate price for their refusal to hearken unto the words of the Lord. Theuderic here shows that he can listen when necessary and is by this action, a pious and godly king.

This picture is further reinforced by the perception that Theuderic should be seen as investing in the power of the church, having Nicetius of Trier appointed in 527, bringing him in from the Limousin, in order to restore the church in the Rhineland.⁴³⁶ Here we witness a king engaged in an act of piety by strengthening the church, and so also his own position through the stability and patronage inherent in such a relationship. Indeed in the very early stages of Book III we see that Theuderic is intimately involved in the distribution of ecclesiastical office.⁴³⁷ Therefore Theuderic should be seen as a more capable and pious king than the select images presented by Gregory in his *Histories* suggest, implying that Gregory really did choose his material very carefully,⁴³⁸ with a concern for the right example to highlight the right message in particular works.

⁴³³ *Hist.* III.5.

⁴³⁴ *Hist.* III.6.

⁴³⁵ *Hist.* IV.51.

⁴³⁶ Collins, 'Theodebert', p. 18.

⁴³⁷ *Hist.* III.2.

⁴³⁸ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 2.

In comparison with Theuderic, a less than positive account of Theudebert can be found, again in *The Life of the Fathers*.⁴³⁹ In the ‘Life of Nicetius of the Treveri’, the king is said to have done ‘many unjust things’:⁴⁴⁰ entering church in the presence of the excommunicated, being ‘proud in his royal glory’ and being an adulterer.⁴⁴¹ This obviously conflicts with the extremely favourable image we are presented with in III.25, again suggesting that Gregory has been selective with his sources, using those anecdotes that would best suit the different agendas of his various works.

Whilst affirming that Gregory manipulated the events in Book II to fit his agenda, Wood feels that no such falsification occurred in Book III

‘except perhaps with regard to the errors in the account of the foundation of the monastery of Agaune...to make it appear to be an act of penance performed by Sigismund to atone for the murder of his son.’⁴⁴²

This fits well with Gregory’s plan to show how bad deeds bring about the downfall of the mighty. That he can be seen to be manipulating the evidence here suggests that he has done so elsewhere in Book III, and indeed this can be seen from the selective use of the available evidence concerning Theuderic and Theudebert discussed above.

⁴³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁴⁴⁰ *VP* XVII.2.

⁴⁴¹ *VP* XVII.2. The charge of adultery is somewhat corroborated by the evidence of *Hist.* III.27.

⁴⁴² Wood, ‘Clermont and Burgundy: 511-534’, p. 124.

4.2 Theuderic and Clovis in comparison.

Having dealt with the comparison between Theuderic and Theudebert I now move on to examine the ways in which Gregory compares Theuderic to Clovis, his father. In order to do this, I will firstly deal with the events that led Theuderic to invade Clermont, and then I will go on to the theme of trickery. In a prelude to the events surrounding Theuderic's death and the succession of his son Theudebert,⁴⁴³ Childebert is invited to take over the area of Clermont by Arcadius, a senator of that city, ostensibly because Theuderic is thought to be dead in Thuringia. When he hears that this is not the case, Childebert soon leaves the scene. It is clear that he does not want a war at this stage. Theuderic's ravaging of the Clermont area is, according to Thorpe, attributed to 532,⁴⁴⁴ only two years before his death and the accession of his son. However a suggested date of 524 seems more likely⁴⁴⁵ and may suggest that Theudebert was not involved in the aborted political manoeuvring following the supposed death of his father in Thuringia, being too young for serious consideration as a successor.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ *Hist.* III.23.

⁴⁴⁴ *Hist.* III.12. Thorpe (trans.) *Gregory of Tours*, , p. 171, n. 14.

⁴⁴⁵ Wood, 'Clermont and Burgundy', p. 123.

⁴⁴⁶ It should not be assumed that Theudebert was in Thuringia at this time as the events of III.7 appear to have occurred c.531, see n.34, some seven years after the Arvernian campaign. It is however possible that Theudebert *was* old enough to be considered in 524, as he must have been over thirteen years of age (being alive, according to Gregory) at the time of Clovis' death in 511). He could have been significantly older than this and, if so, then it is possible that we have here an example of Gregory again manipulating his sources, this time to *avoid* a picture of a son plotting against his father. Theudebert was obviously well versed in warfare by the time of the Danish war, usually thought to date to the 520s.

It would appear that, at that time, Theudebert was not thought to be a suitable choice to succeed his father, at least by a certain faction within the province, presumably led by Arcadius. At the same time there appears to be dissatisfaction within Theuderic's military ranks, as his forces seem more than willing to defect to either Chlothar or Childebert.⁴⁴⁷ Theuderic had to provide for his troops; he had to oil the cogs of Merovingian society, and so, knowing 'At ille infidelis sibi exhistimans Arvernus,'⁴⁴⁸ he led his army into the Auvergne, giving them free rein to plunder his own kingdom.

This suggests that he controls neither land nor men and the negotiations lead to an overreaction on Theuderic's part in allowing his troops free rein. This is clearly in contrast with the Catholic Clovis, who, on more than one occasion forcibly holds back or punishes his men who disobey orders of restraint.⁴⁴⁹ In direct contrast to Clovis, Theuderic's men invade the church of St. Julian, and are only stopped by the vengeance of the saint himself.⁴⁵⁰ Clovis was fearful of the vengeance of St. Martin and acted as a true God fearing Christian king should, ordering his men to do no harm to any of the saint's possessions. He sought good tidings for the forthcoming battle and received encouragement in the manner of a quote from the book of Psalms.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ *Hist.* III.11.

⁴⁴⁸ *Hist.* III.11 *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.107 'that the men of Clermont were ready to betray him'. Thorpe, p.171.

⁴⁴⁹ *Hist.* II.37. This also contrasts with Gregory's account of the campaign in the *Life of the Fathers*.

⁴⁵⁰ *Hist.* III.12.

⁴⁵¹ See above, chapter 3.

In return he was granted victory over the Goths at Vouillé. Theuderic therefore is painted as not as pious as his father, and therefore unable to control his own troops. In fact Theuderic comes across much as Clovis does before his baptism. Directly after his defeat of Syagrius, and presumably the consolidation of his power, Gregory tells us that '*Eo tempore multae aeclesiae a Chlodovecho exercitu depraedatae sunt, quia erat ille adhuc fanaticis erroribus involutus.*'⁴⁵² Surely, then, Theuderic is presented as lacking in piety, as Clovis had been before his conversion. Whereas Clovis is saved by his baptism and ascends to be the avenger of God, smiting the enemies of the Franks, Theuderic muddles around in a punitive campaign against his own people. Theuderic cannot control himself, his army or his lands in stark contrast to his father. Theuderic is fighting the wrong kind of civil war as decried by Gregory in the Preface to Book V. If he would wage war on his own sins, rather than let them control him, he would find it easier to listen to the will of God, and so find success.

Theuderic's invasion of the Auvergne may well provide an answer to the question of why Gregory paints this king in such negative imagery. The Auvergne was his ancestral home. Much of the evidence for Book III has been said to have originated within his own family's archive.⁴⁵³ As such, there surely were few good feelings toward the king in Clermont and the surrounding areas.

⁴⁵² *Hist.* II.27, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.72 'many churches were plundered by the troops of Clovis, for he still held fast to his pagan idolatries.' Thorpe, p.139

⁴⁵³ Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, p.39

As Gregory was looking for a way to highlight the good deeds of Clovis and Theudebert, Theuderic's actions made him the perfect fall guy.⁴⁵⁴

Clovis's life is covered in the second half of Book II, culminating in his death, at the centre point of Books I-IV. The chapters near the beginning of Book III are developed in such a way as to illuminate the king's actions, by providing a stark contrast to his cunning, strength and success. There are several ways that this has been achieved. The role of queens as a catalyst, much like Clovis in the latter stages of his career, will be dealt with in the following chapter. Here I examine the role of cunning and trickery within the pages of Books II and III.

4.3 Trickster Kings

Clovis was an arch trickster.⁴⁵⁵ As just two examples, he tricked Chloderic into succumbing to his greed,⁴⁵⁶ and he tricked Ragnachar's bodyguard into betraying their king, with false gold.⁴⁵⁷ Such trickery was one of the weapons he used as the first Catholic king of the Franks, to instil unity and strength. Towards the end of Book IV it is clear that these traits were not apparent in those Merovingian kings contemporary with Gregory. From the very earliest stages of Book III it would appear that some of Clovis descendants were not as capable at trickery. This motif within the *Histories* suggests the slow decline of the Merovingian kings.

⁴⁵⁴ The divergent (in some ways diametrically opposite) views of Theuderic and Theudebert presented in the *VP*, as referred to above underline how Gregory tailored his schematic presentation of the kings in the *Histories* to suit his overall agenda.

⁴⁵⁵ *Hist.* II.7. for a reference to Aëtius's trickery of the kings of the Goths and Franks.

⁴⁵⁶ *Hist.* II.40.

⁴⁵⁷ *Hist.* II.42.

Whilst involved in the Thuringian campaign Theuderic allies with his half-brother Chlothar, but upon the successful conclusion to the affair, Theuderic tries to have his brother assassinated, in order to escape paying a share of the spoils of conquest. However, the events bear more resemblance to a farce than a legitimate attempt at fratricide. Here, in all its glory, is the tale as told by Gregory:

‘Cum autem adhuc supradicti regis in Thoringiam essent, Theudoricus Chlothacarium fratrem suum, occidere voluit, et praeparatis occulte cum arma viris, eum ad se vocat, quasi secricius cum eo aliquid tractaturus, expansumque in parte domus illius tenturium de uno pariete in altero, armatus post eum stare iubet. Cumque tenturium illud esset brevior, pedes armorum apparuere detecti. Quod cognoscens Chlothacarius, cum suis armatus ingressus est domum. Thuedoricus vero intellegens, hunc haec cognovisse, fabulam fingit et alia loquitur. Denique nesciens, qualiter dolum suum deleniret, discum ei magnum argentum pro gratia dedit. Chlothacharius autem vale dicens et pro munere gratias agens, ad metatum regressus est. Theudoricus vero quaeritur ad suos, nulam extantem causam suum perdedisse catinum, et ad filium suum Theodobertum ait: ‘Vade ad patrum tuum et roga, ut munus, quod ei dedi, tibi sua voluntate concedat’. Qui abiens, quod petiit inpetravit. In talibus enim dolis Theudoricus multum callidus erat.’⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁸ *Hist.* III.7. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.105 ‘While the Kings were still in Thuringia, Theuderic plotted to kill his brother Chlothar. He prepared an ambush of armed men and then summoned Chlothar to his presence, saying that he had something which he wished to talk over. In a part of his

This is such a ridiculous series of events that one has to wonder whether Gregory has not doctored the facts, to serve as an example of Theuderic's lack of cunning, so fitting his literary motif. Theuderic is humiliated when Chlothar easily sees through his plan and then has to hand over a present to alleviate the situation. To make matters worse it is Theudebert who is asked to retrieve the gift. Theudebert can do no wrong, and so returns with the salver, enhancing his own reputation and further spoiling that of his father. This is yet another example of Theuderic using Theudebert to do the dirty work, as in III.3 and III.21. It would seem that Theuderic is digging a deeper and deeper hole for himself here. Chlothar must have had a hearty chuckle at his half-brother's inept display. Gregory too cannot resist poking fun at his subject, with the last ironic line. This excerpt highlights Gregory's pessimism or satirical streak:⁴⁵⁹ what Goffart refers to as 'the sense of the irredeemable sinners in a depraved world.'⁴⁶⁰

Theuderic's actions are in stark contrast to those of his father. Clovis tricked Chloderic into succumbing to his greed and killing his father Sigibert the

house he stretched a piece of canvas across from one wall to another, and he told the armed men to stand behind it. The canvas was not long enough to reach the ground, and the men's feet were plainly visible beneath it. Seeing this, Chlothar marched into the house with his armed men. In his turn, Theuderic realized that Chlothar had seen through his plot, so he tried to think up a pretext while he chatted on about one thing after another. Not quite knowing how to cover-up his treachery, he finally handed Chlothar a great silver salver as a present. Chlothar thanked Theuderic for the gift, said good-bye and went back to his lodging. Theuderic then complained to his family that he had handed over the silver salver without any valid reason for doing so. 'Run after your uncle,' said he to his son Theudebert, 'and ask him to be so good as to hand back to you the present which I have just given him.' The young man set off and was given what he asked for. Theuderic was very good at this sort of trick.' Thorpe, p. 169, modified.

⁴⁵⁹ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p. 91. Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 197-203.

⁴⁶⁰ Goffart, *Narrators*, p. 175. Compare the presentation of Theuderic here with that of Sigibert in *Hist* IV.29, discussed below.

Lame.⁴⁶¹ He gifts Chloderic both his father's kingdom and treasure, whereas Theuderic offers Chlothar half the Thuringian kingdom, but ends up giving away treasure. The parallels are striking. Chlothar sees through the pathetic attempt at assassination, while Chloderic does not. Chloderic dies at the hands of Clovis' assassins, while examining the wages of his greed, whereas Chlothar sees through the ruse and walks off with Theuderic's treasure. That he returns it speaks volumes for the reputation of Theudebert and also Chlothar's reluctance to go to war at this stage. Clovis takes over Cologne with hardly any bloodshed, his cunning and reputation serving him well, while Theuderic must contest a battle and fail in his trickery before his conquest is realised. That he succeeds at all is surely down to his birthright.⁴⁶²

Clovis orchestrates a seamless series of events, masterfully staged, with a successful outcome: the ongoing unity of the Franks; how different then are Theuderic's bumbling actions, which succeed only in humiliating him and - presumably - alienating his brother Chlothar? Far from creating a unified Merovingian front, his actions have served only to sunder the alliance. How well this fits Gregory's views as expressed in the Preface to Book V, aimed at his contemporaries. First invoking Clovis

'Recordamini quid capud victuriarum vestrarum Chlodovechus fecerit, qui adversus reges interfecit, noxias gentes elisit, patrias subjugavit: quarum regnum vobis integrum inlesumque reliquit. Et cum hoc facerit, neque

⁴⁶¹ *Hist.* II.40.

⁴⁶² *Hist.* III.7, Theuderic's army also blunders into the pits dug for them by the Thuringians: another example of Gregory's attraction to this motif. See also Sigibert in *Hist.* IV.51.

*aurum, neque argentum, sicut nunc est in thesauris vestris habebat. Quid agitis? Quid quaeritis? Quid non habundatis? In domibus dilitiae supercrescunt; in prumtuariis vinum, triticum, oleumque redundat; in thesauris aurum atque argentum coacervatur. Unum vobis deest, quod pacem non habentes, Dei gratiam indigetis. Cur unus tollit alteri suum? Cur alter concupiscit alienum?*⁴⁶³

Clearly the example of Clovis's offspring is being used by Gregory to demonstrate the shortcomings of his contemporary kings, who are repeating the mistakes of this first generation that fails in its 'duty' to preserve the dominion of the Franks. This serves to underline the message of the Preface to Book V: that the Merovingians are being undone by their greed and discord.

Another example of Theuderic's failure to trick his enemies comes within the tale of the rebellion of Munderic.⁴⁶⁴ Bloated by pride, Munderic proclaims that he is the equal of Theuderic, pretending to be of royal blood. ' *Accede ad me, et si tibi aliqua de dominatione regni nostri portio debetur, accipe.* " *Dolosae enim haec Theudoricus dicebat...*⁴⁶⁵ The trick fails and Theuderic has to make

⁴⁶³ *Hist. V.Praef. MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.193, 'the founder of your victorious country, who slaughtered those rulers who opposed him, conquered hostile peoples and captured their territories, thus bequeathing to you absolute and unquestioned dominion over them... you cannot keep the peace, and therefore you do not know the grace of God. Why do you keep stealing from each other? Why do you always want something which someone else possesses?' Thorpe, p.253.

⁴⁶⁴ Goffart, *The Narrators*, p.208, sees it as 'among other things a commentary on Theuderic's treachery.'

⁴⁶⁵ *Hist. III.14, MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.110 ' "Come to see me," said Theuderic, "and if any part of my kingdom is rightly yours, then take it." When he said this, Theuderic was trying to trick Munderic.' Thorpe, p.174. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.177 on Theuderic's failed trickery.

his authority felt by force of arms. However, much like at Vollore⁴⁶⁶ and Chastel-Marlhac,⁴⁶⁷ in the preceding chapter, Theuderic's troops cannot successfully besiege Munderic's castle. So for the second time in this chapter Theuderic falls back on trickery, ordering Aregisel to attempt to lure Munderic out through promises of safe conduct. The plan works up to a point, but once out of his fortress Munderic, under attack from Aregisel's troops, proclaims '*Evidentissime cognusco, quod feceris per hoc verbum signum populis ad me interficiendum; verumtamen dico tibi, quia periuriis me decipisti, te vivum ultra nullus aspiciet*'.⁴⁶⁸ Aregisel is killed and Munderic sells his life dearly, '*...et usquequo spiritum exalavit, interficere quemcumque adsequi potuisset non distitit*'.⁴⁶⁹ Munderic, though '*...[multa] elatus superbia*'⁴⁷⁰ at the start of the tale, gains our sympathy through his experiences in dealing with Theuderic and his tricks, dying a death that has elements of heroism.⁴⁷¹

What Gregory has achieved here is to provide a vignette that shows up Theuderic as sadly lacking in those qualities that allowed his father's rise to prominence. Whilst Clovis saw the walls of Angoulême fall before him⁴⁷² Theuderic fails in the three sieges mentioned above. This also highlights the

⁴⁶⁶ *Hist.* III.13.

⁴⁶⁷ *Hist.* III.13.

⁴⁶⁸ *Hist.* III.14, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.112. 'I see clearly...that...was a signal for your troops to kill me. My answer is this, that no one shall see you alive again, even if you have tricked me by your false promise.' Thorpe, p.175.

⁴⁶⁹ *Hist.* III.14, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.112 'as long as there was breath in his body he continued to cut down every man within his reach.' Thorpe, p.175.

⁴⁷⁰ *Hist.* III.14. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.110 'swollen with pride'. Thorpe, p.173.

⁴⁷¹ In contradiction to the argument of Goffart, 'Conspicuously absent'.

⁴⁷² *Hist.* II.37.

discord within Theuderic's kingdom in that he cannot maintain control. Now this may be an example of rebellion after the initial suppression under Clovis; with the great king dead, the population may feel justified in attempting to throw off Merovingian rule, or it may be that Munderic had a legitimate claim to the throne.⁴⁷³ Whatever, once again it belittles Theuderic that he has such trouble suppressing the uprising. The strength and unity under Clovis is history, now the realm of Theuderic is in disarray.

However, Theuderic is not the only son of Clovis to be somewhat less than his father when it comes to trickery. Rather than being a failed trickster, Chlodomer is killed by trickery.⁴⁷⁴ Chlodomer out-distanced his troops in pursuing the routing Burgundians under Godomar at Vézeronce, when the fleeing Burgundians

*'...adsimilantes illi signum eius, dant ad eum voces, dicentes: 'Huc, huc convertere! Tui enim sumus'. At ille credens, abiit inruitque in medio inimicorum. Cuius amputatum caput et conto defixum elevant in sublimi'.*⁴⁷⁵

In direct contrast Clovis is saved '*...velocis equi...*',⁴⁷⁶ while Chlodomer's carries him to his death. Chlodomer's downfall occurs in the same chapter in

⁴⁷³ G. Halsall, pers comm.

⁴⁷⁴ de Nie, *Views*, p. 105-6: argues that Gregory sees civil war ending in self-destruction.

⁴⁷⁵ *Hist.* III.6, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.103, 'imitated Chlodomer's rallying-cry and shouted to him: 'This way! This way! We are your own troops!' Chlodomer believed them, wheeled in their direction and rushed headlong into the middle of his enemies. They hacked off his head, stuck it on a lance and raised it in the air.' Thorpe, p.167.

