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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Gregory Burgas for the Master of Arts in History were presented November 2, 2000, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Gregory Burgas for the Master of Arts in History presented November 2, 2000.

Title: Legislating Against Reality: The Political Conflicts and Context of the Seventh-Century Merovingian Church Councils

The bishops of the seventh-century Merovingian Church were often drawn from the secular aristocracy after long careers in local or royal government. They remained involved in politics even after becoming bishops, and these entanglements occasionally dictated their actions. Historians have examined these actions by using the chronicles and hagiography of the seventh century, but not by using the Church councils.

I translated the last five general councils of the Merovingian Church from the Latin into English for the first time, and then examined the councils in their political context. In the seventh century, the bishops were asserting their independence from the monarch with more force than in prior years, and this conflict for power can be seen in the canonical legislation.

The three themes that are examined in this thesis are episcopal election and distribution of Church property; problems with women; and punishment of canonical infractions. The bishops wanted independence from the monarchy and

the aristocracy in dealing with these issues, and the canons reflect this desire. From other sources, historians know that compromises often overrode the legislation, but this does not change the fact that the canons can be used to know what the bishops wanted from their flock and the areas in which they felt they should have dominance.

This thesis concludes that the bishops were involved in politics even when they came together to consider the state of their Church. They codified their relationship with the secular world in the canonical legislation, and they also laid out an ideal on which they could fall back when they were in a position of strength. The canons are not meant to be binding law, but they were meant to be a guide by which the bishops could negotiate with their rivals. The secular nature of Merovingian bishops has often been asserted, using other evidence. This thesis reinforces that notion by examining what the bishops decided about their Church when they gathered together, rather than when they dealt with the monarchy on a one-to-one basis.

LEGISLATING AGAINST REALITY:
THE POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND CONTEXT OF THE SEVENTH-CENTURY MEROVINGIAN CHURCH COUNCILS

by

GREGORY BURGAS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
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INTRODUCTION: "Nothing but a series of murders and horrible scenes"

1. The Merovingians and History

Dusk was gathering one day at the manor of Chelles, near Paris, in 584 A.D. The king had just returned from hunting and wanted to rest. As he alighted from his horse, a man materialized from the shadows and lunged at the king with a knife. The blade entered the king in the armpit, and he staggered under the blow. As the king reeled, the assassin stabbed him again in the stomach. The king, bleeding from the mouth as well as from his wounds, cried out and fell. He died there on the stable floor.

Why was the king killed? Was it discontent with his rule? Was it in revenge for a murder the king ordered years before? Was it perhaps a conspiracy hatched by his adulterous wife and her lover? Because the king was Chilperic I, one of the most notorious of the early rulers of Frankish Gaul, the suspect list was long and varied. According to the primary chronicler of the sixth century, Gregory, the bishop of Tours, Chilperic was both the Nero and Herod of the time, caring for no one and "loved by none." In his hour of death, he was "deserted by all."[1]

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[1] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1974), VI.46 [hereafter *HF*] gives the story of Chilperic's murder. Gregory does not suggest a motive or identify the killer. Later chroniclers put the onus on Queen Brunhild, who hated Chilperic because he profited from her husband's death in 575, or on two men sent by Landeric, the mayor of the palace, who was egged on by Fredegund, Chilperic's wife, with whom Landeric was having an adulterous relationship. Whoever may have perpetrated the crime, there was no shortage of suspects. See more below, p. 34. For the Latin text see: Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, ed. Bruno Krusch and William Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* (Hanover, 1951).

Gregory of Tours used the story of Chilperic's murder to lead into a description of the king's calumnies against the Gallic Church. He begins by writing that "[Chilperic] showed no remorse at what he did, but rather rejoiced in it, like Nero of old who recited tragedies while his palace was going up in flames." Gregory can barely control his fury when he describes how the king treated the Church:

> He never ceased his attacks on those who served our Lord and, when he was among his intimate friends, the bishops were the constant butt of his ridicule and facetiousness. One he would accuse of levity, another of *superbia*, a third of excess and a fourth of *luxuria*. How empty-headed was this bishop, according to him, how pompous that! There was nothing that he hated so much as he hated the churches. He was perpetually heard to say: "My treasury is always empty. All our wealth has fallen into the hands of the Church. There is no one with any power left except the bishops. Nobody respects me as King: all respect has passed to the bishops in their cities." With this in his mind he made a practice of tearing up wills in which property had been bequeathed to the bishops.[2]

Gregory continues in this vitriolic vein for a while. Chilperic's historical reputation was sealed.

The king and his frustration with the Catholic Church are at the heart of Merovingian politics. During the Merovingian era in Gaul, Germanic settlers interacted with the Roman aristocracy left after the fall of the Western Empire and built a new society on the old. The bishops of the Merovingian Church were often drawn from this Roman aristocratic class, and they expected to be treated like aristocrats. Many sources reflect how the bishops policed themselves and the clergy they supervised. One of the more valuable of these sources is canon law.

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[2] *HF*, VI.46. Thorpe inexplicably declines to translate *superbia* and *luxuria* - arrogance and extravagance. The Latin reads: *Illum ferebat levem, alium superbum, illum habundantem, istum luxoriosum.*

The councils of the Gallic Church defined the laws and attempted to codify the relationship of the Church with the monarchy and the laity. The canons of the councils give a more complete view of the history of Gaul during the Merovingian era than the chronicles alone provide. This is especially noteworthy for the seventh century, after Gregory of Tours had died and taken his keen eye with him. The chronicles become less reliable and detailed, and other sources need to be consulted to draw an accurate picture of life in the Frankish kingdoms. In this thesis I examine five councils of the seventh century Gallic Church in a political context. Chilperic's complaints in the sixth century about the bishops had not vanished in the seventh, and, among other concerns, the councils reflect the bishops' anxiety over matters of ecclesiastical election, the distribution of property, clerical relations with women, and punishment for infractions of canon law.

The councils with which I will deal in this thesis are those of Clichy (626/627 A.D.), Chalon (647-653), Bordeaux (662-675), Losne (673-675), and Autun (663-680).[3] I have translated the councils into English for the first time, and I will explain how the bishops used canon law in their struggle for independence from their sovereign. This conflict is an important part of Western European history, and in the Merovingian era it revealed itself for the first time after the fall of the Roman Empire.[4] The councils are significant because they are the last general synods held in the Merovingian kingdoms, and during the seventh century the Church was able to assert itself more than in the sixth and perhaps have some hope of success in implementing the canons.

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[3] One source in which they can be found is Jean Gaudemet and Brigitte Basdevant, eds., *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens (VIe - VIIe siècles)*, Sources chrétiennes (Paris, 1989), which has the original Latin and a French translation.

The Merovingians as a dynasty were once relegated to the footnotes of history, but in the past two decades historians have made a serious and largely successful effort to rescue their reputation from Carolingian propaganda. As the dynasty that replaced them in 751, the Carolingians had much to gain from painting their predecessors with a tarred brush. Historians, perhaps dazzled by Charlemagne, largely accepted the assessment of the great king's biographer, Einhard, who claimed, among other things, that for many years prior to the deposition of the last Merovingian king, Childeric III, the monarchs had lost all power. Control in the kingdom had devolved to the office of *maior domus*. The most famous of the *maiores domus* were from the Pippinid family, predecessors of the Carolingians.[5] According to Einhard, Childeric III simply sat on his throne, "with his hair long and his beard uncut," and acted out his part. The mayor permitted him very little freedom, but did allow him to travel about the countryside in a cart "pulled by yoked oxen and led, as happens in the countryside, by a herdsman."[6]

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[4] Visigothic Spain is a unique example because of the presence of the Arian monarchy for many years.

[5] The origin of the *maior domus*, usually called the mayor of the palace, is obscure. The first reference is in *HF*, VI.9, when Badegisil leaves the office to become bishop of Le Mans. The office becomes far more important in the seventh century. For more on the office see Paul

Edward Gibbon picked up this theme in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) when he wrote that the later Merovingians "lost the inheritance of his [Clovis, the founder of the dynasty] martial and ferocious spirit," and that they "ascended to the throne without power, and sunk into the grave without a name."[7] Twentieth-century historians, for some time, saw no reason to disagree about the dynasty as a whole. Samuel Dill, writing in the early part of the century, wrote of the conquering Franks:

> The vices inherent in the nature of the victorious race, rapacity, feud, and cruelty, were scarcely mitigated by its adoption of the spiritual suzerainty of the Church and its adaptability to the old civilisation. The old barbaric temper was continually breaking through the restraints of law and organised authority, and the centralisation of the Franco-Roman system which was its strength proved often to be a grave danger when the power

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Fouracre, "Merovingians, Mayors of the Palace and the Notion of a 'Low-Born' Ebroin," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 57, no. 135 (1984): 1-14, especially 7-11.

[6] Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, in Paul Dutton, ed. and trans., *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard*, Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures 2 (Peterborough, Ontario, 1998), 17.

[7] Cited in Patrick Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988), 221. For more on Gibbon and the Merovingians, see Ian Wood, "Gibbon and the Merovingians," in Rosamond McKitterick and Roland Quinault, eds., *Edward Gibbon and Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), 117-36. Wood argues that Gibbon's view of the dynasty was not completely disparaging. For instance, he correctly identified the shift from a Mediterranean orbit to a northern European orbit that resulted from the disappearance of the Rhine frontier after the Merovingian conquests, a point, Wood writes, "which few have observed as sharply as did Gibbon," 134.

> was in unworthy hands.[8]

Ferdinand Lot, writing a few years later, continued in a similar fashion:

> Christianity had no moral influence on [the sons of Clovis] whatsoever. Treachery, cruelty, lust are the characteristics of their dynasty. Their duplicity equals and even surpasses that of the Byzantines themselves. Their history is nothing but a series of murders and horrible scenes which are recounted by Gregory of Tours with a cold-bloodedness that is at times disconcerting.[9]

As historian Patrick Geary explains, even in the late 1980s the family had yet to recover from Einhard's largely biased account of them.[10] French and German historians even ignored earlier kings like Clovis. The most obvious and simple reason for historians' ignorance is that the Carolingians deliberately colored the past with their propaganda in order to justify their usurpation of the throne. Charlemagne's father, Pippin III, was the first Carolingian king, and the men writing in the late eighth and early ninth centuries would hardly find it in their best interests to portray their patron's father as a usurper.

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[8] Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London, 1926), 154.

[9] Ferdinand Lot, *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages*, trans. Philip and Mariette Leon (London, 1931, new material 1961), 328.

[10] There is debate over what exactly Einhard was trying to achieve with his description of Childeric III. Most historians have accepted that he was denigrating Charlemagne's predecessors for the sole purpose of justifying Pippin's usurpation. See Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 224-25. More recently, Alexander Callander Murray has argued for a slightly different interpretation. See "*Post vocantur Merohingii*: Fredegar, Merovech, and 'Sacral Kingship,' " in Alexander Callander Murray, ed., *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto, 1998), 121-52. Einhard, he argues, was not saying that an ox-cart was a despised mode of travel – it was widely used in society by the "well-to-do," was "no doubt the most spacious and comfortable vehicle available, and [was] particularly useful when the roads were bad." See 130-32. Whatever the motive behind Einhard's description, there is little doubt he was not well disposed toward the last Merovingians.

In recent decades, historians have rehabilitated the Merovingians and examined them in a new light, one that looks at their accomplishments and their legacy rather than simply casting them as a convenient foil to the glorious Carolingians. The last Merovingian kings retained power much longer than was previously thought and were able to rule in their own right for periods of time after the recognized high point of Merovingian civilization, which ended in 639 with the death of Dagobert I.[11] Scholars have also looked anew at the entire period *circa* 450-751 and how the Franks transformed the Roman province of Gaul into a powerful European kingdom, making the Carolingian Renaissance possible. Patrick Geary is one such historian. In the same year as Geary's book came out, Edward James's *The Franks* delved less into the politics of the time and more into the culture of the Germanic invaders.[12] James focused on the earlier Merovingians, from Clovis, who died in 511, to the death of his son Chlothar in 561. Clovis united the various Frankish tribes under his rule and converted to

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[11] A typical comment of the years after Dagobert's death can be found in Edward James's book *The Origins of France: From Clovis to the Capetians, 500-1000* (New York, 1982). Although he writes on page 145 that the "traditional" picture is misleading, he still starts the chapter with, "Dagobert I died in 638 [sic], the last energetic and effective Merovingian king: there followed over one hundred years during which '*rois fainéants*' ruled Francia - 'do-nothing kings'." *Roi fainéant* is another stock phrase one encounters when dealing with the Merovingians. For its origin, see Edward Peters, *The Shadow King:* Rex Inutilis *in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327* (New Haven, 1970), 5-14. It was first used in the fourteenth century in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* in conjunction with the later Carolingian kings and became more popular after 1599 when Claude Fauchet attempted to define the term.

[12] Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988). James emphasizes politics more in *The Origins of France*.

Catholicism, which brought him the protection and cooperation of Rome. James pays less attention to the seventh century, choosing instead to emphasize how the Franks became a society by looking at their laws, the development of the church and the economy, and their manner of dress. His afterword is concerned with the period after the death of Dagobert I and how the Franks have been seen in French myth.[13] His book and Geary's are largely favorable to the Merovingians, but they are more concerned with the rise of the Franks than with the decline of the dynasty.

Recent scholarship has provided a fuller portrait of Merovingian life and politics. Ian Wood, perhaps the foremost Merovingian scholar alive today, wrote an exhaustive study that should be a touchstone of this era for many years.[14] Not only does Wood examine the politics of the three centuries, he also provides a rich social background to the period, studies the Church and culture, examines the economy and laws of the kingdoms, shows how the kings interacted with their foreign neighbors, delves into the role of women in the Merovingian court, and attempts to downplay the contribution of the Carolingians to the decline of the dynasty. He also shows the true legacy of the Merovingians: Christianity and its spread to the pagan areas of Germany and into Britain. Wood does mention the councils briefly in certain areas: to discuss ecclesiastical appointments[15] and Merovingian legislation,[16] to highlight Chlothar II's and Dagobert I's relationship with the Church,[17] and in order to dispute the letter written by Saint Boniface to the pope in 742 that deplored the state of the Frankish clergy.[18] Most recently, Paul Fouracre has offered a fascinating dissection of Merovingian political consensus and how the kings kept vast territories and diverse groups of people loyal to the center.[19]

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[13] James gives a brief overview of the problems associated with Merovingian historiography in *The Franks*, 237-43, beginning with the thirteenth century. German and French nationalism plays its part, even today, in the study of the early medieval period, and has even influenced popular culture, as James points out when he mentions the comic book characters Astérix and Obélix, whose adventures were turned into the biggest-grossing movie ever made in France. See also Wood, "Gibbon and the Merovingians," in which he discusses Gibbon's involvement with French politics and historiography in the eighteenth century. Prior to the French Revolution, Wood writes on 126, "early Frankish history had become an ideological battleground for those concerned with the position of the French monarchy and the *parlements*." The Merovingian political and religious legacy continues to influence the French, as the controversy over the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of Clovis's conversion to Christianity showed in 1996. See Adam Gopnik, "The First Frenchman," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 7, 1996, 44-53. I thank Karen Carr for pointing out this article.

[14] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (Harlow, 1994). I use Wood's dates, when available, in this thesis, which is why the year 639 for Dagobert's death I use does not correspond to James's. Dates in the sixth and seventh century are often approximate, and I will only discuss the discrepancies among scholars once, during the proto-Carolingian *coup* of the 650s.

Other studies from the 1980s and 1990s deal more intensely with ecclesiastical policies. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, who was a pioneer in the study of Merovingian history, wrote a seminal book dealing exclusively with the Frankish

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[15] Ibid., 78.

[16] Ibid., 105.

[17] Ibid., 154-55.

[18] Ibid., 250-54. This famous letter is reprinted in Paul Dutton, ed., *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader* (Toronto, 1993), 6-9.

[19] Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (Harlow, 2000), 12-32.

Church.[20] It examines the rise of the Church prior to and after the conversion of Clovis, and then moves on to Merovingian saints and the dealings with the papacy before shifting its focus to the Church under the Carolingians. A complete chapter is devoted to the church councils, but the scope of the book is wider than just the councils of the seventh century. Wallace-Hadrill skims the canons in a few pages,[21] despite his assertion that they are an "impressive body of legislation" that show "the Merovingian Church at its best."[22]

Other recent books also deal with the church and society in the seventh century. Yitzhak Hen's *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751* cites the Church councils as a source, but Hen is more concerned with how the liturgical cycle affected Frankish society.[23] His study is deep and thorough, but is focused less on the politics of the period. Conversely, Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding's fine book on the last years of Merovingian history deals almost completely with politics.[24] The authors use the chronicles and, more importantly, saints' lives to provide a view of the seventh century that shows, once again, that Merovingian society remained vital and creative even while its kings were losing power. This book brings up a crucial point about Merovingian Gaul: its hagiography is an important historical source. Many saints of the era were bishops, who were part of the aristocracy, or even kings and queens.[25] Using the *vitae* of the day allows the historian to gain a different perspective than those of the chronicles, and balancing all the biases makes the image of the times come a little more into focus.

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[20] Titled, perhaps not surprisingly, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983).
[21] Ibid., 104-07.
[22] Ibid., 104.
[23] Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, 1995). A somewhat scathing review of Hen's book by Ralph Mathisen appeared in the *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (Oct. 1999), 1361-62.
[24] Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding, eds. and trans., *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography 640-720* (Manchester, 1996).

The Church councils provide insight into the politics of the age because the participating bishops were often consecrated late in life, after long careers in the secular world. Moreover, the legislation they promulgated is as concerned with political as it is with religious matters. These men did not leave worldly concerns behind when they entered the Church. Audoin of Rouen is an example of the secular ties of the bishops. One of the most famous men of the time, he was introduced while a boy to St. Columbanus, given a good education, and ended up at the court of Chlothar II (584-629).[26] Audoin held high office under Chlothar's son Dagobert I (623-639) as a referendary. Men in this office functioned as royal judges, may have controlled the tax rolls, and most importantly, oversaw the production of royal charters, perhaps even proposing the outlines of their contents.[27] In 641 Audoin was ordained bishop of Rouen, a seat he held until his death *circa* 684. Audoin was a signatory of the council of

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[25] For the kings and queens, see Eileen Conheady, "The Saints of the Merovingian Dynasty: A Study of Merovingian Kingship" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1967).

[26] All the years cited in this thesis are regnal years.

[27] Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 140-41.

Chalon (626/627),[28] and held much power, both in the ecclesiastical world and the secular one. These men were concerned not only with laying down laws to govern the behavior of the people, but also with putting constraints on the king, to whom they were often politically opposed. Ecclesiastical law was an excellent way to limit the power of one's rival, which in Merovingian Gaul was often the monarch.

Politics comes into the councils on more than one occasion. Electing bishops was a haphazard process tinged with both political considerations and proper ecclesiastical procedure during the Merovingian centuries,[29] with many examples of uncanonical processes,[30] and the councils reflect the concerns of the clergy in this matter. The council of Chalon, held between 647 and 653, contains one of the many canons concerning episcopal election: "If any bishop from any city whatsoever should die, an election should not be held by anyone except his fellow bishops, clergy, and citizens. If it is otherwise, an ordination of this sort will be regarded as invalid."[31] Yet Audoin himself, who signed his name to the canons, was elevated to his seat uncanonically.[32] Other canons with political undercurrents deal with church lands, a concern in those years as mayors, kings, and regents struggled for revenue, and the bishops threw their support behind the most powerful magnate. On the one hand, this struggle was with the monarchy, which was always trying to usurp or regain lands for the royal fisc, and on the other hand, it was with the bishops themselves, who often had children from their days as secular nobles. Therefore, the council of Clichy in 626/627 begins a trend by stating that "bishops of long tenure ... should [not] ... be able to have long-held goods of the church transcribed to their own property."[33]

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[28] See Appendix A below, p. 155.

[29] The papacy, which had the right to confirm the election and even intervene if it so chose, had its own problems in the seventh century, with the Lombards on one hand and the exarchate of Ravenna on the other, not to mention the imperial government in Constantinople, and was not as involved with the details of the Frankish Church as it had been before and would be again.

[30] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 78, goes over some of them briefly. Included is Gregory of Tours, a staunch advocate for the proper procedure and adherence to Catholic doctrine.

[31] Chalon, 10. For the Latin, see below, p. 65.

[32] *Vita Audoini Episcopi Rotomagensis*, 7, in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 152-65, which says, "this holy man of God had by *royal command* occupied the episcopal position" (my emphasis). The original Latin reads *iusso regali*, see 143.

The canons also reveal the changing role of bishops in Merovingian society and their relationship with monks. In the seventh century, a new form of monasticism appeared in Gaul, and the monks of this movement were not necessarily content with their subservient position in the Gallic Church's hierarchy. Monks often allied with the monarchs to bypass the episcopal hierarchy, especially with the arrival of the Irish monks. Many bishops were torn between their desire to retain control over the monasteries and their devotion to the new, aggressively proselytizing form of monasticism. The canons of the councils reflect this struggle.

My first chapter provides a brief narrative history of the Merovingian era. Then I consider the state of Merovingian monasticism in both the sixth and seventh centuries. The evolution of monasticism in Gaul is crucial to an understanding of much of the seventh-century canonical legislation and why the bishops acted as they did. The following chapters analyze some of the main themes and motives of the councils. In the appendix the councils appear in translation. This thesis shows that the Merovingian bishops were a vital force in secular politics and that they used the councils in an effort to influence those politics. The canons are very concerned with property, the status quo, and control of procedures. In a world where the line between Church and State was blurred, if not nonexistent, the bishops used the canons to set down a program by which they could continue to wield power in the secular sphere. In the chronicles and hagiography of the times, the bishops are seen interacting with the aristocracy and the monarchy, but it is often anecdotal evidence. By using that evidence in conjunction with the canonical legislation, we can see tangible proof of the bishops' secular concerns. The canons illuminate the debates over episcopal election, the anxiety over Church lands, and the bishops' loss of control over the monasteries. In Merovingian Gaul, power was tied to personal initiative, and the canons provide some of the only evidence historians have for an attempt to codify the power relationships in the kingdoms. The idea that the bishops were political is not new or radical, but too often historians simply assume it is true. By carefully analyzing the canons and how the bishops asserted their rights to power, we can prove that assumption.

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[33] Clichy, 2. For the Latin, see below, p. 66.

2. A Few Words on Sources

Any discussion of Merovingian historiography must begin with Gregory, the bishop of Tours. Gregory's *The History of the Franks* is a lively and fascinating chronicle, full of civil wars, scandalous behavior, and Christian miracles. Technically, Gregory's masterwork is called the *Libri Historiarum X* (*Ten Books of the Histories*), because Gregory was not interested in writing a history of the Frankish people in the way Bede was writing a history of the English or Paul the Deacon was writing a history of the Lombards.[34] Gregory wrote during the latter half of the sixth century, and he provides an excellent example of a Gallic bishop under the Merovingians. He occupied the strategically important seat of Tours, defied kings, arbitrated disputes among nuns, and hobnobbed with the aristocracy of the kingdom. He chose favorites and excoriated those who did not live up to his standards, as seen above in his treatment of Chilperic.[35] Although there has been much debate over how reliable Gregory is, historians generally accept him as a guide to sixth-century politics. There have been many articles and books written about Gregory, and because his lifetime ends before the focus of this study, I will use him only to survey

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[34] See Edward James, "Gregory of Tours and the Franks," in *After Rome's Fall*, 51-66. As James puts it succinctly on page 52: "Gregory, of course, is best known for doing something that he did not do: write an ethnic history, the *History of the Franks*."

[35] Although even Gregory was not so impolitic to condemn the king so roundly while Chilperic was among the living. The bishop may not have liked the king, but knew it would not do him any good to arouse Chilperic's wrath. Gregory is much more open about his dislike for Fredegund, Chilperic's wife, during the king's lifetime. See Ian Wood, "The Secret Histories of Gregory of Tours," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 71 (1993): 253-70.

Merovingian political and religious history of the sixth century. After that he will fade from view.[36]

The seventh and early eighth centuries are rather less well served by written documentation than the sixth. The two surviving chronicles of Merovingian Gaul are sketchy compared to the detail one finds packed into the over six hundred pages (in Thorpe's translation) of Gregory's *Histories.* Historians have used hagiography, charters, and wills to fill in the gaps left by the chronicles, the first of which is that of Fredegar.[37]

Fredegar is the name by which historians call the author of the chronicle, but it is certain that he (or she, conceivably) was not named Fredegar. Almost nothing is known about the chronicler, or even whether there were one, two, or three authors of the main body of the work. This has led to great speculation over the identity of the author (or authors), and it is unnecessary to delve into that quagmire here.[38] There is also debate over when Fredegar was writing, but that is another avoidable swamp. His chronicle tells the tale of the Merovingians to 642, when it abruptly terminates.[39] Despite doubts about its veracity and Fredegar's tendency to lift entire sections from other works without citing them,[40] the chronicle is a valuable source for what many historians agree is the high point of Merovingian civilization, the reigns of Chlothar II and his son Dagobert I over a united kingdom (613-639).

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[36] Gregory and his works make up a small cottage industry in Merovingian studies. A few books worth mentioning are: Giselle de Nie's highly readable book *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower: Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours* (Amsterdam, 1987), which is a fascinating psychological study of Gregory and his world; Raymond van Dam's *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), looks at Gregory's rise to the episcopacy and his relationship with his patron saints, especially St. Martin; and John Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (Oxford, 1998) discusses Gregory's view of female saints. There are many others, of course, but they are far too numerous to list here.

[37] See J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* [hereafter *Fredegar*] (London, 1960).

