

Fredegisus

De substantia nihili et tenebrarum

A scholarly deacon named Fredegisus, nicknamed Nathanahel, served as a messenger among Alcuin, Charlemagne, and Arno bishop of Salzburg.¹ He became an archdeacon sometime before Wednesday, 15 April 800, succeeded Alcuin as abbot of the monastery of Saint Martin at Tours 804-06, witnessed the will of the emperor Charlemagne in 811, served as archchancellor for the emperor Louis the Pious from 819, became abbot of Saint Bertin and Saint Omer in 820, also abbot of Cormery, and died on Sunday, 10 August 833. Sometime after he had become archdeacon and Charlemagne had become emperor Fredegisus composed a treatise *De Substantia Nihili et Tenebrarum* 'On the Substance of Nothing and Shadows', addressed as from Charlemagne to an Irish scholar named Dúngal.² The treatise has been edited frequently, always unsatisfactorily, from three sources: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS latin 5577, folios 134-137, written late in the ninth century; Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. Lat. 69, folios 90-93, written late in the ninth century or early in the tenth; and Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9587, folios 51-53, written during the tenth century, and folios 168-170, written during the modern period.³

The most competent of the earlier editors, Dümmler, unaccountably presented the text as two separate letters. One recent editress, Concettina Gennaro, normalized the text to her own standards of correctness, disregarding some forms found in all three manuscripts, and ignoring both the precepts of Alcuin's treatise *De*

¹ Max MANITIUS, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1911), vol. I, pp. 459-461. Mary GARRISON, 'Fridugisus', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. XXI, pp. 27.2-28.

² David GANZ, 'Dúngal', *Ibid.*, vol. XVII, pp. 297.2-298.2. For the works of Dúngal see Michael LAPIDGE & Richard SHARPE, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400-1200*, Royal Irish Academy Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources, Ancillary Publications I (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1985), nos. 657-659, p. 173; Richard SHARPE, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin I (Turnholt: Brepols, 1997), no. 245, p. 102; D. R. HOWLETT, *The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1995), pp. 120-124.

³ *Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, ed. Ernestus DUEMLER, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistolarum Tomus IV* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), pp. 552-555. *Fridugiso di Tours e il 'De Substantia Nihili et Tenebrarum'*, ed. Concettina GENNARO, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto Universitario di Magistero di Catania, Serie Filosofica Saggi e Monografie XLVI (Padova: Antonio Milani, 1963).

Orthographia and the practice of our author's contemporaries, even when that was fixed in the forms of acrostics, mesostichs, and telestichs in *carmina figurata*. Gennaro normalized the form of the author's name to *Fridugisus*, that of the emperor to *Carolus*, that of one of his titles to *Dominus*, and she repeatedly assimilated consonants unassimilated in the manuscripts.

A normalized form of our author's name in Old English might be *Friþugisl*, meaning 'peace-hostage'. But native speakers of Old English often used forms other than those preferred by modern philologists. The former name-element *friþu* 'peace' occurs, with the spelling fixed by an acrostic in a poem written by Saint Boniface under his Old-English name, in Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS M.p.th.f.29, folio 44r, *Uynfrehth priscorum Duddo congesserat artem*. The latter name-element *-gisl* 'hostage' recurs with metathesis in the late-eighth- or early-ninth-century *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*, London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.VII, folio 12v, as *Helmgils*, and in the West-Saxon regnal table prefixed to the late-ninth-century manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173, folio 1r, as *Cynegils*.

In a poem about his cell, *De Abbatibus* by Aedilulf of Bywell, written A.D. 803-21, the name appears in line 270, *alter erat frater Fridegils cognomine dictus*, with short *i* and short *e* in *Fride-*. In the Domesday Book, compiled A.D. 1084-86, the name is spelled *Fredgis* three times from Nottinghamshire, volume I, folios 223rb, 226ra, 290rb, and *Fredgist* five times from Yorkshire, Lindsey, and Lincolnshire, volume I, folios 300va, 300vb *bis*, 366rb, 368va. London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 60, folios 59-64, preserves a charter, purporting to have issued from A.D. 664 but written during the mid-twelfth century, that includes the *signum Fredegysi ministri*.

Several Franks had literary careers in Anglo-Saxon England. One was the mid-tenth-century poet Frithegod of Canterbury, named in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, published after A.D. 1125, as *Fridegodus*, but known elsewhere as *Fredegaud* of Brioude.⁴ Another was the late-tenth-century hagiographer and poet *Lantfredus* of Winchester and Fleury.⁵

⁴ *Dum Pietas Multimoda*, ed. G. M. DREVES, *Analecta Hymnica* XVI (1894), pp. 33-35; *Carmina Potatoria*, ed. P. VON WINTERFELD, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini* IV.i (1899), pp. 350-353; *Frithegodi Monachi Breuilloquium Vitae Beati Wilfredi et Wulfstani Cantoris Narratio Metrica de Sancto Swithuno*, ed. Alistair CAMPBELL (Zürich: Thesaurus Mundi, 1950); *Ciues Caelestis Patriae*, ed. P. R. KITSON, in 'Lapidary traditions in Anglo-Saxon England, Part 2', *Anglo-Saxon England* XII (1983), pp. 73-123 at 109-123. M. LAPIDGE, 'The hermeneutic style in tenth-century Anglo-Latin literature', *Anglo-Saxon England* IV (1975), pp. 67-111; *Idem*, 'A Frankish scholar in tenth-century England: Frithegod of Canterbury / Fredegaud of Brioude', *Ibid.* XVII (1988), pp. 45-65; both rept. *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066* (London & Rio Grande: Hambledon, 1993). D. R. HOWLETT, *British Books in Biblical Style* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1997), pp. 225-231.

⁵ *Epistolae*, ed. W. STUBBS, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, Rolls Series (London: Longman & Co., 1874), pp. 369-370, 376-377; *Translatio et Miracula Sancti Swithuni*, ed. E. P. SAUVAGE, *Analecta Bollandiana* IV (1885), pp. 372-410; ed. M. LAPIDGE, *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies

Regardless, then, of whether our author was English or Frankish, *Fredegisus* was an acceptable form of his name. There is unmistakable evidence in the fixed forms of *carmina figurata* that Alcuin and his younger contemporary Joseph Scottus wrote the name of the emperor as *Carlus*.⁶ There is equally unmistakable evidence of coins on which the name appears as *KAROLVS*.⁷

In a series of books and articles I have defined a mode of thought and composition, fully developed in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, perfectly represented in Jerome's Latin *Biblia Vulgata*, and commented upon explicitly in the Talmud in Hebrew, the works of Plato in Greek, and the standard curricular manuals of the quadrivium in Latin. I have illustrated the transmission of this tradition of thought and composition in all the literary languages of the British Isles, Latin, Celtic, Germanic, and Romance, in unbroken continuity from Roman times to the modern period,⁸ and documented its transmission to the Continent.⁹ Regardless of whether Fredegisus was Frankish or English, he could have known the tradition both from the pedagogical and literary works of the Englishman Alcuin and from the compositions in prose and verse of the Irishmen Joseph Scottus and Dúngal.