⁴⁷⁶ *Hist.* II.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.88 'by the sheer speed of his horse'. Thorpe, p.154.

which he kills Sigismund and his family, against the advice of Abbot Avitus. It is clear that Chlodomer does not have the grace of God, again in contrast to Clovis, as he ignores the wishes of the agent of the Lord, and is killed. So he is felled by the vengeance of God, through trickery. Sigibert too is undone through trickery after ignoring the advice of St. Germanus, when two assassins approached, ‘...cum aliam causam suggerire simularent, utraque ei latera feriunt.’⁴⁷⁷ In contrast, Clovis survived an attack from both sides at Vouillé.⁴⁷⁸ It would appear that if you take heed of the advice of the servants of God, then you would succeed through trickery. If, however, you do not, then trickery will be used against you.

Theuderic becomes involved in Burgundian affairs in III.5, as he marries into the Burgundian royal family, just as his father had done. Apart from this marriage, chapter five has no direct connection to Theuderic, but is placed in this position within Book III to highlight the major theme of the fall of the Merovingian kings from the state of grace before God held by Clovis, through their greed. This is achieved by presenting a mirror image of II.40, in which Clovis acts as God’s punishment for the sin of greed. In II.40, Sigibert the Lamé is killed by his son, Chloderic. Chloderic is tricked into this action by the cunning of Clovis, who preys on the young man’s greed.⁴⁷⁹ I argued earlier that

⁴⁷⁷ *Hist.* IV.51, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.188. ‘they pretended that they had something to discuss with him, but they struck him on both sides.’ Thorpe, p. 248; de Nie, *Views*, p. 36 sees this as possibly retribution for the death of Chilperic’s nephew, Theudebert, at the hands of Sigibert’s dukes.

⁴⁷⁸ *Hist.* II.37.

⁴⁷⁹ *Hist.* II.40.

this is an example of Clovis' cunning, and his role as God's avenger.⁴⁸⁰ He is seen to smite down those who indulge in pride, greed or debauchery.⁴⁸¹

King Sigismund of Burgundy had a son, Sigeric, by his first wife, the daughter of King Theodoric of Ostrogothic Italy. Sigismund's second wife persuaded him that Sigeric was plotting to kill him and take over his kingdom, in an attempt to emulate his maternal grandfather.⁴⁸² Sigismund, like Chloderic, is also tricked into committing a heinous crime, this time by his second wife, who plays on *his* fears. Father and son die in both chapters (II.40 and III.5), but the order is reversed, as is the association of guilt. Sigismund repents of his actions, but it is too late.

*'Ad quem senex quidam sic dixisse fertur: 'Te', inquit, 'plange amodo, qui per consilium nequam factus es parricida saevissimus; nam hunc, qui innocens iugulatus est, necessarium non est plangi.'*⁴⁸³

This elder plays the same role as Saint Avitus, Abbot of Saint-Mesmin de Micy in the very next chapter and St. Germanus of Paris in IV.51. Even though it is not mentioned that this man is a religious, by association with the subject matter, and the words of warning for Chlodomer from St. Avitus suggest that this old man is an agent of God. Here we see what happens if one does not listen

⁴⁸⁰ Chapter 3, above.

⁴⁸¹ *Hist.* II.40-42.

⁴⁸² *Hist.* III.5.

⁴⁸³ *Hist.* III.5, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.101. 'An old man is said to have remarked: 'Weep for yourself, for, on evil advice, you have become a most wicked parricide. But it is not necessary to weep for him, who has had his throat cut in his innocence.' Thorpe, p.165

to the advice of such an agent. Sigismund pays for his crime, and is killed by Chlodomer, along with his evil wife.⁴⁸⁴ The words of the old man ring true, as do those of Avitus, when Chlodomer is tricked and rides to his death in the ensuing action,⁴⁸⁵ and those of St. Germanus when Sigibert is assassinated.⁴⁸⁶ In contrast Clovis had ever been willing to listen to the likes of St. Remigius of Rheims, even before his baptism.⁴⁸⁷ This lack of respect for the church in Clovis's descendants leads me to the final family of the 'Prehistory', namely king Chlothar and his sons.

4.4 Contemporary Kings: Chlothar

The presentation of Merovingian kings in Book IV establishes a narrative entrenched in chaos and disorder. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the first section of the book, covering the reign of Chlothar. Chlothar emerges from the *Histories* with a tarnished image due to his ruthless determination to acquire power and territory, whatever the cost. He achieved his goal, by becoming sole ruler of the Franks shortly before his death. While there is no doubt that survivability was a major factor, one only need look at his actions with regard to the kingdoms of his rivals, to see that Chlothar's role was far from passive. He began his campaign of acquisition with the cold-blooded murder of his nephews, the heirs to Chlodomer's kingdom. This he accomplished with the

⁴⁸⁴ *Hist.* III.6.

⁴⁸⁵ *Hist.* III.6.

⁴⁸⁶ *Hist.* IV.51.

⁴⁸⁷ *Hist.* II.31.

reluctant aid of Childebert, and Chlotild, who acted under duress.⁴⁸⁸ With this horrendous black mark against his character, Chlothar's ambitions led him to try to oust Theudebert from his newly acquired kingdom, again with Childebert's backing. Once his brother and accomplice died,⁴⁸⁹ Chlothar would take over his kingdom also, having already acquired that of Theudebald. For three years (558-561) Chlothar ruled alone, but Gregory makes no attempt to argue for a return to the unity he espoused under Clovis. Indeed the bishop does not even mention that Gaul was unified. Rather, the period passes in the glint of an eye, overshadowed by the events that led up to Childebert's death, and the revolt of Chlothar's son Chramn.

While Chlothar's actions are bad enough, it is the events that punctuate his reign that really deepen the atmosphere of a land divided and debauched, far from the path of God. This is no better illustrated than in the life of Chramn and the careers of the priests Cato and Cautinus.⁴⁹⁰ In fact Chlothar actually plays a near cameo role in Books III and IV, with few of the chapters dedicated to his actions. More often he plays a supporting role in proceedings, as in the dispute between Cato and Cautinus, where the king personifies authority. Strikingly his power is challenged by the episcopal feud, as will be detailed below.⁴⁹¹ Therefore the narratives that are depicted within the king's reign paint a more

⁴⁸⁸ *Hist.* III.18. Presented at the climax of the first half of Book III, this plays a part in darkening the image of Theuderic, as I will show below.

⁴⁸⁹ *Hist.* IV.20.

⁴⁹⁰ See chapter 5.

⁴⁹¹ See chapter 5.

vivid picture of Gregory's view of Chlothar than do those chapters focused upon his actions.

In order to highlight this, I will concentrate now on the rebellion of Chlothar's son, Chramn. Gregory portrays him in unambiguous terms, and appears primarily concerned with the nature of the advice given to him. His initial actions occur, significantly, in the first quartile chapter, thirteen. Sent to Clermont by his father, he was '*Multae enim causae tunc per eum inrationabiliter gerebantur, et ob hoc acceleratus est de mundo.*'⁴⁹² There are echoes here of the theme of bad advice given by women in Book III.⁴⁹³

*'Nullum autem hominem diligebat, a quo consilium bonum utilemque posit accipere, nisi collectis vilibus personis aetate iuvenele fluctuantibus, eosdem tantummodo diligebat, eorumque consilium audiens, ita ut filias senatorum, datis praeceptionibus, eisdem vi detrahi iuberet.'*⁴⁹⁴

Chramn is immediately painted as of weak character, easily influenced and perhaps inclined toward evil deeds. Ascovindus, an upstanding 'circumspect' citizen of Clermont, does his utmost, in vain, to counteract the bad advice of

⁴⁹² *Hist.* IV.13, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.144, 'extremely ill-advised in nearly everything he did, and his premature death was a direct result of this.' Thorpe, p.207. Aëtius was reputed to be 'never swayed in his judgement by the advice of unworthy counsellors.', *Hist.* II.8, quoting Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus.

⁴⁹³ See chapter 5, below.

⁴⁹⁴ *Hist.* IV.13, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.144. 'He loved no-one from whom he could get good and useful advice. Instead, he gathered round himself low characters in a youthful and restless stage of their lives. He only had affection for them and listened to their advice, even issuing directives allowing them to carry off daughters of senators by force.' Translation taken from A. Callander Murray, *Gregory of Tours. The Merovingians* (Toronto, 2006). This compares interestingly with Remigius of Reims' advice to Clovis. Remigius advises Clovis to temper the levity of young men with the counsel of their elders.

Leo, '*qui nominis sui tamquam leo erat in omni cupiditate saevissimus.*'⁴⁹⁵ Leo is struck deaf and dumb by the power of Ss. Martin and Martialis, whom he had insulted, and died a raging lunatic. Such is the fate of Chramn's most persuasive advisor, thus colouring the character of the prince as well.

Chramn moved on to Poitiers, where he once again succumbed to the whispers of his evil advisors and conspired with Childebert against his father.⁴⁹⁶ He then annexed part of Chlothar's kingdom, causing the king to send two of his other sons, Charibert and Guntram, to deal with the rebel. Chramn managed to trick his half-brothers into quitting the field and advanced to Dijon, where the clergy stopped him from entering the city. Whilst his cunning is portrayed in a manner reminiscent of Aëtius,⁴⁹⁷ the refusal of the clergy to admit Chramn to Dijon shows he lacked the grace of God. Travelling on to Paris he cemented his alliance with Childebert.⁴⁹⁸ When his uncle died, in 558, Chramn still proved to be untrustworthy, and fearing his father's judgement, fled to Brittany. With the support of a Breton Count Chanao, the son faced his father in battle, likened by Gregory to Absalom fighting David. Chramn was defeated and captured trying

⁴⁹⁵ *Hist.* IV.16, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, pp.147-8 'a man aptly named, for he raged like a lion as he strove to satisfy his every passion.' Thorpe, p.211.

⁴⁹⁶ *Hist.* IV.16.

⁴⁹⁷ In *Hist.* II.8 Aëtius tricked his allies out of the booty of battle by suggesting to their king that his father had died, and that he must return to his own lands in order to secure the succession. A similar ruse is pulled by Chramn, who tells his brothers that Chlothar had died.

⁴⁹⁸ *Hist.* IV.17.

to save his family. Chlothar ordered them all to be burnt alive;⁴⁹⁹ a year later to the day, he too died.⁵⁰⁰

Chramn clearly exemplified a disregard for secular authority, in the person of his father, Chlothar. He also stretched the bounds of respect for the Church, when he evicted Firminus from the sanctuary of the church of St. Julian.⁵⁰¹ This would mark the prince out as a heretic in Gregory's eyes.⁵⁰² In many ways Chramn can be seen as a model for the rebellious prince Merovech, to whom it has been suggested that the Preface to Book V was initially addressed.⁵⁰³ Gregory's text implies that he sees the same mistakes being committed time after time, throughout history.

Chramn's refusal of the good advice of Ascovindus echoes Sigibert and Charibert ignoring the advice of Germanus of Paris. Choosing instead the evil advice of Leo, a direct cause of his premature death,⁵⁰⁴ Chramn personifies the weak kings of Book III.⁵⁰⁵ The refusal of admittance to Dijon shows Chramn's lack of grace, to which his ultimate fall can be attributed. Lacking God's grace,

⁴⁹⁹ *Hist.* IV.20.

⁵⁰⁰ *Hist.* IV.21. For the similarity with the death of Valens at I.41 (interestingly very nearly the same point within Book I - at the end of the first half of its last quarter - as Chramn's death is within the four books of the 'Prehistory'), see chapter 2, above.

⁵⁰¹ *Hist.* IV.13.

⁵⁰² Heinzelmann, 'Heresy'.

⁵⁰³ Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V', p.313.

⁵⁰⁴ Gregory does not often predict the death of his characters, but here he clearly desires his readers to fully comprehend his message. Perhaps also it would not do to claim to foresee the death of a ruling monarch. What precedent would this set, and what charges of necromancy could then be levelled against the Bishop by his rivals?

⁵⁰⁵ See chapter 5, below.

he clearly also lacked divine backing for his rebellion against his father, as it went against the Lord's will,⁵⁰⁶ and as such was damned. In turn, Chlothar was unable to be reconciled with his rebellious son, and so cannot be said to possess divine authority either. The kingdom was united for only one year before he too would succumb to the will of the Lord. Chlothar, who had recently performed acts of penitence for his many sins before the tomb of St Martin, was brought low by a fever whilst out hunting. He would not recover, and died, crying out '*Wa! Quid potatis, qualis est illi rex caelestis, qui sic tam magnos regis interfecit?*'⁵⁰⁷ Gregory leaves no doubt that Chlothar had not been forgiven his sins, and that the Lord had seen fit to exact judgement, fittingly on the first anniversary of the death of Chramn. Indeed, the scene has been suggested to encapsulate one of Gregory's most important overall messages.⁵⁰⁸

The reign of Chlothar as depicted largely in Book IV conveys an atmosphere of greed and debauchery the likes of which we have yet to encounter within the pages of the *Histories*. The base for this portrait of the king begins in Book III. His second wife Radegund, taken as booty in Thuringia, turned to God and built the nunnery near Poitiers that would feature heavily in the narrative of Book IX. Gregory mentions her calling in the same breath as Chlothar's murder of her brother.⁵⁰⁹ One gains the impression that the two events were not necessarily unconnected. Chlothar's first wife, at least as far as Gregory informs us, was the

⁵⁰⁶ As interpreted by Gregory in the Preface to Book V.

⁵⁰⁷ *Hist.* IV.21, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.154. 'what kind of king in heaven is this who kills off such great kings in this way?'

⁵⁰⁸ Chlothar's death 'drew particular attention to the folly of earthly vanities': Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V', p.316.

⁵⁰⁹ *Hist.* III.7.

widow of his brother Chlodomer. This would not be the last time that he made advances towards a Merovingian widow.

Upon the death of Theudebald, son of Theudebert, Chlothar '*regnumque eius Chlothacharius rex accepit, copulans Vuldotradam, uxorem eius, stratui suo. Sed increpitusa sacerdotibus, reliquit eam, dans ei Garivaldum ducem*'.⁵¹⁰ This was shortly after his third wife, Ingund, had asked him to find a suitor for her sister Aregund. Never one to miss an opportunity, Chlothar sought out the very finest husband in the kingdom: himself!⁵¹¹ With such a fine exemplar for a father, it is not difficult to see how Chlothar's sons would largely fail to live up to the ideals of faithfulness within marriage, that Gregory had promoted in Book II. Just as Gregory does at this point, I shall now move on to the reigns of Chlothar's sons, with which the 'Prehistory' comes to a cataclysmic finale.

4.5 Marital Affairs

Gregory concentrates on the marital affairs of the Merovingian brothers in the central chapters of Book IV.25-28, thereby promoting the importance of the motif of probity in marriage, reiterating the message from Book II. Guntram's first wife Marcatrude, out of jealousy, poisoned his first son, by a mistress, Veneranda. Marcatrude then lost her own son, through divine vengeance. Guntram dismissed her, though it is not clear whether this was because of her

⁵¹⁰ *Hist. IV.9, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.141, 'obtained his kingdom and took his wife Wuldetrada to his bed. But Chlothar was criticized by the bishops and left her, giving her to Duke Garivald of Bavaria.'* Translation taken from A. Callander Murray, *The Merovingians*, p.50.

⁵¹¹ *Hist. IV.3.*

crime, the judgement of God, or the loss of her son. When she died, he took Austrechild as his wife, who gave him two sons, both of whom died in 577.⁵¹²

Guntram appears to have been unlucky in his choice of wives. One is reminded of the machinations of Sigismund's second wife in III.5.⁵¹³ Perhaps significantly Guntram's poisoned son shared his name with Sigismund's father, Gundobad.⁵¹⁴ While Guntram was unlucky, any wrongdoing is instigated by his evil wife, although it could be argued that Gregory disapproved of the practice of having heirs out of wedlock.⁵¹⁵ Perhaps we should see Marcatrude's actions as the judgement of God upon the loose-living Guntram, likewise the death of his later two sons at an early age. Whatever his sins, they pale next to those of Charibert who dominates the very centre chapter of Book IV.⁵¹⁶

Charibert can be said to be his father's son in every way.⁵¹⁷ Just as Chlothar had lusted after sisters, so too did Charibert. He fell in love with the servants of his

⁵¹² *Hist.* IV.25. Fredegar, *Chronicle* III.56, says it was because she was fat.

⁵¹³ See chapter 5, below.

⁵¹⁴ There are examples within the 'Prehistory' of Gregory deliberately using the repetition of names within a situation in which he is making an important point, for instance III.23 with the two Sigivalds. How far Gregory took his typological view is difficult to say. Certainly he did not believe that Chilperic's son Clovis was a match for his great-grandfather and namesake. Far from it in fact. However, it is possible that the author played around with scenarios, making a note of coincidence, and perhaps weaving it into synchronicity.

⁵¹⁵ This could help to explain Theuderic's presentation within Book III, and the almost throw-away description of his birth, compared to that of his own son Theudebert. All we know of Theuderic's mother is that she was a concubine of his father.

⁵¹⁶ Guntram is described at the very start of IV.25 as '*rex bonus*', which given my reading of events may represent what James and Goffart see as Gregory's irony, or may be an indication that this section of the book was completed during the reign of King Guntram. See also Halsall, 'Nero and Herod', for an interpretation of Gregory's view of Guntram that would tally with this.

wife, Ingund. Despite her vigorous attempts, she failed to halt her husband's extra-marital advances, and Charibert took one sister, Merofled, as his wife, in place of Ingund. He then married the second sister, Marcovefa. In between he had a son by a third queen, Theudechild, the daughter of a shepherd, but the boy died soon after birth. Not only had Charibert been profligate in his marital affairs, but also his choice of servants and a shepherdess as consorts would be judged harshly by Gregory.⁵¹⁸ Charibert's ill-conceived actions received their just reward when the king and Marcovefa were punished by God:

*'Pro qua causa a sancto Germano episcopo excommunicatus uterque est. Sed cum eam rex relinquere nollit, percussa iudicio Dei obiit. Ne multo post et ipse rex post eam decessit.'*⁵¹⁹

Charibert occupies the central chapter of Book IV because he offers a far worse example than his father Chlothar of the debauchery and excess that has plagued the Merovingians since the death of Clovis. It also allows Gregory to make comparisons with the remaining brothers. Thus, in the subsequent chapter, the first after the halfway point and so important from a chiasmic point of view, Gregory eulogises over the marriage of Sigibert and Brunhild.

⁵¹⁷ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.222, dubs the king a 'sensualist'. Ignoring the theme of divine vengeance, Goffart puts Charibert's death down to natural causes, *ibid.*, p.160.

⁵¹⁸ *Hist.* IV.27.

⁵¹⁹ *Hist.* IV.26, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.159. 'They were both excommunicated as a result by Saint Germanus the Bishop. The king refused to give up Marcovefa: but she was struck by the judgement of God and died. Not long afterwards the King died himself in his turn.' Thorpe, p.220.

*'Porro Sigyberthus rex cum videret, quod fratres eius indignas sibimet uxores acciperent et per vilitatem suam etiam ancillas in matrimonio sociarent, legationem in Hispaniam mittit et cum multis muneribus Brunichildem, Athanagilde regis filiam, petiit. Erat enim puella elegans opere, venusta aspectu, honesta moribus atque decora, prudens concilio et blanda colloquio.'*⁵²⁰

In this passage Gregory passes judgement on Charibert, and it would seem Guntram, for their low ambitions with regard to their marriage. In this way he praises Sigibert, his patron let us not forget, for having the clarity of mind to seek a queen of like standing. He was rewarded by God with a wife of exquisite beauty and manners. There is a feeling of expectation of the good deeds to come from this union. One cannot help but cast back to the blessed nature of the marriage of Clovis and Chlotild. Indeed, both queens appear to have been appropriated in a similar way.⁵²¹ Chlotild had died in the first chapter of Book IV, while Brunhild appears, in the first chapter of the second half of the book, in that chapter which possesses such importance in chiasmus. The final section of the 'Prehistory' is set, primed for the fall of Sigibert, just as the beginning of the four-book unit had begun with the Fall of Man.