[38] Without going back too far into the past, some of the scholarly work done on Fredegar includes: J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962), 71-94, and in the introduction to his translation of the chronicle, xiv-xxv. In his introduction, Wallace-Hadrill reviews the arguments for single and multiple authors and

J. M. Wallace-Hadrill's translation of the chronicle begins with the fourth book. The first three books of Fredegar are usually seen as a gloss of other historians and are rarely consulted, although Fredegar has some interesting and unique ideas about the origin of the Franks that will be mentioned below. The fourth book – keeping in mind the divisions are modern contrivances – tells of the early seventh century, and is therefore the one most often consulted. The "fifth" book of Fredegar, if it can be considered as such, is comprised of the so-called "Continuations," which take the chronicle up to the coronation of Charlemagne. They are less important to this thesis, as the first ten chapters of the Continuations

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comes down on the side of two distinct authors. Soon afterward, Walter Goffart, "The Fredegar Problem Reconsidered," *Speculum* 38, no. 2 (1963): 206-41, goes over the evidence again and unequivocally states, "[the chronicle] was compiled and written by a single man," see page 241. More recently, Roger Collins, *Fredegar*, Authors of the Middle Ages 13 (Aldershot, 1996), 11-16, backs up Goffart, although he admits there is still some question. Collins writes in his preface that there are plans for a new edition of the chronicle, but I have not seen it yet.

[39] The chronology is a bit muddled. The text ends with chapter 87, which describes events in 639, but chapter 81 takes events up to 641/642 and the accession of Constans II as Byzantine emperor. Fredegar mentions events that took place in 658 and writes that he will tell about them later, but he never does.

[40] Such as Jerome, Isidore of Seville, Hydatius, and Gregory of Tours. See Wallace-Hadrill's introduction to the chronicle, x-xiv, and Collins, *Fredegar*, 17-23 for discussions of the author's sources.

consist of a gloss of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (for which see below), and the remaining are usually described as a "family" chronicle of the Carolingians and are more useful for the study of the career of Charles Martel than the lives of the later Merovingians.[41]

The final chronicle of the Merovingians is the aforementioned *Liber Historiae Francorum* (*LHF*).[42] The *LHF* is the main source of later Merovingian politics, from the end of Fredegar's main chronicle to the 720s. The author of the *LHF* helps out immensely by telling us exactly when he (or she[43]) is writing. The last words of the chronicle are: "The Franks set up above themselves as king Theuderic [IV, a puppet of Charles Martel] who had been raised in the monastery of Chelles. He was a son of Dagobert the younger [III, 711-715/16], and is now in the sixth year of his reign.'"[44] Since it is known that Theuderic became king in 721, the date of composition is 727.

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[41] There is debate about when the Continuations were composed as well. For the arguments, see Wallace-Hadrill's introduction, xxv-xxviii. He followed the prevailing argument that three different people continued the chronicle at three different times. Roger Collins, "Deception and Misrepresentation in Early Eighth Century Frankish Historiography: Two Case Studies," in Jörg Jarnut, Ulrich Nonn, and Michael Richter, eds., *Karl Martell in Seiner Zeit*, Beihefte de Francia, 37 (Sigmaringen, 1994), 227-47, argues for a single Continuator working around 751, with a further "updating" in 768, but not necessarily with new material for the years prior to 751. Collins also makes the point that the Continuator perhaps deliberately rewrote history to denigrate the dukes of Aquitaine for the greater glory of Charles Martel, and claims that this calls into question the entire chronicle. His article ends with the unanswered and tantalizing question: "How much else in these sources bears the marks of their authors' willingness to write history that conforms to their *a priori* ideological purpose?" One could argue that a great deal of history would be rendered irrelevant if we asked that question of it, but thankfully for this thesis, the Continuations are only a peripheral source.

[42] *Liber Historiae Francorum* [hereafter *LHF*], ed. and trans. Bernard Bachrach (Lawrence, KS, 1973).

[43] Richard Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the* Liber Historiae Francorum (Oxford, 1987), 148-72, goes over the possible identity of the author. See Wood, "Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul," in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), 78 n. 107 for the possibility of a nun writing the chronicle.

The *LHF* is notoriously brief in its descriptions of events and unfortunately confused in its chronology, but it is noteworthy in that it offers a secular, pro-Merovingian view of the late seventh and early eighth centuries.[45] Taken with the hagiography of the age, the chronicle allows the historian to see past the later Carolingian propaganda about the antecedents of that noble family and perceive a more balanced picture.[46] To the author of the *LHF*, Pippin II, a hero to the later Carolingian chroniclers, and, to a lesser degree, Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, were simply part of the political landscape, and not necessarily the most important parts. The author of the *LHF* praises Childebert III (694-711) as a king respected by all, and gives the impression that the Merovingians continued to exercise power and wield influence long after their supposed decay. Even the final sentences of the chronicle, quoted above, can be interpreted in a way that de-emphasizes the influence of Charles Martel. Theuderic is raised up as king by the Franks, by which the author means

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[44] *LHF*, 53.

[45] Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, specifically 159-60 and 166-72, although this is a theme passim.

[46] As Collins suggests in "Deception and Misrepresentation," 235, the author may have engaged in some deliberate distortion of chronologies, opening up the concern that more is falsified in the chronicle. As with the Continuations to Fredegar, enough is known to be true in the *LHF* to render Collins's argument more interesting than problematic for this thesis.

Neustrians, and not by the Austrasian Charles.[47] Even though Charles Martel is one of the author's heroes, he had nothing to do with the elevation of the Merovingian king. This viewpoint of later Merovingian Gaul is important for the historian who wishes to look past the propaganda of the age of Charlemagne, when chroniclers were concerned about presenting the early Carolingians in as positive a light as possible.

The hagiography of the seventh century is another valuable source for Merovingian history. Saints' lives were often written shortly after the saint's death, and could present a different view than that of chronicles, even those of the same time period. For the seventh century, the *vitae* are particularly fruitful, because so many of the bishops who were acclaimed as saints were deeply involved in politics. Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding's book, *Late Merovingian France*, goes over the relationship between religion and politics in great detail. Their choices of *vitae* are helpful for the purposes of this thesis because of their focus on religious matters affecting political actions. Audoin of Rouen, Leudegar of Autun, and Praejectus of Clermont were all politically active bishops, and in council, these men and their counterparts could be expected to weigh political matters as well as religious ones. Their lives illuminate some parts of the *LHF* and provide us with better knowledge of the dynamic that existed in aristocratic and royal circles, and their actions make some of the canons of the councils more comprehensible. Another important – and somewhat unlikely – source for later Merovingian history is Eddius Stephanus's *Life of Wilfrid*, translated by J. F. Webb.[48] Bishop Wilfrid of York is familiar to students of English history, but his life, written in the 710s, is crucial to Merovingian history, as it gives "the sole narrative references" to the reign of Dagobert II.[49] This king's reign is more important than the meager evidence for it, and it is unusual that the author of the *LHF* does not mention it, as he certainly knew of Dagobert.[50]

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[47] Neustria was the western Frankish kingdom centered on the Seine-Oise valley, while Austrasia was further to the east, between the Meuse and Rhine-Moselle rivers. The Pippinids were from the eastern kingdom.

Finally, charter evidence for Merovingian history is crucial to constructing a narrative of the times. The study of charter evidence is a newer frontier of Merovingian scholarship, however, and it comes into this thesis only briefly. I regret not being able to use the charter evidence more thoroughly, and future studies of the seventh century will rely heavily on these document. Charters, grants, and wills are part of the expanding field of knowledge that will allow historians to view the seventh century in a fresh light and answer more questions about the Merovingian realms.

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[48] In D. H. Farmer, ed., *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth, 1965), 105-82.

[49] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 231.

[50] For Dagobert II, see below, pp. 46-47. Gerberding in *The Rise of the Carolingians* skims over the author's reluctance to mention Dagobert. On page 79, Gerberding simply writes, "Either [the chronicler] did not believe that Dagobert had returned to become king or he did not want us to know of it." Gerberding does not explore this tantalizing throwaway line further, but one wonders why the author of the *LHF*, who presumably "believed" that Dagobert had become king, since it had only been forty-eight years since his death, did not want succeeding generations to know about the reign. Dagobert was king in Austrasia, and the pro-Neustrian bias of the chronicler is obvious, but this does not seem a good enough reason not to mention the king at all.

CHAPTER ONE: "Peperit filium nomen Meroveum"

1. Merovingian Political History

By the middle of the eighth century, Pippin III, known to history as "the Short," was the most powerful man in the Frankish kingdom. As the mayor of the palace, he was the chief official of the king, who was essentially his puppet. No one at court challenged his authority. But he chafed under the phantom rule of King Childeric III, whom Pippin and his brother Carloman had wrenched from a monastery in 743 and placed on the throne to appease the nobles who wanted a king. Was he not the son of Charles Martel, the Hammer of God, Pippin thought to himself, whose victory over the heathen hordes of Islam at Poitiers in 732 had saved Christendom? And was he not descended from the first Pippin, who helped bring down the demon in woman's flesh, Brunhild, in 613? Pippin wanted the royal crown for himself, and he meant to get it. He decided to appeal to the pope, and in 750 he sent two envoys, Abbot Fulrad of Saint-Denis and Bishop Burchard of Würzburg, to Rome. Their mission was to ask Pope Zacharias whether it was good that the king of the Franks had no real power, clearly insinuating that the man who actually held the power, Pippin, ought to be king in name. At this particular point in time, Italy was beset by the aggressive Lombard king Aistulf, who had ended Byzantine control of Ravenna and threatened the safety of Rome. Zacharias leapt at the chance not only to gain a new ally closer to Italy than the distant Byzantine emperor, but also to seize the prerogative of papal king-making. He told the envoys what they wanted to hear, and invoking his "apostolic authority," he decreed that Pippin should be made king. Pippin quickly packed

Childeric III back to his monastery, and the Merovingian dynasty, which had ruled Gaul for almost three hundred years, came to an end.[1]

The first Merovingian recorded in historical sources is Childeric, who died around 480 A.D. Prior to this ruler, the family's history is shrouded in legend and subject to much speculation. Chlodio is supposed to have founded the dynasty in the middle of the fifth century, and from his son Merovech the family derives its name. Through the account of Merovech's birth in the much later *Chronicle of Fredegar*, there has been much discussion of the "divine" origin of the kings. According to Fredegar:

> It is said that, when Chlodio was staying with his wife on the seashore in the summer, his wife went to the sea around noon to bathe and a beast of Neptune resembling the *quinotaur* sought her out. Right away she conceived by either the beast or her husband and afterwards gave birth to a son called Merovech, after whom the kings of the Franks were later called Merovingians.[2]

This supernatural origin became important in the relationship between the kings and the church. Historians assume that Gregory of Tours knew this story and chose to suppress it due to its pagan roots.[3] The meaning of the supposed divinity of the Merovingian kings has remained a bone of contention to the current day.[4]

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[1] The story of Pippin's usurpation can be found in the Royal Frankish Annals; see Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization*, 11. For the Lombards in Italy, see Jan T. Hallenbeck, *Pavia and Rome: The Lombard Monarchy and the Papacy in the Eighth Century* (Philadelphia, 1982), 52-63 for the years 749-751. It is anachronistic to call Pippin's father Charles "Martel," as this nickname was not coined until the ninth century (see Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 1-2), but that is the name by which history knows him.

[2] "Fertur, super litore maris aestatis tempore Chlodeo cum uxore resendens, meridiae uxor ad mare labandum vadens, bistea Neptuni quinotauri similes eam adpetisset. Cumque in continuo aut a bistea aut a viro fuisset concepta, peperit filium nomen Meroveum, per co regis Francorum post vocantur Merohingii." *Fredegar*, III.9, quoted in Murray, "Sacral Kingship, " 122.

The history of the dynasty comes more into focus by the time of Childeric and his son, Clovis. Clovis is the most renowned Merovingian king. He united the Franks into a kingdom that was the antecedent of both France and Germany, and he converted to Catholicism and gained the friendship of the papacy. He also benefited from having a sympathetic biographer, in the form of Gregory of Tours and his *Histories*. Gregory was well disposed toward Clovis as the man who brought Catholicism to the Franks, and the king, long dead before Gregory was even born, comes off better than most in Gregory's account.[5] Clovis not only brought the Franks into the Christian orbit, but he was also a mighty military leader. A brief summary of his reign shows his prowess: He destroyed the army of the Roman general Syagrius, who controlled the area around Soissons;[6] he subjugated the Thuringians; he made a marriage alliance with the Burgundians, taking Chlothild as his wife. According to Gregory, Chlothild was a Catholic and a driving force behind her husband's conversion. In 507 he won his greatest victory at Voulon[7] against the Visigoths under Alaric II and incorporated much of southern Gaul into his kingdom. By trickery, Clovis then became the overlord of the Ripaurian Franks, who lived east of the Rhine.[8] He died in 511 after a thirty-year reign.

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[3] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 37, makes this point. In Gregory's *Histories*, following on the heels of his rather sparse account of Merovech – he is mentioned only once (II.9), with Gregory writing, "Some say that Merovech, the father of Childeric, was descended from Clodio" – comes a long chapter on the evils of paganism.

[4] Murray, "Sacral Kingship," goes over the arguments in great detail, as this story has long been used as an indication that the Merovingians had their roots in, as he puts it, "an archaic type of Germanic kingship," 122. Naturally, this has led to great speculation on the beginnings of the dynasty, and what Fredegar's story actually meant – and not all of it historically valid. A quick search of the word "Merovingian" on the Internet yields hundreds of sites about conspiracies, connections to the Templars and the Rosicrucians, and the divinity of the kings. Fascinating, to be sure, but highly dubious in an historical setting.

[5] For Gregory's sources for Clovis and what they may mean, see Yitzhak Hen, "Clovis, Gregory of Tours, and Pro-Merovingian Propaganda," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 71 (1993): 271-76.

[6] *HF*, II.27. Gregory uses the word *rex* to describe Syagrius, but there is a great deal of doubt as to his true significance. As James points out in *The Franks*, 70-71, Syagrius was probably a

Clovis's kingdom was divided among his four sons: Theuderic, Chlodomer, Childebert, and Chlothar, the last three of whom were Chlothild's sons.[9] The reasons for this division remain obscure, but had momentous consequences for the state of the realm.[10] Despite the fracturing of the domain, the Merovingians continued their conquests. The 520s and 530s saw more wars

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renegade Roman count, and Gregory may have exaggerated his importance to make Clovis's victory more impressive.

[7] Gregory puts this battle at Vouillé, "near the tenth milestone outside Poitiers." The Latin is "campo Vogladense," and Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, 41, has argued convincingly that it should be situated at Voulon.

[8] See *HF*, II.27-40 for Clovis's conquests.

[9] Ibid., III.1.

[10] See Ian Wood, "Kings, Kingdoms, and Consent," in P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood, eds., *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), 6-29 for a study of motives. Wood points out on page 6 that the law of the Salian Franks implies that all the sons should inherit. The *Pactus Legis Salicae*, LVIIII, in H. F. W. D. Fischer, ed., *Leges Barbarorum* (Leiden, 1948) contains the law to which Wood refers. It reads: "De terra uero [a footnote adds "salica"] nulla in muliere hereditas non pertinebit sed ad uirilem sexum qui fraters fuerint tota terra pertineat." The problem with this, as Wood states, is that this law concerns allodial land, and there is no indication that the Merovingians considered the kingdom as allodial. As Wallace-Hadrill puts it in *The Long-Haired Kings*, 185, "None appeared to feel that the *regnum* of his father had been shattered or even weakened by division of property." This idea of one realm, governed by four men, is in marked contrast to, say, the 630s, when Dagobert I deliberately split his kingdom at the behest of the Neustrian aristocracy. By then there was a distinct difference between the Neustrians and the Austrasians. See *Fredegar*, IV.76.

in Thuringia and Burgundy, and by 537 the Merovingians had occupied much of southern Gaul.[11]

The years following Clovis's death saw the formation of the three principal Merovingian kingdoms – Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy[12] – and also the introduction of an element which dominated the political landscape for the next 150 years: civil war. Childebert and Chlothar excluded Chlodomer's three sons from the succession after his death in 524. They gave Chlothild, who was raising the boys, a choice: she could have the boys' hair cut short, or they could be killed. Chlothild chose the latter.[13] Chlothar murdered two of the sons, but the third, Chlodovald, escaped and went into a monastery, where he cut his own hair and is now known to history as St. Cloud.[14] A decade later Theuderic died, and Chlothar and Childebert failed in an attempt to wrest control of the eastern part of the Merovingian realm from his son Theudebert (533-548).[15] Both Theudebert and his son Theudebald (d. 555) predeceased the two other sons of Clovis and the civil strife continued. Chlothar's son Chramn conspired with his uncle Childebert against his father. Chlothar sent two of his other sons, Charibert and Guntram, after his Absalom. Before this could be resolved, Childebert died in 558, and Chlothar took over his kingdom. Chramn fled into Brittany, where Chlothar defeated him in battle and had him killed along with his wife and daughters. Chlothar did not long enjoy his triumph. Gregory reports with some satisfaction that he came down with a fever, and died in great agony. This occurred, with divine good timing, "on the first anniversary of the killing of Chramn."[16]

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[11] See Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 50-54, for an explanation of the conquests and the flaws in Gregory's chronology.

[12] These are seventh-century designations, but are suitable for this time period. When Clovis died, the kingdom was split four ways, with the primary cities "naming" the kingdoms. Thus, Theuderic I was king of Rheims/Metz, Chlodomer king of Orléans, Childebert I king of Paris, and Chlothar I king of Soissons.

[13] To modern sensibilities, this seems ridiculous. However, the long hair of the Merovingian monarchs is one of the more interesting aspects of their authority. Wallace-Hadrill in *The Long-Haired Kings*, 156-57, mentions it as perhaps being a symbolic representation of their social standing and indicates that barbarians of rank may have worn their hair long, and only later did it acquire special significance for the Merovingians. It is clearly important by Gregory's time. In *HF*, II.9 he writes that the Franks set up long-haired kings in Thuringia as they came through, and in *HF*, V.14 he tells us that Merovech, Chilperic I's rebellious son, was tonsured as punishment. Jonas, the abbot of Bobbio, writes in the *Life of St. Columbanus*, 57 that Columbanus went to Theudebert II's court around 610 and told the king to abdicate and become a monk, which would obviously entail tonsure. See the *Life of St. Columbanus* in Edward Peters, ed., *Monks, Bishops and Pagans: Christian Culture in Gaul and Italy, 500-700* (Philadelphia, 1975), 75-113. Finally, the author of the *LHF* mentions in chapter 4 that as their first king, the Franks raised up Faramund "as the long-haired king among them." The *LHF*, 52 tells us that a monk named Daniel, "whose hair had grown back on his head," was taken from his monastery in 715 by the Neustrians and established on the throne as Chilperic II. Of course, there is Einhard, mentioning the long hair of the king as an anachronistic sign of his royalty. This quick gloss of the follicular habits of the Merovingians is simply to put Chlothild's answer in context. To the Merovingians, having one's hair cut was the ultimate humiliation. Long hair became both a symbol of royalty and, in its absence, an indicator of powerlessness.

Chlothar left four sons – Charibert, Guntram, Sigibert, and Chilperic – and their reigns form the bulk of Gregory's chronicle. As in 511, the realm was divided among them.[17] The rivalry among the brothers extended to foreign affairs. In 566, Sigibert asked the Visigothic king Athanagild for his daughter's hand in marriage, and Brunhild entered the Merovingian scene. This queen would dominate Merovingian politics for the next half-century. Being Visigothic, she was Arian, but converted easily to Catholicism.[18] Chilperic, Sigibert's brother, in a fit of pique, decided that he too wanted a royal wife, despite the fact that he already had a number of wives.[19] He asked for Brunhild's sister, Galswinth, promising to dismiss all his other wives for her. When she reached the court, he welcomed her with great honor, but Gregory could not resist explaining that the reason for his love was because "she had brought a large dowry with her." Galswinth's position at court aroused the jealousy of Fredegund, an earlier wife of Chilperic's. Fredegund and Galswinth began to quarrel, and Galswinth finally threatened to return to Spain. Chilperic "did his best to pacify her with smooth excuses and by denying the truth as convincingly as he could." This apparently did not work, because he eventually had her garroted by one of his servants in her bed. Gregory writes that the king wept crocodile tears for her, "but within a few days he had asked Fredegund to sleep with him again."[20]

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[14] Gregory tells this story in *HF*, III.18 with a great deal of drama, including a minor feud between Childebert and Chlothar that presages the major *bella civilia* of the later books.

[15] See Roger Collins, "Theodebert I, 'Rex Magnus Francorum,' " in Patrick Wormald with Donald Bullough and Roger Collins, eds., *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, (Oxford, 1983), 7-33, for the career of this king. Collins uses the spelling "The*o*debert" because his coinage shows that spelling, but all written sources spell the king's name "The*u*debert." Gregory, who is generally sparing with praise, called him "a great king, distinguished by every virtue," and one who "ruled his kingdom justly, respected his bishops, was liberal to the churches, relived the wants of the poor and distributed many benefits with piety and friendly goodwill." See *HF*, III.25. Gregory was born in 539 in Clermont-Ferrand. Theudebert's heyday was the late 530s, when he was invading Italy, and he moved through Burgundy on his way south. He had also been active in Aquitaine in the 520s. I have not found mention of the connection, but it is perhaps not too much of a stretch to think Gregory was reporting what he heard from his elders as a child about the exploits of the king.

[16] See *HF*, IV.16-21 for Chramn's rebellion. Chlothar I died in 561.

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[17] Charibert was not much of a factor in the new alignment, as he died in 567.

[18] This is in contrast to her daughter Ingund, who was sent to Spain around 580 to marry Hermenegild, the son of the Visigothic king Leuvigild. She refused to convert to Arianism, for which she was beaten by Goiswinth, Leuvigild's wife – and Brunhild's own mother, therefore Ingund's grandmother and stepmother-in-law. See *HF*, V.38. Gregory, being a good Catholic, writes about this episode with admiration for Ingund, then goes on to tell that Ingund converted her husband from the "false Arian heresy" to the "true Catholic faith," but Pauline Stafford in *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, GA, 1983), 122, makes the point that Goiswinth was simply demanding what was required of a new queen marrying into the family.

[19] Whether of not the Merovingians actually practiced polygamy is another hotly debated issue among historians. See Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900* (Philadelphia, 1981), 38-40 and Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 62-74 for discussions of the practice.

The civil wars continued. In the early 570s, the three kings continued to ally with and to double-cross each other, until in 575 Sigibert planned an attack on Tournai, where Chilperic had taken refuge. Before Sigibert could attack, however, he was assassinated. Gregory lays the blame for this murder directly at the feet of Fredegund, who had "suborned" the killers.[21] Brunhild, deprived of the protection of her husband, further lost status when the Austrasian nobles took her young son Childebert. Childebert was proclaimed king, the first example of a child set up as a Merovingian monarch with the aristocracy as the actual power behind the throne.[22] Chilperic seized Paris and banished Brunhild to Rouen. There she stayed until Chilperic's son, Merovech, came to the city and married her. Naturally, this distressed Chilperic, and believing his son was plotting against him, he had Merovech taken into custody.[23] The prince escaped, but was eventually trapped in Rheims. When he saw he could not flee, he asked his servant to kill him.[24]

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[20] The gruesome tale of Galswinth is in *HF*, IV.28. As Wood points out in *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 127, Gregory, who admired Brunhild, does not record any reaction of that queen to her sister's death, and certainly does not attribute the rivalry between Brunhild and Fredegund in later years to a vendetta. Although Gregory is not shy about portraying sainted queens as promoting a blood feud – as he does in an earlier chapter with Chlothild when she wants revenge on her Burgundian uncles – my belief is that he felt better writing about the rage of a queen thirty years dead than one who was still alive, and one who probably helped him gain his episcopal seat. Wallace-Hadrill in *The Long-Haired Kings*, 134-35, has a different view, one that bases many subsequent actions of Guntram and Childebert II toward Chilperic as stemming from Brunhild's hatred for Fredegund. Wallace-Hadrill writes that Chilperic's brothers – Guntram and Sigibert – planned to avenge Galswinth's murder by seizing her dowry from Chilperic and deposing him. This action he blames on Brunhild, as Sigibert's wife. It seems more reasonable to attribute Brunhild's later hatred of Fredegund to the latter's possible involvement in Sigibert's assassination, which was much more devastating politically to Brunhild.

[21] *HF*, IV.51.

[22] Ibid., V.1.

[23] Ibid., V.2-3.

While Chilperic was fighting his son, his brother Guntram was allying himself with Childebert. Guntram's own sons had died, so he made Childebert his heir.[25] This alliance, as many in Merovingian Gaul, was fleeting, and after four years the young king broke with Guntram and formed an alliance with his other uncle Chilperic.[26] Into this political scene arrived the pretender Gundovald.

Gundovald has been the subject of a long and excellent book,[27] and it will only be necessary to skim the details. According to Gregory, Gundovald claimed to be the son of Chlothar I and one of his mistresses. Chlothar denied it, but his brother Childebert I accepted Gundovald's claims. Gundovald left Gaul and fled to Italy, and whence to Constantinople.[28] In 577, the Byzantines attempted to bring the Merovingians into Italy, but for various reasons, no king was interested in the venture.[29] In the following year, however, Chilperic did send an embassy to the imperial capital,[30] for reasons that remain obscure.[31] In 580, two of Chilperic's sons died.[32] Soon afterward, his oldest surviving son, Clovis, began to brag that he would inherit the entire kingdom. Clovis was the son of Audovera, Chilperic's first wife, and his stepmother Fredegund feared his retribution. She went to Chilperic and told him Clovis had plotted with a witch to kill his other sons. Chilperic ordered that Clovis be killed. This left him with no heirs.[33]

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[24] Ibid., V.18. This is a long and interesting chapter. In it Gregory challenges a Merovingian king for the first time, when Chilperic attempted to punish Bishop Praetextatus of Rouen for marrying Merovech and Brunhild. This confrontation led to his scathing review of Chilperic's reign after the king was murdered.

[25] Ibid., V.17.

[26] Ibid., VI.1, 3. It is not until chapter 31 of Book VI that we learn Childebert was upset because Guntram "took from him part of Marseilles, and now he is harboring fugitives from his [Childebert's] kingdom, and refusing to hand them over." De Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*, 9-14, goes over the scholarship done on the way Gregory structured his work.

[27] Bernard S. Bachrach, *The Anatomy of a Little War: A Diplomatic and Military History of the Gundovald Affair (568-586)* (Boulder, CO, 1994).