In this tradition of composition, because in Hebrew and Greek and Latin every letter of the alphabet bears a numerical value, א = 1, ב = 2, ג = 3, A = 1, B = 2, Γ = 3, every word exhibits a numerical value as well as a meaning. Fredegisus was well instructed in gematria, the calculation of numerical values of words, and he used it to fix his text in minute particulars, as we shall see from the very beginning in the title and salutations and preface and throughout his remarkable composition. One may suppose that someone who knew this had been taught earlier to spell Latin in conformity with the rules as expressed in Alcuin's treatise *De Orthographia*. The only one of Alcuin's rules

IV.ii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 218-333; *Altercatio Magistri et Discipuli, Responsio Discipuli, Carmen de Libero Arbitrio*, ed. M. LAPIDGE in 'Three Latin poems from Æthelwold's school at Winchester', *Anglo-Saxon England* I (1972), pp. 85-137, rept. *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066*, pp. 225-277. D. R. HOWLETT & A. HARVEY, 'An Attack on the Welsh Master Ioruert', *ALMA* LII (1994), pp. 281-285. D. R. HOWLETT, *British Books in Biblical Style*, pp. 234-237.

⁶ *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, ed. E. DUEMLER, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), pp. 152-153, 158-159, 226-227.

⁷ *Karl der Grosse, Werk und Wirkung* (Aachen, 1965), front cover.

⁸ *Liber Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi: The Book of Letters of Saint Patrick the Bishop; The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style; The English Origins of Old French Literature; British Books in Biblical Style; Cambro-Latin Compositions: Their Competence and Craftsmanship; Sealed from Within: Self-Authenticating Insular Charters; Caledonian Craftsmanship: The Scottish Latin Tradition; Insular Inscriptions* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005); and articles in *ALMA*, *Cambridge* (now *Cambrian*) *Medieval Celtic Studies, Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*, and *Peritia* from 1994 to 2004; 'Artful Anglo-Norman Prose: The Structure of *De Plaz de Corone*', *Romania* CXVII (1999), pp. 273-278; with Charles THOMAS, 'Vita Sancti Paterni, The Life of Saint Padarn and the Original *Miniu*', *Trivium* XXXIII (2003), pp. 1-129.

⁹ 'Some Criteria for Editing Abaelard', *ALMA* LI (1993), pp. 195-202; 'Arithmetic Rhythms in Latin Letters', *ALMA* LVI (1998), pp. 193-225.

not observed in the following text is retention of etymologically correct *-dt-* in preference to what is printed as Alcuin's *-tt-*. I have arranged the text, numbering sentences to the left and lines to the right, and marking rhythms of the cursus with acute and grave accents.

TEXT

INTERROGATIO DOMNI CAROLI SERENISSIMI IMPERATORIS
DE SVBSTANTIA NIHILI ET TENEBRARVM

IN NOMINE PATRIS ET FILII ET SPIRITVS SANCTI
CAROLVS SERENISSIMVS AVGVSTVS
A DEO CORONATVS

MAGNVS ET PACIFICVS IMPERATOR ROMANVM GVBERNANS IMPERIVM
QVI ET PER MISERICORDIAM DEI REX FRANCORVM ET LANGOBARDORVM
DVNGALO FIDELI NOSTRO

- 1 Sententias siue rationes quas tibi dirigimus de substantia nihili et tenebrarum
diligenter ac studiose explorare te uolumus
et utrum rectae ac uerae sint an aliqua falsitate notabiles nobis significare stude.
- 2 Nihil tamen allegorice aut figurate tibi adtendas
sed nudum sermonem nudamque litteram rem nudam significantem.
- 3 Non autem nos latet quid allegorice maiores nostri in his intelligere uoluerint 5
quoniam si alia exempla quaeres quam plurima prompta sunt
sicut in Psalmis *Pro nihilo saluos facies illos*
et in Iob *Qui appendet terram super nihilum*
et cetera.
- 4 Similiter si de substantia tenebrarum alia exempla quaesieris 10
inter cetera haec etiam adhibere poteris
ut est *Benedicite lux et tenebrae Domino*
et Apostolus *Deus qui dixit de tenebris lumen splendescere*
in Propheta lex Domini uoce *Ego Dominus formans lucem et creans tenebras*
et in Iob *Tempus posuit tenebris et uniuersorum finem ipse creat* 15
item ibi *Terminum dedit aquis donec finiantur lux et tenebrae*
item aliud *Omnes tenebrae absconditae in occultis Dei*
et *Noctem uerterunt in diem et rursum post tenebras spero lucem.* 18

OMNIBVS FIDELIBVS DEI
ET DOMNI NOSTRI SERENISSIMI PRINCIPIS KAROLI
IN SACRO EIVS PALATIO CONSISTENTIBVS
FREDEGISVS DIACONVS ¶