⁵²⁰ *Hist. IV.27, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.160.* 'King Sigibert observed that his brothers were taking wives who were completely unworthy of them and were so far degrading themselves as to marry their own servants. He therefore sent messengers loaded with gifts to Spain and asked for the hand of Brunhild, daughter of King Athanagild. This young woman was elegant in all that she did, lovely to look at, chaste and decorous in her behaviour, wise in her generation and of good address.' Thorpe, p.221.

⁵²¹ *Hist II.28 (Chlothild); IV.27 (Brunhild).*

With the very next chapter any remaining positive feelings are dashed as Chilperic copies his brother Sigibert, and marries Brunhild's sister, Galswinth. Chilperic loved her very dearly due to the size of the dowry she brought with her.⁵²² However, this union was not to have such a happy outcome, as Chilperic was already married to Fredegund, whom he still loved. Galswinth badgered the king about this state of affairs until he had her garrotted in her bed. The murder of this woman, who was blessed by God, was marked with a miracle.⁵²³

Of the four brothers, only Sigibert comes out of this section with any credit. Guntram is betrayed by Marcatrude, but then falls from grace with his treatment of Theudechild through greed. Charibert is purely debauched and pays the price with excommunication and death. His tale is a replica of his father's.⁵²⁴ However, Charibert is excommunicated for his sins, and so makes a far better example of a wrongdoer. Gregory could have put the death of Chlothar at the centre of the book, however, in using Charibert, he can refer back to Chlothar, whilst also addressing the differences between the brothers through their marriages. In this way, disunity can be shown in the second half of the book, over three kingdoms, instead of the one under Chlothar. Chilperic is also

⁵²² *Hist.* IV.28, 'a quo etiam magno amore diligebatur. Detulerat enim secum magnos thesauros.'

⁵²³ *Hist.* IV.28.

⁵²⁴ Chlothar had taken Aregund, the sister of his queen, Ingund, as his wife. This came about, when Ingund asked him to find her sister a suitable husband. Considering himself to be the best suitor, Chlothar duly married his sister-in-law. Charibert was also to marry sisters, which would bring about his early demise, through the vengeance of the Lord. For Charibert failed to listen to the advice of Germanus, Bishop of Paris, the agent of God.

greedy, jealous of his brother Sigibert and debauched. Thus he is deprived, briefly, of his kingdom.⁵²⁵

Within this central section covering the marital relations of the Merovingians, Gregory highlights the sins upon which Clovis avenges the Lord, namely greed and debauchery. If one takes into account the very comportment of these kings, aloof in their disdain for the church and its morals, then pride can be added to that list. Gregory has placed these three sins at the heart of Book IV, mirroring the central chapters of the 'Prehistory' as a whole, namely II.40-42. The comparisons with Clovis are apparent for all to see. However, until now the full extent of the structural nature of Gregory's argument has been ignored.

With the death of Galswinth, Chilperic's brothers, suspicious of his complicity in the murder of the queen, chased him from his kingdom, temporarily. So continued the civil war that had begun as soon as Chlothar was laid to rest, as his four remaining sons, Chilperic, Sigibert, Guntram and Charibert began to fight over their father's realm. The conflict would continue throughout the remainder of Book IV. The division of Chlothar's kingdom echoes that of Clovis's, however there the similarities end. Gregory's contemporaries inherited a kingdom in upheaval, which would be exacerbated by division into four parts. This chapter of division set the pace for the second half of Book IV, and acts as a signpost for what is to come.

⁵²⁵ *Hist. IV.22.* Chilperic combines all the faults of a bad king. His depiction in Book IV differs dramatically from that in Books V and VI. This suggests a modification to Halsall's interpretation in 'Nero and Herod', which lumps Gregory's depiction of Chilperic in Book IV in with that in Books V and VI. Gregory's view of the king may have changed after their confrontation at the trial of Praetextatus of Rouen and the establishment of a '*modus vivendi*' (Halsall, 'Nero and Herod', p.347) between the two.

4.6 Civil War

Gregory continues the main themes of Book IV with detail that emphasises the depths to which the Merovingians have fallen, in his description of the civil war that brings the ‘Prehistory’ to a climax. The Huns invaded as Chlothar’s sons struggled to preserve equilibrium over the division of his kingdom. Sigibert defeated the invaders, whereon their king sued for peace and made overtures of friendship. Gregory recounts another Hunnic incursion, in which Sigibert is this time taken prisoner. However, he manages through cunning to bribe his way free. *‘idque ei magis ad laudem quam ad aliquid pertinere opproprium iusta ratione pensatur.’*⁵²⁶ Gregory appears defensive of his patron, perhaps implying that Sigibert had received some criticism for this action. This would seem to underline that ability at cunning and trickery was on Gregory’s ‘check-list’ for good kingship.

This was the first of several incursions into Frankish territory at a time when internal divisions would have sent a message to neighbouring states that here was a juicy morsel ripe for the taking. Without the grace of God, and the authority that went with it, the Merovingians were unable to retain control of their borders. Hence the Saxons invaded Gaul on a pillaging expedition. They were repelled through the deeds of the great general Mummolus.⁵²⁷ There

⁵²⁶ *Hist.* IV.29, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.162. ‘This was greatly to his credit, rather than something to be ashamed of.’ Thorpe, p.223.

⁵²⁷ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.161; Wynn, *Wars and Warriors*, both highlight the length to which Gregory elaborates on Mummolus’s origins. Goffart sees the bishop as painting a negative picture of the general’s early career, while Wynn argues that Gregory uses Frigieridus’s description of Aëtius utilised in Book II, as a template for this introduction of Mummolus. This, Wynn argues, is unusual, as Gregory usually omits any such background detail.

followed a Lombard incursion, which once again Mummolus put to the sword. It is perhaps telling that credit should go to one who was not a member of the Merovingian family, rather than, as in Book III, when the deeds of Buccelin were attributed to the reign of Theudebert.⁵²⁸ The remaining royal brothers were not worthy of such comparisons, or the glory that went with conquest.

4.7 The Beginning of the End

The beginning of the end game of Book IV and the ‘Prehistory’ as a whole comes in *Hist.* IV.47. Although the brothers have been feuding ever since their father died, ambitious as they were, up until now there had been a modicum of control about their actions. By and large their greed had been mitigated by the clergy. This is encapsulated in the tales of saintly acts that are interspersed within the early part of the brothers’ tale, from chapter twenty-two onwards. From this point on, the only mention of the clergy will be that their advice is ignored, or their property despoiled.

Hist. IV.47 begins with the start of a dispute between Sigibert and Guntram. The latter called a council of his bishops in Paris in an attempt at mediation, but the kings refused to listen to their advice, ‘*Sed ut bellum civili in maiore pernitate crescerit, eos audire, peccatis facientibus, distulerunt.*’⁵²⁹ Chilperic joined his brothers in their rage and sent his son Theudebert to invade Tours, Poitiers and other cities. In so doing Theudebert broke an oath to Sigibert,⁵³⁰

⁵²⁸ *Hist.* III.32.

⁵²⁹ *Hist.* IV.47, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.184. ‘and as a result of their sinful behaviour this civil war grew more and more bitter.’ Thorpe, p.244.

and acted in a manner totally at odds with that of his namesake, Theudebert I. ‘*Sed et de Toronicam regionem maximam partem incendit et, nisi ad tempus manus dedissent, totam continuo debellasset. Cum motu autem exercitu, Lemovicinum, Cadurcinum vel reliquas illarum propinquas pervadit, vasta, evertit; ecclesias incendit, ministeria detrahit, clericus interfecit, monastitia virorum deicit, puellarum deludit et cuncta devastat. Fuitque tempore illo peior in ecclesiis gemitus quam tempore persecutionis Diocliciani.*’⁵³¹

What could be clearer than that the Merovingians had fallen very far from the path of righteousness. They not only ignored the advice of the clergy, but actively plundered church possessions. Passions were inflamed by greed and the Frankish kingdoms were racing headlong into chaos. At this point Gregory foreshadows the message of the Preface to Book V. Barely able to believe his eyes Gregory recalls the piety of their ancestors in comparison to the plunder occurring all around him. ‘*Illi [parentes eorum] sacerdotes Domini ex toto corde venerati sunt et audierunt; isti non solum non audiunt, sed etiam persecuntur.*’⁵³² The monastery at Latte which housed relics of St. Martin was attacked, the monks slaughtered and the valuables ransacked. However all but

⁵³⁰ *Hist.* IV.23

⁵³¹ *Hist.* IV.47, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.184. ‘He...burned much of the district around Tours, and, if the inhabitants had not quickly surrendered he would have burnt it all. He continued to advance with his troops and invaded the Limousin, the district of Cahors and other territories near by, all of which he ravaged and sacked. He burned the churches, stole their vessels, killed the clergy, emptied the monasteries of monks, raped the nuns in their convents and caused devastation everywhere. There was even more weeping in the churches at this period than there had been at the time of Diocletian’s persecution.’ Thorpe, p.244.

⁵³² *Hist.* IV.48, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.184. ‘These people [their relatives] listened with all their heart to the Lord’s bishops and had great reverence for them; nowadays they not only do not listen, but they persecute instead.’

one of the protagonists was killed directly afterward; Martin and God were not to be slighted in such a way.

Events turn from bad to worse⁵³³ as Sigibert employed the wild tribes across the Rhine to assist his ambitions. It is significant that while advancing against his brother Chilperic, Sigibert could not find a ford across the river Seine. Clovis received divine aid in crossing the River Vienne, in the form of a huge doe. Mummolus too received such help crossing the River Isère. This illustrates that Sigibert had now totally stepped outside the boundaries of good kingship. God most definitely was not supportive of his actions. Civil war was not a good war. Unlike Mummolus who had fought against invaders and received God's blessing, both in victories and in the sign of a deer leading his men across a river, Sigibert was out on his own. He forced Guntram to help in his attack on Chilperic, and the latter sued for peace. Sigibert ordered his army to stop plundering the villages around Paris, but he could not control those from beyond the Rhine. He had no authority, because he had stumbled for the path of God and so would not be provided with the respect of his office, just as he had shown no respect to the bishops of the Council of Paris. It was St. Martin who eventually quelled the wild hordes, because he had the will of God behind him.⁵³⁴

A year later, Chilperic conspired with Guntram to depose Sigibert. However once again Sigibert raised men from beyond the Rhine, defeated and killed

⁵³³ Goffart, *Narrators*, pp.177-181 for a discussion of irony, and Gregory's use of the comparison of bad with worse.

⁵³⁴ *Hist.* IV.49. See also De Nie, *Views*, p.64.

Theudebert, whose body was despoiled, and made peace with Guntram. Chilperic took refuge in Tournai with his family: the situation was getting desperate and lightning flickering across the sky, just as it had before Chlothar's death.⁵³⁵ Sigibert was pushing hard and certain Franks were making it clear that they would abandon Chilperic if Sigibert advanced. Pressing on, and turning a deaf ear to the warning of St. Germanus that if he went with murder in his heart he would find only death: 'whoso diggeth a pit (for his brother) shall fall therein',⁵³⁶ Sigibert was assassinated whilst being raised on a shield to be elected king. So died Gregory's patron, the king who had elevated him to the throne of Tours, as the culmination of the chaos entrenched in Book IV.

4.8 Conclusion

In the preceding two chapters have shown how Gregory uses biblical and historical exemplars to define his parameters regarding what constituted a good or bad king. This was expanded within Book II within a 'Life' of Clovis, the foremost Merovingian king. His actions against those lost in sin resulted in the unification of the Frankish kingdom under a Catholic king. This had the approval and backing of God. This was also to be the highlight of Merovingian rule, as Clovis's descendants were shown to succumb to the same vices that had brought low the enemies of their famous ancestor. This culminates in the death of Gregory's patron, Sigibert, probably the impetus for the writing of the *Histories*. In the following chapter I shall expand upon the theme of kingship, by detailing the events that concern other ranks in society, in particular the

⁵³⁵ *Hist.* IV. 50-1.

⁵³⁶ Proverbs 26, 27 Gregory of Tours added the section in parentheses.

clergy and royal women. It will be shown that there is a synchronous relationship between the nature of events thus recorded in a king's reign, and the actions of the king himself.

Chapter 5: The Effects of Kingship on Society: Clergy and Women

Gregory does not concentrate solely on the lives of kings in the *Histories*, a fact highlighted by the debate over the title 'History of the Franks'. He expends a great deal of effort detailing the lives of the clergy, aristocracy and other elements of society. In this chapter, however, I will look only at the clergy and at royal women, using Gregory's scheme as highlighted above. It will become clear that his depictions of clergy and high status women in particular play a vital role in the image of society and its relationship with the king. It will become clear that the relationship between leaders and led as depicted in the 'Prehistory' is structured synchronically. That is to say that when there are bad kings in charge, faults are usually to be found among the clergy and the role of women in politics becomes seriously deleterious to the kingdom. A king must control his kingdom.

5.1 Book I

The degree to which Book I should be seen as a key to the reading of the 'Prehistory'⁵³⁷ is further enhanced when we consider the presentation of the clergy therein. Before the advent of kingship within the Hebrew nation it was the clergy, in the form of spiritual leaders and prophets such as Noah, Abraham and Moses who led society and undertook the moral education of the people. Though leading by example they were, time and again, unable to keep their followers from straying from the path of God. While the depictions of these great men of the Bible are positive, their long-term, or even short-term influence is not. Noah's grandson Chus was the inventor of magic and idolatry.

⁵³⁷ See above, chapter 2.

Abraham's grandson, Edom, forsook his birthright out of greed; at Joshua's death the people gave themselves to idolatry.⁵³⁸ These figures stand-alone: there is no mention of the deeds of the Israelites under their rule, only a record of the aftermath. There is no feeling that the times of good leaders were synchronous with times of good behaviour by their people. Only from the point where the Hebrews request a king from the Lord is there such a relationship between a king and his people, defined by their relationship with God.

I have shown that the second quarter of Book I relates to (or prefigures) Book II, and that both are concerned primarily with the birth and nature of kingship. Gregory leaves his examples of synchronicity for Book II, and these deal heavily with the role of legitimacy, both in religion and in monarchy. In the second quarter of Book I however the only *spiritual* leader to receive any space is Christ himself. The vast majority of the material in this section is concerned with kingly figures.

This changes completely with the advent of the second half of Book I. As noted previously, the third quarter of the book is concerned primarily with the persecution of the early church. The Apostles Peter and Paul are martyred in Rome. Their saintly personas bear comparison with the evil deeds of Nero, who dies by '*propria se manum interfecit*'⁵³⁹ and the necromancer Simon Magus.⁵⁴⁰ The persecution of the Apostles sets the scene for the next quarter of Book I.

⁵³⁸ Chus, *Hist.* I.5; Edom, *Hist.* I.8; Joshua, *Hist.* I.12.

⁵³⁹ *Hist.* I.25, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.20 'his own hand'. Thorpe, p.84

⁵⁴⁰ *Hist.* I.25.

James the Just, Mark the Evangelist and Stephen the Levite are martyred, while Domitian carried on Nero's 'rage' against the Christians.⁵⁴¹ Trajan continued the evil deeds, and SS Clement, Simeon and Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch suffered for their faith.⁵⁴² St Polycarp was incinerated at a time when heresies prospered.⁵⁴³

Gregory reintroduces the theme of Gallic Christianity with a record of the martyrdom of Photinus, his successor St Irenaeus, and Vettius Epagatus, the author's remote ancestor.⁵⁴⁴ *Sub Decio vero imperatore multa bella adversum nomen christianum exoriuntur, et tanta stragis de credentibus fuit, ut nec numerari quaeant.*⁵⁴⁵ nevertheless, Gregory tries. At this point he records seven bishops sent to convert Gaul, most of whom, as would be expected, were martyred.

This entire quarter is crammed full of the names of those who fell during these early days of persecution. The emperors responsible for the deeds are almost indistinguishable from each other, so little information is provided. Their appearance serves merely to provide a timeline for the narrative, just as had

⁵⁴¹ *Hist.* I.26.

⁵⁴² *Hist.* I.27.

⁵⁴³ *Hist.* I.28.

⁵⁴⁴ *Hist.* I.29.

⁵⁴⁵ *Hist.* I.30, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.22 'Under Decius a long series of wars was waged against those who bore the name of Christians, and such slaughter was made among the believers that it is not possible to list those who died' Thorpe, p.86, modified.

been the case from the very advent of the empire, within the pages of Gregory's *opus* at least.⁵⁴⁶

The tone is lightened somewhat when Gregory retells a story of charity and piety in the face of persecution, unsurprisingly concerning another of his ancestors.⁵⁴⁷ The respite from unremitting violence does not last however, and Gregory continues the tale of persecution under Valerianus and Gallienus. By way of digression we are also informed of the Alammanic invasion of Gaul, under Chroc, a proud '*nonnulla inique gessisset*' possibly driven on by his '*matris iniquae*'.⁵⁴⁸ Further persecution is recounted, some at the hands of Chroc, who was killed in Arles, '*non inmerito poenas, quas sanctis Dei intulerat, luens*'.⁵⁴⁹ The violence reaches a crescendo with the persecution under Diocletian, where '*magni christianorum populi ob veri Dei cultum interficerentur*'.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁶ See for example *Hist.* I.18 for the depiction of Julius Caesar '*imperator primus*' and Augustus, following on directly from a reference to Servus, the 'King of the Romans' in *Hist.* I.17.

⁵⁴⁷ *Hist.* I.31.

⁵⁴⁸ *Hist.* I.32, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.25 'perpetrator of a long series of crimes', 'wicked mother'. This serves as a signpost to the coming discussion of the weakness of kings who listen to the bad advice of their women-folk. Thorpe, p.89

⁵⁴⁹ *Hist.* I.34, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.26. 'paying the penalty which he deserved for the sufferings which he had inflicted on God's elect'. Thorpe, p.90

⁵⁵⁰ *Hist.* I.35, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.26, 'great multitudes of Christians were slaughtered because of their worship of the true God.' Gregory will refer back to this event in the finale of Book IV. *Hist.* IV.47, under the persecutions of Theudebert, son of Chilperic, 'there was even more weeping in the churches in this period than there had been at the time of Diocletian's persecution.' '*Fuitque tempore illo peior in ecclesiis gemitus quam tempore persecutionis Diocliciani.*'

In a catalogue of terror Gregory has retold the painful early years of the Church, within the third quarter of Book I. With the advent of Constantine I,⁵⁵¹ peace is restored, the True Cross is discovered and St Martin is born. This chapter clearly marks a major change in the fortunes of the Church and a new direction for the *Histories*. Just as the chaos in the early chapters ceased under the presentation of David in *Hist.* I.12, so the persecution ends in *Hist.* I.36, under the auspices of Constantine. In this manner Gregory uses the quartile chapters to great effect, structuring his work to a hitherto unrecognised degree.

Following on from the change of fortune signposted in I.36, this final quarter of the book has an air of celebration. James of Nisibis provides salvation for his town through prayer; Maximinus of Trier '*potens in omnia sanctitate repperitur.*'⁵⁵² Hilary of Poitiers is recalled from exile⁵⁵³ and

'novisque lampadum radiis Gallia perlustratur, hoc est eo tempore beatissimus Martinus in Gallias praedicare exorsus est, qui Christum, Dei filium, per multa miracula verum Deum in populis declarans, gentilium incredulitatem avertit.'

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⁵⁵¹ *Hist.* I.36.