[28] *HF*, VI.24. In the late 560s and early 570s Italy was a major battlefield, with the Lombards, the Avars, and the Byzantines fighting over territory. First Narses, then Longinus sponsored Gundovald in northern Italy, and the emperor Justin II seems to have made use of a "long-haired puppet king" to further imperial policy in Italy. In 574, when Gundovald went to Constantinople, Tiberius had been installed as caesar, and he was the one who summoned the Frank to the capital. See Bachrach, *The Anatomy of a Little War*, 18-26.

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[29] The date is from Walter Goffart, "Byzantine Policy in the West Under Tiberius II and Maurice: The Pretenders Hermenegild and Gundovald (59-585)," *Traditio* 13 (1957): 81. On page 85, Goffart gives the reasons that Guntram, Childebert, and Chilperic ignored the Byzantine appeal.

[30] *HF*, VI.2. The date is obtained by backtracking. Gregory writes that the ambassadors returned from Constantinople after three years in the sixth year of Childebert's reign.

[31] Bachrach, *The Anatomy of a Little War*, 34-35, writes that Chilperic's fear of Guntram and the abilities of his general Mummolus led him to seek an alliance with Constantinople. According to him, "when he sent his embassy ... he surely had good reason to support a long-haired king – his half-brother Gundovald, sent from the East Roman capital by Emperor Tiberius as a replacement for Guntram." He also argues that Chilperic may have wanted imperial recognition – a not unlikely scenario, given that *HF*, II.38 mentions the famous consular recognition given to Clovis by Emperor Anastasius. Goffart has a lesser opinion of the embassy, one that would not look out of place in Gregory's *Histories*. In "Byzantine Policy," 85, he writes that Chilperic sent ambassadors to the East, "simply, in my opinion, to apprize Byzantium of his greatness."

[32] *HF*, V.34.

[33] Ibid., V.39. The lack of male heirs is an excellent example of the vagaries of early medieval life. Chilperic's oldest son, Theudebert, was killed in battle against Sigibert in 574/575. Merovech, as we have seen, was also accused of treason and killed. The third son, Samson, died of a fever when he was about three years old. See *HF*, V.22. In 580, two more sons – Dagobert and Chlodobert – died of dysentery, as we have just seen. Gregory explicitly links these deaths to divine intervention, as de Nie, *Views from a Many-Windowed Tower*, 37-38, points out. Many horrific natural phenomena preceded the deaths, as Gregory writes in V.33, and later, in V.50, he recounts an intriguing conversation he had with Salvius, the bishop of Albi. As the two saints are looking at the roof of the king's house, Salvius tells his friend that he sees "the naked sword of the wrath of God hanging" over it. Gregory then writes, "He was not wrong in his prophecy. Twenty days later died the two sons of King Chilperic." In 582 Fredegund had another son, Theuderic. See *HF*, VI.22. Theuderic died less than two years later, see *HF*, VI.33, and again, his death was presaged, according to Gregory. Despite having three wives, Chilperic had only one male heir when he died. Fredegund's reaction to Clovis's boasts can therefore be put in some context. According to Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 86, infertility was the strongest reason for divorce in Merovingian times – not to mention in later medieval times – and Chilperic had no compunction about putting wives aside.

In Constantinople, the emperor Tiberius II saw that the Franks were his best chance at driving the Lombards out of Italy. By 581, Chilperic's lack of heirs probably made the invasion of Italy more propitious from Byzantium's point of view, because the king would not be focused on his family's needs. It is in this context that Childebert broke his agreement with Guntram and made one with Chilperic.[34] Then Fredegund became pregnant again, in the early part of 582.[35] Chilperic's alliance with Childebert, which stated that the younger king would inherit Chilperic's lands when the older king died, suddenly looked less attractive. Chilperic made amends with his brother Guntram,[36] and the web of Merovingian double-dealing pulled a little tighter. Then, in the autumn of 582, Gundovald landed at Marseilles.[37]

Gundovald spent three years trying to rally support for his cause. He had some important patrons in Gaul, including, perhaps, Radegund, a nun at Poitiers and former wife of Chlothar I, who may have known the truth about Gundovald's parentage.[38] Meanwhile, during 583 and early 584, the jockeying for position in

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[34] There is disagreement about the connections between these two events. Goffart in "Byzantine Policy," 93, claims that the return of the envoys and the reversal of the alliances "came at such close intervals that there would have been no opportunity for the two events to be other than coincidental." Bachrach, *The Anatomy of a Little War*, 47, disagrees with Goffart's position, using the Austrasian mayor Gogo's attempts to conclude a treaty with Constantinople as proof. He claims Gogo and the Austrasian magnates were interested in the provinces of northern Italy and realized Guntram would be no help to them.

[35] This was Theuderic, who died less than two years later.

[36] *HF*, VI.19.

[37] *HF*, VI.24.

[38] *HF*, VII.36. On Radegund, see Conheady, "The Saints of the Merovingian Dynasty," 30-47, and Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992), 161-77. Radegund rejected her life with Chlothar and built the convent at Poitiers in 544, but remained active in political life, see George, 168, who mentions she kept contacts with the bishops Avitus of

Gaul continued. Childebert and Chilperic, again allied,[39] attempted to encircle Guntram, with an invasion of Italy on Childebert's part and the proposed marriage between Rigunth, Chilperic's daughter, and Reccared, the son of the Visigothic king Leuvigild.[40] All of this intrigue came to a sudden stop in October 584, when Chilperic was assassinated.[41]

Whether or not Chilperic's assassination was planned at the highest levels of the aristocracy, as some have maintained,[42] it still opened up opportunities for

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Clermont, Felix of Nantes, Domitianus of Angers, and Martin of Braga, important religious as well as secular men.

[39] After Chilperic asked for Guntram's friendship (see above, note 36), their "alliance" is not mentioned again. The next time in Gregory's *Histories* that alliances come up, it is with regard to Childebert and Chilperic's accord in VI.31. The chapter continues with the uncle and nephew going to war against Guntram, which ended in the defeat of Chilperic and peace between he and Guntram, and a minor palace revolution against Childebert. Bachrach, the most thorough source on the subject, does not mention any reason for the turn of events. The character of both Chilperic and Guntram would lead one to believe they did not take any so-called alliance seriously, however.

[40] *HF*, VI.42 for Childebert's invasion. This did not lead to a permanent Frankish presence. For the marriage alliance, see VI.34. Rigunth's hellish journey south is described in VI.45 and VII.9-10.

[41] See above, p. 1. As mentioned, there was no shortage of suspects. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 14, points out, "when murders are domestic, women were easy targets" – hence the accusations by later chronicles that Brunhild (according to *Fredegar*), and Fredegund (according to the *LHF*) were the culprits. According to Bachrach, *The Anatomy of a Little War*, 88, the contemporary view held by Guntram was that neither woman was responsible. See *HF*, VII.21, in which Fredegund accuses Eberulf, a treasurer in Chilperic's court, and Guntram believes her. According to the bishop of Tours, Guntram later made "a number of wild accusations" against Brunhild, but he never said she planned Chilperic's murder. See *HF*, IX.32.

[42] See Goffart, "Byzantine Policy," 104-05 and n. 142, and Bachrach, *The Anatomy of a Little War*, 88-91. Both use *HF*, X.19 as circumstantial evidence, as this chapter recounts the torture of Sunnegisil, Childebert's count of the stables, who was implicated in a plot to kill that king in 589/590. Bachrach, 89, puts it succinctly: "Sunnegisil ... reportedly confessed under torture that he had played a role in Chilperic's assassination." Sunnegisil was close to Childebert, so the implication is that Childebert knew about the plot. Gregory's account of the torture reads "In his tormentis non solum de morte *Chilperici* regis, verum etiam diversa scelera se admisisse confessus est" (my emphasis). According to a footnote, Krusch and Levison believe this king to be Childebert, and in other versions of the text, the name is "Childeperi." Thorpe translates this as "Childebert," but Goffart and Bachrach believes it pertains to Chilperic. As the previous chapter refers to the assassination plot against Childebert, it might be more believable that Gregory was referring to that king rather than a king over five years dead, but I have no seen any more speculation on the subject. The other element in the "conspiracy theory" comes from Guntram,

Gundovald. Shortly after Chilperic's death, the pretender and his allies launched an offensive into Aquitaine. Meanwhile, Guntram and Childebert had also not been idle. They both went to Paris, where Fredegund placed herself and her infant son, Chlothar, under Guntram's protection. In very little time, the king had successfully taken over the administrative duties of Neustria, and he remained the legal guardian of King Childebert in Austrasia. He was in an excellent position to deal with Gundovald.

In February 585 Gundovald moved to the town of Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Guntram's army promptly besieged him. The situation quickly became grave for the defenders.[43] Guntram's counts sent a message to Mummolus, Gundovald's general, offering him his life if he surrendered. Mummolus went to Gundovald and told him to give himself up. After the general assured the pretender that nothing would happen to him, Gundovald left the city and surrendered. Despite the promises by Guntram, Gundovald was killed immediately, and Mummolus was killed shortly thereafter.[44] Guntram reigned supreme.

Gregory's *Histories* end around the year 591, and he himself died in 594.

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who accused Theodore of Marseilles, who had welcomed Gundovald, of having Chilperic killed. He made his accusations in front of Bertram of Bordeaux, Palladius of Saintes, Nicasius of Angoulême, and Antidius of Agen, bishops who all supported Gundovald. See Bachrach, 90.

[43] See *HF*, VII.34 for Gundovald's move. The Latin name of the town is *Lugdunum Convenarum*, which is usually shortened to Convenae. Bachrach in *The Anatomy of a Little War*, 119-44, goes over the geography of Comminges and the preparations for the siege in great detail.

[44] *HF*, VII.38-39. Mummolus had been Guntram's general, and the king probably felt personally slighted by his defection to go over to Gundovald's side.

A new generation of kings was arriving on the scene to dominate politics, but the *bella civilia* described by Gregory would continue. Guntram died in 593, and Childebert inherited his kingdom. With Chlothar still young, Childebert was the most powerful ruler in Gaul, but he lived only three years after his uncle.[45] The Merovingian lands were again divided, this time between his sons, Theudebert II gaining Austrasia, and Theuderic II the kingdom of Burgundy.

Fredegund died in 597, but her son Chlothar II continued the war against his cousins. By 600 he had been driven out of most of his territory by Theudebert and Theuderic, and held only "twelve cantons between the Seine, the Oise and the sea."[46] Brunhild, now in Burgundy with Theuderic, continued to be a power behind the throne. The machinations of Brunhild in the first decade of the seventh century have much to do with history's view of her, and it is worthwhile to examine her career a bit more closely.

As seen above, Brunhild came to Gaul in 566 and was widowed in 575. A Merovingian queen was in a precarious position when her husband died. Brunhild, like other royal wives, was dependent on her husband, even though she was royalty herself. She was obviously a charismatic woman, and perhaps even dominated politics during Sigibert's reign,[47] but when her son Childebert II was taken from her, she was powerless.[48] However, when Childebert reached his majority, Brunhild once again became a power in the realm. She was a driving force behind the Treaty of Andelot (587), which finally settled the bad blood between Guntram and Childebert.[49] She corresponded with Pope Gregory the Great, promoted Augustine's evangelizing mission to Kent, and was the impetus behind the Austrasian involvement in Italy and the diplomatic ties to Constantinople. Childebert's death in 596 put her in an even more powerful position. Theudebert, the new king in Austrasia, was ten, and his brother Theuderic was nine.[50] Brunhild first went to Austrasia, but Theudebert was less than enthusiastic about this arrangement, and soon after reaching his majority, he threw out his grandmother in 602, forcing her to seek refuge in Burgundy.[51]

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[45] *Fredegar*, IV.16: "Quarto anno post quod Childebertus regnum Gunthramni acciperat defunctus est."

[46] Ibid., IV.20: "Duodicem tantum pagi inter Esara et Secona et mare litores Ociani Chlothario remanserunt." The term *pagus* is one of those wonderfully inexact Latin words – Wallace-Hadrill translates it as "canton," which may be too precise. It can also mean "district," "province," or "region."

[47] See *HF*, VI.4. Gregory puts into the mouth of Ursio, a supporter of Childebert II, a speech to Brunhild that includes, "It should be enough that you held regal power when your husband was

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alive." Even if Ursio never said this, Gregory obviously believed Brunhild was the force behind the throne.

[48] Catherine Tuggle in "The Power and Influence of Merovingian Women, 493-717" (Master of Arts thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1980), 7-8, makes the point that "a woman married to a Merovingian king but not sharing Merovingian blood did not share this royalty even if she herself was a princess from another kingdom. However, a non-Merovingian woman could share in Merogingian [sic] royalty only if she had a son who became king." She was not royalty apart from him, nor did her royalty equal his. Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval History* (London, 1986), 5, writes that "a Merovingian wife might have the title of queen, but there is no evidence that she underwent any special inauguration ritual (apart, presumably, from the marriage-ritual itself) that would have paralleled her husband's to his kingship."

[49] *HF*, VIII.22 and IX.20.

[50] See Ibid., VIII.37 for Theudebert's birth, just before Gregory mentions in the next chapter that it was "the eleventh year of King Childebert's reign," i.e. 586. Ibid., IX.4 mentions Theuderic's birth, in the "same year" in which Radegund died, i.e. 587.

[51] *Fredegar*, IV.19. Wallace-Hadrill's dates in the margin indicate that this took place in 599. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 131, makes the point that Pope Gregory continued to urge her to reform the Austrasian Church until 602, and he concludes that "assuming Gregory was reasonably well informed on Frankish politics, this must suggest that Brunhild held power in Austrasia until that year." Theudebert turned fifteen around 601, the age at which Merovingian kings reached their majority (see Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 55), so Wood's date makes more sense in that regard.

Theuderic was much more pliable than his brother, and it was in the Burgundian court that Brunhild would gain her greatest power and earn her infamy.

The decade between Brunhild's arrival in Burgundy and her downfall are notable because of the appearance of Columbanus on the Gallic scene. The influence of Columbanus in the religious sphere will be examined below, but there is no denying his political influence. In 609 Columbanus crossed paths with Brunhild and her grandson Theuderic. Brunhild was getting older, and Theuderic was living a dissolute life, despite Jonas's assertion that the king "came often to [Columbanus] and humbly begged his prayers."[52] The Burgundian monarch was unmarried, but had four sons by various mistresses. A few years earlier, in 607, Theuderic had brought a wife to court: Ermenberga, the daughter of Witteric, the Visigothic king. This episode ended badly, and both Jonas and Fredegar blame Brunhild.[53] Historians have not challenged this opinion.[54] So in 609 the king had no wife, and Brunhild wanted to make sure his illegitimate sons would succeed. She asked Columbanus to bless the children, and the saint told her bluntly, "Know that these boys will never bear the royal sceptre, for they were begotten in sin."[55] This led to a breakdown in relations between the court and the holy man. Brunhild harassed Columbanus, and "influenced the bishops to attack Columban's faith and to abolish his monastic rule."[56] Brunhild was eventually successful in driving the Irish monk out of Gaul, but at the further cost of her already tarnished image.[57]

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[52] Jonas, *Life of St. Columbanus*, 31.

[53] *Fredegar*, IV.30: "But his grandmother saw to it that Theuderic's marriage was never consummated ("coitum non cognouit"): the talk of Brunechildis his grandmother and of his sister Theudila poisoned him against his bride. After a year, Ermenberga was deprived of her dowry and sent back to Spain." Jonas, *Life of St. Columbanus*, 31: "For she feared that her power and honor would be lessened if, after the expulsion of the concubines, a queen should rule the court." Jonas makes no mention of Ermenberga, but this passage shows that he thought Brunhild had no intention of sharing her power with any other woman.

[54] Stafford in *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 67, and Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 15, inexplicably claim Theuderic was never married. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 132, concludes, "Brunhild was apparently concerned to prevent her son and grandsons from taking wives who would challenge her position as queen." My own view is different. Despite Gregory of Tours' contention that all sons born of a king were legitimate (see *HF*, V.20), by this time the legitimacy of princes had become important. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 63-71, discusses the evolution of marriage and legitimacy along with polygamy, and it appears by this time, Gregory's statement may not have been as accepted. Brunhild was almost seventy, and I believe she wanted the marriage to work so that her legitimate great-grandsons (as opposed to her

The civil wars of the Merovingians continued throughout the decade. Following Chlothar's defeat in 600 and a war between Austrasia and Burgundy in 605, the realms were quiet for a few years. In 610, Theudebert invaded Alsace and forced his brother to cede it to him. The next year Theuderic told Chlothar he planned to attack Theudebert and asked the Neustrian king to stay out of the war. He promised Chlothar the return of the duchy of Dentelin, which Theudebert had taken in 600. Chlothar agreed, and Theuderic raised an army. The next May, the brothers marched against each other. At Toul, Theuderic carried the day, and his brother fled to Cologne. Theudebert assembled an army of Saxons, Thuringians, and other trans-Rhenish people and met his brother at Zülpich, where Theuderic

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four illegitimate ones) could continue her personal war against Chlothar II. Nelson in "Queens as Jezebels," 29, alludes to this point, but goes no further.

[55] Jonas, *Life of St. Columbanus*, 32.

[56] Ibid., 33.

[57] Columbanus was in his seventies when he left Gaul for Italy, so it may have been that he was tired of the fight and wanted to go someplace and retire.

was again triumphant. He marched on Cologne and secured Theudebert's treasure. The defeated Austrasian king was captured and killed. His son, Merovech, "still in the white of baptism," was dashed against a stone. Thus Theuderic gained the kingdom of Austrasia.[58]

Like Chlothar I and Childebert II before him, Theuderic had little time to enjoy his new power. In 613 he marched against his cousin Chlothar II because the Neustrian monarch had dared to seize Dentelin, as promised by Theuderic before his war with Theudebert. When Theuderic reached Metz, however, he died of dysentery at the age of twenty-six.[59] Brunhild attempted to claim the succession for Sigibert II, Theuderic's oldest son, ignoring the Merovingian tradition of dividing the inheritance. But this gambit backfired, partly because Brunhild overestimated her support among the aristocracy.[60] Arnulf, later bishop of Metz, and Pippin of Herstal, the progenitor of the Carolingians, invited Chlothar into Austrasia. With the collaboration of Warnacher, the Burgundian mayor of the palace, the magnates from that kingdom betrayed the queen and delivered Sigibert's army up to Chlothar. Brunhild was brought before the king and charged with the deaths of ten Frankish kings: Sigibert I, Chilperic I and his son Merovech, Theudebert II and his son Merovech, Chlothar II's own son Merovech, Theuderic, and Theuderic's three sons. She was then tortured and dragged by a wild horse until it crushed her under its hoofs.[61] As Fredegar puts it, "The entire Frankish kingdom was united as it had been under the first Chlothar."

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[58] See *Fredegar*, IV.38 for the war. The *LHF*, 38 gives the information that Theudebert was killed at Cologne – Fredegar simply indicates that he was "sent in chains to Chalon."
[59] *Fredegar*, IV.39.
[60] As Wood points out in "Kings, Kingdoms and Consent," 13.

The Merovingian *regnum* was not united administratively, however. Warnacher remained mayor of the Burgundian palace, and Austrasia and Neustria also retained their courts. This division became more pronounced when, in 623, Chlothar established his son Dagobert as the king in Austrasia.[62] When Chlothar died in 629, Dagobert became sole ruler, but three years later he too placed his son, Sigibert III, on the throne of Austrasia.[63] The Austrasians were angered, says Fredegar, by Dagobert's debauchery and corruption, and Pippin stirred the magnates against him until he installed a king more to their liking.[64]

Dagobert's reign has justly been seen as the apogee of the Merovingian era.[65] When he died in 639, his son Clovis, who had been born in 633, became king. Dagobert's queen, Nanthild, and the mayor of the palace, Aega, ruled as regents. Aega died not long after Dagobert, and Nanthild continued as sole regent. She controlled the treasury, and even when her stepson Sigibert, ruling in

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[61] *Fredegar*, IV.40 gives the whole story. Obviously, the author is engaging in some propaganda: Brunhild had no reason to cause the death of her first husband, nor even her second. Theuderic died of natural causes, and Fredegar, in the same chapter, makes it known that two of Theuderic's sons escaped, so the hyperbole is blatant.

[62] Ibid., IV.47.

[63] Ibid., IV.75.

[64] Ibid., IV.60 contains the famous line about Dagobert's innumerable mistresses: "Nomina concubinarum, eo quod plures fuissent, increuit huius chronice inseri."

[65] See, for example, Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 14-16. As they put it, in the parlance of seventh-century ideas of "good" kingship, Dagobert "was able to defeat foreign foes and keep the internal peace."

Austrasia, requested his share, she did not give it up without some negotiation.[66] She was also able to secure her own choice as the new mayor of the palace.[67] Sigibert continued to rule Austrasia with Pippin as his mayor, but Pippin died not long after Dagobert. Then, in the 650s, an event occurred that has been debated by historians ever since: the so-called "Carolingian" *coup* of Grimoald, Pippin's son.

The story is deceptively simple, like much that is told in the *LHF*. Chapter 43 gives the brief tale:

> King Sigibert of Austrasia died and Peppin who also died was replaced as mayor of the palace by his son Grimoald.[68] Just after Sigibert died, Grimoald had the king's young son who was named Dagobert tonsured and directed Didon, the bishop of the city of Poitiers, to take the boy on a pilgrimage to Ireland. Then Grimoald placed his own son on the throne. The Franks [by this the author means the Neustrians] were very indignant about this and they prepared an ambush for Grimoald. They seized him, and sent him to Clovis [II], king of the Franks, to be condemned.

The story of Grimoald's attempt to seize power has been the subject of much controversy. The intricacies of the debate should be glanced at briefly. Sigibert III died, according to most historians, in 656. Grimoald put his own son, known to history as Childebert, on the throne after getting rid of the true heir, Dagobert. Childebert ruled for five years.[69] After his death, Childeric II became king in Austrasia and ruled for thirteen years.

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[66] *Fredegar*, IV.85.

[67] Ibid., IV.89.

[68] Grimoald did not immediately replace Pippin. Note also the chronology – Pippin died long before Sigibert.

[69] See Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, 54.

The problem is with the dating. According to Gerberding, the dates do not make sense. The author of the *LHF* says that Grimoald was condemned by Clovis II, who died in 657. If Sigibert died in 656, and assuming Childebert could not remain on the throne without his father's support, the usurper could not reign for five years. Less than two years is more feasible.[70] Gerberding makes an argument for pushing Sigibert's death date back to 651, and therefore everything falls into place.[71] The biggest problem with Gerberding's theory appears to be who was ruling Austrasia from 657 to 662, when Childeric II became king. After Clovis II's death, his oldest son Chlothar III became king in Neustria.[72] If Chlothar was also the Austrasian king during those years, his name does not appear on the regnal lists written during the Carolingian era.[73] Jean-Michel Picard also uses dates to prove his case, first with regard to the death of the Irish martyr Foillán,[74] and then to the passage from the *Life of Wilfrid* that provides the first evidence for the *coup*. According to Eddius, Bishop Wilfrid helped restore Dagobert to the throne of Austrasia in 675/676.[75] Picard mentions that Dagobert had been returned to Gaul *postquam annorum circulum*, which means the nineteen-year Paschal cycle adopted by the Northumbrian Church.[76] If Dagobert returned to Gaul in 675, his exile would have occurred in 656.

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[70] Ibid., 48-49. Jean-Michel Picard, "Church and politics in the seventh century: the Irish exile of king Dagobert II," in Jean-Michel Picard, ed., *Ireland and Northern France AD 600-850* (Dublin, 1991), 27-52 offers a direct refutation to Gerberding's argument. As he concludes, pages 51-52, if Childebert had been killed with Grimoald, it would have been mentioned, "either as a sign of divine retribution for usurping the throne, or as yet another example of the ruthlessness of the Frankish nobility."

[71] Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, 49-52.

[72] *LHF*, 44.

[73] Picard, "Church and politics," 29. He notes that regnal lists are unreliable with regard to length of reign, but do provide the names of the kings in the correct order. It is a regnal list that Gerberding himself uses to hypothesize that Sigibert died in 651, see *The Rise of the Carolingians*, 52.

[74] Picard, "Church and politics," 31-36.

[75] Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Wilfrid*, 28.

My intention is not to give Grimoald's *coup* "more attention than it probably deserves," as others have put it.[77] It is important, however, in both Merovingian history and later Carolingian history. The major points of the *coup* show not only the power that Grimoald commanded,[78] but also that the Franks were still deeply committed "to the Merovingians and to the system of rule based on a properly established royal court."[79] Although Grimoald's fall shunted the Pippinids out of power for some years, his nephew Pippin II would return the family to power in the 670s.

Clovis II died in 657. His widow, Balthild, was an Anglo-Saxon who had been brought to Gaul as a slave by the Neustrian mayor, Erchinoald, and given to the king.[80] Balthild became regent for her son Chlothar, and she elevated her other son Childeric to the throne in Austrasia after marrying him to his cousin Bilichild, the daughter of Sigibert III.[81] Sigibert's widow Chimnechild became regent for the new king.[82] Erchinoald died shortly after Clovis, and Ebroin was chosen as mayor.[83]

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[76] Picard, "Church and politics," 37.

[77] Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 19.

[78] According to Picard, "Church and politics," 38, he minted money in his own name.

[79] Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 19.

[80] *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 2-3, in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 118-32.

[81] The family connection is mentioned in the *Passio Leudegarii*, 8, in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 215-53, in which Bishop Leudegar scolds Childeric because "the queen, his wife, was the daughter of his own uncle, and unless he made amends for these and other unlawful abominations he would for sure very soon see that divine vengeance was close at hand." One wonders if the bishop felt smug or if he was horrified by the royal couple's ultimate fate.