DE SVBSTANTIA NIHILI

- 1 Agitatam diutissime a quam plurimis quaestiónem de n̄hilo
quam indiscussam inexaminatamque ueluti impossibilem ad explicándum
reliquérunt
mecum sedulo uoluens átque pertráctans
tandem uisum mihi fúit ádgredi
eamque nodis uehementibus quibus uidebatur implicita disruptis absolui átque
enodáui 5
detersoque nubilo in lúcem restítui
memoriae quoque posteritatis cunctis in futurum saeculis mandándam praeuídí.
- 2 Quaestio autem huiusmodi est Nihilne áliquid sít an non ?
- 3 Si quis responderit Videtur m̄hi nihil ésse
ipsa eius quam putat negatio compellit eum fateri aliquid esse nihil dum dicit
Videtur m̄hi nihil ésse. 10
- 4 Quod tale est quasi dicat Videtur mihi n̄híl quiddam ésse.
- 5 Quod si aliquid esse uidetur ut non sit quodam modo uidéri nón potest
quocirca relinquitur ut aliquid ésse uideátur.
- 6 Si uero huiusmodi fiat responsio Videtur mihi nihil nec áliquid ésse
huic responsioni óbuiándum est 15
primum ratione in quantum hominis rátio pátitur
deinde auctoritate non qualibet sed diuína dúmtaxat
quae sola auctoritas est solaque immobilem óbtinet firmitátem.
- 7 Agamus itaque ràtióne.
- 8 Omne itaque nomen finitum aliquid significat ut hómo lapis lígnum 20
haec enim ut dicta fuerint simul res quas significant intellégimus.
- 9 Quippe hominis nomen praeter differentiam aliquam positum uniuersalitem
hóminum désignat
lapis et lignum suam similiter generalitátem complectúntur.
- 10 Igitur nihil si modo nomen est ut grammatici asserunt finítum nómen est.
- 11 Omne autem nomen finitum áliquid significat. 25
- 12 Ipsum uero aliquid finitum ut non sit aliquid ínpossíbile est.
ut finitum aliquid non sit impossibile est ut nihil quod finitum est nón sit áliquid
ac per hoc ésse probábile est.
- 13 Item nihil uox significátíua est.
- 14 Omnis autem significatio ad id quod significat refértur. 30
- 15 Ex hoc etiam probatur non posse áliquid nón esse.
- 16 Item aliud Omnis significatio eius significátio ést quod est.
- 17 Nihil autem áliquid significat.
- 18 Igitur nihil eius significatio est quod est id est réi existéntis.

- 19 Quoniam uero ad demonstrandum quod non solum aliquid sit nihil
sed etiam magnum quiddam paucis actum est ratione
cum tamen possint huiusmodi exempla innumera profèri in médium
ad diuinam auctoritatem recurrere libet
quae est rationis munimen et stábile firmaméntum. 35
- 20 Siquidem uniuersa ecclesia diuinitus èrudíta
quae ex Xristi látere órta
sacratissimae carnis eius pabulo pretiosique sanguinis póculo èducáta
ab ipsis cunabilis secretorum mystériis institúta
inconcussa fide tenere confitetur diuinam potentiam operatam ésse ex nihilo
terram aquam aera et ignem lucem quoque et angelos atque ánimam hóminis. 40
- 21 Erigenda est igitur ad tanti culminis auctoritatem méntis ácies
quae nulla ratione cassari nullis argumentis refelli nullis potest uíribus
inpugnári. 45
- 22 Haec enim est quae praedicat ea quae inter creaturas prima ac praecipua sunt
ex nihilo cóndita.
- 23 Igitur nihil magnum quiddam ac praeclárum est quantúmque sit
unde tanta et tam praeclara sunt aestimandum nó est. 50
- 24 Quippe cum unum horum quae ex eo genita sunt aestimari sicut est ac definíri
nón possit.
- 25 Quis enim elementorum naturam ex ásse metúus est ?
- 26 Quis enim lucis aut angelicae uel animae substantiam ac natúram compléxus ?
- 27 Si ergo haec quae proposui humana ratione comprehéndere nequimus
quo modo obtinebimus quantum qualeue sit illud unde originem génusque
dúcant ? 55
- 28 Poteram autem et alia quam plurima subicere sed docibilibus quorumque
pectoribus satis his insinuátum crédimus. 56

DE SVBSTANTIA TENEBRARVM

- 1 Quoniam his breuiter dictis commode finem inposui
mox ad ea expedienda intentionem rétuli
quae curiosis lectoribus non inmerito uidebantur dígna quaesúta.
- 2 Est quidem quorundam opinio non esse tenebras et ut sint inpossibile ésse.
- 3 Quae quam facile refelli possit [? l. póssit refélli] 5
- Sacrae Scripturae auctoritate prolata in medium prudens léctor agnóscet.
- 4 Itaque quid libri Genesis historia inde séntiat uideátur.
- 5 Sic enim inquit *Et tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi.*
- 6 Quae si non erant qua consequentia díctur quia érant ?
- 7 Qui dicit tenebras esse rem constituèndo pónit 10
qui autem non esse rém negando tóllit
sicut cum dicimus Homo est rem id est hominem cóstitúimus
cum dicimus Homo non est rem negando id est hóminem tóllimus.
- 8 Nam uerbum substantiale hoc hábet in natúra
ut cuicumque subiecto fuerit iunctum sine negatione eiusdem subiecti decláret
substántiam. 15

- 9 Praedicando igitur in eo quod dictum est *Tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi*
res cónstitúta est
quam ab esse nulla negatio séparat àt diuidit.
- 10 Item tenebrae subiectum est érant declàratíuum
declarat enim praedicando tenebras quódam modo ésse.
- 11 Ecce inuicta auctoritas ratione comitata ratio quoque auctoritatem confessa
unum idémque praedicant 20
tenebras sc̄flicet ésse.
- 12 Sed cum ista exempli causa posita ad demonstrandum quae proposúimus
sufficiant
tamen ut nullis contradicendi occasio aémulis rèlinquátur
faciamus palam pauca diuina testimonia adgregántes e plúribus
quorum excussi formidine ineptissimas ulterius uoces aduersus ea iaculári non
aúdeant. 25
- 13 Siquidem Dominus cum pro adflictione populi Israel plagis seuerioribus
castigáret Aegýptum
tenebris etiam inuoluit adeo spissis út palpari quírent
et non solum obtutibus hominum uisum ádiméntibus
sed etiam pro sui crassitudine manuum tactui súbiacéntibus.
- 14 Quicquid enim tangi palparique potest ésse necesse est 30
quicquid esse necesse est non esse ínpossibile est
ac per hoc tenebras non esse ínpossibile est
quia esse necesse est quod ex eo quod est palpábile probátum est.
- 15 Illud quoque praétereúndum nón est
quod cum omnium Dominus inter lucem et tenebras diuisionem fáceret 35
lucem appellauit diem et ténebras nóctem.
- 16 Si enim diei nomen signíficat áliquid.
noctis nomen non potest aliquid non sígnificáre.
- 17 Dies autem lúcem signíficat
lux uero magnum aliquid est [? l. mágnum est áliquid] 40
dies enim et est et magnum aliquid est [? l. mágnum est áliquid].
- 18 Quid ergo ?
- 19 Nihiline significatíuae sunt ténebrae
cum eis uocabulum noctis ab eodem conditóre inpréssum est
qui luci appellationem diéi inpósuit ? 45
- 20 Cassanda est diuína auctóritas ?
- 21 Nullo modo.
- 22 Nam caelum et terram facilius èst transíre
quam auctoritatem diuinam a suo státu permutári.
- 23 Conditor etenim rebus quas condidit nómina inpréssit 50
ut suo quaeque nomine res dicta ágnita fóret.
- 24 Neque rem quamlibet absque uocabulo formáuit
nec uocabulum áliquod státuit
nisi cui statuerétur exísteret.
- 25 Quod si foret omnimodis uiderétur supérfluum 55
quod Deum fecisse néfas est díci.