⁵⁵² *Hist.* I.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.27 'had great influence because of his saintliness', Thorpe, p.91

⁵⁵³ Hilary was exiled by Constantius II in 365, for his anti-Arian outbursts.

⁵⁵⁴ *Hist.* I.39, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.27. 'Gaul became bright with new rays coming from its lamps, for this is the moment when Saint Martin began to preach in this country. By his many miracles he overcame the disbelief of the Gentiles and made it clear to the people that Christ, the Son of God, is Himself the true God.' Thorpe, pp.91-2.

Further, Theodosius, an emperor who ‘*omnen spem suam atque fidutiam in Dei misericordiam ponit; qui multas gentes non tam gladio quam vigiliis et oratione conpescuit*’⁵⁵⁵ and defeated the tyrant Maximus, with the help of St Martin.⁵⁵⁶

Bishop Urbicus of Clermont was tempted by the Devil to have intercourse with his wife, but was truly penitent upon returning to his senses.⁵⁵⁷ The daughter who was the seed of this union herself became a religious. St Illidius became bishop of Clermont after Urbicus’s successor Legonus. ‘*vir eximiae sanctitatis ac praeclarae virtutis*’.⁵⁵⁸ Further inspirational tales of the next bishops of Clermont follow.⁵⁵⁹ The tale of the chaste lovers, who forsook all earthly vices for the love of Christ,⁵⁶⁰ precedes the final chapter, in which Gregory details the

⁵⁵⁵ *Hist.* I.42, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.28, ‘put all his hope and trust in the mercy of God...held many peoples in check, more by vigils and prayer than by the sword’. Thorpe, p.92. Goffart, *Narrators*, p.217, refers to Theodosius as ‘Gregory’s closest approximation of a Roman hero’. *Ibid.* pp.221-2, Theodosius is ‘far more exemplary than Constantine’, both in Orosius and Gregory. Theodosius’s appearance in chapters 42 and 43, midway between chapters 36 and 48, in the last quarter of Book I, may illustrate even more attention to structural detail on the part of Gregory, and a desire to intensify the presentation of events towards the end of the book. As noted earlier, Theodosius occupies the position in Book I (half way through its fourth quarter) that is occupied by Sigibert and his brothers in the four-book structure. In this way the end of Book I acts as a very pointed contrast with the end of Books I-IV as a whole, immersed as that section is in warfare and a lack of prayer.

⁵⁵⁶ *Hist.* I.43.

⁵⁵⁷ *Hist.* I.44.

⁵⁵⁸ *Hist.* I.45, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.29 ‘He was a man of such remarkable holiness and impeccable virtue’. Thorpe, p.94.

⁵⁵⁹ Saint Nepotianus cures an envoy to Spain, Arthemius, of a high fever. This Arthemius then forsakes ‘his earthly spouse and his private fortune’ to become the next bishop of Clermont. One wonders to what extent this foretells other stories of Spanish envoys to Gaul, such as the Arians Agila and Oppila, with whom Gregory engages in religious disputes, in an attempt, no doubt, to cure them as Arthemius was cured by Nepotianus. See *Hist.* V.43 (Agila) and VI.40 (Oppila). For a discussion on the relations between the Franks and Spain see James, *The Franks*, pp.92-3.

⁵⁶⁰ *Hist.* I.47.

passing away of St Martin and the subsequent quarrel over possession of his remains.⁵⁶¹

Throughout this final quarter of Book I pious Christians are upheld as worthy exemplars of success. This quarter is bracketed by St Martin, who is born in *Hist.* I.36 and dies in *Hist.* I.48. As the pre-eminent saint in Gaul, and the patron saint of Tours, Gregory's diocese, Martin was painted as a powerful figure within the *Histories*. The events of his life, as depicted in Book I bare witness to this. He was born under auspicious circumstances: Constantine was in power and the True Cross was rediscovered.⁵⁶² Martin, upon starting to preach in Gaul, '*Hic enim fana destruxit, heresem oppraessit, ecclesias aedificavit et, cum aliis multis virtutibus refulgeret, ad consummandum laudes suae titulum tres mortuos vitae restituit.*'⁵⁶³ Later he would visit the tyrant Maximus, and possibly have a hand in his defeat at the hands of Theodosius.⁵⁶⁴ At his death, this holy man, performer of many good deeds for the sick and numerous miracles, was so highly regarded by the population around Tours that two cities, Tours and Poitiers, fought for his remains.⁵⁶⁵ These events, however, pale into insignificance with the saint's posthumous actions, which litter the entire *Histories*.

⁵⁶¹ *Hist.* I.48.

⁵⁶² *Hist.* I.36.

⁵⁶³ *Hist.* I.39. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.27, 'destroyed pagan temples, suppressed heresy, built churches and earned great renown for many miracles, crowning his claim to fame by restoring three dead men to life.' Thorpe, p.92.

⁵⁶⁴ *Hist.* I.43.

⁵⁶⁵ *Hist.* I.48.

5.2 Book II

The audience is reminded that St Martin held the favour of God in the first chapter of Book II. Here the taunts of his successor, Bricius, are met with the prophecy that the latter would endure hardship during his time as bishop. Duly, Bricius is falsely accused of adultery by the people of Tours, and must flee to Rome. At the crux of this argument is the lack of respect shown to Martin by Bricius. Martin is shown to be in the right by the punishment that is handed out to Bricius, by God. The message here is that one should respect authority, especially that descending directly from God. I have shown how Clovis's life is a lesson in authority and respect. These events, at either end of Book II, personified by Martin and Clovis, bracket the book and clearly demarcate its leitmotif: legitimacy. Indeed, the two figures 'meet', before the Battle of Vouillé, when Clovis sends his men to seek a sign, at the church of St Martin, showing that God approved of the king's actions and supported him in the battle to come. The signal is duly delivered.⁵⁶⁶ Further references to Martin within the 'Prehistory' will be shown to support the image of the king within whose reign the anecdote lies.

So we see that Gregory uses such figures as the clergy to define the image of a time and place, namely Gaul at the time of the coming of the Franks, i.e. Book II. This image is further enhanced by the presence of Arian Vandals, depicted solely as persecutors of the Catholic faithful. In the face of this hounding, Gregory first draws a picture of the resistance put up by a true daughter of

⁵⁶⁶ *Hist.* II.37. 'As [the messengers] entered the church, it happened that the precentor was just beginning to intone this antiphon: 'For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies: that I might destroy them that hate me.' Psalms 18, 39-40. See also above, chapter 3.

Christ: an aristocratic woman from Spain who withstood the numerous tortures to which she was subjected.⁵⁶⁷ Next Gregory relates the tale of Bishop Eugenius of Carthage, who bests the charlatan Arian bishop Cyrola in the performance of miracles. Cyrola had attempted to falsify his miracle, but was found out, and the legitimacy of Eugenius and the Catholic faith was proved for all to see.⁵⁶⁸

Upon returning to the subject of Gaul, Gregory makes it clear that the country is in chaos. In a three-chapter vignette the bishop paints the sorry tale of the Hunnic invasion of Gaul, through the pleas of various churchmen to God. Bishop Aravatus⁵⁶⁹ of Tongres, ‘*eximia sanctitatis*’⁵⁷⁰ in his ways, prayed at the tomb of the Apostle in Rome for the salvation of Gaul, but to no avail. He was informed that it was the *peccatum populi*⁵⁷¹ that had brought this plague upon them. In effect Gregory is portraying the fate of Gaul under the flood of invaders in the language of the Bible. The Huns are to be seen as the Flood, punishing the iniquity of mankind. Here the spiritual leaders and their flock are at odds, just as we see in the first quarter of Book I. This is repeated in Book II at a time when there was no Frankish king to unite the people under Catholic rule. In this way, Clovis will be likened to David and the Franks to the Israelites.

⁵⁶⁷ *Hist.* II.2.

⁵⁶⁸ *Hist.* II.3. Gregory uses, and reproduces, documentary evidence in this chapter, namely a letter written by Eugenius to his flock on the matter of his exile to Albi, where no doubt, Gregory had become aware of its existence. In this way the author follows the example of Eusebius.

⁵⁶⁹ This should be Servatius and is an error on Gregory’s part, see N. Gauthier, *L’Évangélisation des Pays de la Moselle. La Province Romaine de Première Belgique entre Antiquité et Moyen-Âge (IIIe-VIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1980), pp.140-1.

⁵⁷⁰ *Hist.* II.5, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.46, ‘extremely saintly’.

⁵⁷¹ *Hist.* II.6: *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.47 ‘sins of the people’.

The picture of a land at odds with God is reiterated in the following chapter, where St Stephen the Levite is seen to be begging the Apostles to spare his oratory in Metz from the flames of the plundering Huns.⁵⁷² His cries are heard, but the town was burned, due once again to *'peccatum populi'*.⁵⁷³ Only when the populace as a whole repents of its sins, personified by the townspeople of Orleans, does God send them succour, in the person of Aëtius.

Following a section already dealt with above, in which Gregory details the origin of kingship among the Franks, and details favourable traits in a good king through the personal description of Aëtius, once again the author settles down to consider the role of the clergy in pre-Clovis Gaul. He uses Clermont as his subject, due presumably to the body of material available through family connections. We are told that there is a dispute over the succession following the death of Venerandus, Bishop of Clermont. A woman confronted the conclave of electing bishops, *'mulier quaedam velata atque devota Deo'*. They were informed that none of the candidates were suitable, but that God had chosen another. As the priest Rusticus entered, the woman cried *'En ipsum quem elegit Dominus.'*⁵⁷⁴ The people immediately forgot their dispute and hailed Rusticus as the new bishop. The woman had seen Rusticus in a vision, and so should clearly be seen as an agent of God, sent to proclaim the will of the

⁵⁷² G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995), p.230, for a discussion of these events.

⁵⁷³ *Hist. II.6, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.47..*

⁵⁷⁴ *Hist. II.13, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.63.* 'wearing a veil over her head to mark the fact that she was a true servant of God'. 'That is the man whom the Lord elects!' Thorpe, p.129, 130.

Lord. Alone the people of Clermont and their clergy could not decide upon a worthy successor. Only through indirect intervention from God could a consensus be reached. Only through God could the legitimacy of the successor be established.

Gregory returns to the subject of St Martin, by detailing the grand church built in his honour by Bishop Perpetuus of Tours. The author points out that if both Martin's feast-days were observed correctly then one would receive the protection of the saintly Bishop '*in praesenti saeculo et in futuro*'.⁵⁷⁵ Almost as an aside, Gregory mentions that the roof of the original, smaller, church dedicated to Martin had been so beautiful, that Perpetuus decided to reuse it. He therefore placed it on a church dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul. Of course this church was therefore smaller than that dedicated to Martin. In this way Gregory promotes Martin above the Apostles in the saintly hierarchy. In so doing, he also promotes his own standing, and that of other Bishops of Tours. In order to further enhance the saint's image, mention is made of the marble lid to be found over his tomb, sent by Bishop Eufronius of Autun, in '*grande devotione*'.⁵⁷⁶ The fame of St Martin had reached the edge of Burgundy.

This more-or-less self contained section on the clergy is rounded off in much the way it started, through the device of a devout woman, in this case the wife of Namatius, Bishop of Clermont. She sponsored the church of St Stephen outside the city walls, and was rewarded with the wisdom to accept charity from

⁵⁷⁵ *Hist. II.14 MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.64* 'in this world and the next.' Thorpe, p.130.

⁵⁷⁶ *Hist. II.15, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.64*, 'great devotion'.

one poorer than herself.⁵⁷⁷ Two devout women bracket this discourse on legitimacy and authority within the church, and are themselves bracketed by King Childeric, Clovis's father. Gregory's manipulation of material and framework is revealed once again.

Kings and clergy are alternated as Gregory returns to his moral teaching, through the counterpoint of Count Victorious and Bishop Eparchius. The former is stoned for debauchery, while the latter resists the temptations of the Devil himself, in adjoining chapters. The theme of sexual probity for political legitimacy is once again highlighted.⁵⁷⁸

This all leads to the central chapter of the book, concerned with the wisdom and sanctity of Sidonius Apollinaris. Gregory had great respect for this man, as can be deduced from his preface to a collection of Sidonius's masses.⁵⁷⁹ The more important chapter for my discussion here is that which follows the crux of Book II, a position that in chiasmus holds great weight. Here Sidonius is attacked by two of his clergy. One is likened to Arius, and dies in a similar manner, whilst the other is the image of Simon Magus. He too dies, '*ab excelsa arce superbiae praeceps allideretur.*'⁵⁸⁰ That Sidonius survives this coup is a testament to his

⁵⁷⁷ *Hist.* II.17.

⁵⁷⁸ Victorious, *Hist.* II.20; Eparchius, *Hist.* II.21.

⁵⁷⁹ This does not survive.

⁵⁸⁰ *Hist.* II.23, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.69 'dashed headlong from the summit of his pride.' Thorpe, p.137.

legitimacy, supported by the will of God.⁵⁸¹ Indeed Gregory alludes to his being restored to authority.⁵⁸²

If we consider the depiction of women and clergy within the reign of Clovis, we will see that the synchronous thesis holds true. Clovis maintains respect for the church, bizarrely even in the act of plundering it. This is reflected in the relationship of church to state. The bishop of the church plundered in the first chapter of Gregory's depiction of the king's life, asks for an important ewer to be returned. Clovis considers this, even whilst a pagan. However, before he can return the treasure, it is split asunder by one of his men. Much chagrined, Clovis later splits the man's skull in retribution. Even before his baptism Clovis is thus shown as God's avenger.

The positive relationship between the king and the Catholic clergy continues with his baptism, in which Chlotild also plays a key role.⁵⁸³ All visible sections of society are seen to be acting in harmony. This is further explained with the deference shown to St Martin by Clovis in the lead-up to the battle of Vouillé. It will therefore come as no surprise that the king is victorious in his conquests; church and state are one, legitimate and focused.

⁵⁸¹ Gregory suffered a similar attack, as described in V.49. The placing of this chapter concerning Sidonius, and the weight Gregory place son the theme of legitimacy, suggests that this section of the 'Prehistory' may well have been completed sometime after Gregory was himself accused.

⁵⁸² *Hist. II.23, 'potestati'.*

⁵⁸³ Chlothild's role here continues the theme of the importance of women in helping to make important decisions; where the king is good, and maintains control of himself and his kingdom, as in Clovis' case, their influence will be positive.

5.3 Book III

The anecdotal evidence concerning the clergy in Book III plays an important role in supporting the image of the two main protagonists, namely kings Theuderic and Theudebert. At the start of the book, we are presented with the story of Apollinaris, candidate for the bishopric of Clermont.⁵⁸⁴ He gained his goal by bribing king Theuderic, but would not last long in the position, dying after only four months. This scene will be dealt with in greater detail below, as it involves the intervention of ambitious women. However, for the purpose of this argument, it needs to be noted that Apollinaris is presented in a way that displays no favourable virtues, merely naked ambition, of a weak individual, driven on by those around him. This serves to weaken the position of the king. For not only is this presentation enacted during his half of the book, but by being intrinsically involved in the election of Apollinaris, Theuderic is implicated in his sudden demise. Surely God would not look favourably on a king whose choice of bishop should die after such a brief time in office.

The remainder of the first half of Book III is crammed with political intrigue, revolving around the wars in Burgundy and Thuringia. This leaves Gregory little time to discuss ecclesiastical matters. When he does, it all appears rather rushed. For example, his record of the succession in Tours, covers six bishops in quick succession, the only highlight being that the last, Francilio was poisoned. The remainder get at best a line.

⁵⁸⁴ *Hist.* III.2.

However, Gregory reserves the central chapter for a eulogy of his great-grandfather Gregory of Langres. He was ‘famed far and wide for his miracles and virtuous deeds.’ This is in stark contrast to the events that had so far unfolded in Book III, and so provides a clear counterpoint to the division and disappointment evident in the beginning and end chapters.

Within the second half of Book III, the main example of clerical affairs involves Theudebert himself, and as such has already been covered above. However, it can be repeated here that his dealings with the church were very much to Gregory’s liking, and so it can also be said that clerical affairs met the approval of God.

5.4 Book IV

Within Book III Gregory utilises another section of Merovingian society, its high-status women, as the foil to his depiction of kingship, which shall be dealt with below. For further evidence of the synchronous nature of Gregory’s narrative, we should look towards Book IV. As the bleakest of the four books, it is little surprise that there should be a multitude of material with which to darken the depiction of the Merovingian kings. Chlothar’s reign as presented in Book IV has already been assessed. However, there is a great deal of material available in the first section of the book that is not directly concerned with the king. Book IV is the most detailed of the ‘Prehistory’, no doubt due to the contemporary nature of events. Therefore, it is a more testing exercise to see if the synchronous depiction of events as described above should continue.

5.5 Episcopal Division: Cato and Cautinus

Within the section of Book IV that covers Chlothar's reign, Gregory expends a great deal of time recounting the Episcopal feud between the priests Cato and Cautinus, for two reasons. First, the rivalry concerns the see of Clermont, a familiar town to Gregory, and a focus for his writing throughout the *Histories*.⁵⁸⁵ Second, the infighting displays the collapse of Episcopal unity, as a motif for the break up of society under the rule of Chlothar.⁵⁸⁶ The escalation of enmity will evoke parallels with the growing civil war that brings Book IV to a climax.

The priest Cato gained the support of the bishops at the funeral of St. Gall, the previous bishop of Clermont. They saw that he had the popular vote on his side, and offered to provide protection should members of the court of king Theudebald wish to interfere. However, Cato suffered from the sin of pride; he told the bishops that he did not need their help, and proclaimed that he would be inducted as bishop in the proper canonical way. He had after all served the church in all ranks for the appropriate term. He asked '*Quid enim mihi nunc restat, nisi ut episcopatum, quem fidelis servitus promeretur, accipiam?*'⁵⁸⁷ The bishops left, '*eum vanam gloriam exsecrantes*'.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.193, 'Clermont holds an astonishing place in books I-III.' Its prominence has, for Goffart, implications for the nature of Gregory's audience, p.194.

⁵⁸⁶ The lack of unity within Chlothar's reign would explain why Gregory makes no mention of the unification of the kingdom under his reign after the deaths of Childebert and Chramn. The three-year period from Childebert's death to that of Chlothar is covered in one chapter, concerned with Chramn's rebellion.

⁵⁸⁷ *Hist.* IV.6, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.139. 'What is left but that I should be ordained bishop as the reward for my faithful service?' Thorpe, p.201.

⁵⁸⁸ *Hist.* IV.6, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.139, 'cursing Cato's pride'.

Cato was duly elected bishop, with the support of all his clergy. However, even before he was inducted he overstepped his authority, therefore failing in his responsibilities, and threatened the Archdeacon, Cautinus, who fled to the court of King Theudebald. There he announced the death of St. Gall, and was elected bishop of Clermont by the king and his advisors. This should be seen as Cato's punishment for overstepping the mark, abusing the authority that had hitherto been provided by God, and so showing no responsibility toward his charges within the church. '*Grandis postea inter ipsum et Catonem presbiterum inimicitiae ortae sunt, quia nullus unquam potuit flectere Catonem, ut spiscopo suo subditus esset.*'⁵⁸⁹ The church in Clermont was split⁵⁹⁰ between support for the two, and Cautinus deprived Cato and his proponents of all church benefits, until they returned to the fold.

Cautinus then proposed, with the presumed agreement of the king,⁵⁹¹ that Cato should be given the bishopric of Tours. However, Cato kept the deputation waiting before, vainglorious as ever,⁵⁹² he declined the offer, apparently because Chlothar's rebellious son, Chramn, had promised him the throne of Clermont on the old king's death. '*Sed qui cathedram beati Martini contemptui habuit, quam voluit non accepit.*'⁵⁹³ Arriving at court at the same time that Chlothar was made aware of his refusal of the episcopate of Tours, Cato asked the king to remove

⁵⁸⁹ *Hist. IV.7, MGH.SRM. 1.1, pp.139-40* 'There ensued a great feud between [Cautinus] and the priest Cato, for no one could ever persuade Cato to submit to his bishop.' Thorpe, p. 202.