Ebroin became one of the most notorious figures in seventh-century Merovingian politics. He formed a regency council with Audoin, bishop of Rouen, and Chrodbert, bishop of Paris, among other nobles.[84] In 664/665, Chlothar came of age, and Balthild retired to a monastery.[85] Ebroin continued to gain power, and when Chlothar died in 673, the mayor overstepped his bounds. Ebroin should have called together a council of the nobles to confirm the elevation of the new king, Theuderic III, Chlothar's brother. This he refused to do. The magnates rebelled and abandoned the mayor and his king, instead offering the throne to Childeric II of Austrasia. Ebroin and Theuderic were tonsured and sent to the monasteries of Luxeuil and Saint-Denis, respectively.[86] Childeric arrived in Neustria with his Austrasian mayor, Wulfoald, and immediately began ignoring the Neustrian aristocracy.[87] One of his main advisors, Leudegar, bishop of Autun, began to criticize aspects of his rule, including his incestuous marriage to his cousin.[88] The tension between Austrasians and Neustrians came to a head at Easter 675, when a land dispute led to Leudegar's exile to Luxeuil.[89] This lit the powder keg, and the Neustrian magnates rose up against their imported king, killed him, and murdered his pregnant wife Bilichild.[90] Wulfload fled to Austrasia, and both Ebroin and Leudegar returned from exile. Ebroin regained the mayoralty,[91] restored Theuderic III, and quickly took revenge on Leudegar, having him killed.[92]

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[82] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 223.

[83] *LHF*, 45. For more on Ebroin, see Fouracre, "The Notion of a 'Low-Born' Ebroin," 11-14.

[84] *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 5. Audoin's own *vita* makes no mention of this regency council.

[85] Ibid., 10. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 22, makes the point that this was probably not voluntary, as her hagiographer suggests.

[86] *Passio Leudegarii*, 5-6.

[87] *LHF*, 45: "Childeric was much too frivolous and went about everything much too carelessly." As Gerberding points out passim in *The Rise of the Carolingians*, the author of the *LHF* was pro-Neustrian, and therefore acting "frivolously" would mean ignoring Neustrian advice. The pro-Neustrian nature of the *LHF* is most obvious in the terminology the author uses. Not once does he call the Neustrians anything but "Franks," but he always called the easterners "Austrasians." When the Neustrians called for Childeric to rule them in *LHF*, 45, the author writes, "they ... sent to nearby *Austrasia* for Childeric. He came with Duke Wulfoald and was raised up over the kingdom of the *Franks*" (my emphasis).

The assassination of a Merovingian king without a viable heir led to a volatile situation not only in Neustria, but in Austrasia as well. Childeric was, after all, sole ruler of the Merovingian kingdoms. Ebroin could not push his choice Theuderic on the Austrasians without their approval, as seen from the case of Childeric in Neustria. Pippin II gained control of the Austrasian mayoralty, but he had no king. He knew, however, where to find one. Pippin's uncle, Grimoald, had gotten rid of a Merovingian prince – Sigibert III's son Dagobert, living in exile in Ireland. The Pippinids had Irish connections through Grimoald and his sister Geretrud, abbess of Nivelles, where Foillán was buried.[93] Ultán, Foillán's brother, was abbot of Fosses, a Pippinid foundation, in 656 when Dagobert was exiled and in 676 when he returned.[94] Pippin could therefore get in touch with the exiled heir and bring him back to rule.[95]

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[88] *Passio Leudegarii*, 8.

[89] Ibid., 12. Ironically, Ebroin, who was still at the monastery, was Leudegar's bitter enemy because while Ebroin was mayor, Leudegar, according to his *vita*, was the only one who stood up to him. For more on the land dispute, see below, pp. 73-74.

[90] *LHF*, 45. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 229, interprets this as an indication that the Neustrians were attempting to extinguish the entire Austrasian line.

[91] *Passio Leudegarii*, 16-19, 28.

[92] *LHF*, 45. Leudegar's *vita* goes into much more detail about the saint's martyrdom. See chapters 30-35.

[93] See *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis*, 3 in Jo Ann McNamara, John Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds. and trans., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham and London, 1992), 222-34, for Geretrud's position as abbess, and the *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano* in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 327-29, for the burial of the Irish saint.

Dagobert II returned to Austrasia and was crowned king in early summer 676.[96] This did not resolve the tension between the Austrasians and Neustrians, and in 679, Pippin attacked his western neighbors. Ebroin met his foes in a forest called Bois-Royal du Fays and defeated them soundly.[97] The instability of the situation was evident when, not long after the battle, Dagobert was assassinated.[98]

Ebroin was also murdered not long after Dagobert, and the early 680s were relatively quiet. In 687, however, Pippin gathered an army of Austrasians and attacked the westerners. This led to the famous battle at Tertry, which, thanks to Carolingian propaganda, has often been seen as the true beginning of Pippinid power in Gaul,[99] but it simply meant that Pippin was able to secure the mayoralty. However, it appears he was not about to impose Austrasians on the Neustrian court, perhaps recalling the example of Wulfoald and Childeric II in the 670s. Charter evidence indicates a lack of Pippinid influence in the Neustrian court prior to the advent of Charles Martel,[100] and the author of the *LHF* does not overemphasize Pippin's victory. Pippin himself did not become mayor in Neustria, first installing a follower of his and later his son Grimoald.[101] The system appears to have righted itself.

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[94] Picard, "Church and politics," 46.

[95] See ibid., 49, for this theory. Why both Ebroin and Pippin felt they needed a Merovingian on the throne is part of the nature of the kingship. The "sacred" nature of the Merovingians has been dealt with, and rejected, recently. See Murray, "Sacral Kingship," who sums up his argument on page 151: "Sacral kingship among the Franks is a hypothetical construct of modern historiography founded on the exegesis of nineteenth-century *Germanistik* as adapted to recent theories about the nature of early Germanic society. No source gives unequivocal testimony to the existence of such an institution." For more on the nature of Merovingian kingship and its relationship to the nobility, see Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 14-32. He mentions the annual assemblies of the nobility at the royal court, assemblies that were imperative for the just governance of the realm. On page 30, he writes "[The assemblies] were also occasions at which the loyalty to the Merovingian kings was expressed, so they were points of potentially great embarrassment, or even danger. For if the Pippinids, or even Charles Martel himself, were perceived to be disloyal or to be challenging the right of the assembly to express their traditional loyalties, their rule could be judged 'tyrannical', that is, rule without consent and without proper legal basis." Fouracre suggests this may be why the Pippinids waited so long to usurp the crown.

[96] Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, 71.

[97] *LHF*, 46.

[98] Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Wilfrid*, 33: "[Wilfrid] journeyed on [from Rome] … till he came to the land of the Franks, only to find that his faithful friend King Dagobert had been assassinated by some treacherous dukes and (Heaven defend us!) with the bishops' consent." Dagobert is often used as an example to deny the contention that the later Merovingians were all "do-nothing kings." As Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 231, puts it, "His murder in 679, further, suggests that he had powerful opponents who had no desire to see his memory preserved," hence the scant

Theuderic III died in 690, and his son Clovis III became king. Clovis lived only four more years, however, and Theuderic's other son Childebert III became king in 694 and ruled for seventeen years. Childebert is another example of a vigorous Merovingian king during the time of their supposed *fainéance*. He

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evidence for his reign. An impotent king would not have stirred up the passions of the aristocracy. The murder of Childeric II can also be seen in this light, as Wood points out on page 235.

[99] The *Annales Mettenses Priores*, in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 350-70, go on for several pages about the battle, casting Pippin and his warriors as Robin Hood: "Pippin's leaders decided wholeheartedly to take up arms, to fight for the robbed and wretched who had safely sought his protection." Pippin is also magnanimous in victory, as after the battle, "with unimaginable faithfulness he reserved the name of king for [Theuderic] lest he should seem to exercise tyranny or cruelty." He then "took over sole leadership of the Franks." The annals were written around 805, and it is interesting to contrast the glorification of Charlemagne's great-grandfather with the account in the *LHF*, 48: "They came together in battle in a place called Tetry [sic] and while they fought against each other, King Theuderic along with Berchar, the mayor of the palace, turned their backs. Peppin, indeed, emerged the victor." There is no indication that Tertry was anything more than Ebroin's victory at Bois-Royal du Fays. Neither battle led to the conquest of the other kingdom.

[100] Paul Fouracre, "Observations on the Outgrowth of Pippinid Influence in the "Regnum Francorum" After the Battle of Tertry (687-715)," *Medieval Prosopography* 5, no. 2 (1984): 6-7.

[101] *LHF*, 48-49.

was admired by his contemporaries,[102] and was occasionally even able to escape the influence of the famous Pippin.[103] After he died in 711 and Pippin followed him to the grave in 714, Merovingian history became more tied up in the early history of the Carolingians. Pippin's death caused the Neustrians to revolt once again, and they found a cleric named Daniel and placed him on the throne as Chilperic II.[104] The mayor of the palace, Ragamfred, raised an army and marched against Charles Martel, the only son of Pippin still living. Charles cleverly set up his own king, Chlothar IV, and defeated the Neustrians.[105] It is a testament to the endurance of the monarchy that both mayors still felt it necessary to set up Merovingian monarchs, and although the evidence is slight and overshadowed by the achievements of Charles Martel, Chilperic may have still retained some power.[106]

With the deaths of Chlothar IV in 719 and Chilperic II in 721, the Gallic stage became almost exclusively Charles's. Martel continued his wars of conquest, and when Theuderic IV died in 737, he did not seize the throne nor set up another puppet. For the hero of Christendom, this seems like a strange move, but perhaps the precedent of violence from the 650s – violence that involved his own family – deterred him. That the nobility was still strong and opposed to the Carolingians is shown in 743, when Pippin III and Carloman, the sons of Charles, placed Childeric III, who may have been either the son of Theuderic IV or Chilperic II, on the throne when they found themselves beset by dissatisfied aristocrats.[107] By the time of Pippin's usurpation in 751, however, the nobility was obviously ready for a change. With the sanction of the pope, the last Merovingian monarch was quietly retired, and the stage was set for Charlemagne.

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[102] Ibid., 50, for the year 711: "Then the most glorious lord Childebert, a just king of good memory went to the Lord."

[103] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 261-63, goes over the written evidence for Childebert's career. In 697 he found against Drogo, Pippin's son, in a law case.

[104] *LHF*, 52. He was allegedly the son of Childeric II, but the author has his doubts.

[105] For more on Charles's maneuverings before and between his two decisive victories over the Neustrians (Amblève in April of 716 and Vinchy on 21 March 717), see Richard Gerberding, "716: A Crucial Year for Charles Martel," in *Karl Martell in Seiner Zeit*, 207-16.

[106] See Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 268-69.

Merovingian government took not only a political form, but a religious one as well. In the analysis of the canons, the seventh-century political machinations of the bishops will be examined in greater detail. The evolution of monasticism, however, which shifted focus from a more urban phenomenon under the nominal control of bishops such as Caesarius of Arles in the sixth century to a more rural institution controlled by powerful abbots and, to a lesser degree, the noble families who founded the communities in the seventh century, is crucial to understanding the legislation of the councils. Some important developments in Merovingian monasticism need to be discussed before entering into analysis of the canon law of the seventh century.

2. Merovingian Monasticism

Columbanus casts a long shadow over Gallic monasticism, and can obscure other independent developments. The Irishman benefited from one of the things that Clovis had had: a sympathetic biographer, in the form of Jonas of Bobbio. This, combined with recent fashionable research on the role of the Irish in preserving literacy during the "savage" years of the "Dark Ages," has made Columbanus a heroic figure.[108] That is not to say he was not a strong, charismatic leader who had a long-lasting and far-reaching influence on monasticism in Europe. However, his reputation can outshine the accomplishments of others in Gaul who also had an impact on the lives of the regular clergy.

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[107] See ibid., 288-90. For the aristocratic resistance to the Carolingians and the evolution of the *regnum Francorum*, see Herwig Wolfram, "The shaping of the early medieval principality as a type of non-royal rulership," *Viator* 2 (1971): 33-51, especially 39-44.

Caesarius, the bishop of Arles, is perhaps the most famous of these, and the one who must share with Columbanus much of the credit for influencing Gallic monasticism. Caesarius was born about 470 in the region of Chalon-sur-Saône and became a monk at Lérins, one of the most famous monasteries in medieval Europe, when he was about twenty years old. In 502 he was consecrated bishop in Arles, in southern Gaul, a post he held until his death in 542.[109] Soon after becoming bishop he founded a nunnery at Arles with his sister Caesaria as abbess.[110] He presented her with a Rule, "arguably the first rule written specifically for a women's monastery in either east or west."[111] Caesarius also wrote a Rule for men, which would later be an important counter-balance to so-called Columbanian monasticism.[112]

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[108] One of the more popular histories of the 1990s was Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York, 1995), which contains at least two falsehoods in its title and is, although doubtlessly entertaining, myopic in its historiography. On page 188, Cahill brings Columbanus to Gaul, where "the bishops tend to their local flocks of literate and semiliterate officials," despite the evidence for literacy among the nobility in Gaul. See Ian Wood, "Administration, law and culture." Brunhild, "the wicked Visigothic princess," makes her appearance on page 189 of Cahill's book. A more recent book by Matthew J. Culligan and Peter Cherici, *The Wandering Irish in Europe: Their Influence from the Dark Ages to Modern Times* (New York, 2000), has less to say about this time period, but still makes the Irish heroes fighting against, among others, the "sinister" Brunhild. See pages 1-7, 61-81.

[109] The important dates of his life can be found in William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), 5-6.

[110] Ibid., 117.

The work of Caesarius in promoting cloistered women spread north through the work of Radegund, the most famous nun of the sixth century. Radegund's career offers a good example of not only a woman's role in the cloister, but also the continuing power of royal saints after they had withdrawn from the world.

Radegund was a Thuringian who was captured as booty by Chlothar I, who subsequently married her.[113] Even as a queen, she behaved like a nun, and she eventually left Chlothar and was consecrated by Bishop Medardus of Soissons.[114] Radegund's marriage was dissolved, if the sources are to be believed, rather easily. Medardus seemed to have some reticence about consecrating the wife of a king, and certain unnamed nobles were "harassing" him because he thought "he could take away the king's official queen as though she were only a prostitute,"[115] but as she had not borne any children and Chlothar had at least five other wives or concubines from which to beget heirs, Radegund was allowed to leave. This decision was codified in Merovingian law, which held that a marriage could be dissolved by mutual consent if each party was dissatisfied, and nunneries were acceptable avenues for repudiated wives.[116]

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[111] Ibid., 118.

[112] For more on the southern Gallic monastic culture, see Ian Wood, "A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories," in H. B. Clarke and Mary Brennan, eds., *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), 3-32.

[113] *HF*, III.7.

[114] Venantius Fortunatus, *The Life of the Holy Radegund*, 12 in McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 70-86.

[115] Ibid. McNamara gives the Latin, "reginam non publicanam sed publicam," proving that, sometimes, interesting phrases get lost in translation.

Radegund's life as a nun is celebrated both by Fortunatus, her dear friend, and Baudonivia, a nun at Poitiers. They celebrate her dutiful submission to the nun's life and recount her miracles, but it is clear she was not divorced from the secular world, a trend seen in Merovingian monasticism throughout the sixth and seventh centuries. In both Caesarius's and Radegund's nunneries, we see urban monasteries, not the rural outposts of the Egyptian and Irish monks. Not even Columbanus deviated far from this template, as we shall see.

Radegund brought Caesarius's Rule north and instituted it in her own nunnery.[117] This helped link the southern, less Germanic provinces of the Merovingians to the central and northern areas, as well as Radegund personally to the bishopric of Arles.[118] She also became involved in the controversy over the piece of the True Cross that she wanted to bring to Poitiers. According to Baudonivia, Radegund appealed to Sigibert I for permission to ask the Byzantine emperor for the piece. When Maroveus refused to inter the relic in Radegund's nunnery, Sigibert "deputed" Eufronius to step in.[119] Radegund, who mortified her flesh and performed menial tasks, nevertheless "did not relinquish the power which went with her association with the Merovingian family."[120] There was no point in cutting off all ties with the throne.

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[116] Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, 80-81.

[117] Fortunatus, *The Life of the Holy Radegund*, 24; *HF*, IX.39, 40. Brian Brennan in "St Radegund and the Early Development of Her Cult at Poitiers," *Journal of Religious History* 13, no. 4 (1985): 343, writes that "We might note at this point that Radegund and Agnes [the Mother Superior appointed by Radegund] were virtually forced to adopt the rule of Caesarius because they lacked the support of Bishop Maroveus who came to the *cathedra* of Poitiers c. 568." Gregory used the words "necessitate commota" to describe the situation. Fortunatus does not indicate whether or not Radegund had any choice.

[118] Brennan, "St Radegund," 345.

Politics and religion continued to mix with the arrival of Columbanus in *circa* 590. The Irish saint is widely credited with introducing a new form of monasticism to the north, diametrically opposed to the urban monasticism of sixth-century Provence, Aquitaine, and Burgundy. However, the paucity of sources about northern Gaul in the sixth century means that scholars have nothing with which to compare the spread of "Columbanian" monasticism.[121] The Irishman's influence is considerable, but needs to be appreciated in context. His battles with Brunhild, presented by Jonas as a struggle against an evil woman by a noble and humble monk, must be countered with that queen's support of the monastery in Autun and a letter from Gregory the Great confirming her right to choose an abbot without episcopal interference.[122] Columbanus's apparent scorn for the secular world must be balanced by the fact that his monastery at Luxeuil was probably on royal land, land that was almost certainly donated by Childebert or his son Theuderic, against whom Columbanus later turned.[123] The founders of monasteries, prior to and after Columbanus, expected to be remembered in the prayers of the monks. In fact, "perpetual intercession" was usually a provision of foundation.[124] In this sense, Columbanus's sermonizing against Theuderic's profligacy can be seen as a betrayal of his patrons.[125]

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[119] Baudonivia, *The Life of Radegund*, 16, in McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 86-105; *HF*, IX.40. It should be mentioned that Eufronius's action was uncanonical.
[120] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 139.
[121] Ibid., 185.
[122] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 58.
[123] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 195.

Columbanus also brought to light the conflict between abbots and bishops in Gallic monasticism. Sixth-century councils had established that monks were subservient to bishops,[126] which was almost completely opposite the custom of the Irish Church.[127] This situation had caused friction in the past, as in the case of Radegund and Maroveus, but that was complicated by Radegund's status.[128] With Columbanus, the debate became more politicized – he undermined the bishops' authority by establishing networks throughout the aristocracy of the region, which allowed him to gain patronage without going through the episcopal hierarchy. One such aristocrat was Waldelen, who "ruled over the people between the Alps and the Jura," and who went with his wife to Columbanus when they failed to conceive and begged him to intercede with God on their behalf.

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[124] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church,* 60.

[125] For more on Columbanus's relationship to the royalty and aristocracy of the region, see Ian Wood, "The *Vita Columbani* and Merovingian Hagiography," *Peritia* 1 (1982): 63-80. Wood goes over the omissions in Jonas's *vita* and provides perhaps a fuller portrait of the Irish saint.

[126] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church,* 66.

[127] A recent book about this period in Irish history is Dáibhi Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200* (Harlow, 1995). He takes a closer look at the organization of the Celtic Church on pages 147-68. For an interesting take on the Continent's occasionally contentious relationship with the Irish monks, see Michael Enright, "Iromanie-Irophobie Revisited: A Suggested Frame of Reference for Considering Continental Reactions to Irish *Peregrini* in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in *Karl Martell und Seiner Zeit,* 367-80.

[128] Brennan, "St Radegund," 344, writes, "the spiritual authority of the bishop could be seriously undermined by the establishment of a nunnery if the foundress were a determined woman and *a member of the royal family*" (my emphasis). Radegund challenged the bishop not necessarily

Columbanus told them they would have many sons, but the first must be consecrated to the Lord. This son, Donatus, later became bishop of Besançon.[129] Columbanus also journeyed to Meaux, far north of Luxeuil in Austrasia, where he was welcomed by Chagneric, one of Theudebert II's counselors, whose own son Burgundofaro became bishop of Meaux and whose daughter Burgundofara founded the monastery at Faremoutiers and became its abbess.[130] While he was in Austrasia, the monk also met Autharius, whose sons Ado and Dado each founded a monastery following Columbanus' Rule.[131] Jonas says little else about these two, but from the *Vita Audoini* we learn that the family was noble and that Dado, also known as Audoin, became bishop of Rouen. A third brother, Rado, became treasurer, probably under Dagobert I.[132] We see from these examples that Columbanus involved himself deeply in the secular affairs of the day. His protégés moved in the highest circles of government and the Church. The influence of a stern and imposing monk on these men in their childhood should not be underestimated.

In the early seventh century, Chlothar II and Dagobert I actively patronized monasteries. Dagobert enriched the monastery at Saint-Denis; provided the land to Bishop Eligius of Noyon for the foundation of the monastery

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because she wanted monastic autonomy, but because she had been a queen and was used to getting her way.

[129] Jonas, *Life of St. Columbanus*, 22. He also signed the councils of Clichy and Chalon, see Appendix A below, pp. 146 and 156.

[130] Jonas, *Life of St. Columbanus*, 50; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 185-86.

[131] Jonas, *Life of St. Columbanus*, 50.

[132] *Vita Audoini*, 1.

of Solignac; donated the land for the monastery of Saint-Amand in northern Gaul; and gave the land and helped endow Rebais, which was founded by Audoin and his brother.[133] Dagobert's son Clovis II and his queen Balthild continued the pattern. Balthild built the monasteries of Chelles and Corbie.[134] These are just some of the examples of royalty and aristocracy – for there is little doubt that men like Eligius, Amandus, and Audoin were closely connected to the court and also drawn from the nobility – working together for the spiritual well-being of their kingdom.[135]

The kings and queens were not the only ones establishing monasteries. The family of Pippin I, which of course became the most famous in the realm, had its connections with Ireland through the monk Fursey and his brothers Foillán and Ultán. After Fursey's death in *circa* 649, Foillán and Ultán brought to Gaul the cult of Patrick and established themselves at Nivelles, founded by Itta, Pippin's widow.[136] These Irish monks came from a separate tradition than that of Columbanus, and probably brought a different form of monasticism. In addition, they were patronized not by the royal court, but by the aristocracy.[137]

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[133] See *Fredegar* IV.79 for Saint-Denis and Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 70-71. See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 141-43, for a brief discussion of the controversy over the founding of Rebais.

[134] *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 7.

[135] See Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 193, for others.

[136] *Vita Geretrudis*, 2. On page 221, the editors write: "By [founding the monastery], they kept their portion of the family fortune out of royal hands." This would become a key point in later years.

[137] There is debate about what kind of monasticism these two groups practiced. See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 314, for a brief discussion.

The establishment of monasteries under royal and aristocratic control – or influence, to use a somewhat more ameliorative term – led back to the conflict between abbots and bishops that Columbanus had highlighted. The conflict took its most intense form in the secular world with the granting of immunities. "Immunity" is a term long debated in Merovingian judicial history.[138] Immunity in the context of monasteries is something that affected the Merovingian Church in the seventh century, and to understand the concept, it is necessary to look a bit more closely at Queen Balthild.

We have already encountered Balthild as regent for her son, Chlothar III. Little is known about her after she entered the monastery at Chelles, but she probably died *circa* 680.[139] Balthild was a powerful queen even while Clovis II was alive, and she may have been behind Clovis's request of Bishop Landeric of Paris to grant the monastery of Saint- Denis a privilege from episcopal interference in 655. This meant the bishop could no longer exact payment for some liturgical functions, interfere with the distribution of monastic revenues, or dip into the treasury of the monastery.[140] After Balthild became regent, she stepped up this process. At various monasteries, she "ordered a privilege to be confirmed for them and she also conceded them immunities."[141] The privileges were similar to the ones Landeric gave to Saint-Denis. The immunities placed the monasteries under the direct control of the king, and it also guaranteed that royal officials would not enter the monastery, effectively exempting the monks from some royal taxes.[142] In return, the Crown expected them "to exhort the clemency of Christ, the highest king, for the king and for peace."[143] She continued this policy when she founded Corbie, and she also richly endowed the monasteries founded by Filibert at Jumièges and Laigobert at Saint-Moutiers-au-Perbe.[144]

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[138] See Alexander Callander Murray, "Immunity, Nobility, and the *Edict of Paris*," *Speculum* 69, no. 1 (1994): 18-39; Paul Fouracre, "Eternal light and earthly needs: practical aspects of the development of Frankish immunities," in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, eds., *Power and Property in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), 53-81; and especially Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1999) for recent studies of the question.

[139] The date is from Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 114.

[140] Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 38. Nelson also suggests that Balthild was behind the request.

These new privileges were not altogether popular among the episcopate. On the one hand, there is strong evidence that Balthild was supported in this move by Audoin of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon, two of the most powerful bishops of the age.[145] She also appointed bishops in the old Merovingian fashion: Genesius of Lyons, Leudegar of Autun, and possibly Sigobrand of Paris.[146] These men could be considered her supporters. On the other hand, Balthild seemed genuinely concerned with reforming the Church, especially in stamping out simony,[147] and this may not have endeared her to the bishops. She also may have been involved in the murder of Bishop Aunemund of Lyons in the early 660s.[148] According to her hagiographer, her retirement to Chelles coincided with the murder of Sigobrand, and Nelson has speculated that this was a reaction by the aristocracy against her policies.[149] Certainly there is no mention in her *vita* of compensation to the bishops for the loss of those revenues that the monasteries now controlled.

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[141] *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 9.
[142] See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 109 n. 85.
[143] *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 9.
[144] Ibid., 7, 8.
[145] Audoin was on the regency council for Chlothar III; see ibid., 5; Eligius baptized the young king; see Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 108. For more on these two bishops and their relationship with the rural monasteries of their sees, see Paul Fouracre, "The Work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon in Extending Episcopal Influence from the Town to the Country in Seventh-Century Neustria," in Derek Baker, ed., *The Church in Town and Countryside, Studies in Church History* 16 (Oxford, 1979), 77-91.
[146] See Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 199 for Genesius; *Passio Leudegarii*, 2: "Then Queen Balthild … sent this vigorous man Leudegar to be bishop of Autun …"; *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 10, for Sigobrand. Wood accepts that she was responsible for his appointment, but the *vita* is vague. Sigobrand's predecessor, Chrodbert, is mentioned in chapter 5 as being part of the regency council, so Balthild may have been instrumental in choosing his successor.