- 26 Si autem nefas est dici Deum aliquid statuísse supérfluum
nomen quod Deus inposuit tenebris nullo modo uideri pótet supérfluum.
- 27 Quod si non est superfluum ést secundum módum.
- 28 Si uero secundum modum et nécessárium 60
quia eo ad dinoscéndum rem ópus est
quae per id sígnificátur.
- 29 Constat itaque Deum secundum modum res constituísse et nómina
quae sibi inuicem sunt nécessária.
- 30 Sanctus quoque Daudid Propheta Sancto Spírítu plénus 65
sciens tenebras non inane quiddam et uentósum sonáre
euidenter exprimit quía quíddam sunt.
- 31 Ait ergo *Misit tenebras.*
- 32 Si non sunt quómodo mittúntur?
- 33 Quod autem est mitti potest et illo mitti pótet ubi nón est? 70
- 34 Quod uero non est mitti quolibet non pótet quia núsquam est.
- 35 Igitur missae dicuntur ténebrae quia érant.
- 36 Item illud *Posuit tenebras latibulum suum.*
- 37 Quod scilicet erat posuit et quódam modo pósuit
ut tenebras quae erant latibulum súum póneret? 75
- 38 Item aliud *Sicut tenebrae eius*
ubi ostenditur quia in possessione sunt ac per hoc esse máifestántur.
- 39 Nam omne quód possidétur est
tenebrae autem in possessione sunt igitur sunt.
- 40 Sed cum ista talia ac tánta sufficiant 80
et arcem tutissimam contra omnia inpugnaménta téneant
unde leui repulsi tela in suos iaculatores rétorquere póssunt
ex euangelica tamen firmitate quaédam poscéndam sunt.
- 41 Ponamus igitur ipsius Sáluatoris uérba.
- 42 *Filii inquit regni eicientur in tenebras exteriores.* 85
- 43 Adtendendum est autem quod tenebras exterióres nóminat
extra enim unde exterius deriuatiuum est lócum signficat.
- 44 Quapropter cum dicit exteriores tenebras locales ésse demónstrat.
- 45 Nam non essent exteriores tenebrae nisi essent et ínterióres.
- 46 Quicquid autem exterius est id in lóco sit necesse est. 90
- 47 Quod uero nón est id núsquam est.
- 48 Igitur exteriores tenebrae non solum sunt sed étiam locáles sunt.
- 49 In Passione quoque Domini euangelista tenebras factas esse praedicat ab
hora diei sexta úsque ad hòram nónam.
- 50 Quae cum factae sint quomodo non ésse dicúntur?
- 51 Quod factum est éffici nón potest 95
ut fáctum non fúerit
quod uero semper non est nec úmquam fit id núnquam est
tenebrae aútem fáctae sunt
quare ut non sint éffici nón potest.
- 52 Item aliud *Si lumen quod in te est tenebrae sunt ipsae tenebrae quantae erunt?* 100
- 53 Neminem dubitare credo quin quantitas corporibus ádtribúta sit

- quae cuncta per quantitatem dístribuúntur
 et quantitas quidem secundum accidens ést corpóribus
 accidentia uero aut in subiecto sunt aut de subiécto praedicántur.
- 54 Per hoc ergo quod dicitur *Ipsae tenebrae quantae erunt* ? quantitas in subiécto 105
 monstrátur
 unde probabili argumento colligitur tenebras non solum esse sed etiam
 córporales ésse.
- 55 Itaque haec pauca ratione simul et auctoritate congesta uestrae magnitudini
 atque prudentiae scribere curáui
 ut eis fixe immobilitérque haeréntes
 nulla falsa opinione inlecti a ueritatis tramite declináre póssitis. 110
- 56 Sed si forte a quocumque aliquid prolatum fuerit ab hac nostra ratióne
 dissétiens
 ad hanc ueluti ad regulam recurrentes probabilibus sententiis eius stultas
 machinationes deícere uáleátis. 112
- EXPLICIT.

TRANSLATION

**INTERROGATION OF THE LORD CHARLES, MOST SERENE EMPEROR
 ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF NOTHING AND OF SHADOWS**

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
 CHARLES, MOST SERENE AUGUSTUS
 CROWNED BY GOD
 GREAT AND PEACE-MAKING EMPEROR GOVERNING THE ROMAN EMPIRE
 WHO ALSO THROUGH GOD'S MERCY KING OF FRANKS AND LOMBARDS
 TO DUNGAL OUR FAITHFUL MAN

- 1 The sentences or reasonings [with play on 'ratios'] which we are directing to you about the substance of nothing and of shadows we wish you diligently and studiously to explore and study to signify to us whether they may be right and true or notable for any falsity.
- 2 Nothing nonetheless allegorically or figurally should you attend to there but naked speech and naked letter signifying a naked thing.
- 3 It does not, however, lie open to us what our elders may have wished to understand allegorically in these things since, if you seek other examples, how very many ready there are just as in Psalms 'For nothing you will make those men safe' and in Job 'Who appends the earth above nothing' and the rest.
- 4 Similarly if you should seek other examples about the substance of shadows you will be able to hold the mind to these also among the rest as is 'Bless, light and shadows, the Lord'

and the Apostle 'God Who said from the shadows light should shine'
 in the Prophet the law of the Lord in an utterance 'I, the Lord, forming light and
 creating shadows'
 and in Job 'He has placed a time for shadows, and Himself creates the end of all
 things'
 in the same way there 'He has given a boundary to the waters until light and shadows
 be ended'
 in the same way another: 'All shadows hidden in the secret places of God'
 and 'They turned night into day and again after shadows I hope for light'.