⁵⁹⁰ *Hist. IV.7, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.140, 'divisio clericorum'*.

⁵⁹¹ By now this was Chlothar, who had taken over the kingdom of Theudebald on the latter's death.

⁵⁹² *Hist. IV.11, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.142, 'vanae gloriae'*.

⁵⁹³ *Hist. IV.11, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p. 142. Psalms 108, 18, '[T]he man who had despised the throne of St. Martin was not, however, elevated to the one which he wanted'*. Thorpe, p.204.

Cautinus from his post, to the king's obvious amusement.⁵⁹⁴ Cato then asked for the throne of Tours instead, but was confused to find the king now un-amenable. *'Cui rex ait: "Ego primum praecipere, ut Turonus te ad episcopatum consecrarent, sed quantum audio, despectui habuisti ecclesiam illam; ideoque elongaveris a dominatione eius.'*

⁵⁹⁵ I suggest that Chlothar here acts as a tool for the vengeance of St Martin, for the slur accorded to Tours by Cato's refusal to take up the post initially. Likewise, as the tool of divine vengeance, the king punishes Cato further for his abuse of authority.

In his arrogance Cato bribed a woman to cry out his own splendour, and Cautinus's crimes, in the throws of a faked possession.⁵⁹⁶ The audience would be reminded of the heretical Cyrola, who had bribed an accomplice to fake a miracle cure for blindness.⁵⁹⁷ Gregory regarded rebellion against authority as heresy, as we have already seen.⁵⁹⁸ Therefore, at this stage, Cato, unwilling to accept the authority of Cautinus, and also spurning the chance to become bishop of Tours, epitomised a proud heretic, far from God's grace, tearing the unity of the church asunder.

⁵⁹⁴ *Hist.* IV.15, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.147, 'rege inredente'.

⁵⁹⁵ *Hist.* IV.15, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.147. "My original decision was that they should consecrate you Bishop of Tours,' said the King, 'but now that I have learnt that you have refused that diocese you must give up all hope of ever being appointed to it.' Thorpe, p.210.

⁵⁹⁶ *Hist.* IV.11

⁵⁹⁷ *Hist.* II.3

⁵⁹⁸ See for example the case of Sidonius Apollinaris in *Hist.* II.23.

However it became clear that Cautinus could match Cato in terms of vice. Up until this point the incumbent bishop was presented as the innocent victim in the whole affair. The audience soon learns that as soon as he became bishop, Cautinus turned heavily to debauchery and greed. He had one priest buried alive for failing to turn over his land. The priest escaped and told an astonished Chlothar what had occurred, whereupon Cautinus was likened to Nero and Herod.⁵⁹⁹ Gregory finishes this character assassination with a quip that Cautinus was easily flattered, predominantly by the Jews with which he consorted to buy precious goods.⁶⁰⁰

The fate of the two antagonists was sealed during the plague that hit Clermont, possibly in 571:

*‘Tunc et Cato presbiter mortuos est. Nam cum de hac lue multi fugissent, ille tamen populum sepeliens et missas viritim dicens, numquam ab eo loco discessit. His autem presbiter multae humanitatis et satis delictur pauperum fuit; et credo, haec causa ei, si quid superbiae habuit, medicamentum fuit. Cautinus autem episcopus cum diversa loca, hanc cladem timens, circuisset, ad civitatem regressus est; et haec incurrens, parasciven passiones dominicae obiit.’*⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ *Hist.* IV.12, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.143, ‘numquam vel Neronem vel Herodem tale facinus perpetrasset, ut homo vivens sepulchro reconderetur.’

⁶⁰⁰ *Hist.* IV.12. For Gregory’s views on the Jews see for example his depiction of their conversion by Avitus, Bishop of Clermont (*Hist.* V.11) and the author’s own discussions with a Jew named Priscus (*Hist.* VI.5).

⁶⁰¹ *Hist.* IV.31, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.166. ‘It was then that the priest Cato died. Many fled from the plague, but Cato never moved from the city of Clermont, burying the dead and with great courage continuing to say Mass. This priest was a person of great humanity and devoted to the poor. He was a proud man it was true, but what he did at this moment excused everything.’

Just as Chlotild had been forgiven her fall from grace in aiding the murder of her grandsons,⁶⁰² for the good works that she did in later life,⁶⁰³ so Cato is forgiven his earlier rebellion and pride as he tends the victims of plague.

This tale serves four purposes. First, through the infighting in the Church, it highlights the lack of order in Chlothar's reign. There is a lack of respect for Episcopal authority that mirrors the tale of Chramn and his disrespect for the secular authority of his father. Indeed, Cato is seen to be indirectly involved in Chramn's machinations, and so is irreverent towards secular authority also. Gregory intersects the two storylines in the first 'quartile' chapter: thirteen. These two episodes are used to make it perfectly clear that society under Chlothar has strayed from the path of God. This is because the king does not possess legitimate divine authority, due to his sinful actions already described. He is king because he is a Merovingian, which was essential in the political world. In Gregory's view, however, God did not bless his reign, for he lived in an impious and debauched fashion. Therefore God denied him supreme authority and so his kingdom was in chaos. His own sins were reflected in those of society.

Bishop Cautinus, on the contrary, hurried from town to town to avoid the plague, but in the end he returned to Clermont, caught the infection and died on Good Friday' Thorpe, p.226.

⁶⁰² *Hist.* III.18

⁶⁰³ *Hist.* IV.1. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.135. '*Igitur Chrodigildis regina, plena dierum bonisque operibus praedita*',

Second, the feud between Cato and Cautinus highlights the tensions to be found at a time of episcopal succession. In particular Gregory brings to light the problems caused by royal, as opposed to canonical, appointment of a bishop. This has great significance, as Gregory himself had been appointed to his post by Sigibert and was, like Cautinus and Sidonius Apollinaris, a victim of rebellion from within the ranks of his clergy.⁶⁰⁴

Third, Gregory once again focuses on the sins of pride, greed and debauchery as unbecoming of a man of God. A king, by his very position as moral exemplar for his people, should be by default a man of God. Hence there is no room for vices in his public or private life. Chlothar's vices are reflected in society, in the persons of Chramn, Cato and Cautinus.

Fourth, the escalating feud between the priests parallels that of Chlothar's sons in the climax to Book IV. If the world were already turned upside down by such behaviour within Episcopal circles, the excesses of the Merovingian brothers would need little introduction.

⁶⁰⁴ The placing of the feud of Cato and Cautinus and its description of the disrespect for Episcopal authority might suggest that this section of Book IV was at least revised after Gregory's trial at Berny-Rivière, where Gregory himself was under a similar attack from his underlings. Gregory manipulated the structure of the end of Book V to enhance the significance of his trial and especially his quelling of the revolt by his clergy: Halsall, 'Nero and Herod', pp.340-1. Alternatively, Gregory might still have been working on Books I-IV in the time surrounding his trial, if Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V', p.312, is correct in his suggestion that *Hist. V.Praef* was the first element composed and that Gregory worked on Books I-IV at the same time as composing the earlier parts of his history of *gesta praesentia*.

5.6 The Role of High Status Women in Book III

I have already shown how Gregory has manipulated Book III to emphasise the failings of Theuderic compared to the successes of his father and son.⁶⁰⁵ Here I will show how the author presents a certain motif, deployed as background information, to emphasise the portrayal of each king in his respective half of the book. The motif in question is the depiction of high-status women, and their affect on the men they attempt to manipulate. I will show that depictions of king and women are synchronous and that the latter are used to colour the image of the former. Society will be seen to reflect the virtues or vices of the incumbent king.

Almost at the very start of the book (III.2) we encounter our first pair of influential and ambitious women, deeply involved in political manoeuvring. Apollinaris's wife, Alchima, and his sister, Placidina, persuaded Quintianus to let Apollinaris have the bishopric of Clermont, as Quintianus had already been appointed to the see of Rodez. When Quintianus claimed there was nothing he could do to influence the decision, the women sent Apollinaris to King Theuderic with gifts to buy the title of Bishop of Clermont from him. However, Apollinaris only lasted four months and Quintianus took over, with Theuderic's blessing.

Here Apollinaris's female relatives are shown to be involved in politics and are, at first, successful. However this does not last, as Apollinaris dies early, implying, in the eyes of Gregory of Tours, that he was not favoured by God, a

⁶⁰⁵ See chapter 4, above.

major dent in his political aspirations, according to the author. Quintianus however, appears as a latter day Hilary, mentioned in the Preface to Book III,⁶⁰⁶ being returned to his diocese after exile. This would imply that Quintianus was favoured by God, as was Hilary, and he certainly has Gregory's approval. Though these women act directly in their dealing with Quintianus, they are a mere catalyst within the tale itself, as it is to Theuderic that Apollinaris must go in order to succeed and it is by God that he must be found worthy. The bishop's short career reflects badly upon Theuderic's piety, and sows the seeds of doubt regarding the king's authority.

5.6.1 Amalaberg

In III.4, Gregory presents the first of a trilogy of chapters all concerned with the effects of ambitious and powerful, women. The first deals with the '*iniqua atque crudelis*'⁶⁰⁷ Amalaberg. The narrative concerns the battle for control of Thuringia. Of three brothers one, Berthar, was killed by Hermanfrid, Amalaberg's husband. Hermanfrid seemed content with his lot, but not so his wife who, through mockery, incited him to action:

'Hermenefrede vero uxoriniquia atque crudelis Amalaberga nomen inter hos fraters bellum civile dissiminat. Nam veniens quadam die ad convivium vir eius mensam mediam opertam repperit. Cumque uxori, quid sibi hoc

⁶⁰⁶ *Hist.* III. Pref.

⁶⁰⁷ *Hist.* III.4. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.100, 'wicked and cruel'.

vellit, interrogaret, respondit: Qui inquit, a medio regno spoliatur, decet eum mensae medium habere nudatum.'⁶⁰⁸

*'Talibus et his similibus ille permotus'*⁶⁰⁹ Hermanfrid made war on his surviving brother, Baderic. Hermanfrid asked Theuderic for help in return for half of Baderic's kingdom. However, the deed being swiftly accomplished,⁶¹⁰ *'Protenus Hermenefredus oblitus fidei suae.'*⁶¹¹ He then ruled the entire Thuringian kingdom, but owed a measure of his recent success to the ambition of his wife. So Amalaberg appeared to have been successful, just as had the women in Clermont. She had conquered her brothers-in-law through control of her husband.⁶¹²

The repercussions of Amalaberg's actions come in chapter seven, where Theuderic, angry at being made to look a fool by Hermanfrid,⁶¹³ led the Franks in the conquest of Thuringia. Theuderic then met with Hermanfrid, and while

⁶⁰⁸ *Hist. III.4. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.100.* 'Amalaberg, the wife of Hermanfrid, was a wicked and cruel woman: it was she who sowed the seeds of civil war between the two remaining brothers. One day when her husband came in to have a meal, he found only half the table laid. When he asked Amalaberg what she meant by this, she answered: 'A king who is deprived of half his kingdom deserves to find half his table bare.' Thorpe, p.164

⁶⁰⁹ *Hist. III.4. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.100* 'Roused by this and by other similar things which Amalaberg did'. Thorpe, p.164

⁶¹⁰ *Hist. III.4. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.100.* 'Confligentisque cum Baderico, exercitum eius adterunt ipsumque obruncant gladio.'

⁶¹¹ *Hist. III.4. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.100* 'Hermanfrid broke his word without more ado. Thorpe, p.164

⁶¹² N. Gradowicz-Pancer, 'De-gendering female violence: Merovingian female honour as an 'exchange of violence' *EME 11:1* (2002): 1-18 sees the use of a proxy to carry out one's aims as commonplace in Merovingian times, and female violence as 'a quest for accumulation of power, wealth and social precedence.' p,18.

⁶¹³ *Hist. III.7. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.104.* 'Nunc autem Herminefredus quod mihi pollicitus est fefellit et omnino haec adimplere dissimulat.'

the two kings chatted on the city walls of Zülpich *a nescio quo impulsus, de altitudine muri ad terram corruit ibique spiritum exalavit.*?⁶¹⁴ Thus, Hermanfrid's death, and the conquest of the Thuringian kingdom can both be linked back directly to the ambition of Amalaberg. Her initial success had turned to dust.

As in the anecdote concerning Apollinaris⁶¹⁵ we have a situation where the ambition of women is seen to be driving their men to greater heights. In the first case this promotion did not last, and was probably seen by Gregory as a judgment by God. In this case we have to wait for retribution, but it is inevitable. It would appear that feminine ambition, enacted through control of less ambitious men, leads to failure.

5.6.2 The Burgundian Affair

The next two chapters (*Hist.* III.5 and III.6) are concerned with the events surrounding the Burgundian succession, and subsequent invasion by the Franks. Though not making an appearance until *Hist.* III.6 Chlotild was a prime mover in the events surrounding the fate of Burgundy. She was Burgundian by birth; her father Chilperic was killed by his brother Gundobad, father of Sigismund, the main protagonist in *Hist.* III.5. It would appear that the killing of Sigeric by his father in *Hist.* III.5 is a mirror to the events in *Hist.* II.40. As I have discussed this comparison above, here I wish to concentrate on the role of Sigismund's wife in the events.

⁶¹⁴ *Hist.* III.8. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.106 '... 'somebody accidentally gave Hermanfrid a push and he...died'. Thorpe, p.169.

⁶¹⁵ *Hist.* III.2.

We are not given her name, either unknown by Gregory, or deemed unimportant, but it is she who instigates the crime. There is a suggestion that she was one of the servants of Sigismund's first wife; Sigeric is said to have berated her for wearing clothes that '*quae dominiae tuae, id est matre meae*'⁶¹⁶ Falling out with her stepson, she accused him of plotting against his father. The father listened and '*His et huiusmodi ille incitatus verbis, uxoris iniquae consilium utens...*'⁶¹⁷ This is uncannily similar to the way in which Amalaberg plots against Hermanfrid's brother: 'Roused by this and by other similar things which Amalaberg did.' So in two adjacent chapters we have instances of queens plotting against royal relatives, for which Gregory appears to use very similar imagery. Therefore the implication is that the two chapters are connected.

Sigismund listened to his wife, killed his son and then immediately regretted his action. Too late the words of admonition of an old man, surely here playing the role of the agent of God, were ignored, but '*ultione divina de vestigio prosequente.*'⁶¹⁸ Once again, the queen's actions came to nothing, as both she and her husband were killed, after being captured by Chlodomer.⁶¹⁹ This happened at the instigation of another queen, Chlotild, who incited her sons to attack Burgundy:

⁶¹⁶ *Hist. III.5, MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.101* 'belonged to your mistress, my own mother! Thorpe, p.165. This implication that the Burgundian heretics were involved with women of a lesser status will draw comparisons with the marital relations of the Merovingian kings in Book IV. 25-28.

⁶¹⁷ *Hist. III.5. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.101* 'was roused by his wife's words and by a lot of similar allegations which she made.' Thorpe, p.165.

⁶¹⁸ *Hist. III.5. MGH.SRM. 1.1, p.101* 'the vengeance of God followed fast on his heels.' Thorpe, p.166

⁶¹⁹ *Hist III.6.*

*‘Chrodechildis vero regina Chlodomerem vel reliquos filius suos adloquitur, dicens: ‘Non mre paeneteat, carissimi, vos dulciter enutrisse; indignate, quaeso, iniuriam meam et patris matrisque meae mortem sagaci studio vindecate.’*⁶²⁰

The events in *Hist.* III.6 have been seen as a blood feud,⁶²¹ with Chlotild gaining revenge for the murder of her parents by her uncle,⁶²² but is that really the story here? Chlodomer acted as Chlotild’s avenging angel, capturing Sigismund and family, killing them and throwing them down a well. He then went on to victory at Vézeronce, but at the very moment of victory he was killed by the trickery of the enemy.⁶²³

Chlodomer’s death implies that it was fine to carry out deeds of war when they were justified by the will of God. Clovis killed Ragnachar because of his debauchery,⁶²⁴ and being under the aegis of God he was successful. Chlodomer was destroyed at the very pinnacle of his short career, because, acting in the interests of his mother rather than God, he failed to heed the advice of Avitus, Abbot of St. Mesmin-de-Micy, the agent of God:

⁶²⁰*Hist.* III.6. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, pp.101-2. ‘Queen Chlotild arranged a meeting with Chlodomer and her other sons. ‘My dear children,’ said she, ‘do not give me cause to regret the fact that I have brought you up with such care. You must surely resent the wrong which has been done to me. You must do all in your power to avenge the death of my mother and father.’ Thorpe, p.166

⁶²¹ S. White, ‘Clotild’s Revenge: Politics, Kinship, and Ideology in the Merovingian Blood Feud’ in S.K. Cohn, Jr. and S. A. Epstein (eds.) *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy* (Michigan, 1996), pp. 107-130 at p. 109; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, ‘The Bloodfeud of the Franks’ in his *The Long-Haired Kings* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 121-147, at p. 131.

⁶²² *Hist.* II.28.

⁶²³ *Hist.* III.6.

⁶²⁴ *Hist.* II.42.

*'Si...respiciens Deum, emendaveris consilium tuum, ut hos homines interfici non patiaris, erit Deus tecum, et abiens victuriam obtenibis; si vero eos occideris, tu ipse in manibus inimicorum traditus, simili sorte peribis; fietque tibi uxorique et filiis tuis, quod feceris Sigimundo et coniugi ac liberis eius.'*⁶²⁵

This passage encapsulates Gregory's message regarding war; it can be justified, but only when the cause is righteous, according to the rules laid down by an actively interventionist God.⁶²⁶ By showing respect for God, Chlodomer would have received the authority to wage war, and would have succeeded. As it was, he instead fought for a cause that was without authority. Chlotild, as a vengeful queen, filled with pride, did not have the blessing of God, and so neither did her campaign, led by Chlodomer, hence his fall.

In order to highlight the comparison between Clovis and Chlodomer a similar motif is used in two important battles but with widely differing results. At the Battle of Vouillé Clovis narrowly escaped death, *'Sed auxilio tam luricae quam velocis equi, ne periret, exemptus est.'*⁶²⁷ whereas the swiftness of

⁶²⁵ *Hist.* III.6. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.102. 'If you change your plans and show respect to God by refusing to have these men killed, the Lord will be with you and you will go forth to victory. On the other hand, if you do kill them, you will fall into the hands of your enemies and you will suffer a fate similar to theirs. Whatever you do to Sigismund and his wife and children, the same will be done to your children and your wife and you yourself. Thorpe, p.166. Similarities can be drawn with the actions of Sigibert in IV.51.

⁶²⁶ B. Reynolds, 'The Beatific and the Bestial: Gregory of Tours' Perspectives on War' (PhD diss., Kentucky University, 1980), p.15. Parallels can be drawn with the warning given to Sigibert by Germanus of Paris in IV.51.

⁶²⁷ *Hist.* II.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.88 'it was his chain mail which saved him and the sheer speed of his horse'. Thorpe, p.154.

Chlodomer's steed only led him away from his troops into the ranks of the enemy. In this way, Chlodomer's short career can be seen as a mirror of that of Clovis. Impetuous and deaf to the advice of God, speaking through Avitus, Chlodomer rode to his death, instigated by the alleged wounded pride of his mother. Clovis on the other hand, won the most important battle of his career, through the favour of God.

To complete the punishment, as foretold by Avitus, Chlodomer's sons were killed by his brothers, Childebert and Chlothar.⁶²⁸ Again this happens through the pride of Chlotild, the very woman who sent their father to his death, on a false errand. Chlothar and Childebert, being alarmed at the attention Chlotild was paying to Chlodomer's sons, gave her the option of letting the boys have their hair cut off, or their heads. Chlotild, betrayed by her pride, chose the latter, and Chlodomer's family were wiped out, except for a third brother who devoted his life to God, and was therefore saved.