Monasteries also were important in spearheading missionary work. Missionaries do not figure much in the seventh-century church councils, but they were an important part of Merovingian Christianity. The presence of paganism in Gaul after 500 is still debated, and may never be answered.[150] Certainly writers of the time often mentioned pagan practices, but whether this indicates that they were still prevalent or whether the authors simply believed they were is not clear.[151] As Yitzhak Hen has pointed out, when "combing through the lives of the

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[147] *Vita Domnae Balthildis*, 6.

[148] This is the subject of much debate. Eddius Stephanus, who calls Aunemund "Dalphinus," claimed that Balthild killed the bishop and eight others. See *Life of Wilfrid*, 6. Eddius also wrote that Wilfrid was persecuted at that time, despite the fact that Wilfrid was almost certainly no longer in Gaul after 658. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 34-38, argues that Eddius simply wanted to establish "Wilfrid's saintly credentials at an early point in his *Vita*." The death of Aunemund, she writes, is a result of "local conflict" rather than one "between centre and province." Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 166-79, argue differently: If one takes Wilfrid out of the "martyrdom" scene in Eddius, everything else fits. And although it may have started as a local dispute, the fact remains that a charge of treason was leveled against the bishop, and the king did dispatch men to bring him to court. As Chlothar was still in his minority, "the king" here can be seen as the regent, i.e. Balthild.

[149] Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 41-42.

[150] A recent book on the topic is Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997). For Gaul, see specifically 130-59.

[151] In the translations in this thesis, canons 13 and 16 of the Council of Clichy are the only ones that specifically mention, respectively, converted Jews and pagans. See below, pp. 140 and 141.

Merovingian saints, *which were written in the Merovingian period*, it is obvious how remarkably little their interest was in pagan survivals and superstitions" (my emphasis).[152] The question of the "paganism" of the Gauls must remain unanswered, because what concerned monastic missionaries was the actual paganism of those on the fringes of the realm. The most famous example of this is St. Augustine's mission to England in 597, which was launched with the aid of the Franks. Gregory the Great linked the evangelization of the Saxons with reform of the Frankish Church, and it is in this context that the pope heaped praise upon Brunhild, the persecutor of Columbanus.[153] The Merovingian support for the mission was probably due to political motives as well as religious ones, as the Franks had some claim to hegemony in south-east England in the late sixth century. They also had a family connection, as the daughter of King Charibert I had married Aethelbert, the king of Kent.[154]

The prime focus of Merovingian missionary work was east of the Rhine, as it continued to be under the Carolingians. Columbanus settled in the Vosges, and although he himself seems to have had an aversion to missionary work,[155] Columbanian monasteries were on the forefront of the battle to Christianize the east. St. Amandus, who was influenced by Columbanus, went far and wide in his mission and ended up in northern Gaul and Frisia, setting the stage for Carolingian missions in that area.[156] Boniface has been given much of the credit for the conversion of the people east of the Rhine, but there is evidence for a Bavarian Church from the seventh century, and Boniface may have been more of a reformer and organizer.[157] The history of Bavaria's conversion is murky, but it is almost certain that Christianity was well rooted there before Boniface arrived in the eighth century.[158] Wilfrid and other Anglo-Saxon missionaries prior to Boniface were also active in Frisia.[159]

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[152] Hen, *Culture and Religion*, 205. He devotes pages 154-206 to the topic, a very thorough investigation of Gregory of Tours, Merovingian hagiography, and penitentials, among other sources. R. A. Markus, "From Caesarius to Boniface: Christianity and Paganism in Gaul," in Jacques Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth, eds., *The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity* (London, 1992), 154-72 argues for a slightly different interpretation. He sees pagan practices as continuing, but changing the Gallic form of Christianity. Boniface felt the need for reform to inaugurate "an incomparably more radically Christian society." See page 168. Both points of view have validity and do not necessarily contradict each other.

[153] Pope Gregory remarked that Brunhild "had done more for the mission than anyone except God." See Ian Wood, "The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English, *Speculum* 69, no. 1 (1994): 6.

[154] *HF*, IV.26 and IX.26. See Wood, "The Mission of Augustine," for more on the religious aspects of the evangelization. On the political designs of the Merovingians in England, see Ian Wood, "Frankish Hegemony in England," in *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 235-41.

The Merovingians not only were the most successful of the Germanic successor states in western Europe, but their bishops and monks, with the backing of the royal house, were largely responsible for the spread of Christianity east of the Rhine and at least partly responsible for the conversion of England. This time period also saw "a flowering of the monastic tradition which was crucial to the development of monasticism in the west."[160] In this political and religious context, the councils of the seventh century can be analyzed with greater detail, as many of the prime power brokers in the kingdoms were the bishops. As we shall see, the bishops had one eye on religious reform and one on the governance of the realm, and the councils were key arenas in which they wrestled with the rulers.

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[155] According to Jonas, he did go among the Swabians and bring Christianity to them, but some of them had already been baptized and had reverted to pagan practices. See *Life of St. Columbanus*, 53. In chapter 56 Jonas shows an unintentionally humorous justification for Columbanus shirking more missionary work. The saint thought of evangelizing the Slavs, but an angel of the Lord told him he should enjoy the fruits of his labor and instead head to Italy. Columbanus seems not to have needed much encouragement to take the angel's advice.

[156] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 72-73.

[157] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 307-11.

[158] Ibid., 312.

[159] See Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Wilfrid*, 26, and Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 316. Willibrord, the abbot of Echternach, is the most famous of the early missionaries. He and Pippin II have generally been seen as working hand-in-glove to Christianize Frisia, but Marios

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Costambeys, "An aristocratic community on the northern Frankish frontier 690-726," *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994), 39-62, argues for a slightly different interpretation.

[160] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 323.

CHAPTER TWO: "Uniuersalis totius populi elegerit uotus"
Episcopal Elections and Church Property

Merovingian bishops moved in the cold hard world of political reality. There was no way around this; they were chosen from the secular nobility and had often worked in the court of the Merovingian kings. When they gathered in council, the political and religious aspects of the issues were often so connected as to make little difference to the bishops. Two areas that appear purely religious, episcopal election and the transfer of Church property, were in fact highly charged with political overtones. The bishops had to consider the world in which they lived when legislating on these topics.

The election of a new bishop was potentially a political hand grenade. Merovingian history is littered with bishops who were chosen by the king (or regent, in the case of the seventh century) and were unpopular in their own diocese, or chosen by their fellow bishops only to run afoul of the monarchy. The counciliar statutes of the seventh century reflect the fine line that the bishops had to walk when selecting one of their own. The transfer of power in a diocese was linked to the property of the Church, the distribution of which also worried the ecclesiastical authorities. According to Chilperic I,[1] the Church controlled a great deal of land left to it by pious worshippers, by noblemen hoping for redemption in the next life, and by the kings themselves, donating it from the royal fisc. In the turmoil after a bishop's death, the king would be tempted to carve off a chunk of the ecclesiastical estates in order to return it to the fisc. The Church could not allow this, and the bishops codified the process of land transfer in the councils.

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[1] For Chilperic's rant, see above, p. 2.

Of the eighty canons of the councils examined in this thesis, nine are expressly devoted to the election of new bishops, and nine others touch on the manner in which ecclesiastical property should be handled. These statutes indicate the canonical way of choosing a new bishop and keeping the property in the hands of the Church. Of the Council of Clichy's twenty-eight canons, nine are related to episcopal election and property. Canon 21 says that no one from the laity may be appointed a priest.[2] More specifically, Canon 28 states that a new bishop should only be appointed by the "universal vote of the whole people" and with the assent of his fellow bishops.[3] No one violating this precept would be allowed to ascend to the seat. This stricture was not being followed, for at Chalon two decades later, Canon 10 explicitly restates that after the death of a bishop, an election should be held only by the other bishops, the clergy, and citizens of the diocese.[4] At Losne, Canon 5 mentions that the consent of the people is necessary for the election of a bishop.[5] Both Canons 16 and 22 condemn bishops who choose their own successors.[6]

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[2] Clichy, 21: "nullus laicorum archipresbyter preponatur."

[3] Ibid., 28: "quem uniuersalis totius populi elegerit uotus ac conprouincialium uoluntas adsenserit."

[4] Chalon, 10: "Si quis episcopus de quacumque fuerit ciuitate defunctus, non ab alio nisi comprouincialibus, clero et ciuibus suis habeatur electio; sin aliter, huiusmodi ordinatio irrita habeatur."

[5] Losne, 5: "populi tam consensus."

[6] Ibid., 16: "Vt episcopi, iuxta quod canones moment, sucessorem sibi eligere non praesumant, nisi ipse remotus et exutus ab omnibus rebus aeclesiasticis fuerit." 22: "Si quis episcopus sucessorem sibi contra decreta canonum subrogauerit, ipse a proprio gradu decedat mutata uita contemtus."

The canons about property make a clear distinction between what belongs to the Church and what belongs to the individual within the Church. Canon 2 of Clichy mentions that even if clerics have possessed goods of the church for "any length of time," they should not consider these goods their own.[7] This theme is repeated, not only in later canons of this particular council – Canons 12, 15, 18, 22, 23, and 24 – but in later councils. The fifth canon of Chalon warns that laymen should not be placed in charge of the parish goods.[8] Canon 16 of Losne, mentioned above, combines both concerns. The bishop should not choose his own successor unless he no longer has control of the property of the church. The implication here is that bishops are choosing their own successors, in violation of canonical law, but the legislators are accepting this as long as property is not alienated from ecclesiastical control.

All this legislation stems from the bishops' very real fears both about kingly interference in ecclesiastical affairs and also the establishment of episcopal dynasties. These tensions were evident early in the development of the Church under the Merovingians, and had not been alleviated by the seventh century. Gregory of Tours himself is an early example of both problems in the Merovingian Church. According to Venantius Fortunatus, Gregory rose to the episcopate in 573 through the good graces of Sigibert I and Brunhild. In his poem celebrating the occasion, Fortunatus wrote to the people of Tours:

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[7] Clichy, 2: "Clerici quod etiam sine precatoriis qualibet diuturnitate temporis de ecclesiae remuneratione possederint, in ius proprietarium prescriptione temporis non uocetur, dummodo pateat rem ecclesiae fuisse."

[8] Chalon, 5: "Saeculares uero, qui necdum sunt ad clericatum conuersi, res parrochiarum uel ipsas parrochias minime ad regendum debeant habere commissas."

> The cherishing hand of Father Aegidius consecrated him to the Lord,
> that he should restore the people, that Radegund should love him.
> The triumphant Sigibert and Brunhild look on this promotion with favour,
> through the king's judgement the glorious culmination is at hand.[9]

Despite this external influence on his election, Gregory insists that his family had been occupying the episcopal seat in Tours for many years. In his *Histories*, he lists the bishops of Tours from those who first took office during the reign of the Roman emperor Decius (249-251). Later in his list he begins to mention that the bishops are from "a senatorial family," and often related.[10] Six bishops prior to Gregory are referred to in this fashion. This family was Gregory's.[11]

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[9] "Quem patris Aegidii domino manus alma sacravit, / ut populum recreet, quem Radegundis amet. / Huic Sigibertus ovans favet et Brunichildis honori: / Iudicio regis nobile culmen adest." Poem 5.3, *Ad cives Turonicos de Gregorio episcopo*, reprinted in George, *Venantius Fortunatus*, 194-95. Gregory remains silent about the circumstances of his election. A few noteworthy things come from this short section of the poem. Aegidius is mentioned in Gregory's *Histories*, not as the man who consecrated him, but as a conspirator in a plot against Childebert II who is eventually deposed. The other point is that although the king and queen were not, perhaps, directly responsible for his elevation, their favor was still important. This kind of influence was what the bishops were trying to prevent.

[10] Gregory often uses the terms "senator" and "senatorial," and there is debate on exactly what he means. Frank Gilliard, "The Senators of Sixth-Century Gaul," *Speculum* 54, no. 4 (1979): 685-97, goes over the evidence and the historiography of this complex problem, and unfortunately does not come to a firm conclusion, because it may be beyond modern historians to ever know what Gregory meant. Gilliard's conclusion, however, provides what may be the best attempt at a definition: "The senators of sixth-century Gaul were wealthy, landed proprietors, usually of Gallo-Roman stock, who were called by the traditional name, *senator*, which in previous centuries had been applied in the provinces indistinguishably to imperial *senatores* and to municipal *curiales*. Those real *senators* and *curiales* were the ancestors of many sixth-century senators, but because of the effects of social mobility in the fifth and sixth centuries, by Gregory's time some of those called *senator* in Gaul were parvenus of neither imperial nor municipal senatorial stock." See 696-97.

[11] The six bishops are: Eustochius (443-460), Perpetuus (460-490), Volusianus (491-498), Ommatius (521-525), Francilio (527-529), and Eufronius (555-573), who was Gregory's first cousin. See *HF*, X.31. No historian doubts that this is Gregory's family. Thorpe's Introduction to the *Histories* contains a long section devoted to Gregory's illustrious family, for example, and Wood mentions it in a few places in *The Merovingian Kingdoms*; see 28, for example. For more

Furthermore, the question of Church property comes up as well in Gregory's situation. His maternal great-uncle, Gregory of Langres, was a *senator* and a count of Autun before becoming bishop, and his son Tetricus succeeded him in the episcopate.[12] The transfer of personal property could easily be confused with property belonging to the diocese. In decrying both illegal elevation to the bishopric and the bait-and-switch that might be pulled with ecclesiastical property, the councils could not have found a better target than Gregory of Tours.

Gregory died in 594, but the concerns associated with elections such as his had not disappeared by the 620s. In the seventh century, just as in the sixth, there are many examples of bishops rising to their positions in non-canonical circumstances. In the 650s, Aunemund was consecrated bishop of Lyons by his predecessor, Viventius, in a clear violation of canonical law.[13] Praejectus, the bishop of Clermont in the 660s and 670s, was also involved in a dispute over his seat. When Bishop Felix died, the archdeacon Garivald claimed that he should be elevated to the seat. "The custom of succession among [Garivald's] predecessors had been that the person serving in that deacon's post took over the pastoral care," according to Praejectus's hagiographer, and "this business ... had been made

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on Gregory's family, see Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, 52-68. Gregory himself is rather coy about his family. He mentions them obliquely throughout his writings, usually to praise his predecessors. In one obviously self-congratulatory passage, he has King Chlothar I say of the family of Saint Eufronius, Gregory's immediate predecessor as Bishop of Tours, "That is one of the noblest and most distinguished families in the land." See *HF*, IV.15.

[12] Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, trans. Edward James (Liverpool, 1991), VII.1.

[13] *Acta Aunemundi*, 2, in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 179-92. The Council of Paris (614) had forbidden appointments of this sort, but it obviously continued, as Canon 16 of Losne reiterates it.

binding in law." Praejectus attempted to seize the seat by telling all about a vision his mother had had that predicted that he would be a great man, and he swayed many of the clergy. Garivald took his case to the laity and won the seat by bribery, in clear violation of canonical law. He lived only forty days, however, and Praejectus, "a better candidate," succeeded him.[14] Leudegar was appointed bishop in Autun by order of Queen Balthild in the early 660s. According to his *vita*, two men fought over the see, and it became "so fierce that there had been bloodshed." One man was killed and the other driven into exile, so Balthild "sent this vigorous man Leudegar to be bishop in Autun in order that the church there, which now for almost two years ... had stood alone ... should be protected by his strength and guidance."[15] Examples of bishops who had connections to the royal court are not as abundant in the seventh century as in the sixth, possibly because of the lack of explicit evidence provided by Gregory of Tours for the sixth.[16] But these prominent men, including Audoin of Rouen,[17] who were elevated against the will of the councils, are enough to explain why the legislation existed.

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[14] *Passio Praejecti*, 13, in Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 271-300, gives the whole story. In chapter 12, the author tells us that Praejectus made a bid to become bishop on the death of Felix, but he was told that he was not rich enough – an important point about the kind of men who became bishop and the kind of social status Praejectus held. Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 261, make the point that although Garivald is treated rather roughly by Praejectus's hagiographer, he certainly appeared to have law and custom on his side.

[15] *Passio Leudegarii*, 2.

[16] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 78, writes "Many bishops owed their position to the king," but the examples he uses from Gregory do not necessarily back this up. Gregory mentions Baudinus, "who had been in the king's service," acceding to the bishopric of Tours in 546, and in his list of the bishops of Tours he mentions that Baudinus had been a referendary (*HF*, IV.3, X.31); Flavius, also a referendary, "was elected" bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône about 580 (*HF*, V.45); in 581, the "King (probably Chilperic I) ... had Badegisil, Mayor of the Palace, elected" to the seat of Le Mans (*HF*, VI.9); Licerius, another referendary, became bishop of Arles in 586 (*HF*, VIII.39); Virus, who belonged to a "senatorial family," was chosen by the king as bishop of Vienne (*HF*, VIII.39); and Charimer, yet another referendary, was made bishop of Verdun "by royal decree" (*HF*, IX.23). Wood's point is that the bishops came from the court, which is not by itself uncanonical. Not all of these bishops rose to their positions illegally, and Gregory does not seem to condemn those who did.

This struggle for independence by the Church was carried out in Gallic councils because of less contact with Rome. During the seventh century the papacy saw its prestige diminish from the heady days of Gregory the Great (590-604), culminating with the arrest, trial, and exile of Martin I (d. 656).[18] In the sixth century, a system of patronage had evolved in Italy whereby the popes involved themselves in episcopal elections.[19] For the actual election, a standard procedure was outlined in papal letters. Notice of a vacancy was sent to Rome, and the pope sent a representative to arrange an election. Technically, the election had to result from unanimous vote of the clergy, nobles, and people. The pope reserved the right to intercede if there was a deadlock.[20] This system of patronage could be extended to kings as well, as seen by Gregory the Great's relationship with the Merovingian monarchy.

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[17] See above, p. 12.

[18] Martin ran afoul of the imperial government in Constantinople over the monothelete heresy. Emperor Constans II (641-668) was also upset that Martin had not received imperial sanction for his election, and charged him with high treason, which may have had some truth to it, for Martin supported the exarch of Ravenna, Olympius, who had proclaimed himself emperor in 652. John Julius Norwich's massive recent history of the Byzantine Empire in three volumes, *Byzantium* (New York, 1988), gives the whole sordid tale in Volume One, *The Early Centuries*, 317-19. His is a somewhat pro-Byzantine stance; he takes a disapproving tone toward Martin's arrest, but also adds that it is hard "not to sympathize with Constans" in his fight against heresy. A counter to this can be found in Nicolas Cheetham's *A History of the Popes* (New York, 1982), 50-51, which is virulently anti-Constans.

[19] Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages, 476-752* (London, 1979), 324, defines patronage as "the intervention of the pope in episcopal elections either directly or through his agents to secure the appointment of a man known to be fitted for the enhanced responsibilities of the office." He goes on to emphasize that there was nothing simoniacal in this.

[20] Ibid., 333-34. Unfortunately, this entire section of Richards's book is concerned with the Italian episcopate. Gaul is largely absent from the book, but it is probable the popes felt the same way about bishops in Francia as they did about the ones in Italy. Gregory the Great certainly did.

The pope's interaction with Gaul began early in his papacy. In 595, Vigilius of Arles wrote to the pope requesting the use of the *pallium*,[21] and Gregory granted it and made the bishop the papal vicar in the lands ruled by Childebert II.[22] The pope corresponded regularly with the Merovingian kingdoms, and his letters reflect his concern with simony and the ordination of unqualified laymen to ecclesiastical office. These problems show up not only in later canons, but also in Gregory of Tours. In his *Histories*, Gregory writes about the lobbying that followed the deaths of Theodosius, bishop of Rodez, and Remigius of Bourges.[23] Pope Gregory probably knew that reform of the Merovingian Church could not be accomplished without royal support, and therefore he looked the other way when extending the papal system of patronage to the Merovingian kings.[24] This interference with episcopal election was nothing new, but with papal approval, it became more entrenched. The canons of the seventh century decry this process without actually stemming it much.[25]

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[21] The *pallium* was a coverlet worn draped across the shoulder. By the sixth century it had become symbolic of the metropolitan office, conferred by the pope on the bishop who would then be metropolitan for a region. Obviously, this was an important honor for Vigilius. Caesarius of Arles also received the *pallium* earlier in the century. Arles continued to be Rome's gateway to Gaul throughout the Merovingian era. Gregory also originally denied the *pallium* to Syragius of Autun, a favorite of Brunhild. He eventually relented because Syragius had been so helpful in Augustine's mission to England. See Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 116.

[22] R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), 171.

[23] *HF*, VI.38-39. In the latter case, Guntram is shown as resisting the offers of money for the see. In both cases, the candidate with royal support is elected.

[24] Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 172.

[25] Lobbying by the bishops against royal interference in episcopal election is not an exclusively seventh-century phenomenon. Sixth-century councils condemned it as well. For more on the

Church property is tied to the election of a new bishop, as the canons make clear. As seen above, ecclesiastical property could easily be confused with personal property.[26] During the sixth century, great tracts of property were left to the Church; enough to indicate that Chilperic's whining was not simply exaggeration.[27] Kings and other magnates continually challenged the ownership of these lands. Canon 18 of Clichy and Canon 6 of Chalon single out secular nobles, rather than other bishops, attempting to seize property. The eighteenth canon of Clichy reads:

> When a bishop dies, if anyone in any position or set up in military service or puffed up by power dares to seize and presumes to inventory the furniture situated in the bishops' house or the goods of any type put into the houses or the fields of the church before the opening of the will or the hearing, or has dared to break the bars of the church, let him be rejected from communion.[28]

This canon may refer to King Dagobert I, who "longed for ecclesiastical property," if Fredegar is to be believed.[29] Canon 6 of Chalon is more ambiguous,

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Gallic Church's relationship with Rome, see Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 110-18. On page 112, he makes a key statement: "So far as the evidence goes, it could not be claimed that Rome and the Gallo-Roman Church were regularly in touch with one another. The evidence is spasmodic and possibly their relations were little better than that. But there was communion and affection and mutual respect. The judgement of the popes might be challenged from time to time, but not their authority."

[26] Another example that could cause concern pops up in Franz Irsigler, "On the aristocratic character of early Frankish society," in Timothy Reuter, ed. and trans., *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the ruling class of France and Germany from the sixth to the twelfth century* (Amsterdam and New York, 1978), 109. Irsigler mentions that the will of Bishop Hadoind of Le Mans from 643 indicates that he owned several *villae*. This bishop signed the Council of Clichy in 626/627, see Appendix A below, p. 146. Irsigler does not mention whether this land was given to the Church or to Hadoind's heirs.

[27] For examples, see ibid., 123-42, passim.

[28] Clichy, 18: "Si quis in quolibet gradu uel cingulo constitutus aut potestate suffultus decedente episcopo res cuiuslibet conditionis in domus uel agros ecclesiae positas ante reserationem testamenti uel audientiam ausus fuerit occupare uel repagula effringere ecclesiae et supellectilem infra domus ecclesiae positam contingere uel scrutare presumpserit, a communione abdicatur."

[29] *Fredegar*, IV.60: "cupiditates instincto super rebus ecclesiarum."

using the word *nullus*, but may also refer to the king, in this case Clovis II.[30] Although not much is known about this king, the author of the *LHF* does not have kind words for him. He writes that:

> Clovis, having been instigated by the devil, cut off the arm of the blessed martyr Denis. At the same time he brought ruin to the kingdom of the Franks with disastrous calamities. This Clovis, moreover, had every kind of filthy habit. He was a seducer and a debaser of women, a glutton and a drunk.[31]

Fredegar's continuators have little to say about the king, commenting only that in his later years he went a bit mad, which the *Gesta Dagoberti I* ties to his theft of the relic of St. Denis.[32] This view of the king must be balanced against the monarch who persuaded the bishop of Paris to grant the first immunity to Saint-Denis, a practice continued by his wife Balthild after his death. As we have seen, however, favoring of monasteries over the churches may not have been popular with the bishops, and the attempts to limit royal interference in episcopal property could stem from Clovis's program.

The other canons dealing with property are concerned with other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy taking land belonging to a certain church. Ecclesiastical property was at the heart of one of the most shocking events in late Merovingian history. We saw above that King Childeric II was murdered in 675. According to Leudegar's hagiographer, this stemmed directly from his treatment of both the bishop and Hector, the *patricius* of Marseilles. A woman named Claudia left her property to Clermont, but Hector

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[30] Chalon, 6: "Vt nullus ante audientiam res quarumlibet ecclesiarum inuadere aut auferre praesumat."
[31] *LHF*, 44.
[32] *Fredegar*, continuations, 1 and Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 157.

> had seized the daughter of this Claudia and wickedly joined himself to her and then, having subjected her to the misery of concubinage,[33] he went to King Childeric, who was ruling at that time, having taken over both kingdoms, and he joined with another in his crime, one called Leudegarius.[34]

Hector accused Praejectus of stealing the lands that belonged to Claudia's daughter, and Praejectus was summoned to court to answer the charges. Praejectus went to Autun, where he apparently turned the tables on Leudegar and Hector. Childeric turned against the *patricius* and the bishop of Autun, and the two men fled. Hector was captured and killed, while Leudegar was exiled to Luxeuil.[35] The author of Praejectus's *vita* finishes this vignette by telling us that "by royal order and by the generosity of the king, as he had decided, the blessed Praejectus obtained judgment concerning the property which Hector was trying to get hold of: his church was to hold it as right for all time."[36] This was perfectly within the limits set by the councils – for instance, Canons 12 and 22 of Clichy. The fact that Leudegar, a bishop himself, would contend with another bishop in this matter shows that the canons had little effect when politics were involved. Leudegar was perhaps looking to expand his diocese's holdings at the expense of his neighbor, Praejectus, but failed spectacularly. Both men came to a bad end – Leudegar was blinded and martyred by Ebroin, and Praejectus was martyred when his patron, Childeric, was killed.[37]

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[33] Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 288 n. 103 make the point that she was probably his wife because he went to court to defend her rights.