TO ALL THE FAITHFUL MEN OF GOD AND OF OUR LORD
 THE MOST SERENE PRINCE CHARLES
 LIVING TOGETHER IN HIS SACRED PALACE
 FREDEGISUS THE DEACON
 ON THE SUBSTANCE OF NOTHING

- 1 The question about nothing, proceeded with repeatedly for a very long time by very many men
 which they left behind undiscussed and unexamined, as if impossible to explicate, turning over and completely drawing out with myself attentively, finally, as it seemed to me, I approached,
 and I untied and unknotted it from the strong knots, broken apart, with which it seemed implicated
 and with the cloud wiped away I brought it back into the light,
 also I have foreseen that it be handed over to the memory of posterity to all ages in the future.
- 2 The question, however, is of this sort: is nothing something or may it not be?
- 3 If anyone should respond 'It seems to me to be nothing'
 this, his negation which he thinks, compels him to confess, while he says 'It seems to me to be nothing', that nothing is something.
- 4 Which is such as if he should say 'It seems to me that nothing is a certain something'.
- 5 Which if it seems to be something it cannot seem in a certain manner that it may not exist
 concerning which it is left behind [as a logical consequence] that it would seem to be something.
- 6 If in truth a response of this sort should be made 'It seems to me that nothing is not something'
 to this response it must be put by way of an answer
 first by reason in so far as the reason of a man lies open [*i.e.* is evident]
 then by authority, not just by any, but by divine moreover
 which is the only authority, and it alone ascertains unmoveable firmness.
- 7 And so let us proceed with reason.
- 8 And so every finite noun signifies something, as 'man', 'stone', 'wood'
 for these [words], as they may be said, signify at once things which we understand.

- 9 Indeed the noun 'of man' posited designates beyond any distinctive difference [of an individual] the universality of men
'stone' and 'wood' embrace similarly their own generality.
- 10 Therefore 'nothing', if now [or 'in a manner'] it is a noun, as grammarians assert, it is a finite noun.
- 11 Every finite noun, however, signifies something.
- 12 In truth, that the finite something itself may not be something is impossible so that it is impossible that a finite something may not be, so that nothing which is finite may not be something,
and through this its existence is proveable.
- 13 In the same way nothing is a signification word.
- 14 Every signification, however, is referred to that which it signifies.
- 15 From this also it is proved not to be possible for something not to be.
- 16 In the same way, another: every signification is what its signification is.
- 17 'Nothing', however, signifies something.
- 18 Therefore 'nothing' is the signification of that which is the 'it' of an existing thing.
- 19 Since in truth it is to be demonstrated that not only may nothing be something but also a great certain something is made by reason [or 'ratio'] from a few things though nonetheless unnumbered examples of this sort may be brought forth into the middle [*i.e.* 'into the centre', 'into the open for consideration']
one ought to recur [lit. 'run back'] to divine authority
which is the foundation of reason and a stable firm base.
- 20 Just as the universal church divinely instructed [lit. 'brought out from rudeness']
which, born from the side of Christ
educated with the food of His most sacred flesh and with the cup of precious blood from the very cradles instituted with the mysteries of secrets
it confesses to hold in unshaken faith that divine power wrought existence from
nothing
earth, water, air, and fire, also light, and angels, and the soul of man.
- 21 Sharpness of mind is therefore to be raised up to the authority of such a peak [by hypallage 'to such a peak of authority'],
which can be frustrated by no reason, refuted by no arguments, impugned [lit. 'fought against'] by no powers.
- 22 For this is that which predicates these things which were established from nothing,
first and foremost among creatures.
- 23 Therefore nothing may be a certain something, great and outstandingly bright and very great
whence it cannot be estimated how many and what very bright things have come.
- 24 Indeed not even one of these things which have been begotten from it can be estimated and defined just as it is.
- 25 For who has measured the nature of the elements from an *as* [*i.e.* 'from a small unit']?
- 26 For who has embraced the substance and nature either of angelic light or of the soul?
- 27 If therefore we do not know how to comprehend by human reason these things which I have proposed

in what manner will we ascertain how much or of what sort that may be whence they draw their origin and kind?

- 28 I had, however, added also very many others, but we believe the one insinuated in these things sufficient for the breasts of those teachable men.

ON THE SUBSTANCE OF SHADOWS

- 1 Since I have briefly imposed an end fitly with these brief sayings
I have brought the intention back immediately to the expediting of these things
which seemed not without merit worthy of inquiry by curious readers.
- 2 It is indeed the opinion of certain men that shadows do not exist and that their existence is impossible.
- 3 How easily this can be refuted
the prudent reader will know by the authority of Sacred Scripture brought forth into
the middle [for consideration].
- 4 And so what the history of the book of Genesis may feel about that should be seen.
- 5 For thus it says 'And shadows were above the face of the abyss'.
- 6 By what consequence is it said that they were if these things were not?
- 7 Who says that shadows exist posits by constituting a thing
who, however, [says that they] do not exist takes away by negating a thing
just as when we say 'A man is' we constitute a thing, that is, a man
when we say 'A man is not' we take away by denying a thing, that is, a man.
- 8 For a substantial word has this in nature
that a thing joined to whatever subject it may be without negation of the same subject
declares a substance.
- 9 By predicating, therefore, in that which is said 'Shadows were upon the face of the
abyss' a thing has been constituted
which no negation separates or divides from existence.
- 10 In the same way 'shadows' is the subject, 'were' the declarative
for it declares by predicating that shadows exist in whatever manner.
- 11 Lo, with unconquered authority accompanied by reason, reason also having
confessed authority, they predicate one and the same thing
understand, that shadows exist.
- 12 But though these things posited for the sake of example suffice for demonstrating the
things which we have proposed
nevertheless that an occasion of contradicting be left to no envious men
let us make in the open, aggregating a few divine testimonies from many
struck out by the strength of which they [*sc.* our opponents] may not dare to hurl
most inept words further against them.
- 13 Since indeed the Lord for the affliction of the people of Israel castigated Egypt with
rather severe plagues
He even wrapped [it] in shadows so thick that they could be felt
and not only by taking away sight from the ongazings of men
but even adding a feature because of their density to the touching of hands.
- 14 For whatever can be touched and felt has necessarily to exist
whatever has necessarily to exist cannot possibly not exist