In each of these last three examples, all within the first section of Book III, the plotting of influential women has caused the death of kings. Amalaberg brings down destruction on her husband Hermanfrid. Sigismund's wife destabilizes the Burgundian royal family. Chlotild destroys that family, but in her pride brings about the death of her son Chlodomer and grandsons. In each case the plotting has backfired and their associate has died. These actions and consequences are no coincidence.

⁶²⁸ *Hist.* III.18.

Gregory is reiterating that those who do not listen to His agents are not favoured by God and will not prosper. Sins such as greed and pride will avail no one. Non-believers, indicated by their failure to listen to the agents of God, will lose everything. Even those led astray by false causes will not be spared. Through their vices and sins the three kings affected here are tempted, each by a different woman. The Fall of Man continues; nothing has changed since the time of Adam. Through this temptation they stray from the path of the righteous, as portrayed by the agents of God: Avitus and the old man, and so their doom is sealed.

Intrigue and machination have coloured the start of Book III, and with it the depiction of the king at its focal point: Theuderic. By describing in such terms the political events surrounding the king, Gregory casts doubt on his authority, by likening him to those kings who listen to the bad advice of ambitious women, who are devoid of authority and the grace of God, as seen by their ultimate failure. The synchronous nature of Merovingian society is illuminated.

It appears that these queens, and other women of high status, are acting somewhat in the manner of Clovis in Book II: as a catalyst. I have already shown how Clovis appears in certain chapters of Book II as a vehicle for the downfall of his enemies through their own pride, greed and debauchery.⁶²⁹ In this manner Clovis achieves dominance of the Franks, the epitome of a people united under their first Catholic king. That unity is provided by a strong king, who is also acting under the protection, and with the favour, of God. So piety,

⁶²⁹ Above, section 3.5.

chastity and strength bond the people together. His strength is shown by his success in battle combined with his cunning trickery. Though the plotting women at first would seem to be successful in both these ways, by proxy, through their men folk, in the end their plans come to naught. The outcome is invariably failure.

Surely Gregory is making a point here about the decline in Merovingian strength brought about through weak kingship, a trait Gregory could well have espied in his contemporaries.⁶³⁰ Those kings mentioned above were pushed around by their queens, who used their vices against them, just as Clovis had done in Book II with Chloderic.⁶³¹ Hermanfrid is destroyed by his pride and greed, Sigismund by his fear and Chlodomer by his failure to listen to the agent of the Lord. Each king is destroyed by the ambitions of a queen. So here we see the queens acting in the same way as Clovis, as instruments of downfall. However, it was their own downfall, as well as that of their men, that resulted from their plotting, for they did not have the grace of God, for they were not, in the main, Franks. Those that *were* Franks are shown to be weak kings, who met a sticky end, bullied by their queen, i.e. Chlotild.⁶³² For they, like Chlodomer, are not cunning and wise in the face of trickery and are easily lost to their greed and pride. Thus the main role of the women in Book III is to show the weakness of their respective kings. That there is a motif here is shown by the proximity of the chapters concerning these acts. They form a mini book in their own right,

⁶³⁰ Wood, 'The secret histories of Gregory of Tours', p.263.

⁶³¹ *Hist.* II.40.

⁶³² Chlotild, now a widow, plays the role of 'first lady' to her sons.

from III.4 - III.6. By extension, as these events are placed within the half of Book III dedicated to his reign, Theuderic is tarred with the image of weakness. This is the nature of synchronous reportage.

In *Hist.* II.40, Clovis persuades Chloderic to kill his father, Sigibert the Lamé, in order that Clovis can eventually take over the kingdom of the Franks of Cologne through the aegis of the Lord.⁶³³ This is mirrored by *Hist.* III.5, where father kills son before the entire family is destroyed through the vengeance of God. This serves to reinforce the idea that the influence of queens should be seen as a perversion of the proper course of events. Sigismund's queen becomes involved and the world is turned upside down. Nothing good can come of this, and things are seen to get worse as Chlotild adds her considerable influence to the situation in *Hist.* III.6, complicating a series of events already out of control, and leading to the deaths of two royal families. Just as the chapters are mirrors, so are the main protagonists, and Sigismund's queen is a mirror of Clovis. As Clovis acted as a catalyst for the downfall of his rivals,⁶³⁴ destroyed by their various sins, so Sigismund's queen has acted as catalyst to the fear and weakness of her husband, so bringing about the death of her rival, Sigeric. The message here is that queens should not be trusted; their agendas are not valid, as they seek ambition for its own sake, and solely for their own benefit, rather than that of the Frankish people as a whole, that we see as the result of Clovis's scheming. Advice or cunning that is sanctioned by God will result in success; otherwise one will be rewarded with failure.

⁶³³ *Hist.* II.40, '...for he walked before Him with an upright heart and did what was pleasing in His sight.'

⁶³⁴ Above, section 3.5.

Gregory has depicted weak kings influenced by ambitious women, in repeated examples of failure. This helps to reinforce the general feeling in the first half of Book III that events are getting out of hand, due to the weakness of Merovingian leadership. In particular, as the main focus of that part of the book, Theuderic becomes tarred with the same brush as those who suffered for their weakness. As Clovis's oldest son, he should be taking the lead in Frankish politics, but as we have seen, he was no match for his father or son.⁶³⁵

Chlotild is the only queen to transcend Book III, perhaps because she is the one queen who is actually successful in her plotting; she helps convert Clovis to Catholicism.⁶³⁶ In this she is fulfilling the will of God. Chlotild, due to her piety and the successful conversion of her husband, comes off very well from the narrative in Book II. She is obviously an important player in the conversion of the Franks as a whole, as they would follow Clovis's lead, and indeed we see that the minor leaders of the Franks do just that.⁶³⁷ How then is it that she is seen to have sunk to such a state at the centre of Book III, in chapter eighteen, where her pride condemns her grandsons to death. Is this merely a case of her getting beyond herself? As the embodiment of Christian piety and evangelism she has been built up by Gregory, and so is in a position to be brought back down, in order to once again fit his agenda. Pride indeed comes before a fall, as

⁶³⁵ Above, sections 4.1-4.3

⁶³⁶ C. Nolte, 'Gender and Conversion in the Merovingian Era' in J. Muldoon (ed.) *Varieties of religious Conversion in the Middle Ages* (Florida, 1997), pp. 81-99 at p. 93.

⁶³⁷ *Hist.* II.31.

Gregory was only too aware, having been thrown from his horse following his vainglory and pride.⁶³⁸

Having committed the sin of pride (*Hist.* III.6 and 18) Chlotild is surely punished by the loss of her son and grandsons; in both cases she is at fault. Both actions occur during the reign of Theuderic, further cementing the theme of decline within the first half of Book III. Indeed the dramatic circumstances of chapter eighteen form the culmination of the first half narrative. Being concerned with the division of the kingdom, as Childebert and Chlothar fear that Chlotild will back Chlodomer's sons' claim to their father's lands, now split between the uncles, *Hist.* III.18 repeats the theme of *Hist.* III.1, which deals with Clovis's death and the division of his kingdom. Just as a book's theme can be repeated in the first and last chapters,⁶³⁹ so too does Gregory use this device at the terminal chapters of a particular narrative. So division and decline are emphasised in chapter eighteen, at the end of the narrative concerning the reign of Theuderic.

However, after a suitable pause, and, not coincidentally, happening once Theudebert has gained the throne, Chlotild has presumably felt remorse for her actions, received a divine pardon, and hence succeeds in preventing civil war between the Merovingians.⁶⁴⁰ *Quod nullus ambigat, hanc per obtentum reginae*

⁶³⁸ *GM*

⁶³⁹ Heinzlmann, *History and Society*, p.136.

⁶⁴⁰ The prevention of civil war was crucial to Gregory, see *Praef. V, passim*.

*beati Martini fuisse virtutem.*⁶⁴¹ Thus she is forgiven and can be buried in Paris ‘*plena dierum bonisque operibus praedita.*’⁶⁴² This series of events serves Gregory’s purpose, for in order for sinners to have an incentive to change, there must be a possibility of redemption and forgiveness, reflecting a theme of the Preface to Book I.⁶⁴³ In addition, by recording these events within the narrative of the two contrasting reigns of Book III, those of Theuderic and Theudebert, Gregory highlights the redemption of Chlotild, and the Merovingian line, under the latter.

However, the depiction of Theudebert is not entirely without its black marks. The king’s relationship with a mistress, Deuteria receives censure by the Franks, much in the same way as had Childeric in Book II. Deuteria’s evil deeds, such as the killing of her own daughter, end in Theudebert deserting her for another woman. This does not seem to affect Gregory’s vision of the king, determined as it is by his relationship with the church. Theudebert’s line would be extinct by the time Gregory became bishop of Tours. There was therefore nothing to be gained by belabouring the legitimacy or otherwise of his marital relations.

Gregory’s use of background detail that synchronises with the main theme of Theuderic’s reign does not stop with the attentions of the women discussed above. The king’s intervention in the Auvergne in order to assuage his

⁶⁴¹ *Hist.* III.28. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.125. ‘None can doubt that this miracle was wrought by Saint Martin through the intercession of the Queen.’ Thorpe, p.186.

⁶⁴² *Hist.* IV.1. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.135 ‘full of days and rich in good works,’

⁶⁴³ *Hist. Praef.* I. *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.3 ‘*quia scio, peccatis obnoxium per credulitatem puram obtinere posse veniam apud Deum*’.

potentially revolting troops by suppressing this apparently rebellious region adds fuel to the fire of the chaos of Theuderic's reign.⁶⁴⁴ The implication is that God did not favour Theuderic, as he appears belittled by the depictions of his father and son. His lack of authority is highlighted by the deeds of the ambitious women, the weakness of the kings so abused, and the rebellion to be witnessed in his kingdom and retinue. This is in marked contrast to the reign of Theudebert, where little occurs that could be construed as damaging in such a way. Indeed, as mentioned, Chlotild's redemption occurs under his watch, so enhancing both their images. Comparisons with Theuderic serve to heighten the contrast between good and bad kingship.

The warring brothers had strayed from the path of God due to their lust for material gain. Their greed was reflected in all aspects of society. Thirty monks dug into the ruins of the fallen fortress at Tauredunum, destroyed in a landslide.⁶⁴⁵ *'Quod dum agerent, mugitum montes, ut prius fuerat, audierunt. Sed dum a saeva cupiditate retenerentur, pars illa quae nondum deruerat super eos cecidit, quos operuit atque interfecit, nec ultra inventi sunt.'*⁶⁴⁶ The monks

⁶⁴⁴ One must remember that Gregory only reports the machinations of one man, Arcadius, as responsible for the insurrection that brought such harsh reprisals. There is no evidence that the whole region was up in arms.

⁶⁴⁵ Marius of Avenches, *Chronicle* 563, also mentions the landslide at Tauredunum, but not the greed of the monks. T. Mommsen (ed.) *MGH AA 11* (Berlin, 1894), pp.225-39 ; Callander Murray (trans.), *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, pp.101-108

⁶⁴⁶ *Hist. IV.31, MGH.SRM. 1.1*, p.164. 'While they were busy at their task, they once more heard the bellowing of the mountain. So strong was their lust for gain that they took no notice: and a part of the hillside which had not previously collapsed now fell on top of them.' Thorpe, p.226.

paid the ultimate price for their greed.⁶⁴⁷ A similar fate would befall two Merovingian kings.⁶⁴⁸ In another example of sinful behaviour, Andarchius is burnt alive for his greed in stealing the possessions of another by fraud.⁶⁴⁹

As we have seen, all is not well within the higher echelons of Merovingian society, reflecting the state of affairs at the highest level. This synchronicity continues as the tension between the kings and their bishops is reflected in the third quartile chapter, *Hist.* IV.39, where Gregory reports the feud between Count Palladius and Bishop Parthenius of Javols. Both men accused the other of various charges before the king. However, God took vengeance on the Count, who, with the help of the Devil, took his own life with his sword.⁶⁵⁰

In a lengthy digression, Gregory provides material on the merits of the church, as a counterpoint to the woes of society so far described. The blessed priest Julian restored sight to the blind and cured the possessed. He died in the same plague that took Cato and Cautinus.⁶⁵¹ A monk protected the harvest from a rainstorm through prayer, and was beaten lest he become proud of his actions.⁶⁵² Avitus becomes bishop of Clermont and Gregory pleads that he should '*iniquam*

⁶⁴⁷ Goffart, *Narrators*, p.189, the monks should have heeded the warning of God, 'if the *miseri* persist in their blindness and crimes, it is not for lack of admonition.' Here lies a symptom of greed and deafness to the truth of the path of God that we witness in Gregory's contemporary kings.

⁶⁴⁸ Charibert and Sigibert.

⁶⁴⁹ *Hist.* IV.44.

⁶⁵⁰ *Hist.* IV.39.

⁶⁵¹ *Hist.* IV.32

⁶⁵² *Hist.* IV.34.

*in omnibus extirpans luxuriam, iustam Dei inserit castitatem.*⁶⁵³ St Friard is commemorated for being ‘*sanctitate egregious, actione sublimes, vita nobilis*’.⁶⁵⁴ At the same time St Nicetius of Lyon died, a man ‘*vir totius sanctitatis egregious, castae conversationis.*’⁶⁵⁵ He was also Gregory’s great-uncle. The main motifs remain prominent throughout: piety, chastity and humility.

Finally, the abbot of the monastery in which Julian the priest had lived, is rebuked in a vision for his lax use of authority. He saw a river of fire in which men were plunging ‘like so many bees entering a hive.’ A bridge spanned the river leading to a large white house on the opposite bank. Asking what was occurring the abbot was told: ‘*De hoc enim ponte praecipitabitur, qui ad dstringendum commissum gregem fuerit repertus ignavus; qui vero strenuous fuerit, sine periculo transit et inducitur laetus in domum quam conspicias ultra.*’

⁶⁵⁶ The abbot awoke and was thereafter more severe with his monks. With this story Gregory warns both royalty and clergy about the dangers of abusing one’s authority, by not fully taking up the responsibilities involved in possessing that authority.

⁶⁵³ *Hist.* IV.35, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.168, ‘reform all those given to loose-living and turn them towards that chastity which God ordains!’ Thorpe, p.230.

⁶⁵⁴ *Hist.* IV.37, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.169, ‘admirable in all that he did and noble in his conduct.’ Thorpe, pp.232-3.

⁶⁵⁵ *Hist.* IV.36, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.168, ‘remarkable for his saintliness and chaste in his behaviour.’ Thorpe, p.230.

⁶⁵⁶ *Hist.* IV.33, *MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.166, ‘From this bridge will be hurled anyone who is discovered to have been lacking in authority over those committed to his charge...Anyone who has kept good discipline may cross without danger and will be welcomed joyfully in the house you see opposite.’ Thorpe, p.228.

5.7 Conclusion

Through the use of synchronic evidence, Gregory highlights both the leitmotifs of each book, and the image of the kings within that book. In Book I we see that the experiences of the prophets and clergy reflect the major issues of kingship, persecution and celebration. Book II highlights legitimacy and again kingship. Book III utilises the role of high-status women to illuminate the lack of authority to be found within the reign of Theuderic, and the redemption of Chlotild reflects favourably on Theudebert. In Book IV, the feud over the see of Clermont reflects the division between Chlothar and his son, and provide a neat emphasis for the lack of unity within that king's reign, even though he was sole king of the Franks for a year or so.

This level of manipulation leaves little doubt that Gregory carefully constructed his narrative for the illumination of his agenda. The authority derived from God must be responsibly managed. If this is achieved, society will be at peace, as shown by the actions of such ranks as the clergy and the aristocracy. However, when the king is at odds with God, then fractures in society abound, clergy feud and aristocrats fight both secular and religious authority. This culminates in the civil war that brings Book IV and the 'Prehistory' to an end.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis originated as a development of the idea, proposed by Guy Halsall, that the Preface to Book V was constructed within a careful chiasmic framework.⁶⁵⁷ I noted that many of the issues raised within the preface, proposed as the first chapter of the *Histories* to be written, were to be found within the preceding four books. A glimmer of a framework, also along chiasmic lines, suggested that the four books that constitute the ‘Prehistory’ were an expansion of the concerns expressed in the preface. Combined with the retrospective nature of the remaining prefaces, suggesting such a course for that of Book V also, it became clear that a careful study of the structure and agenda of Books I-IV was necessary to underline the degree to which Gregory had manipulated his material. His purpose was to expand upon the concerns addressed in the Preface to Book V. The extent of Gregory’s manipulation of his sources, and the precision with which they were pieced together in order to support his denouncement of his contemporary kings, to be found within the Preface to Book V, would add to the body of evidence suggesting that the bishop was a far more accomplished writer than earlier scholarship had stated. It will also prove that the *Histories* is a far more focused work than had previously been suspected.

6.1 The Framework: Cardinal Chapters

During the course of my research it quickly became evident that there was a detailed and solid framework to Books I-IV. The material in each book had been manipulated in order that chapters placed at strategic divisions within the

⁶⁵⁷ Halsall ‘The Preface to Book V’, *passim*.

book carried the leitmotif of that book.⁶⁵⁸ For example, in Book I the cardinal chapters present the figures of Adam, David, Christ, Constantine and Martin.⁶⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly the focus of the book is the development of Christian history from the Creation to the death of St Martin. Adam as the first man, and first sinner, sets the tone for Gregory's view of mankind, which quickly commits 'one execrable crime after another'.⁶⁶⁰ David appears as a strong man, the first effective king of the Hebrews, and thus a role model for Clovis and, through him, Gregory's contemporary Merovingian kings. The role of kingship as a force for steering the people on the path of God is central to the 'Prehistory'.

Christ was central to Gregory's beliefs and to Book I. He does not overpower the book however, merely bringing the first half to a close. Gregory then launches on the depiction of the early years of the church, for his agenda is more concerned with the everyday workings of his faith through the agents of God than Christ alone. In Constantine Gregory portrays the end of persecution of the church. By placing the birth of Martin in the same chapter, Gregory highlights the dependence of kings on the will of the Lord, and brackets the final quarter of the book, one filled with a mood of celebration, with his own patron saint.

⁶⁵⁸ Heinzelmann introduced this idea, but only as it pertained to a selective reading of beginning, middle and end chapters.

⁶⁵⁹ Chapters 1, 12-13, 24, 36 and 48.

⁶⁶⁰ *Hist.* I.3.

The cardinal chapters of Book II feature Martin again, Sidonius Apollinaris and Clovis.⁶⁶¹ The three figures so placed were of great importance to Gregory. St Martin was the patron saint of Tours, about whom Gregory wrote four books of his *Vita*. Sidonius Apollinaris had gained Gregory's utmost respect, to the extent that the bishop of Tours wrote a preface to a collection of Sidonius's sermons, now lost. Clovis was to prove central to Gregory's didactic theme for the 'Prehistory', as the most accomplished of all the Merovingian kings, and first Catholic king of the Franks. Therefore the placing of such figures in the first, middle and last chapter of Book II strongly suggests a careful manipulation of material. Add to this the themes dealt with in these chapters, which portray the principal personalities all successfully fending off attacks on the legitimacy of their authority.

The focus of Book III is on persecution and redemption, as evidenced by the portrayal of kings Theuderic and Theudebert, as well as a cameo by queen Chlotild. The background to this book is the division of the kingdom following Clovis's death, highlighted in the first chapter, and the continual comparisons made between Theuderic, his father and son. Within chapter one, Gregory portrays Theudebert in a positive manner, using language that reflects upon the introduction of his father, Theuderic, at an earlier point. This lies amid the background of the division of Clovis's kingdom between his sons, setting the tone for both Books III and IV.⁶⁶² These two books can perhaps be seen as representing something of a unit on their own, as there is no preface dividing

⁶⁶¹ *Hist.* II.1, 22 and 43.