[34] *Passio Praejecti*, 23. Compare *Passio Leudegarii*, 9, in which Hector, who was "nobly born of a famous line" and wise in "worldly affairs," went to Childeric about "a certain law case." Leudegar's hagiographer makes no more mention of the case.

[35] *Passio Leudegarii*, 11-12, and *Passio Praejecti*, 25-26.

[36] *Passio Praejecti*, 27.

These examples show why the issues of episcopal election and transfer of property were important to the bishops. Despite the repetition and therefore the indication that the provisions were not being followed, no one, not even the pope, appears to have been bothered by the lack of proper procedure when choosing a bishop. We have seen how Aunemund became bishop of Lyons because his predecessor consecrated him personally. Yet he was held in high esteem by the court, and was godparent to Chlothar III.[38] Aunemund was brought down not by bishops angry at his shady method of obtaining the seat, but by a faction in the town hostile to his family, which was apparently famous in the region.[39] Neither Leudegar nor Praejectus, who were raised to their seats against the statutes of the councils, were condemned for it. Likewise, neither Audoin nor Arnulf of Metz, to give two examples of men who survived the political machinations of their age, were chastised for their somewhat underhanded methods of gaining a see.

Coming to a conclusion about property and its alienation or seizure is trickier, because the sources are less clear about such legalistic maneuverings. However, charter evidence from the end of the seventh century indicates that the king was still granting land to the Church, and the monastery of Saint-Denis could still win a law case against the powerful Pippinids dealing with property matters.[40] On the other hand, the evidence from the monastery of Saint-Wandrille shows that two abbots in the eighth century were in the habit of giving out their land in defiance of the canons.[41] The most evidence for a secular leader taking ecclesiastical lands revolves around Charles Martel, although even this is sketchy and probably biased.[42] From the sources, it appears that in the seventh century, an uneasy balance had been achieved in the Merovingian kingdoms with regard to the Church's attitude toward the monarchy. This is evident in the councils – the preamble to Clichy compares Chlothar to King David, and his son Dagobert is compared to Solomon and praised for his pursuit of justice.[43] These biblical themes became commonplace in the seventh century, and they indicate that the bishops were fitting the monarchs into a new ecclesiastical framework.[44] In this light, the conflicts over property become less pronounced than those involving Charles Martel and Pippin III. The seventh-century kings and bishops still coveted land, but in a relatively stable political environment, there was less need to secularize it, as Martel found necessary in his struggles for power in the eighth century.

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[37] *Passio Leudegarii*, 24, 35 and *Passio Praejecti*, 30.

[38] *Acta Aunemundi*, 2. Chapter 8 implies that Aunemund baptized the king.

[39] Ibid., 2, tells us that he was the son of a man of "illustrious standing," who held secular command in Burgundy and Provence. Aunemund's own connection to the court would argue in favor of his high social status.

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[40] See Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 261, 263.

[41] Ian Wood, "Teutsind, Witlaic and the History of Merovingian *precaria*," in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, eds., *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), 31-52. As Wood makes clear on page 48, it was "not the transfer of lands into the hands of laymen that was at issue, but rather the transfer of lands into the hands of laymen who were not otherwise associated with the monastery."

[42] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 274-80, goes over Charles's policies briefly. See also Ian Wood, "Saint-Wandrille and its Hagiography" in Ian Wood and G. A. Loud, eds., *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages* (London, 1991), 1-14. Pierre Riché, *The Carolingians: The Family Who Forged Europe*, trans. Michael Idomir Allen (Philadelphia, 1993), takes a more pro-Martel view of the secularization of Church lands. On page 39 he makes the point, not overlooked by Wood, that those writing about Charles were ecclesiastics, and would therefore be ill disposed toward him. Hincmar of Rheims was the main writer who perpetuated this portrait of Charles. Wood uses more contemporary evidence to show that the later view of Martel was not necessarily incorrect. Pippin III was also notorious for secularizing Church lands, though less famous than his father. As Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (Harlow, 1983), 37, points out: "In 742 ... Pippin III, according to the *Gesta episcoporum Autissiodorensium*, deprived the bishops of Auxerre of the power and possessions which had practically formed a principality for them in northern Burgundy." Riché does not mention this. Wallace-Hadrill in *The Frankish Church*, 134-37, goes over the evidence for Martel's seizure of Church lands, and while he writes on page 134 that "the taking of church lands, whether outright or on a temporary basis, whether with some legal colour or without it, goes back in time far behind Charles Martel," he does conclude on page 137 that although it was still rich, "the Frankish Church at the time of [Martel's] death in 741 had lost much." The point is that there is more evidence, both contemporary and later, for Charles Martel seizing Church lands than there is for, say, Dagobert I, but the words of Paul Fouracre in *The Age of Charles Martel*, the most recent scholarship on the time period, should be kept in mind: "On balance the fortunes of the church under Charles Martel were mixed – so mixed, in fact, that it is difficult to speak of the church as a whole rather than of the experiences of particular persons, sees and monasteries." See page 137.

What can we make of the repeated canons against outside interference in episcopal election and seizure of Church property? Something must have disturbed the bishops. We see, however, not much in the way of wholesale secularization of land or indignation at a king's man ascending to a seat. The kings in the seventh century were less likely to be branded a "Nero," as Gregory called Chilperic I, and the attitude of the Gallic Church toward them appears to have been less antagonistic than the sixth-century bishop of Tours. The authors of both Fredegar's *Chronicle* and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* were less concerned with ecclesiastical politics than Gregory had been. Both chronicles

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Fouracre's argument is that Martel had no program to despoil churches, but did so he believed he needed to.

[43] The Latin reads "uelut ille Dauid"; see *LHF*, 42 and *Fredegar*, IV.58 for references to Dagobert I.

[44] See J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, 1971), 47-53.

are, nevertheless, interested in how kings comport themselves, and on the whole, their accounts are favorable. In the hagiography, the monarch is rarely criticized – it is those people surrounding the king who were corrupt, if corruption existed at the highest levels.[45] The aristocratic bishops wanted authority derived from a king,[46] and therefore their criticisms in the councils had to be oblique. In the politics of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, canons were used to check the power of others. In the case of episcopal election and the transfer of property, this appears to be the case. As long as the status quo was maintained, no bishop worried himself too much that his colleagues were routinely appointed by the monarch. The *laissez-faire* attitude of the hagiographers, who were themselves clerics or monks, is proof of that.

As for land, the main issue was keeping control of what the Church possessed. In the seventh century, with the civil wars of Chilperic, Guntram, and Sigibert behind them, the Merovingian monarchs had little need to seize ecclesiastical property. The seventh century was one in which, as far as the sources reveal, the equilibrium of the Merovingian system of government was disturbed only when one aristocratic family became too powerful – Pippin's family being only the most enduring example. The bishops had a vested interest in stability at the highest levels, and therefore were careful not to antagonize the kings. When a land dispute did arise between bishops, the king could even act as mediator, as the case of Leudegar and Praejectus shows. The canons dealing with episcopal election and property distribution indicate that the ecclesiastical hierarchy had set rules that could be easily ignored in the name of stability. The bishops were striving for an ideal in the full knowledge that they could not achieve it, because the king on one hand and the nobility on the other remained too forceful in politics, and despite their desires, the choice of a new bishop and the transfer of Church lands were inextricably tied up in the secular world.[47]

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[45] Ibid., 51.
[46] Ibid.

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[47] Ian Wood, "Ecclesiastical Politics of Merovingian Clermont," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, 34-57, looks at Clermont because of the wealth of documentation about the area. For the seventh century, he uses the example of Praejectus to come to a similar conclusion. On page 43, he writes, "If bishops wanted to oppose royal intervention in church matters they had precedents for so doing, but if a king made appointments which were generally accepted, the hagiographers could and did invoke divine inspiration as the guiding force in his choice. The canons were ignored if circumstances demanded; each episcopal election requires individual scrutiny." Wood focuses on Clermont and uses mostly examples from the sixth century; he ignores many of the bishops I have examined, and is not as concerned with the transfer of property.

CHAPTER THREE: "De subintroductis mulieribus"

The Church's Relationship with Women

In 625 King Chlothar II faced a crisis. A little over a decade earlier, he had ended years of civil strife by bringing down Brunhild and reuniting the Merovingian kingdoms. A few years later, he gave Austrasia a king again, but made sure the kingdom was still under his aegis by naming his son Dagobert as ruler. As a monarch who had seen the tremendous political strife of the Merovingians, Chlothar was no doubt haunted by the specter of disunity, and by 625, he was no longer a young man and was concerned for the future of his family. Therefore, it was imperative that his son should take a wife. Chlothar's own wife, Sichild, had a sister, Gomatrude. The arrangement seemed obvious, and when his father ordered him to Paris, Dagobert came, and was married to Gomatrude.[1] Gomatrude was not his actual aunt, as Sichild was not Dagobert's mother,[2] but it is perhaps not a coincidence that the tenth canon of the Council of Clichy, called not very long after the wedding, explicitly condemned incestuous unions. It is the only time incest is mentioned in the seventh-century councils, and it may be that the bishops were expressing their disapproval over the match.[3]

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[1] See *Fredegar*, IV.53 for the wedding of Dagobert.

[2] Bertetrude, who was more than likely Dagobert's mother, died in 618; see Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 148. It is possible that Chlothar was married to Sichild prior to Bertetrude's death, because, as we have seen, polygamy was not unheard of among Merovingian kings. If Dagobert had been marrying his mother's sister, however, Fredegar would have made a great deal about it.

[3] Another marriage took place about the same time that may also have influenced the bishops, although it was not a royal one. According to *Fredegar*, IV.54, in 626 the mayor of the palace, Warnachar, died, and his son, Godinus, married Warnachar's widow, his own stepmother Bertha. Chlothar was furious about the match, and Godinus fled to Dagobert's court for protection. Dagobert asked his father for a pardon for Godinus, and Chlothar finally said he would spare Godinus's life on the condition that he give up Bertha, "whom he had married contrary to canon

Women posed a major problem to the clergy in the Middle Ages. There is no doubt that churchmen had wives or mistresses. Gregory of Tours mentions it casually in many instances, and appears to be unconcerned about it. One of the many objects of his scorn was Badegisil, the bishop of Le Mans, who died in 586. Badegisil was a horrible bishop, according to Gregory, and his wife was "even more fierce than he was," and had "the same morose and harsh temper as her husband." After his death she fought with the next bishop, Bertram, over her retention of objects that had been given to the church during her husband's episcopate, claiming they were part of his stipend.[4] Despite Gregory's objections to both Badegisil and his wife, it is obvious from his language that he does not think there was anything particularly wrong with a married bishop. Of his predecessors at Tours, Francilio (527-529) and Baudinus (546-552) were married.[5] Gregory the Great must have known marriage was still practiced among the clergy of Gaul, but his letters to the Franks emphasize more the elimination of simony and the ordination of unqualified laymen.[6]

Injunctions against associating with women are not overly common in the five councils, but they are present throughout, and the repetitions of their decrees

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law" ("quam contra canonum instituta uxorem acciperat"). Godinus did so, but was eventually killed by order of the king near Chartres. In the next chapter Fredegar mentions the Council of Clichy, and this juxtaposition may also indicate that the bishops were considering the nobility when they wrote the canon against incest.

[4] *HF*, VIII.39.

[5] Ibid., X.31. Gregory never explicitly states that Baudinus was married, but he did hold the office of referendary to the king, and Gregory does write that he "had sons of his own." It is not too great a leap to assume he also had a wife, or at least a concubine.

[6] Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 171.

indicate that the bishops were concerned. The Council of Clichy contains the canon "concerning incestuous unions,"[7] and another in which women are mentioned, Canon 26, deals with widows and girls who have entered nunneries. The twelfth and thirteenth canons of Losne also contain instructions on nuns. Canon 3 of the Council of Chalon makes it known that intimate relations with women were still occurring among the clergy: "Given that it was already fixed by the prior canons, it is still pleasing to restate."[8] Of the four canons from Bordeaux, one concerns women, and here again the bishops are upset about "secretly introduced women."[9] The fourth canon of Losne reiterates this injunction, and the Council of Autun does also.

What do these canons reveal about the Church's attitude toward women? The place of women in Merovingian society has been studied,[10] but without addressing the canons, which is key to understanding the Church's stance and what effect, if any, they had on women and the clergy. The Church, it appears, was less concerned with women than with its priests. Women are simply the means by which these men fall into sin. Can this tell historians anything about the Church's attitude toward women?

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[7] Clichy, 10: "De incestis coniunctionibus."

[8] Chalon, 3: "Licet iam prioribus canonibus fuerat statutum, sed tamen placuit renouare."

[9] Bordeaux, 3: "De subintroductis uero mulieribus."

[10] Suzanne Wemple, looking at women across the broad spectrum of society, states on page 189 of *Women in Frankish Society*, "The fusion of Germanic and Roman populations in the early Middle Ages was beneficial to women." Catherine Tuggle, "The Power and Influence of Merovingian Women," comes to a different conclusion. She looked at the Merovingian queens and argued on page 93, "A woman's role in [Merovingian Gaul] was dependent on and restricted by the rights of the men in her life, whether they were husband, son, mayor of the palace or noblemen."

Women are treated rather well by the canons. Indeed, there is only one law that specifically singles out women for punishment of a specific infraction. This is Canon 13 of the Council of Losne, which reads:

> Indeed, those women whom the priests of the Lord know to live in a religious way should be permitted to live in their own houses chastely and piously. But, if they stand out as being negligent concerning their chastity, they should be impelled into the monasteries in order to come to their senses.[11]

Ignoring the rather patronizing tones implicit in the punishment, this is mild compared to the judgment that other canons say should be meted out to clerics who infringe the legislation. In fact, when the bishops deal directly with women who are presumably chaste and noble and not those "secretly introduced women" whom the clerics were apparently constantly sneaking into the monasteries, they are very careful to make sure the women are protected from rapacity. Canon 26 of Clichy specifies that widows or girls who have been consecrated to the Lord should not be taken from the monastery even if the person is backed by "royal authority."[12] This canon also mentions punishment for women, because if they "consent" to the seizure, both they and their abductor should be deprived of communion.[13] Canon 12 of Losne puts these nuns under the protection of the *princeps*.[14] The meaning of this word in Merovingian sources is still debated, but in the councils it probably means the king.[15] These two canons, and the thirteenth of Losne, which is tied directly to the twelfth, are the ones that attempt to give women in nunneries some protection. They contradict each other slightly. The canon from Clichy makes it clear that someone with royal backing should not interfere with women in religious seclusion, while Losne puts them under the protection of the king. If the bishops at Clichy were worried about the danger from the royal person, what had changed in the next half-century?

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[11] Losne, 13: "Illas uero, quas Domini sacerdotes religioso ordine uiuere cognouerint, liceat eis in domibus earum caste pieque conuersare; ut uero, si neglegentes de castitate earum extiterint, ad eas reuertentes in monasterio trudantur."

[12] Clichy, 26: "Per auctoritatem regiam."

[13] Ibid.: "Quod si utrique *consenserint*, communione *priuentur*" (emphasis mine). The plurality of the verbs implies that both the one doing the abducting and the one being abducted should be punished. Abduction could also mean elopement in this society, so the injunction makes more sense than it might if the bishops were using "abduction" in the modern sense.

In 626/627, Chlothar II ruled securely from Paris. The Council of Clichy, as we know from the prologue, was held at Saint-Denis with the blessing of the king.[16] Chlothar was in the autumn of his reign. He had been four months old when his father Chilperic was killed in 584,[17] and he had been king ever since. After his wars against his cousins Theudebert and Theuderic in the first decade of the seventh century, his reign had been stable. The primary chronicler of the times, Fredegar, is very favorable to Chlothar, and therefore we know little about how he treated the Church, except from what we can learn from omission. The king obviously did not despoil churches and abuse the clergy, or Fredegar surely would have mentioned it. Even a biased chronicler could not overlook that sort of activity. However, Chlothar was in his early forties, and given the lifespan of Merovingian kings, the bishops may have been casting an eye eastward to Austrasia, where Dagobert waited to become sole ruler. We have seen that Fredegar did not completely consider this king an apotheosis of Christian virtue. From Fredegar we also see that relations between the father and son were not always harmonious.[18] The tension between the two kings must have weighed on the bishops' minds when they went into council. In an era when royal authority was strong, royal protection could cut both ways. On the one hand, Chlothar could easily keep the nunneries under his protection. On the other hand, he was strong enough to defy the bishops if one of the secular nobility acted in a hostile manner toward the women who had taken the veil. The bishops were attempting to stifle any thoughts he might have had to reclaim land and women from the Church.

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[14] Losne, 12: "Sub tuitionem principis habeantur."

[15] See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 68-69 for a brief discussion of the word and its contexts. According to the authors, 69, the word "appears very frequently in the Merovingian diplomatic sources, where it always means king," hence I make the assertion that it means the same thing in the canons. In other sources, such as Carolingian annals, it may mean the mayor of the palace or simply "leader," but the councils are much more formulaic and traditional than that and therefore the word probably is more definitive.

[16] Clichy, prologue: "Suggerente gloriosissimo atque piissimo domno Hlothario rege cum in suburbano Parisius in basilicam dominae Mariae matris Domini, quae in atrium sancti Dyonisii martyris sita est, iuxta predium, quod Clipiaco dicitur ..."

[17] *HF*, VII.7.

By the reign of Childeric II in the 660s and 670s, the situation had changed. His mother Balthild stepped up the practice of granting monastic immunities, and Childeric's brother Theuderic III continued it.[19] There is no reason to suppose Childeric stopped it during his reign.[20] As we have seen, the canon dealing with women who wished to become nuns[21] indicates that they should be placed under the protection of the prince. The prince in this situation was Childeric, as the prologue clearly states.[22] The date of Losne is placed between 673 and 675 because this was the only time Childeric held power in Burgundy – but it was also the time, if the author of the *LHF* is to be believed, that Childeric was oppressing his subjects and circumventing the law.[23] Our scant knowledge of the 670s comes from the *vitae* of Leudegar and Praejectus, and the personality of Childeric is difficult to ascertain. The lack of condemnation by the hagiographers, who were writing far earlier than the author of the *LHF*,[24] may mean that Childeric had a better reputation among his contemporaries than he did in later years. The author of the *Passio Leudegarii* takes pains to indicate that evil counselors often misled Childeric,[25] and the hagiographer of Praejectus appends only favorable adjectives to the king and his decisions.[26] This is scant evidence, but the churchmen of the time appear to have a more favorable, or at least neutral, view of the king than those of later generations. There is no reason to believe that Balthild did not continue at least to influence the bishops' decisions, and her ideas about protecting women in nunneries may be manifest in the canonical provision putting nuns under the protection of the king. These laws about nuns were another assertion of ecclesiastical independence. The bishops wanted to make sure that even the kings could not interfere with Church affairs.

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[18] See *Fredegar* IV.52-53.

[19] See Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, 84-89.

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[20] Rosenwein's book unfortunately skips the 670s. There appears to be very little written evidence for this decade.

[21] Losne, 12. The wording is interesting: "ueste mutata permanere uoluerint."

[22] Ibid., prologue: "nos Latina [Losne] in praesentia gloriosissimi principis nostri domni Childerici regis congregati eramus."

[23] *LHF*, 45; see above, p. 45.

[24] See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 194-96 for the composition dates of the *Passio Leudegarii* and 255-58 for the *Passio Praejecti*. As usual with seventh-century texts, the authors are anonymous, but there is reason to believe they were both churchmen and therefore not automatically well disposed toward the king.

[25] See, for instance, *Passio Leudegarii*, 7, 8, 12.

[26] *Passio Praejecti*, 14, makes mention of "the reign of King Childeric of blessed memory," – a standard phrase that could nevertheless be omitted if the king were wicked – and 27 has the phrase "by royal order and by the generosity of the king" in reference to Childeric's decision in the land

The remaining canons that specifically include women deal with clerical intimacy with them.[27] This concern may appear to be a standard complaint against the clergy, but in these days before celibacy was strictly enforced among churchmen it takes on a different aspect. An example of sixth-century episcopal marriage has been mentioned above – Badegisil of Le Mans and his wife. But the problems of episcopal marriage were by no means ignored in the sixth century – in fact, they were addressed often. Married clerics were enjoined to give up sexual relations with their wives.[28] This order was given without much thought for the women: Gregory of Tours writes of an episcopal wife who attempted to prove her husband was sleeping with another woman because of her dissatisfaction with being neglected. This bishop, who had been a married cleric, put aside his wife "in accordance with the requirement of catholic [sic] custom"

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dispute brought by Praejectus against Hector and Leudegar. Obviously, as his hero won the case, the author was generous to the king, but it still indicates a favorable attitude toward the monarch.

[27] Both Canon 3 of Chalon and Canon 10 of Losne use the same word: "familiaritas."

[28] See Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 133, for a brief overview of the canonical legislation of the sixth century. In his chapter on the Church in council, Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 94-109, barely mentions women.

when he became a bishop. The wife did not accept this arrangement and continually tried to seduce him to no avail. She finally went into his bedroom and found him alone, sleeping, with a lamb of "overpowering brightness" on his chest. This proved to her that her husband was doing nothing wrong.[29] But the very idea of married bishops was not abhorrent to the sixth-century Church. Gregory contrasts his stories of Badegisil's wife and the unnamed wife of the unnamed bishop with positive examples of bishops' wives: Riticius and Simplicius, both fourth-century bishops of Autun, had wives who act very chastely.[30] The wife of Namantius, a fifth-century bishop of Clermont, built the church of St. Stephen.[31] These women lived far in Gregory's past, but the *idea* of episcopal marriage is important here, and even when he is deriding the actions of the wives, Gregory does not attack the institution. Venantius Fortunatus held an even more positive view of episcopal marriage than his contemporary Gregory. One reason this might be so is Fortunatus's background – he was Italian, and was probably steeped in the Roman tradition of great senatorial families. He would have less of a problem with sons inheriting their fathers' sees, and some of his epitaphs highlight this distinction.[32] The Church's attitude toward women in the sixth century was more complicated than general disparagement.[33]

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[29] Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, trans. Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool, 1988), 77. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 134, incorrectly identifies the bishop as Felix of Nantes, whom Gregory did not like. Gregory mentions only that he heard the story from Felix – the holy bishop himself is unnamed. Venantius Fortunatus gives a clue that Felix himself was not married – he praises the bishop's chastity and his decision to "marry" the Church. See Brian Brennan, " 'Episcopae': Bishops' Wives Viewed in Sixth-Century Gaul," *Church History* 54, no. 3 (1985): 316. This praise is mentioned by William McDermott, "Felix of Nantes: A Merovingian Bishop," *Traditio* 31 (1975): 1-24, in which he speculates that the story Felix told Gregory actually did pertain to himself – but McDermott does not come to any firmer conclusion.

[30] Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 74, 75.

[31] *HF*, II.17.

In the seventh century, the conundrum of episcopal marriage had not completely disappeared, although the evidence suggests fewer bishops were married. Arnulf, the bishop of Metz, is a famous example of a seventh-century bishop who had a wife.[34] He first enters history in connection with the downfall of Brunhild in 613,[35] and in 614 was made bishop of Metz.[36] After Dagobert had been made king in Austrasia the bishop advised the young ruler,[37] and at the occasion of Dagobert's enforced marriage to his own step-aunt Arnulf was one of the peacemakers after the father and son had a falling-out over which land should belong to which king. About the time of Chlothar's death in 629, however,

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[32] Brennan, "Episcopae," 319.

[33] As Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, concludes on pages 135-36. Although, as pointed out above, she believes women were better treated in Frankish society, that conclusion does not necessarily extend to the attitude of the Church toward females.

[34] Arnulf was later connected to the Carolingian family tree. According to some historians, Arnulf's younger son Ansegisel married Begga, Pippin I's daughter, whence came Charlemagne's ancestors. See Lellia Cracco Ruggini, "The Crisis of the Noble Saint: The 'Vita Arnulfi' " in Fontaine and Hillgarth, *The Seventh Century*, 132 and James, *The Origins of France*, 139. However, Wood in *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 259 n. 35, mentions that Paul the Deacon is the first to link Arnulf and Pippin, and Fouracre and Gerberding in *Late Merovingian France*, 309, explicitly state that Paul was including Arnulf in the Carolingian family tree simply to appease Charlemagne by giving him holy ancestors. The *Annales Mettensis Priores*, a very pro-Carolingian source, do not call Arnulf a Carolingian ancestor, simply noting that Pippin II had the bishop as "a close relative on his father's side." See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 352.

[35] *Fredegar*, IV.40, who writes that Chlothar was "incited" to invade Austrasia by Arnulf, Pippin, and "other magnates."

[36] See Ruggini, "The Crisis of the Noble Saint," 122-23, and n. 11 on the date of 614.

[37] *Fredegar*, IV.58: "Vsque eodem tempore ab inicio quo regnare ciperat consilio primetus beatissime Arnulf Mettensis urbis pontefice."

Arnulf retired from court, no longer advised Dagobert, and gave up his episcopate.[38] There is no doubt that Arnulf was married and had sons.[39]

What do the injunctions against intimacy with women tell us about Merovingian clerical society in the seventh century? What do they tell us about how the Church viewed women? It does not appear that the Merovingian Church of the seventh century was any less concerned with women among their clerics than that of the sixth. Indeed, given the continual legislation against intimacy with women, as well as a more puritanical ideal promulgated by monks such as Columbanus, it could be argued that the seventh-century Church was more concerned than their predecessors had been. But does that mean that the Church considered them to be snakes that shed their skin in order to become more appealing, as the Council of Tours (567) puts it?[40] The evidence from the canons does not back this up. The legislation is not concerned with denigrating women, and the only time pejorative words are used to describe them is in the canon cited above in which women need to "come to their senses," and even this is gently worded. Does this indicate a more enlightened attitude toward females by the seventh-century Church?

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[38] *Fredegar*, IV.58. Fredegar simply says, "Post discessum beati Arnulfi adhuc consilius Peppino maiorem domus et Chunibertum ponteficem urbis Coloniae utens et ab ipsis fortiter admonetus." Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians*, 8, writes that if "one is disinclined to accept yearning for religious seclusion as the reason for his sudden retirement at the height of his secular power, then we might suspect that somehow his political star had begun to fall." Ruggini, "The Crisis of the Noble Saint," 124-25, cites his *vita* to bring up Dagobert's strenuous opposition to his retirement and also the appeal the monastic life had for him in his youth. Both viewpoints are tenable.