- and through this it is impossible for shadows not to exist
because existence is necessary which has been proved from that which is palpable.
- 15 That also must not be passed over
because when the Lord of all things made a division between light and shadows
He called the light day and the shadows night.
- 16 For if the name 'of day' signifies something
the name 'of night' cannot not signify something.
- 17 Day, however, signifies light
light in truth is something great
for day both is and is something great.
- 18 What therefore ?
- 19 Are shadows significative of nothing
since the word 'of night' has been impressed on them by the same Creator
Who imposed for light the appellation 'of day' ?
- 20 Is divine authority to be frustrated ?
- 21 In no manner.
- 22 For it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away [lit. 'to go across']
than for divine authority to be completely changed from its own state.
- 23 For the Creator impressed names upon the things which He created
so that each said thing might be known by its own name.
- 24 Neither did He form anything whatever without a word
nor did He establish any word
unless the thing for which it was established existed.
- 25 Because it would seem superfluous in all respects if it should be
that something God made is to be called unspeakable.
- 26 If, however, something that God established superfluous is to be called unspeakable
the name that God imposed on the shadows can in no manner be seen as super-
fluous.
- 27 Because if it is not superfluous it is according to measure.
- 28 If in truth according to measure, [then] also necessary
because by it the thing is a work to be known
which is signified through it.
- 29 And so it stands that God established according to measure things and names
which are necessary to each other in turn.
- 30 Also holy David the prophet, filled with the Holy Spirit
knowing that shadows do not represent a certain empty and windy thing
evidently expresses that they are a certain thing.
- 31 He says therefore 'He sent shadows'.
- 32 If they are not, how are they sent ?
- 33 What, however, is it that can be sent and can be sent from Him where it is not ?
- 34 What in truth is not cannot be sent from anywhere because it is nowhere.
- 35 Therefore shadows are said 'sent' because they were.
- 36 In the same way that [quotation]: 'He placed shadows as His own hiding place'.
- 37 What, understand, was it He placed, and in what manner did He place it
so that He should place shadows which were His own hiding place ?
- 38 In the same way another: 'Just as His shadows'

- where it is shown that they are in possession and through this they are manifested to exist.
- 39 For everything that is possessed is shadows, however, are in possession, therefore they are.
- 40 But since these such and so many suffice they should hold the fortress very safe against all attacks whence with a light repulse they can return the missiles against their own hurlers from evangelical firmness, nonetheless, whatever they are bound to be asked.
- 41 Let us put therefore the words of the Saviour Himself.
- 42 'Sons' He says 'of the kingdom will be ejected into the outer shadows'.
- 43 It is to be attended to, however, that He names the shadows 'outer' for 'without', whence 'outer' is derivative, signifies a place.
- 44 On which account when He says 'outer' He demonstrates shadows to be local.
- 45 For there may not be outer shadows unless there be also inner.
- 46 Whatever, however, outer is, it is necessary that it be in a place.
- 47 What in truth is not is nowhere.
- 48 Therefore outer shadows not only are, but they are also local.
- 49 In the Passion of the Lord also the evangelist predicates shadows to have been made from the sixth hour of the day until the ninth hour.
- 50 Which, since they were made, how can they be said not to exist ?
- 51 What has been made cannot be unmade as if it were not made what in truth is not always and is never made, that never is ; shadows, however, were made wherefore it cannot be unmade as though they are not.
- 52 In the same way another: 'If the light which is in you are shadows, the shadows themselves how great will they be ?'
- 53 I believe no man doubts indeed that quantity is attributed to bodies which are all distributed through quantity and quantity indeed is in bodies according to accident the accidents in truth either are in the subject or they are predicated from the subject.
- 54 Through this therefore which is said 'The shadows themselves how great will they be ?' quantity in the subject is demonstrated whence by a provable argument it is gathered that shadows not only are, but also they are corporal.
- 55 And so I have taken care to write these few things by reason together also with authority, put together for your greatness and prudence so that clinging fixedly and immoveably to them enticed by no false opinion can you decline from the path of truth.
- 56 But if by chance anything will have been brought forth by anyone dissenting from this our reason recurring [lit. 'running back'] to this as to a rule you may be powerful enough to throw down their foolish machinations with more proveable sentences.
- IT ENDS.

ANALYSIS

It is immediately apparent that Fredegisus arranged his words and ideas in parallel and chiasmic patterns, first in the first quarter of *De Substantia Nihili*, from the beginning to the explicit appeal to reason.

A	1	agitatam
B	1	nihilo
C	2	reliquerunt
D	4	uisum mihi fuit
E	5	uidebatur
F	8	nihilne aliquid sit
G	9	responderit Videtur mihi nihil esse
H	10	fateri aliquid esse nihil
G'	10	dicit Videtur mihi nihil esse
F'	11	nihil quiddam esse
E'	12	uidetur
D'	12	uideri
C'	13	relinquitur
B'	14	nihil
A'	19	agamus

In this passage, which extends over nineteen lines and 150 words, the crux of the chiasmus occurs in the central tenth line. The central words, 74-77 of 150, state what Fredegisus seeks to prove, that nothing is a certain something.

The second chiasmic pattern overlaps the first.

A	16	primum ratione
B	17	deinde auctoritate non qualibet sed diuina dumtaxat
C	19	agamus itaque ratione
D	20	aliquid
E	20	significat
F	24	igitur nihil
G	25	omne autem nomen finitum aliquid significat
H1	28	ac per hoc esse probabile est
H2	29	item
H3	30	omnis autem significatio ad id quod significat refertur
H'1	31	ex hoc etiam probatur non posse aliquid non esse
H'2	32	item aliud
H'3	32	omnis significatio eius significatio est quod est
G'	33	nihil autem aliquid significat
F'	34	igitur nihil
E'	35	significatio
D'	35	aliquid
C'	36	actum est ratióne
B'	38	ad diuinam auctoritatem recurrere libet
A'	39	rationis munimen et stabile fundamentum

This passage, which extends over twenty-four lines and 195 words, divides by the ratio 2:1, which, as we shall see below, governs the composition of the entire treatise, at 16:8 lines and 130:65 words, by both criteria at the crux of the chiasmus, in H'1, which states what Fredegisus seeks to prove, that it is not possible for something not to be.

The third pattern occupies sentences 20-28.

A1	45	lucem quoque et angelos atque animam
A2	45	hominis
A3	47	ratione
A4	50	unde tanta et tam praeclara sunt
B	50	aestimandum non est
B'	51	aestimari sicut est ac definiri non possit
A'1	53	lucis aut angelicae uel animae substantiam
A'2	54	humana
A'3	54	ratione
A'4	55	unde originem genusque ducunt

In this passage, which extends over eleven lines 45-55 and 121 words, the crux of the chiasmus occurs in the central sixth line. The central word, 66th of 121, occurs at the end of B at the crux of the chiasmus.

The fourth pattern unites the entire text of lines 1-56.

A	1	quam plurima
B1	18	auctoritas
B2	18	obtinet
C	37	in medium
B'1	46	auctoritatem
B'2	53	obtinebimus
A'	56	quam plurima

The crux of the chiasmus occurs at *in medium* 'into the middle'.¹⁰

Fredegisus arranged his words and ideas in parallel and chiasmic patterns also in *De Substantia Tenebrarum*.