⁶⁶² See Section 4.1

them. Together they portray a dynasty largely in decline. That decline is apparent in the depiction of Theuderic within the first half of Book III, in which the king is continually compared, unfavourably with not only his father and son, but also certain of his brothers. The climax of his ‘half’ of the book presents an extraordinary picture of Chlotild as accomplice in the slaughter of her grandchildren, at the hands of their uncles Chlothar and Childebert. This chapter reflects badly upon Theuderic, as it is included in the portrait of his reign.⁶⁶³ Starkly, the once great queen, Chlotild, is shown to have fallen far from the grace of God. However, her redemption occurs within the second half of Book III, that concerned with Theudebert, a fine upstanding king, a true successor to his grandfather Clovis. Theudebert’s death at the climax of Book III is portrayed in tragic terms, denoting Gregory’s sincere sadness at the news. Whilst Theudebert’s reign had been colourful, mostly he remained pious and gallant, in contrast to the image we gain of his father. In the central chapter of Book III, as a hiatus within the swirling maelstrom of intrigue, lies a calm depiction of the saintly Gregory of Langres. The great-grandfather of Gregory of Tours, and possible source of the latter’s chosen name, is placed here at the heart of the book, to once again remind the audience, in the manner of the presentation of Sidonius in the previous book, of the centrality of the Catholic faith and the authority of God.

The cardinal chapters of Book IV highlight the extent to which the Merovingians have fallen since the time of their great ancestor, and focus of Gregory’s work, Clovis. In chapter one, Chlotild is laid to rest, full of good

⁶⁶³ See further examples of this motif below.

works, announcing the end of an era, and the passing of the last bastion of restraint against the worst excesses of her sons and their offspring. Thus forewarned, the subsequent depiction of the reign of Chlothar is dark and drenched in division and rebellion, culminating in a battle between the king and his son Chramn, after which the latter is burnt alive. Significantly Chramn had made his first appearance in the 'Prehistory' in the first quartile chapter of Book IV. His short life depicts an image of the ill-advised king falling headlong into disaster.

At the centre of the book we find a series of chapters portraying the marital excesses of Chlothar's sons, with the worst offender at the very heart of the book: Charibert. He is excommunicated for marrying the sister of his queen, and dies, ostensibly by the hand of divine retribution. Unlike the central chapters of Books II and III, we are not presented with the calming authority of the Lord, but by His vengeful side. This colours the book and leads on to the final chapter, in which the civil war reaches its climax with the death of Sigibert, Gregory's patron, at the hand of assassins. Civil war and division have wrought tragedy.

Within the latter two books, Gregory's presentation of the events that underpin his framework, in the cardinal chapters, is subtler, as if reflecting the increasing complexity of the circumstances that he reports. So the division recorded within III.1 combines with the death of Chlotild in IV.1 to paint a picture of degeneration in comparison with Clovis. Both chapters firmly refer back to the epitome of Merovingian kingship, highlighting the motif of each book. Similarly, the deaths of Theudebert and Sigibert at the end of Book III and Book

IV, respectively, reflect the disappointment embodied by their failure to build on the glory that was their ancestor, who died at the end of Book II. The extent to which Gregory loads his cardinal chapters with internal comparisons, references and meaning really emphasises the extent to which his work has been carefully formed, to hitherto unrecognised degrees. This voyage of discovery continues with a careful examination of Book I, uncovering yet more complexity and structure.

6.2 Book I as key

Book I can be seen as a key to the themes that Gregory will cover in his four-book narrative, culminating in civil war. The theme of each book is connected to one of the four quarters of Book I, delineated by the cardinal chapters mentioned above. The first quarter of Book I is concerned with biblical events culminating in the delivery of the Hebrew King: David. Similarly Book I in its entirety covers the period before Gregory investigates the origins of Frankish kingship. Pre-kingship Hebrew history in the first part of Book I relates to pre-Frankish kingship history in Book I as a whole, culminating in the death of Martin of Tours, Gregory's patron saint, and thus connector of Gallic to universal Christian history.

The second quarter of Book I details events from the advent of kingship, through a variety of kingly figures such as Caesar and Augustus, to the Passion of Christ, the culmination of biblical prophecy and precursor to the birth of the Catholic Church. Book II revolves around the quest for, and definition of, Frankish kinship under Merovingian hegemony. This provides the backdrop for

a discussion on the provision of legitimate authority, through God. The book culminates in the life and death of Clovis, the epitome of a good king, who unites the Franks under the banner of Catholicism. In many ways he mirrors Christ. Clovis takes on the role of semi-mythical messianic figure, acting out the will of God and providing a Catholic paradise in Gaul. His death occurs at the centre point of Books I-IV, just as the death of Christ is placed at the centre of Book I. As Christ's Ascension is a prelude to the birth of the Church, so Clovis's 'miracle' of unification sets the stage for the presentation of the Merovingian dynasty. By presenting Clovis in such a manner Gregory succeeds in transferring something of the messianic nature of Christ onto the Frankish king. This serves to enhance Clovis's reputation, which allows for stark comparisons with his descendants. Therefore the second quarter of Book I dealing with various kings and kingly figures, leading up to Christ, the king of kings, relates to Book II, in which Gregory investigates the early kings of the Franks, leading up to Clovis, who would himself become the Franks' own 'king of kings', through conquest and unification.

As the second half of Book I begins, in the third quarter, with the persecution of the early church, alleviated with the arrival of Constantine, the finding of the True Cross and the birth of St Martin, so Book III relates the persecution of the Auvergne under King Theuderic and the lifting of oppression under his son Theudebert. Theuderic is therefore to be compared to the pagan and Arian persecutors of the early church. This portrait is emphasised by Gregory's selective use of evidence and anecdote.⁶⁶⁴ Theudebert, by comparison, is to be

⁶⁶⁴ See Section 4.1

held up as the personification of the piety and salvation associated with Constantine and St Martin. The Arvernian church should be seen as reaching back to the earliest days of the Christian church, brought together by persecution and suffering. Neatly Gregory provides a rich and old tradition for his native diocese. So Book I part three relates to Book III, building on the legacy of Christ and Clovis respectively. The Church and the Franks suffer equally before finding some facet of peace.

Book IV however holds a surprise for the audience, now versed in Gregory's technique. Expecting a theme corresponding to the celebratory nature of the last quarter of Book I, bracketed by Martin and dotted with stories such as the chaste lovers, we are instead presented with the dark tales of greed, pride and debauchery that culminated in the civil war that induced Gregory to begin his great work. The end of Book I does however mirror that of Book IV, as the townsfolk of Poitiers and Tours come into conflict over the body of St Martin. This is reminiscent of the civil war that that erupted in Book IV, over the kingdom of Clovis. Book IV is the antithesis of the last quarter of Book I, and Gregory uses this device to startling effect, comparing the dark days of the recent past with the glory to be found within the life of Martin. Which leads us nicely into the next level of Gregory's plan.

6.3 Multi-Layered Structure

Gregory's framework exists on many levels. Each book is constructed around the framework of its cardinal chapters. The cardinal chapters of Book I relate to the themes within each section of that book, as well as signposting the themes of

each other book in the 'Prehistory'. The four-book unit is built upon the framework established by the cardinal points of each book, to construct an overarching framework of a chiasmic nature.

The framework that is constructed around the cardinal chapters of each book, holding its theme, also relates to those of the other books, as in the deaths of Clovis in III.1 and Chlotild in IV.1 denoting a time of chaos and division. This message is also carried in the sins of Adam in I.1 and the rebellion of Bricius in II.1. The final chapters of each book all carry the motif of death: Martin in Book I, Clovis in Book II, Theudebert in Book III and Sigibert in Book IV. I have shown that these four figures play vital roles in Gregory's didactic plan for the *Histories*. Their presentation is therefore carefully structured. The calm denoted in the central chapters of Book II and Book III through the images of Sidonius and Gregory of Langres respectively, is juxtaposed with the death of Christ and the excesses of Charibert at the centre of Books I and IV. This once again focuses on the chiasmic structure of the Prehistory, as the central chapters of the middle books (II and III), reflect the unity and calm to be found, under God's grace, at the centre of the four book unit. The central chapters of Books I and IV relate to the start and end of the whole unit of four books, with the Creation in Christ, and the degeneracy of civil war.

On yet another level, the quartile chapters of Book I relate to the remaining three books as discussed above. David at the crux between first and second quartiles pre-empts Clovis in Book II, whose death in turn, at the end of Book II, reflects the death of Christ at the middle of Book I. As Christ is central to

Book I, so Clovis is to Books I-IV. Here the role of Book I acting as a ‘key’ to the ‘Prehistory’ can be seen clearly, as can the use of cardinal chapters to carry Gregory’s lesson throughout the four-book unit.

To further this development, the slaying of Abel by Cain at the very start of Book I reflects that of Sigibert by Chilperic⁶⁶⁵ at the end of Book IV. The unity established by Clovis lies at the centre of the ‘Prehistory’, at odds to the division and chaos to be found at the beginning and end. This division is also to be found in the first chapter after the unity encapsulated in the life of Clovis, namely III.1. Book I is constructed in a similar manner: The peace of Christ lies at the heart of conflict to be found in the fratricide of Cain and the feud over the body of Martin, placed at each end of the Book. Conflict is also highlighted in the first chapter after the ‘crux’ of Book I with the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. So, again, Book I can be seen to be a key to the framework of Books I-IV. As Book I is constructed along chiasmic principles, so too should be the framework of the “‘Prehistory’”. This is indeed the case, as I have shown. In this way, Gregory has constructed his entire framework for the four-book unit on chiasmic lines, just as he had the Preface to Book V. The conflict to be found at each end of the preface is compared to the peace to be found at its centre, in the person of Clovis. This is exactly the case with the ‘Prehistory’, which is an expansion of the themes drawn out in the Preface to Book V. The ‘Prehistory’ therefore acts as an extended lesson to Gregory’s contemporary kings.

⁶⁶⁵ Although Sigibert died at the hands of Fredegund’s assassins, the narrative is constructed in such a way as to connect Chilperic to the deed. His wife hired the killers and it was his kingdom and life that was in danger from Sigibert’s invasion.

6.4 Central theme

With the culmination of the ‘Prehistory’ in civil war, which Gregory denounces in his retrospective Preface to Book V, we arrive at the pinnacle of Gregory’s didactic narrative. He is clear what has caused such calamity, and sallies forth, denouncing the vices of greed, pride and debauchery. These sins are to be found at the very heart of the ‘Prehistory’, both structurally and thematically. Within three chapters that constitute the numeric centre of the four books⁶⁶⁶ Clovis is presented as God’s avenger against three kings each personifying the sins of greed, pride and lust.⁶⁶⁷ The antithesis of these sins, namely humility (before God), sexual probity and generosity should be deemed Gregory’s blueprint for good kingship. Such virtues will bring the favour of God and thus ensure a successful reign. These prove to be the core arguments to be found within the four books as a whole, and are concentrated within the Preface to Book V. That they are also to be found at the very centre of the ‘Prehistory’ serves to enhance the structural integrity of the four books as a unit.

6.5 Gregory’s advice to kings

Having shown the extent of Gregory’s careful manipulation of his material and framework within Books I-IV, we can gain a clearer understanding of the process that inspired his historical composition, and the message that he wished to portray. I have shown how the sins of greed, pride and debauchery lie at the

⁶⁶⁶ See Appendix.

⁶⁶⁷ Chloderic – greed; Chararic – pride; Ragnachar – debauchery. Perhaps significantly, these kings can be seen as Clovis’ rivals for Frankish rule, so his victory over them can be seen as an allegory to him overcoming his own vices on the way to the path of God.

very heart of the work's structure and the Preface to Book V. As we see from his description of the descent into civil war, kings engaged in just such vices surrounded Gregory. The Merovingian world was descending into chaos and to cap it all, the bishop's patron, Sigibert, was assassinated. Gregory could not even spare this character in his narrative, for it was Sigibert's own actions that were his undoing. By refusing to listen to the words of Germanus of Paris, and by insisting on pressing forward the attack on his brother, Chilperic, Sigibert had 'dug himself a pit'. Gregory must have despaired at the lack of respect for God and His agents shown by even this king, whom the bishop would at one point describe in glowing terms.

Vice and a lack of piety ran throughout the Merovingian dynasty and, for the bishop of Tours, something had to be done to stop the rot. So Gregory took it upon himself to expand upon his plea to the remaining kings, issued around Easter 576, to be seen in the Preface to Book V.⁶⁶⁸ Hence he filled his narrative with figures that would highlight the pitfalls that faced his contemporaries. He would heighten the greatness of Clovis and place him at the very centre of his four-book dialogue. Clovis would be shown as an avenger of God, striking down those who strayed from the path of righteousness. He intended for this record to strike a chord with his audience, his own contemporary kings. He used chiasmic motifs, bracketing, antithetical couplings and other literary devices to draw attention, time and again, to the focus of his work. By placing unity through piety at the centre of the four books, he sent a clear message as to where his kings were going wrong, just as he did in the Preface to Book V.

⁶⁶⁸ See Halsall, 'The Preface to Book V', p.312.

‘Remember what Clovis, the source of your victories, did, who killed opposing kings, drove out enemy peoples, subjugated their lands, the rule of which he left to you, safe, sound and intact. And when he did this he had neither gold nor silver such as there is now in your treasuries.’⁶⁶⁹

In order to highlight his message, Gregory places great kings and religious figures at the cardinal points of Books I and II: David, Solomon, Constantine and Martin, Sidonius and Clovis.⁶⁷⁰ These giant figures of scripture and history provide profound examples of how a man should act towards God. All were successful in everything they did; the implication is clear that it is through God that we find the true path to success. There are also examples that show how one fares if another path is taken. Herod and Nero suffer terrible fates for their persecution of the children of God. This theme is expanded through Books III and IV as Chramn, Charibert and Palladius all suffer for their crimes.⁶⁷¹

Gregory’s image of a good king is built up through a series of chapters placed throughout the text. Strongmen such as David and Joshua are linked through literary motifs to Clovis. Elements of the depiction of the great king of the Franks can be seen in the description of Aëtius, and certain events of his life. The fact that the general is watched over by his pious wife, who successfully prays for his safe return from campaign, clearly draws parallels with the later

⁶⁶⁹ *Hist. Praef.* V.

⁶⁷⁰ *Hist.* I.12-13, David and Solomon; I.36 Constantine; I.36, 48, II.1 Martin; II.22-3 Sidonius; II.27-43 Clovis.

⁶⁷¹ *Hist.* IV. 13, 26 and 39 respectively.

presentation of Chlotild as the driving force behind Clovis's conversion. Additionally, Aëtius is shown to use trickery to further his designs, just as Clovis would in several instances during his career. Conversely, the depiction of Theuderic abjectly failing in his cunning designs only helps to heighten the contrast between him and Clovis. The theme of the strong man is continued through the portrait of Mummolus, who, like Clovis, is led across a great river by the intervention of God through the form of an animal.

A further aspect to Gregory's vision of a great king draws its foundation from the figure of Solomon, who, wise above all other men, disdains earthly wealth for wisdom. We can see a similar template in the presentation of Theudebert, who puts aside the greed of his father in favour of generosity, magnanimity and piety. The opposite of this latter virtue can be plainly observed in the fate that befalls all those who fail to listen to the words of their advisors, the agents of God. For instance we are presented with Chramn, the rebellious son of Chlothar, who listens not to the agents of the Lord, but to the ill-advice of his cronies.⁶⁷² He meets his end at his father's hand.

By combining these traits of strength in arms, benevolence and piety with sexual probity, a king could rise to the heights achieved by Clovis, and unite the kingdom under God's watchful gaze. However, none of the great king's descendants succeeds in this endeavour, as they all suffer from one vice or another. So Gregory holds forth on the subject of redemption, offering advice to

⁶⁷² This information is presented in the first quartile chapter of Book IV, again reinforcing Gregory's framework, and providing a counter to the wisdom of Solomon espoused in the post-quartile chapter 13 in Book I.

his audience on how to rectify their faults. If they listen to him, then they will succeed where they had previously failed. However, if they ignore him, they, like the exemplars covered within the 'Prehistory', will fall.

6.6 Colourful narrative

Here I have only dealt with those stories to be found in the cardinal chapters. Gregory presents many more examples of good and bad men and women, throughout all the levels of Merovingian society, to paint a vivid and compelling portrait of the '*cum nonnullae res gererentur vel rectae vel improbae*'.⁶⁷³ That image is created by the painting of layer upon layer of anecdotes, which have often been seen as entirely chaotic. Gregory's manipulation of material is far from random however. For instance, in Book III, the black impression we receive of king Theuderic through his invasion of the Auvergne is enhanced by the wicked ambition of high-status women presented within the pages of the book dedicated to his reign. The rehabilitation of one of these women, Chlotild, occurs in the section of Book III dedicated to king Theudebert, whose own image is then enhanced, in direct comparison to that of his father. In Book IV the rebellion of Chramn against his father Chlothar entwines with a memorable feud between the priests Cato and Cautinus. Combined, these narratives serve to paint a picture of Chlothar's reign, , without unity, authority or legitimacy.

In fact Gregory utilises a technique that we can also find in his Miracles of St Martin, where endless repetition of similar miracle stories drives home the glory

⁶⁷³ *Hist. Praef. MGH.SRM.* 1.1, p.1 'great many things that keep happening, some of them good, some of them bad.' Thorpe, p.63.

of the saint in a blunt and unforgiving manner. Here, in the *Histories*, the material is more complex and wide-ranging, but nevertheless the author grasps it and twists it to his will, repeating the same scenarios over and over, using many different characters, in a form of didactic that has been interpreted as showing the bishop's typological view of history. Whether Gregory truly thought in such a way is now impossible to tell, but it may be that such an interpretation of the facts merely suited his purpose at that time.

6.7 Gregory's Antecedents

Now we can see the lengths to which Gregory went in order to disseminate his message. The driving force behind this great work can be guessed from the frequent instances he records an agent of God telling a wayward king how he should behave. In truth, Books I-IV are Gregory's version of those attempts; it is his advice to his kings. This highlights just how desperate the bishop considered the situation at that time, for the examples we see within the text invariably occur at a time of great tragedy.⁶⁷⁴ Gregory could see the dangers that lay before Gaul if the Merovingians continued their headlong rush into war and destruction. It would appear from his text that the Catholic Church had invested a great deal of time in this dynasty. They were the lynchpin of stability, and as the narrative shows, they must reign in their worst excesses so as to bring order to society as a whole. That they might destroy each other totally would be unthinkable. Gallic society would be rudderless, and the future bleak.

⁶⁷⁴ *Hist.* III.6, king Chlodomer dies after ignoring the advice of St. Avitus, Abbot of St. Mesmin de Micy; *Hist.* IV.26, Charibert is excommunicated and dies after ignoring the warnings of St Germanus of Paris; *Hist.* IV.51, Sigibert is assassinated after not listening to the entreaties of the same man of God.

6.8 Date of Composition of the *Histories*

It is an intrinsic aspect of my thesis that Books I-IV were composed as a unit, as an expansion of the themes raised in the Preface to Book V. Thus, in the chronology of composition they follow after the preface, which according to Halsall was delivered at Easter 576, and was the first section of the *Histories* completed. Considering the amount of material that Gregory would have to collate in order to produce Books I-IV, and the degree to which the material is ordered, it is easy to allow several years for the composition of the ‘Prehistory’. There can be little doubt that it was constructed as one piece, as the level of complexity evident in the framework of the four books testifies. This confirms the greater consensus of scholarship on this matter, although there is some debate as to whether there was a brief period of composition c.575/6, or a longer period, which I prefer, from 576 to 580.⁶⁷⁵ Although there is no direct evidence to suggest an early composition, I think it unlikely that Gregory would have waited until as late as 587 to formalise his plan for Books I-IV.⁶⁷⁶ This theory implies that Gregory gathered all his material together in order to produce a comprehensive whole. Another theory that places composition of the latter books, V-X, towards the end of Gregory’s life also suggests that the agenda of the *Histories* may have changed within the writing hiatus.⁶⁷⁷ If so, it would seem improbable that Gregory rewrote Books I-IV in accordance with this change of heart, as they bear little resemblance to the structure of V-X, and are

⁶⁷⁵ See section 1.6.