[39] Ruggini, "The Crisis of the Noble Saint," 123. She notes that the *Vita Arnulfi* mentions only that he had married a "nobilissimam a gente puellem." Later tradition makes her the daughter of the count of Boulogne. For more seventh-century bishops and their families, see Friedrich Prinz, "Die Bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 217, no. 1 (1973): 1-35, especially 21-7. Arnulf's son, Chlodulf, also became bishop of Metz; see Irsigler, "Aristocratic character," 113.

[40] See Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 136.

The attitude toward women, I believe, can be traced to the influence of women in the seventh century. Powerful women had always been a part of Merovingian life, but in Gregory of Tours women rarely played a part in politics except in a more subtle fashion. The familiar women in Gregory's *Histories* – Chlothild, Radegund, Fredegund, and Brunhild – rarely exercised power for any length of time or in any great capacity. Chlothild was dead long before Gregory began writing his history, and Radegund was already in her abbey and had less chance to exercise temporal power.[41] However, Fredegund and Brunhild were both contemporaries of Gregory, and he had a better chance to witness them in action. He relates a great deal of Fredegund's actions, but always through the power of her husband Chilperic.[42] As for Brunhild, she does not become the malevolent and powerful force in the Merovingian kingdoms until after Gregory's death, and the bishop of Tours does not ascribe to her the power that Fredegar did.[43] These royal women derived their strength primarily from their husbands, and in rare cases, their sons.

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[41] Although we have seen instances in which Radegund clearly used her royal influence.

[42] See Wood, "The Secret Histories," 258, for a list of Fredegund's activities in the *Histories*.

[43] This is, of course, a relative concept, as Brunhild obviously does have a starring role in Gregory's book. As we have seen, after Sigibert's murder she was in the political wilderness for a time, which led to her exile from Paris and subsequent marriage to Merovech. The position of Brunhild during the decade after her husband's death is one of controversy, which Nelson in "Queens as Jezebels," 12, addresses. She sees Brunhild still commanding respect and power in Austrasia. And there is no doubt that Brunhild had a great deal of influence over her son Childebert when he reached his majority in 585. However, the point here is that she had much

The seventh century is different in a few crucial instances. For one, the more rural form of monasticism popularized by Columbanus meant women gained power in the nunneries, because, as Nelson puts it, the new monasteries were adapted to "land-based familial structures in which women already and necessarily occupied key positions."[44] Secondly, women after the death of Dagobert assumed a much more prominent place at court and in the political sphere of the kingdoms. The sixth-century monasteries, largely urban on the Caesarian model imported from Arles, were not adaptable to the aristocratic lands of great families. Columbanus's emphasis on the rural monastery freed women to exercise power not only in a religious world, but in the secular world as well, and they were able to do it in a milieu in which their sex became irrelevant.[45] As women moved into monasteries, the attitudes of the bishops toward them changed. This could not have happened, I believe, without women in positions of power.[46]

Brunhild provides the template for powerful women in the seventh century. Despite her later reputation, she did manage to remain in a position of

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more influence over her grandsons in the first decade of the seventh century than she had ever previously had.

[44] Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 2.

[45] Ibid., 4.

[46] Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 141, writes, "In the seventh century, if the silence of the synods accurately reflected the situation, the campaign against women for polluting the sacraments and seducing the clergy subsided. The earlier legislation was neither rescinded nor uniformly enforced. In part, this may be attributed to the absorption of women aspiring to pastoral ministry into the new monastic foundations. There is also sufficient evidence to indicate that the attention of many of the leading bishops shifted from clerical discipline to asceticism." Clerical discipline was still a major concern for the bishops in this era, as the canons clearly show. Also, Wemple does not examine the role of women at court in influencing the shift in attitude toward all females, which I think is a major component.

power for almost forty years after her first husband's assassination in 575. She emulated the Merovingian kings in that she claimed the prerogative to appoint bishops or at the very least influence appointments – there are several cases of this practice.[47] She was also able to depose bishops who displeased her. Desiderius of Vienne is the most famous of these. Desiderius questioned her grandson Theuderic II's morals, so Brunhild assembled a synod at Chalon in 603[48] and deposed the bishop with the connivance of Bishop Aridius of Lyons. Desiderius was then exiled "to an island."[49] He later returned and was stoned by order of Theuderic, acting on "wicked advice" from Aridius and Brunhild.[50] Whether we accept Fredegar's portrayal of the queen as wicked or if we believe that the author of the chronicle was spreading propaganda and may have been stretching the truth, there is no doubt that Brunhild was a power in Gaul.

Dagobert I's queen, Nanthild, has been mentioned briefly, and she was the next powerful woman in the Merovingian kingdoms to take the stage. As we have seen, she and Aega, the mayor of the palace, ruled for Clovis II after Dagobert's premature death. Aega died not long after Dagobert, and Nanthild assumed a more prominent place in the power structure. She died in 641/642, but there is little doubt that in her few years as regent she had a great influence on the Merovingian realms. Balthild is the next great Frankish queen, and we have seen how she used her position in politics. All three of her sons – Chlothar, Childeric, and Theuderic – became kings in turn, and Fredegar's continuator makes it clear that she was important from very early on in her oldest son's career, as after Clovis II died in 657, the Franks made Chlothar III king "with the queen-mother [Balthild] by his side."[51] We have seen that she was on Chlothar's regency council and that she was able to appoint bishops friendly to her.[52] Another queen of the period for which there is less evidence is Chimnechild, Sigibert III's wife. After Sigibert's death in the 650s, she did not press the claims of Dagobert II to the throne, leading indirectly to his exile, and this has prompted at least one scholar to postulate that she was not the boy's mother.[53] She did, however, marry her daughter Bilichild to Childeric II, giving her some influence in Austrasian politics, and an intriguing passage in the life of Bishop Praejectus may indicate she exercised a great deal of power. When Praejectus went to court to plead his case against Hector he was beset from all sides and ended up telling the assembled, hostile throng that he "had entrusted the legal affairs of his church to Queen Himnechild." This leads, almost directly, to a settlement by Childeric in his favor.[54] The meaning of this statement is uncertain,[55] but what is relevant is that Chimnechild was still a force at court and at least in the diocese of Clermont.

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[47] Her influence in the appointment of Gregory of Tours (see above, p. 67) is the earliest example, but there are others. Gregory himself relates a story about her support of Innocentius, the count of Javols, who became bishop of Rodez in 584. See *HF*, VI.38. Fredegar attributes the elevation of Desiderius to the seat of Auxerre to her, but the story is somewhat fairy-tale-like and is perhaps not accurate. See *Fredegar*, IV.19. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 25, argues that she "must surely have been behind the elections of Aridius to Lyons and of Domnulus to Vienne in 603," but this is just speculation, although circumstantial evidence exists in *Fredegar*, IV.24.

[48] Columbanus was called to this synod, but with typical stubbornness, he refused to attend.

[49] *Fredegar*, IV.24: "Desiderium Viennensem episcopum deieciunt, instigante Aridio Lugdunensi episcopo et Brunechilde, et subrogatus est loco ipsius sacerdotale officio Domnolus, Desiderius uero in insula quedam exilio retrudetur." As both Aridius and Domnolus feature in this passage, it could be argued that Brunhild had something to do with their appointment, as Nelson does.

[50] Ibid., IV.32.

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[51] Ibid., continuations, 1.

[52] See above, pp. 44 and 59.

[53] Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 223.

These royal women cover the entire era of the seventh century councils, and it is not too much of a stretch to believe that their influence extended to the Church councils. The queens were known to have appointed several bishops to their seats, and there is no reason to suppose others who signed the councils did not also owe their positions at least in part to royal support, which may or may not have been female royal support. The less militant attitude toward women in the canons may be attributed to a different focus by the bishops on asceticism, but the power of these queens, one of whom – Balthild – continued to wield it after retiring to a nunnery, should not be overlooked. The canons of the Church not only reveal the bishops' fears about their own clerics, but also their concern with the protection of women. A main reason for this is that more women were pulling the strings at court, and the bishops knew that this was now a consideration. By protecting the monasteries from the rapacity of men, the bishops kept their sponsors happy and ensured support from a quarter that could counter the power of the mayors of the palace. This is not to say that the canons banning violence toward nuns were cynical gestures. The bishops expected their decrees to be followed. However, the secular stance of these episcopal aristocrats must not be forgotten. In these canons, the power of the queens, which is evident elsewhere, comes more into focus.

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[54] *Passio Praejecti*, 24.

[55] In a footnote on page 289 of *Late Merovingian France*, Fouracre and Gerberding write: "It is not clear when Praejectus had entrusted his affairs to Himnechild, nor is it obvious why this statement should have interrupted the proceedings, but it is plain that he was in a very weak position before he made this move."

CHAPTER FOUR: "A communione priuetur"

Punishment for clerical crimes

Theuderic II ruled Burgundy in the early seventh century with the assistance of his grandmother, Brunhild. By 609 he was deeply embroiled in his dispute with the Irish monk Columbanus, who was scandalized by the king's habitual promiscuity. The king, who seems to have genuinely respected the monk, placated him and promised to amend his sinful ways. This was either a lie or a promise that the profligate king could not keep, for he soon slid back into debauchery. Columbanus, infuriated, threatened Theuderic with excommunication. This tactic failed, as Brunhild incited the Burgundian bishops against the monk, which led to his eventual banishment from the Merovingian kingdoms. Columbanus was a foreigner with no real power to impose his decree, and it appears to have had no impact whatsoever on Brunhild or Theuderic – perhaps because they knew he lacked the necessary power to back it up, or perhaps because they did not fear a life cut off from the Church. Whatever the reason, Columbanus failed to frighten his adversaries into shape.[1]

Punishment by the bishops of their flock, however, is a crucial component of the seventh-century councils. Thus, the canons of the councils lay out specific instructions on what should happen to those who defy the commands of the church. Much of the time, the offending cleric is deprived of communion. Fourteen canons throughout the councils prescribe this punishment, usually as the only penalty, but occasionally in conjunction with others.[2] The terminology of the canons depriving their wayward clerics of spiritual sustenance is fairly consistent: "a communione priuetur" or some variation thereof.[3] Looking at the crimes one would have to commit to be only deprived of communion and contrasting them to those one would have to commit to incur a greater penalty allows us to see exactly what the bishops considered important. If we can assume that the lesser the punishment, the lesser the crime in the eyes of the bishops, then we can look for a pattern in the crimes being committed.

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[1] The *Life of St. Columbanus*, 32-33, tells this story, and *Fredegar*, IV.36 repeats it almost verbatim.

Canon 7 of Clichy deals with secular judges who presume to punish clerics in public law cases. If the judge does this without the knowledge or permission of the bishop, communion should be denied him.[4] This apparently did not solve the problem, because Canon 11 of Chalon restates the sentence and expands on it.[5] Canon 9 of Clichy begins by stating: "If anyone drags a fugitive out of church on any occasion without having taken an oath, let him be deprived of communion."[6] The men dragging those unfortunates out of the sanctuary must swear that the fugitives will be "assured of their life and secure from torture and maiming."[7] We have already seen Canon 10 of Clichy, which deals with incest. The two people incestuously conjoined should be deprived of communion until such time as they separate. Canon 13 deals with slavery. A Christian who, "forced by necessity,"[8] must sell his slaves should sell them only to other Christians. If he has sold them to pagans or Jews, he will be deprived of communion and the sale will be null and void.[9] We have looked at Canons 18, 24, and 26 in preceding chapters – the first two deal with property, while the latter is concerned with women consecrated to the Lord. Both canons on property state that those who dare to seize the goods of the church, whether he is a layman or a bishop, should not receive communion, while the same fate will befall those who drag any women from nunneries. Canon 26 states that both the abductor and the abductee, if she consents to being abducted, should be punished in this manner.[10] Canon 27 warns that judges who disregard the legislation not only of the church but Chlothar II's edict of 614 confirming the Council of Paris's laws should also be deprived of communion.

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[2] The fourteen are: Canons 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 18, 24, 26, 27 of Clichy; Canons 11, 14, 17 of Chalon; Canon 20 of Losne; Canon 15 of Autun.

[3] Canons 10, 13 of Clichy and 17 of Chalon drop the preposition and create a separative ablative; Canons 10 and 26 of Clichy use the plural; 18 of Clichy uses "rejected" (*abdicatur*); 24 of Clichy uses the passive participle as well as the term "killer of the poor" (*communione priuatus ut necator pauperum*); 27 the passive infinitive (*priuari*); 11 of Chalon uses the infinitive of "exclude" or "sequester" (*sequestrare*); 20 of Losne uses the passive infinitive of "suspend," (*suspendi*); 15 of Losne uses it as the first stage of a larger punishment; see below, p. 110.

[4] Clichy, 7: "publicis actionibus"; "absque conscientia et permissu episcopi."

[5] Chalon, 11. The judges are "wandering" (*circuire*) through parishes and into monasteries and are forcing monks and abbots to present themselves before them. The Latin is a bit twisted: "et clericos uel abates, ut eis praeparent, inuitos atque districtos ante se faciant exhiberi." As Fouracre, "The Work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon," 79, this canon attempts to block the imposition of secular officials between the rural monks and the bishops.

Later councils do not have quite as many canons in which the offenders are excluded from the sacrament. According to Canon 14 of Chalon, oratories had been established on secular estates. The landowners controlled the oratories, and did not allow the clerics who served in them to be sanctioned by the archdeacon. The bishops agreed that they should control the ordination of these clerics and also the goods collected at the oratories. Whoever disagreed with this was to be deprived of communion.[11] Canon 17 concerns violence in the churches. The laity should neither fight, nor incite scandal of any kind, nor bring weapons to church, nor attack anyone in order to wound or kill.[12] Canon 20 of Losne refers to the previous canon, simply appending a fit punishment. Canon 19 claims that monks are "roaming or running around" in various locations away from their own monasteries. Therefore, no one should receive a monk from a different monastery "without leave of his own abbot or a letter of recommendation."[13] Canon 20 adds the punishment of suspending these wayward monks from communion "for an entire year."[14] Canon 15 of Autun, the last canon of the episcopal councils from the seventh century, is a rather harsh statement about monks and abbots that we will look at separately.

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[6] Clichy, 9: "Si quis fugitiuum ab ecclesia absque sacramento quacumque occasione substraxerit, a communione priuetur."

[7] Ibid.: "Nam hoc in ecclesia fugientibus est iurandum, quod de uita, tormento et truncatione securi exeant."

[8] Clichy, 13: "necessitate cogente."

[9] Ibid.: "Nam si paganis aut iudaeis uendiderit, communione priuetur et emptio careat firmitatem."

[10] Ibid., 26: "Quod si utrique consenserint, communione priuentur."

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[11] Chalon, 14. This is a particularly taxing canon to translate, because the bishops seemed to have something specific in mind, but stayed in the abstract. Therefore I offer the complete canon in the original: "De oratoriis, quae per uillas fiunt. Nonnulli ex fratribus et coepiscopis nostris resedentibus nobis in sancta sinodo in querimonia detulerunt, quod oratoria per uillas potentum iam longo constructa tempore et facultates ibidem collates ipsi, quorum uillae sunt, episcopis contradicant et iam nec ipsos clericos, qui as ipsa oratoria deseruiunt, abarchdiacono coherceri permittant. Quod conuenit emendare, ita dumtaxat ut in potestate sit episcopi et de ordinatione clericorum et de facultate ibidem collata, qualiter ad ipsa oratoria et officium diuinum posit inpleri et sacra libamina consecrari. Quod qui contradixerit, iuxta priscos canones a communione priuetur."

[12] Ibid., 17. Again, the Latin is a bit mangled, simply because the scribe layered negative upon negative, perhaps in an effort to emphasize the strong feelings of the bishops. Therefore, the key clause reads: "ut nullus secularium nec in ecclesia nec infra atrium [the narthex] ipsius ecclesiae qualecumque scandalum aut simultates penitus excitare non presumat nec arma trahere aut quemcumque ad uulnerandum uel interficiendum penitus appetere."

[13] Losne, 19: "monachi in monasterio enutriti uacando per diuersa loca discurrant; ut nullus monachum alterius sine comitatum abates sui uel literas comendaticias suscipere praesumat."

The pattern that emerges from the canons depriving offenders of communion is not entirely clear, but appears to deal primarily with property and, to a lesser extent, the boundaries of ecclesiastical power. The imposition of secular law on the clerical class is a concern for the bishops, and this is tied to the idea of the church as a sanctuary that comes out in Canon 9 of Clichy. The four canons that deal directly with property can be joined to the one concerning incest, which begins with denial of communion and ends with those incestuously conjoined unable to gain their personal property.[15] Similarly, Canon 13, which deals with slavery, is also about property – the human kind. The canon warns Jews that Christian slaves should not be converted because those slaves will then be taken over by the public fisc,[16] which was specifically royal property.[17] Women, with whom the twenty-sixth canon of Clichy is concerned, were not specifically seen as property, but they were still subjected to sixth- and seventh-century Frankish misogyny.[18] In Columbanus's wake, female monasticism

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[14] Ibid., 20: "placuit eum anno integro a communione suspendi."

[15] Clichy, 10: "per nullum ingenium neque per parentes neque per emtionem neque per auctoritatem regiam ad proprias perueniant facultates." As throughout these councils, I have translated "facultas" as "goods." Notice the injunction against royal authority helping those under the ban to come into their property.

[16] Ibid., 13: "ipsa mancipia fisci ditionibus reformentur."

[17] On the fisc, see Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 64-6. See 211-13 for a general discussion of slavery in the Merovingian realms.

[18] For these attitudes, see Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 28-31.

"flowered," to use Suzanne Wemple's term, and there also seems to have been a change in perception of what kind of tasks women could perform.[19] This does not mean that nuns fell beyond the purview of ecclesiastical power, which is what Canon 26 addressed.

Further punishment is in store for those clerics who are disobedient. Stripping churchmen of their offices is a favorite rebuke to those who remain recalcitrant. Ten canons of the councils indicate that this is the suitable punishment for crimes.[20] The third canon of Clichy indicates that clerics who plan a rebellion against their bishop and continue even though they are warned about it should be "stripped entirely of their own rank."[21] The bishops did include a provision by which the causes of the rebellion could be examined at the next synod.[22] Canon 24 of Clichy is by now familiar, as it deals with property and also deprives the offending bishop of communion. The wording of the canon is strong: If any bishop, by any kind of "trick or cunning desire," seizes goods belonging to another church and "usurps" them without a hearing and adds them to his own church's property, "he should be deposed away from his office and deprived for a long time of communion like a killer of the poor."[23] Canon 25 continues in a somewhat similar vein: No bishop, unless for the ransoming of captives, should break the holy plates. If he does so, he will lose his episcopal position for two years.[24] The last canon of this council, 28, also contains stern words about the offices of the church. We have looked at this canon in the context of episcopal election.[25] A new bishop must be a native of the see, be elected by the vote of the people and be approved by his fellow bishops. If this does not happen, he "should be cast away from the position, which he assaulted rather than received."[26] Those who ordained him should also "cease the administration of their own seats."[27] The bishops clearly did not look favorably on this kind of uncanonical elevation.

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[19] Ibid., 158-65.

[20] The ten are: Canons 3, 24, 25, 28 of Clichy; Canons 3, 16, 20 of Chalon, plus the letter to Bishop Theudorius of Arles following the canons; Canons 10, 17, 22 of Losne.

[21] Clichy, 3: "gradu proprio omnino priuentur."

[22] Ibid.: "si quas etiam causas se contra episcopo suo aut inter se habuerunt, proxima synodo requirantur."

[23] Clichy, 24: "Si quis episcopis res, quae ab alia ecclesia presentialiter possidentur, quocumque ingenio aut callida cupididate peruaserit et sine audientia presumpserit usurpare ac suis uel ecclesiae suae ditionibus reuocare, diu communione priuatus ut necator pauperum, ab officium deponatur." Note the lack of the ablative after the preposition *ab*.

The council of Chalon contains only three canons dealing with rank. The third makes the unusual statement that any member of the clergy "except for people who are contained in these canons,"[28] should not be intimate with strange women. If he does so, he should be deprived of his order.[29] Canon 16 is again concerned with property. The bishop, priest, abbot, or deacon who purchases a "position of honor" should be stripped of it.[30] And in a rare case of naming names, Canon 20 singles out two bishops of Digne, Agapius and Babo, as having transgressed against the statutes of the canons "in many ways."[31] The bishops are not more specific than that, but for their crimes, these two were deprived of their episcopal rank.[32] Nothing else, it appears, is known about these two bishops.[33] Appended on the end of the council is a letter to Theudorius, the bishop of Arles. The assembled bishops scold Theudorius for failing to attend the council even though he was present in the city. They understand his absence, however, "because so many things are told against you and made common knowledge both concerning your ignoble life and your departure from the canons."[34] The bishops then state that they are aware that Theudorius had professed his penance, and that "one who publicly acknowledges penance can neither hold nor rule an episcopal seat."[35] Therefore, they asked him to keep himself away from his seat at Arles until he had an audience in front of his "brothers." Equally important, he should not take anything from the property of the church into his own control.[36]

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[24] Ibid., 25. I have translated "ministerial sancta" as the plates used for communion. In this canon, the scribe correctly wrote *ab officio* when the matter of punishment came up.

[25] See above, p. 65.

[26] Clichy, 28: "abiciatur a sede, quam inuasit potius quam accepit."

[27] Ibid.: "Ordinatores autem ab officio administrationis suae sedis cessare."

[28] Chalon, 3: "praeter personas, quae in ipsis canonibus continentur."

[29] Ibid.: "ab ordine regradetur." *Regredi* means to set back or go back, and "being deprived" seems to be the likely meaning here.

[30] Chalon, 16: "Quod qui fecerit, ab ipso honore, quem praemiis comparare praesumpserit, omnino priuetur."

The council of Losne contains the final three canons dealing with depriving someone of their office. Canon 10 says simply that "bishops who do not live spiritually now ought to correct or emend themselves within a set time or they should certainly be deprived of office."[37] Canon 17 is also vague: bishops or abbots who have been "condemned formally" for their errors or removed from their churches "by their own accord" should not return to their offices.[38] In a canon we have looked at dealing with episcopal election, the twenty-second of Losne states that a bishop who has "substituted" a successor for himself should be content with a changed life and depart from the position.[39]

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[31] Ibid., 20: "in multis conditionibus."

[32] Ibid.: "ab omni episcopatus eorum ordine decreuimus regradare." Again we see the use of *regredi*, with the incorrect form of the infinitive.

[33] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 106, writes, "We know that there were two bishops of Digne, either rivals or a bishop and his designated successor. One cannot tell which." If they are rivals, it may explain their crimes, as two bishops in the same city at the same time was definitely frowned upon as uncanonical.

[34] Chalon, *epistula*: "dum multa aduersus uos et de indecente uita et excessu canonum ... prouulgata narrantur." For *dum* meaning "because," see Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 72.

[35] Chalon, *epistula*: "qui publice penitentiam profitetur, episcopalem cathedram nec tenere nec regere potest."

[36] Ibid.: "debeatis omnimodis abstinere nec de facultate ipsius ecclesiae nihil ad uestram dominationem, dum in audientia ante fratres conuenitatis."

There is also a slight pattern to be discerned in these injunctions. With the exception of the canon condemning "intimacy with strange women which might bring scandal or the suspicion of adultery,"[40] all of these crimes are concerned with canonical procedure, to a certain extent. The bishops were obviously worried about discipline among the clergy, but not necessarily in a moral sense. Taking away someone's office was a punishment reserved for those who challenged the status quo of the political hierarchy. This reached its extreme form in the ban.

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[37] Losne, 10: "Episcopi, qui modo spiritualiter non uiuunt, ut infra constitutum tempus se debeant cohercere uel emendare aut certe de oficio regradentur."

[38] Ibid., 17: "notanter damnati sunt aut ab ecclesiis eorum sponte remoti sunt."

[39] Ibid., 22: The Latin for what the bishop does is *subrogauerit*, so "substitute" is probably the best translation, although to what this refers is obscure. The rest of the wording is also unusual: "ipse a proprio gradu decedat *mutata uita contemtus*" (my emphasis), which I have translated as "contented with a changed life." This appears to be aimed at someone specific, but there is no evidence at whom.

[40] Chalon, 3: "cum qualicumque extranea muliere familiaritatem habere praesumpserit, quae indecora uel adulterii posit affere suspitionem."

The final stage of specific punishment in the canons seems to be excommunication, although there is a great deal that is left ambiguous about the sanctions imposed by the bishops. Excommunication is mentioned in three canons, and alluded to in two others.[41] Even Canon 6 of Clichy mentions it only as the recourse an excommunicate has after his sentence has been handed down. The person under the ban, says the canon, will have license to protest in the next synod, and if he can prove that he has been unjustly condemned, he should be absolved.[42] Of course, the judgment stands if he cannot prove his case. Canon 15 of Chalon states that abbots or monks should not have secular patronage nor dare to walk in the presence of the king without the permission of the bishop, or they will be excommunicated.[43] In Canon 19, the bishops state that it is well known by all that, during mass, people are forbidden to chant obscene and foul songs over and over, "certainly not while they ought to be praying or listening to the priests who are singing psalms." Because they are doing these things, the priest should forbid them to enter the churchyards, and if they do not want to change their ways, they should be excommunicated or "endure the sting of discipline."[44]

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[41] The three are: Canon 6 of Clichy; Canons 15 and 19 of Chalon. We will examine Canon 11 of Clichy below. The first canon of Autun uses the word *condempnetur*, which is harsh enough to probably mean excommunication.

[42] Clichy, 6: "in proxima synodo hebeat licentiam reclamandi et, si iniuste damnatus fuerit, absoluatur."

[43] Chalon, 15: "Vt abates uel monachi aut agentes monasteriorum patrocinia secularia penitus non utantur nec ad principis presentiam sine episcopi sui permissu ambulare non audeant." Note again the use of *princeps* for the king.