A1	8	sic enim dicit
A2	8	tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi
B1	10	qui dicit
B2	10	tenebras esse rem constituendo ponit
B3	11	qui autem non esse rem negando tollit
B'1	12	sicut cum dicimus
B'2	12	homo est rem id est hominem constituimus
B'3	13	cum dicimus homo non est rem negando id est hominem tollimus
A'1	16	praedicando igitur in eo quod dictum est
A'2	16	tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi

¹⁰ For other examples of this see D. HOWLETT, 'Five Experiments in Textual Reconstruction and Analysis', *Peritia* IX (1995), pp. 1-50 at 12-14, 18, '*Rubisca*: An Edition, Translation, and Commentary', *Ibid.* X (1996), pp. 71-90 at 87-88, *Caledonian Craftsmanship*, pp. 15-18.

A	44	uocabulum
B1	44	conditore
B2	44	inpressum est
C	46	cassandra est
D	46	diuina
E	46	auctoritas
F	47	nullo modo
E'	49	auctoritatem
D'	49	diuinam
C'	49	a suo statu permutari
B'1	50	conditor
B'2	50	inpressit
A'	53	uocabulum
A	100	item aliud
B	100	ipsae tenebrae quantae erunt
C1a101		quantitas
C1b101		corporibus
C2	101	adtributa sit
C3	102	quae cuncta per quantitatem
C2'102		distribuuntur
C1'a103		quantitas
C1'b103		corporibus
D	104	in subiecto
E	104	praedicantur
A'	105	per hoc quod dicitur
B'	105	ipsae tenebrae quantae erunt
C'	105	quantitas
D'	105	in subiecto
E'	105	monstratur

The title, considered here as occupying one line of text, contains ten words, thirty-four syllables, seventy-five letters, and eighty-four letters and spaces between words. In the twenty-three-letter Latin alphabet the name *CAROLVS* exhibits a value of $3+1+17+14+11+20+18$ or 84, coincident with the number of letters and spaces between words in the title.

The salutation from Charlemagne to Dúngal contains thirty-three words, eighty-four syllables, 197 letters, and 229 letters and spaces between words. The thirty-three words are coincident with the age of Jesus, 33. The eighty-four syllables are coincident with the eighty-four letters and spaces between words of the title and with the alphanumeric value of the name *CAROLVS*. After *CAROLVS* | the eighty-fourth letter is the *Q* of *QVI*, who is *CAROLVS*. The last word of the salutation also denotes Charlemagne. The nominative form *NOSTER* bears a numerical value of $13+14+18+19+5+17$ or 86, which, added to the 84 of *CAROLVS*, equals 170, coincident with the number of letters and

spaces between words from the space after *CAROLVS* exclusive to the space before *NOSTRO* inclusive.

The name *DVNGALO* exhibits a numerical value of $4+20+13+7+1+11+14$ or 70, which, added to the 84 of *CAROLVS*, equals 154, coincident with the number of letters and spaces between words between *CAROLVS* | and | *DVNGALO*.

The word *DEVS* exhibits a numerical value of $4+5+20+18$ or 47, coincident with the number of syllables from the beginning to | *A DEO* and from | *DEI* to the end.

The word *IMPERATOR* exhibits a numerical value of $9+12+15+5+17+1+19+14+17$ or 109, coincident with the number of letters and spaces between words from *IMPERATOR* | to the end.

The word *REX* exhibits a numerical value of $17+5+21$ or 43, coincident with the number of letters from *REX* | to the end.

After the salutation follows the preface, eighteen lines long, in two parts, the first *De Substantia Nihili* and the second *De Substantia Tenebrarum*, each nine lines long. From the beginning to *et cetera* | there are eighty-four words, and from | *Similiter* to the end there are eighty-two words. In the first part Fredegisus cites two Biblical sources, Psalm LIV 8 and Job XXVI 7, and in the second part four Biblical sources, the prophet Daniel III 72, the apostle Paul in II Corinthians IV 6, the prophet Isaiah XLV 6-7, and fourth Job XXVIII 3, XXVI 10, XX 26, and XVII 12, the fourth and last source quoted four times. Here we see symmetry in the number of lines 9-9. If we reckon eighty-four words in the first part we see another reflex of the alphanumeric value of the emperor's name. If we reckon the words as 82-2-82, we see another symmetry. But we also see duple ratio 2:1, twice as many sources cited in the second part as in the first, 4:2.

After the preface follows the salutation from Fredegisus to his fellow courtiers. The word abbreviated *dni* in the Brussels manuscript is here written *DOMNI* because that is the form written in full in capital letters at the top of the same folio. *DOMNI* is also written in full in capital letters at the tops of the folios of both the Paris and the Vatican manuscripts. Both the Paris and the Vatican manuscripts read *KAROLI*.

The salutation contains sixteen words, forty-seven syllables, 108 letters and one paraph, together 109 characters, and 125 letters and spaces between words.

The double salutation is a form of homage by a man of Tours to the tradition established by Sulpicius Seuerus, who introduced his Life of Saint Martin of Tours with a double preface. In the Insular tradition this phenomenon recurs in the Anonymous of Whitby's *Vita Sancti Gregorii*, the Anonymous of Lindisfarne's *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, Muirchú moccu Macthéni's *Vita Sancti Patricii*, Adomnán of Iona's *Vita Sancti Columbae*, and the Venerable Bede's *Vita Metrica Sancti Cuthberti*, all written before the time of Fredegisus. The three lines and

sixteen words of Fredegisus's salutation are half as many as the six lines and thirty-three words of Charlemagne's salutation, another duple ratio, expressed in two different elements, the number of lines and the number of words.

The forty-seven syllables are coincident with the numerical value of *DEVVS*, noted above in Charlemagne's salutation to Dúngal.

The 109 characters are coincident with the numerical value of *IMPERATOR*, for whom Fredegisus was writing, coincident also with the numerical value of *FREDEGISVS*, $6+17+5+4+5+7+9+18+20+18$ or 109. One may understand this as an internal confirmation of the author's preferred spelling of his own name and a clear indication of his association with the emperor.

His title *DIACONVS* bears a numerical value of $4+9+1+3+14+13+20+18$ or 82, coincident with the eighty-two words in the second part of the preface placed between the two salutations.

In the preliminaries one line of the title, six lines of the salutation from Charlemagne to Dúngal, eighteen lines of the preface, and three lines of the salutation from Fredegisus to his fellow courtiers total twenty-eight lines. The number 28 is a perfect number and also a triangular number, $1+2+3+4+5+6+7$. It is also the key to the number of sentences in part I, *De Substantia Nihili*.