⁶⁷⁶ Breukelaar, *Historiography*, pp.52-58.

⁶⁷⁷ Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, pp. 108-115.

focused on the events surrounding the death of Sigibert. For this reason I favour an early composition for Books I-IV over a period of several years

A recent consolidation of the scholarship on the subject of the chronology of composition of the entire *Histories* has tied the crux of the debate down to support for either a long synchronous, ever-changing composition, or a retrospective creation during the reign of Childebert II.⁶⁷⁸ Unfortunately, little thought is given to the date of composition of the first four-book unit. As for the remainder of the *Histories*, the evidence provided by Callendar Murray for the retrospective composition is inconclusive. His criticism of the proponents of a synchronous recording of contemporary events lacks substance, and little definitive can yet be made of the subject. Monod states that ‘[I]t is impossible, in fact, to determine precisely the period when [Gregory’s history] was written. Gregory worked on it his entire life and reshaped it repeatedly.’⁶⁷⁹ While true, I think, of the *Histories* as a whole, the four-book unit of the ‘Prehistory’ was born out of the political upheaval surrounding the civil war between Chlothar’s surviving sons, and was probably composed soon after, while the impetus was still strong.

6.9 Audience

The debate over Gregory’s intended audience for the *Histories* has thrown up many possibilities, both clerical and secular.⁶⁸⁰ The subject matter of Books I-

⁶⁷⁸ Murray, ‘Chronology’, *passim*

⁶⁷⁹ Murray, ‘Chronology’, 186, citing Monod, *Études*, p.45.

⁶⁸⁰ See Section 1.5

IV discussed within these pages convinces me that the 'Prehistory' at least was intended for the digestion of Gregory's contemporary kings and their offspring. Having discerned that the four-book unit consists of the bishop's advice to his wayward kings, I have argued that Gregory follows in the apologetic tradition by rebuking them directly. This tradition had its roots in the actions of such as Quadratus and Aristedes, who defended Christianity to Hadrian, and Melito and Appolinaris, who spoke before Marcus Aurelius. These actions were recorded by Eusebius, and passed down to Gregory through Rufinus' translation. He would have been well aware of this tradition of apologetic, and I believe he carried on the works of his predecessors in the *Histories*, in defence of Catholicism. From his *Credo* in the Preface to Book I, right through to his open condemnation of his contemporary kings in the Preface to Book V, Gregory presents historical and biblical examples that support his case, in what is a direct address to his audience, his kings.

Not only does this build upon those apologists that he would have encountered through the works mentioned above, but there were enough examples closer to home to make the argument beyond doubt. Ambrose of Milan, Martin of Tours and Hilary of Poitiers had all stood tall before their respective monarchs, and the latter two at least were very close to Gregory's heart. He would therefore have been very comfortable with a direct appeal to secular authority. It has been argued that Gregory meant this work to be digested by the bishops, so that they might invoke the people to affect the ways of kings. While this sits well with the dynamic between ruler and ruled that appears within the 'Prehistory' of the good in one being reflected in the other, in practice there appears to be little

evidence that change from the bottom up was a valid option. Instead, it would seem strange that a man such as Gregory, who had no problem standing before his king in the Trial of Praetextatus, should wish his peers to speak for him, especially as they had failed to do such for the above defendant.

The Carolingians have left us a picture of Merovingian monarchy that may well lead us to believe that such literary talents as Gregory displays would have been wasted on their ears. However, just as Gregory's reputation is being restored, so our view of the bishop's audience emerges from under the smokescreen of the propaganda of their successors. Chilperic the poet,⁶⁸¹ entertained by the verses of the likes of Venantius Fortunatus, does not conjure up an image of an uncouth barbarian. Gregory himself appealed to his kings to look to such as Orosius for moral inspiration. He at least recognised their literary aspirations. His self-professed rustic style would have led his audience through his didactic narrative in terms they would understand, far more than a work by a more 'rhetorical' author.

Gregory's message would be equally effective no matter at which king or kings the Prehistory was directed. Chilperic must be a strong candidate, as he was the ruler of Tours following the death of Sigibert, and during the period that I favour for the Prehistory's composition. In addition, Gregory makes no mention of the king's direct involvement in the death of his brother in IV.51. However, the chiasmic structure underpinning the work relates this tale with that of Cain and Abel. This subtly colours Chilperic's image, suggesting that he was indeed

⁶⁸¹ *Hist.* V.44, Chilperic apparently wrote many books of poetry, which were, in Gregory's view, merely poor imitations of the fifth-century Christian poet Sedulius.

involved, and that he should mend his ways. In this manner Gregory could exercise the caution with which historians through the ages dealt with the current regime, whilst also rebuking the king in a manner faithful to the apologetic tradition he continued.

A case can obviously be made for Childebert II, Sigibert's son, as the target of the work. Gregory was loyal to the young king's father, and seemingly so to the boy himself. A history written with pro-Austrasian sentiments could help guide the young king towards the proper wielding of God-given power. The presentation of Sigibert as a great hope for the Franks, who then, through his failure to listen to the advice of his bishop, was struck down at his moment of triumph, would surely give his son grave cause for thought.

However, I prefer to see the audience as all the Merovingian kings, young and old, who lived through the aftermath of the civil war that is depicted at the end of Book IV. I feel that Gregory would have made little distinction between them, just as he had portrayed the likes of Chilperic and Guntram in Book IV. None, not even Sigibert, escaped the judgement of Gregory's words.

6.10 Summary

Within the four books of the 'Prehistory' Gregory presents a well-structured lesson for his contemporary kings. Through the use of a chiasmic framework, antithetical chapter headings, bracketing and other literary motifs, Gregory expounds upon the sins that have dragged down the Merovingian line from the lofty heights to be associated with Clovis. The reasons for this fall are reiterated

throughout, but especially condensed within the three central chapters of the ‘Prehistory’, wherein Clovis destroys his vice ridden rivals and unites the Franks under his Catholic banner. Gregory highlights the division that followed Clovis’s death, which culminates in the civil war that probably caused the production of the *Histories*. The comparison between Clovis’ war of conquest that unites the Franks at the centre of the ‘Prehistory’, with the civil war that tears the kingdom apart described at its end, succinctly illuminates the nature and message of Gregory’s work. Throughout, Gregory provides examples of the disasters that befall those who ignore the advice of agents of the Lord. As a leading bishop of Gaul, Gregory was himself such an agent, and so he makes it clear what will happen should his audience fail to heed the explicit warnings provided in this, his advice to his kings.⁶⁸² The research above shows not only that Gregory was an educated and intelligent writer of complex didactic material, but it shines a light on the society within which he composed his works. As such, this study helps to further enhance the view of early-medieval Europe as far from the ‘Dark-Age’ that once it was considered to be.

⁶⁸² For Gregory’s self-promotion as an agent of the Lord see: Reydellet, *La royauté*, p.448; Mitchell, ‘History and Christian Society’, pp.188 and 1987, p.83; Heinzelmann, *History and Society*, p.43.

Appendix A

Manuscript Tradition

Augustine

There is a paucity of Augustinian literature that has survived from before the ninth century. Most sixth-century manuscripts come from Italy, and are of little use here, other than to indicate what texts were available outside Africa. According to Lowe⁶⁸³ there are 6 manuscripts from the 5th century, a dozen or so from the 6th, 4 from the late 6th or early 7th, around 20 from the 7th and 8 manuscripts from the late 7th to early 8th centuries. There are also a number of 8th century copies in Visigothic or pre-Caroline miniscule that he does not cover. The early manuscript tradition of Augustine's major works from the 5th and 6th centuries is as follows::

Leningrad Q. v I.3. N.Africa. (5C).

Verona XXVIII N.Africa. (5C). *De Civitate Dei*.

⁶⁸³ E.A.Lowe, 'A List of the Oldest Extant manuscripts of Saint Augustine with a note on the Codex Bambergensis' in *Studi Agostiniani prededuti Dall'Enciclica del Sommo Pontefice Pio Papa XI per il XV Centenario dalla Morte di S.Agostino*, Miscellanea Agostiniana (Rome, 1931).

Rome Sessorianus 13. N.Italy, possibly the monastery of St. Severin in Naples, under Eugippius. (6C). *De Genesi Ad Litteram*.

Bamberg B.IV.21 Italy, possibly Naples. (6C).

Lyons 478. Constantinople (possibly, though this is uncertain, with an eastern influence on the scribe.) (6C). *De Consensu evangelistarum. Sermo 110*. Handled by Florus of Lyons (died c.860).

Paris 12214 Verona (possibly) (6C). *De Civitate Dei I-IX*. + Leningrad Q. v I.4. *De Civitate Dei X*.⁶⁸⁴

Lyons 607. N.Italy. (6C). *De Civitate Dei I-V*. Also handled by Florus of Lyons.

Paris B.N 9533. Spain. (6-7C). *Enarrationes in psalmos*.

Rome Sessorianus 55. Spain. (6C). *Confessiones*. The Confessions popularity appears to have been largely limited, roughly, to the area of the Loire Valley and centres like Tours, Ferriere and Auxerre.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸⁴ The latter was separated from the former for Peter Dubrowsky in 1791, A.Souter, review of *S.Aurelii Augustini episcopi Hipponensis De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos libri XII*, J.E.C. Welldon (ed.), (London, 1924), in *The Classical Review*, Vol.39, No.5/6 (Aug-Sep 1925), pp. 135-137, at p.136. n.1.

⁶⁸⁵ M.M. Gorman 'The manuscript traditions of St.augustine's major works' in V.Grasi (ed.), *Atti del Congresso internazionale su S.Agostino nel XVI centenario della conversione, Roma, 15-20 settembre 1986* (Rome, 1987), pp. 381-412.

Carlsruhe 100 and 144. Italy/Spain/S. France. (6C).

Autun 107. Spain or French/Spanish border. (6-7C). *Ennarationes in psalmos 141-149.*

Paris B.N. Lat 12214 (6-7C). + 13367. (7C). Italian, from Corbie.

According to Gorman, most seventh-century manuscripts come from Luxeuil in Merovingian Gaul.⁶⁸⁶ For example:

New York Pierpont Morgan Library m.334. A.D. 669, during the reign of Chlothar III. Luxeuil.

Tractus decem in epistulam Iohannis. Also containing *De epistula Ioannis ad Parthos Sermones X.*

Bern A.91. Luxeuil. (7-8C). *De Genesi ad litteram.*

Geneva m.I.16. Luxeuil. (late 7C). Sermons. Letters.

Also *Papyrus Augustine:*

Paris lat. 11641 and Geneva 16 and Leningrad F.Pap.I.1, containing an Augustinian anthology.

⁶⁸⁶ Gorman, p.386.

In the 8th century Tours became *the* famous centre for learning and produced, for example:

Paris B.N. nouv. acq. 1575, from the first half of the eighth century, containing the Augustinian anthology prepared by Eugippius.

Lowe lists the following as among those manuscripts extant from before the ninth century, from Gallic centres other than those mentioned above.

Lyon 426. Probably France, possibly Lyons. (7C). *Enarrationes in psalmos* 49-96.

Lyons 604. A Merovingian centre, possibly Lyons. (7C). *Sermones* 202, 309, 348, 60, 347, 2, 9, 170, 142, 361. *De Fide et symbolo*.

Cambrai 300. Mieux. (late 8C). *De Trinitate*.

Orleans 154. Fleury. (8C). *Sermones*.

Cassian

There are four extant manuscripts of John Cassian's works from the 6th century, 3 of the *Institutiones* and one of *Collationes*. Three of these probably originate in Italy, while one may come from southern France. There is nothing then until the 8th century.

Monte Cassino, Archivio Della Badia 295. S.Italy, probably Capua. (6C).
Institutiones.

Turin Biblioteca Nazionale F.IV.1 Fasc. 16. Probably Italy. (6C). *Institutiones.*

Rome Vittorio Eman. Sessorianus 55 (2099). N.Italy. (6C) *Collationes.*

Autun Bibl. Munic. 24. S.France, possibly monastic. (late 6C). *Institutiones.*

Caesarius of Arles

The earliest surviving manuscript of Caesarius originates from the seventh century, probably France:

Carlsruhe Landesbibl. Aug. CCLIII. (7C) *Homilies.*

Additionally there are a few examples of his work surviving from a slightly later date, such as:

Cologne, Hist. Archiv. GB Kasten B, nos. 148 & 148a. Ireland or somewhere like Bobbio with Irish connections. (7-8C) *Homilies* 94 & 102.

Brussels, Bibl. Royale 9850-52. Soissons, St. Medard's abbey. (7C ex.)
Homilies.

Eusebius-Rufinus

Only two manuscripts pre-date the eighth century.

Milan Ambros. C91 + Turin F IV. 29 + Vatic. Lat. 5760. Origin uncertain.

(6C)

Paris Bibli. Nat. Lat. 1759. Probably from Italy. (7C).

Orosius

Again, there are only two extant manuscripts from before the eighth century. However, whereas Rufinus's translation of Eusebius survived in only six further pre-ninth century examples, Orosius can be found in ten.

Florence Lorenziana LXV.1. Probably from N.Italy. (6C).

Milan Ambros. D.23 sup. Probably Bobbio. (7C).

Interestingly the two texts, Eusebius by Rufinus, and Orosius, can be found in one eighth century manuscript together:

Paris Bibl. Nat. Lat. 10399. Possibly N.E. France. (8C).

It is clear that little can be gleaned from the manuscript tradition when attempting to construct Gregory's library. We know he consulted the texts of Cassian, Orosius, Eusebius through Rufinus. However, the manuscript tradition does not place any surviving texts in Tours at the time of Gregory. It is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions regarding those writers for whom we have no evidence that Gregory had read, such as Augustine.

Appendix B

Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Gen Pref			51	Pref			51	1			51
Pref			50	1			50	2			50
1			49	2			49	3			49
2			48	3			48	4			48
40 Chapters											
42			8	43			8	44			8
43			7	44			7	45			7
44			6	45			6	46			6
45			5	46			5	47			5
46			4	47			4	48			4
47			3	48			3		1		3
48			2	Pref			2		2		2
Pref			1	1			1		3		1
	1	37			2	37			4	37	
	2	36			3	36			5	36	
	3	35			4	35			6	35	
	4	34			5	34			7	34	
30 chapters											
	34	4			35	4			37	4	
	35	3			36	3			38	3	
	36	2			37	2			39	2	
	37	1			38	1			40	1	
	38Pref				39Pref				41	43	
	39	43			40	43				42	
	40	42			41	42					
	41										

Numerical centrality of Chapters II.40-42 within Books I-IV.

Above I have provided three examples of how a numerical count of chapters of Books I-IV leads to the establishment of chapters II.40-42 as lying at the centre of the four-book unit. The first example shows the chapter count with all prefaces counted. The second example omits the general preface, while the third omits all prefaces. As can be seen, this manipulation hardly changes the result, leaving these chapters, concerned with the defeat of Clovis's rivals, depicted in a syhmbolic manner, directly at the centre of the work.

Abbreviations

Journals and Series

AA Auctores Antiquissimi

CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina

CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

EME Early Medieval Europe

MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica

PL J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina* (221 vols.; Paris, 1844-63).

RBPH Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire

SRG *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*

SRM Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum

Works of Gregory of Tours

GC Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Confessorum*: B. Krusch & W. Levison (ed.), *MGH. SRM* 1, Part 2 (Hannover, 1969), pp.744-820; R. Van Dam (trans.), (*Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Confessors* (Liverpool, 1988).

GM Gregory of Tours, *Gloria Martyrum*: B. Krusch & W. Levison (ed.), *MGH. SRM* 1, Part 2 (Hannover, 1969), pp.484-561; R. Van Dam (trans.), *Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs* (Liverpool, 1988).

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VP Gregory of Tours, *Vita Patrum*: B. Krusch & W. Levison (ed.), *MGH. SRM* 1, Part 2 (Hannover, 1969), pp.661-744; E. James, *Gregory of Tours. The Life of the Fathers* (2nd edition; Liverpool, 1991).

VSM Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Virtutibus Sancti Martini*: B. Krusch & W. Levison (ed.), *MGH SRM* Vol.1, Part 2 (Hannover, 1969), pp.134-211; R. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), pp.200-303.

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Alc Ecd. Avitus of Vienne, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis episcopi opera quae supersunt. MGH AA* 6.2, Peiper, R. (ed.) (Munich, 1985).

Amb. DOT. *De Obitu Theodosii*, CSEL 73 O. Faller, (ed.) (Vienna, 1955).

Amm. Marc. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae: Ammianus Marcellinus*. 3 vols. Rolfe, J.C. (trans.) (London 1935-9).

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Aug. Op. *Opera Omnia Augustini Hiponensis*, PL 44. Migne, J.P. (ed.) (Paris, 1841).

Caes. *Serm.* Caesarius, *Sermones CCSL* 103-4 Morin, G. & Lambot, C. (eds.) (Turnhout, 1953).

Cass. *Var.* Cassiodorus Senator, *Variae* II 41, *MGH AA* 12. Mommsen, T. (ed.) (Munich, 1892).

Cass. *De Inst. M.Aurelii Cassiodori, De Institutione Divinarum Litterarum* 1.17.1. PL LXX Migne, J.P. (ed.) (Paris, 1847).

Chlod.Reg. *Chlodowici Regis ad episcopos epistola*, Boretius, A. (ed.) *MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum I.1* (Hanover, 1886), no.1, pp.1-2.

Chron. Gall. *Chronica Gallica anno CCCCLII*, *MGH A.A.* 9. *Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII.* I Mommsen T. (ed.) (Berlin, 1982), pp. 615-662.

Chron. Sar. *Chronicle of Saragossa: MGH AA.* 11, *Chronica Minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII.*, vol.2, T. Mommsen (ed.), (Berlin, 1894), pp.221-223.

Conc. Araus. *Concilium Arausicanum a. 529, Concilia Galliae CCSL* 148a Munier, C & de Clercq, C. (eds.) (Turnhout, 1963).

Conl. *Conlationes. CSEL* 13. Petschenig M. (ed.) (Vienna, 1886).

DEB Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other Documents*. Winterbottom M. (ed. & trans.) (Chichester 1978).

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HE Rufinus, *Eusebii ecclesiastica historia*, Mommsen, T.H. (ed.) in *Eusebius, Die Kirchengeschichte*, Vols I-III, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Schwarz, E.& Mommsen, T. (eds.), (Berlin, 1999).

HL Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* III, 29: Waitz, G. and Bethmann, L. (eds.), *MGH Scriptores Rerum Langobardicum* 1 (Hanover, 1878), pp.13-187.

IHS Isidore of Seville, *Isidorvs Hispalensis sententiae*, *CCSL 111* Cazier, P. (ed.) (Brepols, 1998).

Marius Chron. Marius of Avenches, *Chronica a. CCCCLV-DLXXXI*, *Chronica Minora* 2, *MGH AA 11*, Mommsen, T.H. (ed.) (1894), pp.225-39.

Oros. Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII, accedit eiusdem liber apologeticus*, *CSEL 5*. Zangemeister, K.F.W. (ed.) (Hildesheim, 1967).

Prud. Prudentius *Hamartigenia* 517-20, *Prudentius* Loeb Classical Library, Thomson, H.J. (ed.) (London, 1949), pp.200-73.

Sall. *Sallust*, Rolfe J.C. (ed. & trans.) (London, 1921).

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