The twenty-eight sentences of part I divide by duple ratio at 18.67 and 9.33, that is, two-thirds of the way through sentence 19, of which the thirty-nine words divide by duple ratio at 26 and 13, at *in | medium* 'at | the mean'.¹¹ In part II sentence 3 contains fourteen words, which divide by duple ratio at 9.33 and 4.67, at *in medium*.

The word *NIHIL* bears an alphanumeric value of $13+9+8+9+11$ or 50. In *De Substantia Nihili* there are between *nihili* | in the title and | *nihilo* 1 fifty letters and spaces between words. From | *quaestionem de nihilo* | to *quaestio ... nihilne* | 8 there are fifty words. From | *nihilne* 8 to | *nihil* 9 there are fifty letters. From | *nihilne* 8 to the first *nihil* | 10 there are fifty syllables. From the second *nihil* | 10 to *nihil* | 11 there are fifty letters and spaces between words.

The word *TENEBRA* bears an alphanumeric value of $19+5+13+5+2+17+1$ or 62. From | *De Substantia Tenebrarum* to | *tenebrae* 8 there are sixty-two words, of which the central, thirty-first, is *tenebras* | 4.

The word *HOMO* bears an alphanumeric value of $8+14+12+14$ or 48. In part I line 20 there are forty-eight letters and spaces before | *homo*. In part II lines 12-13 between *homo* | and | *homo* there are forty-eight letters and spaces between words. In the same lines after *hominem* | the forty-eighth letter is the *h* of *hominem*.

The word *LAPIS* bears an alphanumeric value of $11+1+15+9+18$ or 54. In part I line 20 the fifty-fourth of the letters and spaces between words is the *l* of *lapis*.

¹¹ For a long tradition of play on this word see D. HOWLETT, 'Medius as 'Middle' and 'Mean'', *Peritia* XIII (1999), pp. 93-126.

The word *LECTOR* bears an alphanumeric value of $11 + 5 + 3 + 19 + 14 + 17$ or 69. In part II between *lectoribus* | 3 and | *lector* 6 there are sixty-nine syllables.

The first part of the treatise *De Substantia Nihili* occupies twenty-eight sentences and fifty-six lines. The second part of the treatise *De Substantia Tenebrarum* occupies fifty-six sentences and 112 lines. The two parts of the treatise, occupying together eighty-four sentences and 168 lines, are related by duple ratio, reckoned both by the number of sentences, 56:28, and by the number of lines, 112:56, and also by the number of lines to the number of sentences in each part, 56:28 and 112:56. The eighty-four sentences are prefigured in the various plays on the number 84 in the title and salutation and preface.

The two parts are related further by duple ratio in that Fredegisus uses the word *nihil* sixteen times in part I (title, 1, 8, 9, 10 *bis*, 11, 14, 24, 27, 29, 33, 35, 44, 48, 49) and the word *tenebrae* thirty-two times in part II (title, 4, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21, 27, 32, 35, 36, 43, 58, 66, 68, 72, 73, 75, 76, 79, 85, 86, 88, 89, 92, 93, 98, 100 *bis*, 105, 106).

The two parts are related also by symmetry. In *De Substantia Nihili* Fredegisus uses the word *ratio* six times (16 *bis*, 19, 36, 39, 54) and the word *auctoritas* four times (17, 18, 38, 46). In *De Substantia Tenebrarum* Fredegisus uses the word *ratio* four times (20 *bis*, 108, 111) and the word *auctoritas* six times (6, 20 *bis*, 46, 49, 108).

The 396 words of part I divide by duple ratio at 264 and 132, at *ratione* | 16. The word *RATIO* bears an alphanumeric value of $17 + 1 + 19 + 9 + 14$ or 60. After *ratione* | 16 the sixtieth syllable is the first of *ratione* 19.

Fredegisus infixed several other features that guarantee the authenticity and integrity of his text. There are in part I from | *De substantia nihili* to | *Xristi* 41 exactly 333 CCCXXXIII words.¹²

The number of letters in Charlemagne's Salutation provides the key to the number of lines in the entire composition, 197.¹³ At the very end of the composition from the beginning of part II sentence 56 | *Sed* to *EXPLICIT* | there are 197 letters and spaces between words.

The prose is elegantly rhythmical throughout. Of the 197 lines every line of more than four syllables that does not end in a Biblical quotation ends in a good cursus rhythm except part II lines 5, 40, and 41. With simple reversal of word order even these three lines would exhibit good cursus rhythms, but as early Insular Latin writers often composed prose in which three lines did not conform, there are good reasons for leaving these lines as they are.¹⁴

¹² For play on the number 333 in other Insular Latin texts see D. HOWLETT, *Caledonian Craftsmanship*, pp. 83 and 102.

¹³ For another example of this phenomenon in the text of a manuscript written in a scriptorium under the influence of Tours see D. HOWLETT, 'Synodus Prima Sancti Patricii: An Exercise in Textual Reconstruction', *Peritia* XII (1998), pp. 238-253 at 252-253.

¹⁴ D. HOWLETT, 'Insular Latin Writers' Rhythms', *Peritia* XI (1997), pp. 53-116.

The diction illustrates punctilious consistency. When one quarter of the way through *De Substantia Nihili* Fredegisus resorts formally to reason and authority the first word of sentence 7, *agamus*, echoes the first word of sentence 1, *agitata*, implying that the frequentative of the historical past will not need to be repeated because of his definitive present discussion. When in sentence 19 he refers again to reason and authority he writes *ad diuinam auctoritatem recurrere libet*. The infinitive suggests what is appropriate for mortal men. In *De Substantia Tenebrarum* Fredegisus returns to this diction in sentence 22, *Nam caelum et terram facilius est transire quam auctoritatem diuinam a suo statu permutari*. The created heaven and earth can *transire*, as created men can *recurrere*, but the divine stability remains in *suo statu*, the underlying idea being stasis, from the verb *stare*, an idea to which Fredegisus returns in sentence 29, where a divine ordinance *constat*. Although the rhythm, the punctilious consistency of diction, the formality of the grammatical and philosophical arguments, the ratio-based composition, and the intricately overlapping gematria might seem to imply serious intent, the subject of the substance of nothing and shadows suggests play. The man to whom the composition is addressed was an intellectual heir of the Hiberno-Latin parodist Virgilius Maro Grammaticus. As in the second sentence of the Preface Fredegisus uses the word *nihil* in a sense that undermines the argument of the rest of the treatise, one may suspect that this little exercise is an elaborate joke and wonder how many *in sacro palatio consistentibus* got it.

David HOWLETT
 Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources
 Bodleian Library, Oxford