[44] Ibid., 19. This is a relatively raucous canon that is a bit difficult to thrash through, and therefore deserves to be quoted in full: "Multa quidem eueniunt et, dum leuia minime corriguntur, saepius maiora consurgunt. Valde omnibus noscitur esse decretum, ne per dedications basilicarum aut festiuitates martyrum ad ipsa solemnia confluentes obscena et turpia cantica, dum orare debent aut clericos psallentes, cum choris foemineis, turpia quidem decantare uideantur. Vnde conuenit, ut

Finally, the first canon of the council of Autun contains the ambiguous word "condemned" for any priest, deacon, or cleric who incorrectly recites a profession of faith.[45] The lack of the actual term *excommunicare* may mean that this sentence was not actually dictated, but *condemnare* is perhaps just as strong a word, if more ambiguous.

The remaining canons for which punishment is prescribed are vague, and we will examine them briefly. Canon 11 of Clichy states that anyone who commits murder that is not self-defense must not be communicated with.[46] According to Canon 16, those who observe omens that could be compared to those of the pagans, or eat food with pagans, should be urged to correct themselves. If they fail and continue to mix with "idolaters and sacrificers," they should simply "serve a time of penance."[47] The nineteenth canon of Clichy condemns those who reduce free-born or freed men to slavery. If anyone does this, he should be sequestered "just as a defendant charged with fraud."[48] Canon

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sacerdotes loci illos a septa basilicarum uel porticos ipsarum basilicarum etiam et ab ipsis atriis uetare debeant et arcere et, si uoluntarie noluerint emendare, aut excommunicari debeant aut disciplinae aculeum sustinere."

[45] Autun, 1: "Si quis presbyter aut diaconus aut clericos symbolum, quod sancto inspirante Spiritu apostolic tradiderunt, et fidem sancti Athanasii presulis inreprehensibiliter non recensuerit, ab episcopo condempnetur." I have translated *symbolum* as "profession of faith," because of the word *recensuerit*, which means, loosely, "recited." It also makes sense in the context of the dependent clause in the sentence.

[46] Clichy, 11: "cum isto penitus non communicandum." The word *penitus* is used throughout the canons to emphasize the importance of what is being written. The fact that the defendant ought to be incommunicado perhaps indicates that he is officially excommunicated, but it is not certain. However, the canon provides for last rites to be given to these men if they carry out penance: "si paenitentiam egerit, in exitum ei communionis uiaticum non negetur." This seems to argue favorably for the interpretation that such men were under the ban.

[47] Ibid., 16: "Quod si neglexerint et idolatries uel immolantibus se miscuerint, paenitentiae tempus exsoluant."

[48] Ibid., 19: "tamquam calumniae reum placuit sequestrari."

18 of Chalon contains a familiar injunction against work on the Sabbath. Perhaps the generality of the legislation is what makes the punishment also vague: "Whoever is discovered [working] should be corrected under the discipline of every sort of sanction."[49] What this punishment entails the bishops left unsaid. The council of Bordeaux, of which only four canons have come down to us, is fertile in regard to punishment – every canon has something to say about consequences of actions. We have seen Canon 3 in the chapter on women, and the punishment for having a "secretly introduced" woman "against the ancient statutes of the Fathers" should be judged "by that very same canonical judgment."[50] The other three canons are also vague: Canon 1 decrees that the clergy should not carry weapons or wear secular clothing, and those who do should be "struck by canonical judgment"[51]; Canon 2 advises the clergy that those who "have protection of or [are] a servant of a layperson" should be placed under canonical judgment;[52] Canon 4 contains a short guide to how bishops ought to comport themselves; if they attempt anything against the canonical order, they

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[49] Chalon, 18: "Quod qui inuentus fuerit faciens, sub disciplina districtionis omnimodis corrigatur."

[50] See above, p. 82. Bordeaux, 3: "ipsa canonica sentential iudicetur."

[51] Ibid., 1: "canonica feriatur sententia."

[52] Ibid., 2: "presbyteri, diaconi aut quicumque ex clero seculari mundeburdo, uel familiare est ... simili sentential subiaceat." The *simili* here refers to Canon 1, and is therefore similarly vague. *Mundeburdo* is apparently from a Germanic root. In the glossary of *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, eds. (Cambridge, 1986), 273, the word is defined thusly: "pledge-guarantor; one who is named as representative in legal affairs for another unable to plead in court by reason of age or infirmity." The glossary spells the term *mundeboro*, but this is probably the same word, as Canon 3 of Losne also contains an injunction against the clergy, in this case bishops, trying legal cases. "To be under the protection of" is an admittedly loose translation, but more than likely covers what the bishops had in mind.

will be corrected by canonical judgment.[53] A few lines later the bishops proclaim that if anyone is forgetful of the legislation, he "will be considered a hater of the synodal council" and "incur judgment."[54] At Losne, the bishops were again angry at clerics acting in too worldly a manner. Canon 15 states that bishops, priests, and deacons should not "practice hunts in the secular custom," because they will be "corrected by the arrangements of the former canons."[55] What these arrangements were is not known. In Canon 21 the bishops reiterate what they had said to Theudorius of Arles: one really ought to attend the councils when called, or he will be "controlled by the rules of those canons."[56] Canon 10 of Autun contains the familiar injunction against mixing with women, with the punishment being a very "serious correction" for those breaking the rules.[57] The unnumbered canon preceding the fifteenth states that no one should detain a monk from another monastery unless he has his own abbot's permission. If the monk is found wandering, however, he should be returned to his own cell and there "punished according to the merit of his crime."[58] There are also the three canons in which the offender was to be considered a "killer of the poor" – Canons 12 and 24 of Clichy, and Canon 6 of Chalon.

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[53] Bordeaux, 4: "Et si contra ordine canonico aliquid adtemtare praesumserint, cannonica sententia se nouerint esse cohercendos."

[54] Ibid.: "Quod si quis inmemor, quae superius conpraeensa sunt, contemptor fuerit senodali concilio, canonica se nouerit incurrere sententia."

[55] Losne, 15: "Vt episcopi, presbiteri uel diaconi uenationes more seculario exercere non praesumant. Quod si fecerint, priorum canonum institutes corrigantur."

[56] Ibid., 21: "quod ad [h]anc definitionem sanctis canonibus decernitur."

[57] Autun, 10: "seuerius corrigatur."

[58] Ibid., unnumbered: "sed cum inuentus fuerit uagans, ad cellam propriam reuocetur; ibi iuxta culpae meritum coercendus est."

The fifteenth and final canon of the council of Autun is quite specific in its legislation and also specific in its punishments. It describes what monks should do to live their life according to the Benedictine Rule. The punishments are: if an abbot does not adhere to this canon and by extension his monastic rule, "his power of communion should be suspended from him for one year"; if it is a provost, it should be for two years; and if a simple monk does not live by the rule, "he should either be beaten by cudgels or suspended from communion and table and charity for three years." The bishops end this canon with an elaborate metaphor: "For it is just, that the seeds of vices should be pruned by the sickle of justice, lest, if they are fed by a simulation of temperance, they run so wild that they cannot even be cut out by axes."[59] This righteous anger closes the seventh-century conciliar legislation.

The canons that proclaim the ban are, as we have seen, not common, but the crimes are diverse. For this thesis, Canon 15 of Chalon is the most pertinent example. It again shows the bishops exceptionally concerned with retaining control over their clerical flock, something we have tracked throughout the councils. The bishops, obviously, are dealing with the kings often, and presumably took an entourage along. Therefore, this canon is not only reinforcing the social hierarchy, and perhaps also the sacral nature of Merovingian kingship, but it is also reinforcing episcopal control of that hierarchy. The canon does not exclude monks from its baleful gaze. Five abbots signed the council of Chalon,[60] but they were all acting on behalf of certain bishops who were presumably unable to come.[61] Thus the bishops were attempting to control a faction of the church – the monks – that had become increasingly independent after the arrival of Columbanus.[62]

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[59] Ibid., 15: "si abba est, anno uno ei communionis potestas suspendatur; si praepositus, annis duobus; si monachus, aut fustibus uerberetur aut a communione et mensa et caritate annis tribus

The concern with monks tracks one of the most important developments within the seventh-century Merovingian Church. We have seen the evolution of monasticism after the arrival of Columbanus, and how the establishment of monasteries outside the urban centers benefited the secular aristocracy. In the canons of the councils this shift is reflected by the increasing attempts by the bishops to legislate the monks' behavior. The council of Clichy, from 626/627, contains no mention of monks, but the others make up for it. In the second half of the century, five canons of Chalon, one of Bordeaux, three of Losne, and seven of Autun contain the word *abbatus* or *monachus*.[63] They become harsher as the seventh century progresses, with those of Autun particularly so: monks should not have private property (*peculiare*) and should eat the "usual food" and wear the "customary clothing" (*uictum et uestitum consuetum*), nor should they "dare" to

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suspendatur. Iustum enim est, ut subripientia uitiorum semina falce iustitiae resecentur, ne, dum simulatione continentiae nutriuntur, ita siluescant, ut nec securibus excidantur."

[60] See below, pp. 157-58.

[61] The Latin is "in uicem," literally, "into the place of."

[62] One of the signatories of the council of Chalon is Abbot Chagnoald, who shares a name with Columbanus's attendant as mentioned by Jonas in the *Life of St. Columbanus*, 57. I have not read anywhere that these men were one and the same, but the time frame is about right.

[63] The canons are: 7, 11, 12, 15, 16 of Chalon; 3 of Bordeaux; 7, 17, 19 of Losne; 5, 6, 8, 15 and three unnumbered ones of Autun – all of the canons, in fact, except for the first one and the tenth one, both mentioned above, pp. 107 and 109.

have godparents (*conpatres*). They should also not "wander in the episcopal cities," (*in ciuitatibus errare*), and should be obedient to their abbot. The bishops were also against monks "found wandering" (*inuentus fuerit uagans*). And we have seen that the fifteenth canon of Autun contains the provision for the actual physical disciplining of wayward monks.

This increasing anxiety over monastic discipline can be looked at in the context of the age, along with the other terms laid down by the bishops. In the seventh century monasteries were founded more and more often under the influence of noble families. Pippin and his brood are often singled out for this distinction, but they were by no means the only ones. In this environment, the bishops feared losing power over a large section of the clergy, and these canons can be seen as one way in which they attempted to retain control. The founding family of the rural monasteries could often retain certain prerogatives over the property,[64] and this the Church could not allow. The canons are a direct refutation of not only the slow migration of the monasteries away from the cities but also the royal practice of granting immunities from episcopal interference to the monasteries. In this the other two sections of the political hierarchy – the secular aristocracy and the monarch – opposed the bishops, and it was a struggle the ecclesiastics would eventually lose. As the councils show, they did not go quietly into this new age.

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[64] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 61.

Punishment of clerical crimes in the seventh-century councils was much less concerned with morality than with possessions of the church and episcopal power. Even certain secular "crimes," such as the rules against judges interfering with the clergy, are included in the councils, with punishments we might expect the royal court to proclaim, rather than the bishops. The councils are, in one way, a blueprint for behavior in a "secular" fashion – i.e. conforming to societal standards, unquestioning obedience to authority, and keeping material goods within the purview of the church. This converges with the conclusions reached in the other chapters of this thesis. The punishment of infractions that the bishops reserved for themselves is another example of their attempts to establish the independence of the Merovingian Church.

CONCLUSION: "Under the reverberating rays of the sun"

Historians have occasionally seen the year 687 as a watershed in Merovingian history. In that year, according to the sources, Pippin II, the Austrasian mayor of the palace, led his eastern Frankish army west against King Theuderic III and the Neustrian mayor, Berchar. In the battle of Tertry Pippin emerged the victor, an event, Carolingian chroniclers assure future generations, which was an apocalyptic triumph. According to the author of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, the power of God caused the enemy to "reel under the reverberating rays of the sun," but those same rays would bring comfort to Pippin's men. Theuderic and Berchar foolishly believed reports that Pippin's camp had been deserted, and they left themselves open to an attack by the Austrasians. The king and mayor fled from the battlefield, leaving behind many of their nobles to be killed. Pippin crushed all resistance, entered Paris, and magnanimously kept Theuderic on the throne. He then commenced on a campaign of pacification of the Frankish realm that caused his glory to grow even greater.

This is the story as told over a century later by Carolingian propagandists.[1] Sources much closer in time to 687, however, do not see Tertry as a decisive Pippinid triumph over the dissolute Merovingians.[2] The fact remains, however, that the late 680s mark a turning point in the history of the Franks. Politically, stability and continuity remained the order of the day. However, Pippin II was not a supreme ruler, and indeed dealt with rebellions almost immediately after his victory at Tertry. After his death, his hegemony fell apart and his illegitimate son, Charles Martel, had to build it back up again – an effort that took him most of the rest of his life.[3] Even though Tertry does not signify the turning point historians have sometimes asserted, it does provide a convenient marker in the gradual evolution of the Merovingian kingdoms. Following the battle, the sources become noticeably less consistent and more vague about Merovingian politics. The *Liber Historiae Francorum*'s account of the battle is in chapter 48. Only five more chapters, covering the next forty years, finish the book. The continuations of Fredegar's history offer a bit more, but they were explicitly commissioned by Childebrand, Charles Martel's brother,[4] and become more like Carolingian propaganda after Tertry. The *Annales Mettenses Priores* give us more information, but it is still difficult to penetrate the haze and discover what Pippin and Charles were doing during the years 687-741.[5] We can come to some conclusions about the time frame, however, and observe how it differs from the age immediately prior to it.

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[1] See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 358-59, for the account of the battle of Tertry in their translation of the annals of Metz.

[2] See *LHF*, 48, in which the battle occupies as much space as the battle of Bois-Royal du Fays in chapter 46, a battle in which Pippin was defeated.

The time period of the councils translated and studied in this thesis spans roughly 626-680. During these decades, the political boundaries of the

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[3] This is one of the themes of Fouracre's *The Age of Charles Martel.*

[4] *Fredegar*, IV.34 tells us this. See Collins, "Deception and Misrepresentation," 242-44 for more on Childebrand and his son Nibelung.

[5] See Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 48-120 for the campaigns of Pippin and Martel following Tertry. Fouracre often discusses the unfortunate paucity of the sources.

Merovingian realms stabilized in their final forms, and the rivalry between East and West – Austrasia and Neustria – became the overriding factor in Frankish politics. The periphery of the Merovingian kingdoms – Burgundy, Aquitaine, Frisia, Bavaria – was politically important, but only as a counterbalance to the ambitions of noble families in the two core kingdoms. The seventh century was also important because of the rise in influence of the episcopal order. Gregory of Tours tells many individual tales of bishops, and the sixth century is undoubtedly one in which great bishops, Gregory included, ruled their seats and dabbled in politics. The seventh century, while not as well documented in the chronicles, is notable for the many *vitae* of powerful bishops who had an even greater influence on the royal court. The reason for this shift is the character of the kings. Gregory tells of kings who took the throne in the full maturity of manhood. Clovis was fifteen in 481, true, but that was the age at which a Merovingian became an adult. Chlothar I, Theudebert I, Guntram, Sigibert, Chilperic I – these men were adults when they became king, and had less need for a strong group of advisors. Toward the end of Gregory's history, with the accession of Chlothar II and Childebert II, we see the trend in Merovingian politics that would become more common in the seventh century – children coming to the throne, and the necessity of regents during their formative years. Mothers often took this role, as Brunhild, Fredegund, Nanthild, Balthild, and Chimnechild prove, but the bishops and the nobility were also involved. The great bishops of this age – Arnulf of Metz, Eligius of Noyon, Audoin of Rouen, Leudegar of Autun – were men who moved in royal circles, occasionally had the king's ear, and played often-deadly power politics. The argument put forth in this thesis is that the episcopal councils were part of this political scheming. The bishops, on one level, were concerned with the state of their Church and the behavior of their flock. On another level, they were interested in dictating the actions of the monarchy and the nobility and asserting their independence from both. These are the themes I have stressed throughout my analysis.

The political aims of the bishops can be seen in certain areas of the canonical legislation. An important way in which the bishops chose to define their independence was in property laws and episcopal election. Property was not only to stay within the Church, but its transmission down through the decades was closely regulated. This can be seen in the many canons dealing with ecclesiastical property, and also in the punishment levied against those who would meddle with the Church's prerogative. Four canons of the councils punish those who attempt to interfere with Church property with deprivation of communion, and one goes even further and strips the offender of his office within the church. While this is far from conclusive evidence for a trend, it does show that the bishops had property on their minds and wanted to make sure it stayed within their control.

"Control," in fact, is an even greater theme of the councils. The issue of property is simply a subset of the issue of power. Bishops during the seventh century, as we have seen, were moving in circles that required them to dirty their hands in secular business. This is obviously not a phenomenon unique to the seventh century, but this period is something of a seminal era in politicking bishops. Therefore, their control over their own institutions became crucial in an age when alliances with kings and nobles were forged and broken with regularity. Property dovetailed into this more amorphous idea of "control" because of its tangibility. Episcopal election, which is another major focus of the canons, also converged with the bishops' concerns. We have seen that the bishops were not entirely successful in controlling the choice of a new bishop. Political reality too often intruded. However, the canons legislating the correct form of episcopal election are not naïve attempts by the bishops to ignore the true nature of the Frankish polity. Rather, they are a forceful countermeasure to the royal belief that the king was the natural appointer of new bishops. If the king occasionally overrode the canonical legislation, this did not mean he was right. The bishops recognized a political reality while setting up an ecclesiastical ideal to which they could refer when their candidate was denied access to his seat. As the kings grew weaker and became beholden to both the secular and ecclesiastical nobility, they would have to take the bishops into account when an episcopal seat opened up. The bishops would then have the councils to fall back on.

The issue of control also comes up in the canons dealing with women. We have noted that women were always a thorny problem for the men running the Frankish Church, and their ambivalence about women extends to the canons. Clerical intimacy with women, nunneries that were protected from secular rapine, holding the property of incestuously joined people – all of these canons stem from the desire of the bishops to control whatever came into their defined jurisdiction. Their attitudes toward women are not what concern us here, although they are intriguing. Nunneries, like other Church "property," were to be regulated by the bishops. Similarly, the women in those nunneries were part of the ecclesiastical *facultates*, to use the language of the councils, and their safekeeping was important to the bishops. The influence of the seventh-century Merovingian queens, I believe, cannot be overlooked. In an age when regents held the reins of power for years before their sons took over, the bishops had to factor them into their considerations. A more benevolent attitude toward women – however patronizing – can be seen as a reflection of a strong personality like Balthild's at the core.

In the matter of punishment, it was crucial for the bishops to retain control over how clerics would be disciplined. This is an obvious prerogative in the councils, but what is also important is the idea of punishing those in the secular realm as well. The withholding of communion was a simple way for the bishops to assert their power and independence. Depriving offenders of communion can be seen as an important part of discipline. It is also clear that this punishment was not enough for some of the more serious crimes committed by the clergy, and that stripping a cleric of his office within the Church was the next step. When the crime was serious enough, excommunication was imposed.

The imposition of punishment was necessary for the episcopate to retain their control over certain sections of society. The seventh century was one in which the Merovingian *regnum* ordered itself into a new shape. Gone were the warrior-kings such as Clovis I and Theudebert I, who led expeditions to Spain and Italy and conquered vast tracts of territory. The Merovingians were confronted with what every society is confronted with once its initial spasm of conquest is over – how to govern the lands they conquered. Therefore, after Dagobert I, we hear of few extra-territorial conquests until Pippin and Charles Martel re-oriented the Franks to the north of Europe. The seventh century was one of consolidation and governance, and the canons reflect the bishops' concern with their own power and influence.

This is also evident in the canons dealing with monks and monasteries. We have examined Columbanus's impact on Merovingian Gaul and the new form of monasticism he brought with him from Ireland. This rural monasticism was outside the purview of the urban bishops, and despite efforts to stop it, the bishops saw abbots slowly slipping out of their control. The councils of the Gallic Church show a marked increase in monastic crimes and punishments as the years go by, ending with the extreme measures prescribed by the last canon of the council of Autun. Bishops, who were accustomed to dictating to the monasteries what the monks could and could not do, did not want to allow the abbots to usurp some of that power. The fact that the secular nobility was becoming increasingly involved with the administration of the monasteries was alarming as well, and the bishops legislated desperately against that new reality. However, independent sources show that the practice of granting immunities to monasteries and founding monasteries well outside the cities, by both the monarch and the nobility, weakened the bishops' control over abbots and monks and gave the laity another avenue to salvation.[6] The bishops were becomingly increasingly isolated in the Merovingian political world, and the councils reflect their exasperation with the situation. As the seventh century turned to the eighth and Charles Martel became the dominant political force in the country, we hear of fewer bishops actively taking a role in politics.[7] Missionaries to the eastern Germans and abbots of important monasteries, such as Boniface and Fulrad of Saint-Denis, stepped to the fore.

The seventh century in France was not a time of decay, as has often be contended. It was not a time of "do-nothing" kings and rampant corruption in the Church. It was a time of a political equilibrium settling around the office of king, rather than the person who occupied the office. Strong kings such as Chlothar II, Dagobert I, Clovis II, Childeric II, Dagobert II, and Childebert III were able to impose their will on the office and the country, and occasionally paid dearly for their actions. It is clear, however, that the idea of consensus revolved around not only the monarchy, but the aristocracy as well. This aristocracy included the nobles of the Church, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy did their best to maintain the status quo and perpetuate their power. The bishops came together in council to discuss not only the state of their flock, but also the state of the kingdom. They did this because they were involved, in a very important way, with the governance of that kingdom, and peace and stability were crucial to their success in areas of crime and punishment. The Merovingian kings and royal family were involved in a symbiotic relationship with the episcopal hierarchy, one that the bishops tried to maintain without giving up too much of their independence. In the end, changing times rendered the Merovingian system obsolete, as well as the bishops' virtual monopoly on spiritual matters. The rise of the rural monasteries offered the new nobility a different outlet for their benevolent acts and a new route to heaven, and the bishops found themselves competing against those who had once been subservient to them. The canons of the seventh-century councils show a vibrant Church, one concerned with the morality of its members and its clergy, as well as one that did not want to become an arm of the monarchy. This balancing act was too tricky to last, and once the Carolingians became more powerful, the Church was forced to choose sides. When the dust settled, the bishops who allied with Charles Martel and Pippin III found themselves with less independence than they had previously enjoyed. Perhaps they became spiritually stronger. Boniface certainly thought so. But with the anointing of Pippin as king in 751, not only did the king irrevocably entwine himself with the papacy and the episcopate, the bishops also irrevocably tied themselves to the monarchy. Through the canonical legislation of the seventh-century councils, we can glimpse the last official writings of an independent and powerful Merovingian Church.

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[6] For late Merovingian and early Carolingian monastic practices, see Wood, "Saint-Wandrille and its Hagiography"; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 192-205 and 277-80; Wood, "Teutsind, Witlaic"; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, 74-114; Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 122-45.

[7] There were of course some, but not to the extent of the seventh century. There was Bishop Ansbert of Rouen, who ran afoul of Pippin II around the turn of the century; see Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 264; Willibrord, who was consecrated archbishop of the Frisians in 695 and lived until 739; see Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 127; and Bishops Rigobert of Rheims, Crodegang of Sées, Eucherius of Orléans, Hainmar of Auxerre, and Willicarius of Vienne, who were all driven out of their sees by Charles Martel for political reasons; see Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*, 123,125. But these men were not as prominent at court as say, Audoin of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon, or even Leudegar of Autun had been.

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APPENDIX A: "Canonum uero statuta ab omnibus intemerata seruentur"

The translations of the Church councils

In the forty-fourth year of King Chlothar's reign, Fredegar tells us, "the bishops and all the great men of his kingdom, Neustrians as well as Burgundians, assembled at Clichy on the king's business and to consider their country's problems."[1] This is the only time any of the seventh-century church councils are mentioned in the two primary chronicles of the time. This passage, however, is important. In it Fredegar, who certainly must have known the content of the canonical legislation, does not say that the bishops assembled for the reform of the Church. Nor does he say only bishops attended the council. The assembly at Clichy was attended by secular nobles and pertained to the business of the whole country. What comes down to us is just the ecclesiastical legislation, true, but it is important to recognize that this was a meeting to determine political policy as well as religious. The councils were another way in which the bishops could express their will in a political environment, and this crucial point needs to be remembered.

Some of the Latin has been provided in the footnotes of this appendix. Early medieval Latin, no less than classical Latin, was less specific in its vocabulary than English, and therefore the translated words might appear somewhat different from the original. Much of the original Latin has been provided in prior chapters, so it is kept to a minimum here. Likewise, only the most famous bishops have been noted in the footnotes. A full study on whom the bishops were and how their local politics affected what was happening in council has yet to be done.

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[1] *Fredegar*, IV.55: "Anno XLIIII regni Chlothariae, cum pontificis et uniuersi proceres regni sui tam de Neuster quam de Burgundia Clippiaco ad Chlotharium pro utilitate regia et salute patriae coniuncxissent."

COUNCIL OF CLICHY: 626 or 627. 27 September

The synod in the basilica of Saint Mary the Mother of God.

In the name of the Lord. At the suggestion of our most glorious and pious lord Chlothar the king,[2] when we had come together in the vicinity of Paris into the basilica of Saint Mary the Mother of the Lord, which is located in the main hall of Saint-Denis the martyr, near the manor which is called Clichy, and there Your Clemency [Chlothar] had ordered us to deal with the rule of the canons and the state of the church and instructed us to arrange what is necessary. We have given many thanks to the all-powerful Lord, who gave such understanding to Your Glory, that you are vigilant no less for the peace of the church as for the urgency of your own happiness. Whence, we not a little are grateful in the Lord because of those things. You not only produce precepts that are announced to you by divine voices, you also anticipate these things we must say, and just like David, you both carefully govern with grace the authority of the realm and you fulfill a prophetic ministry.

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[2] Chlothar II (584-629).

Therefore, since the grace of your goodness gave us the confidence to make a suggestion, we supplicants hope that you preserve the rule of the constitution for us in every way. [This rule is that] which you ordered to be established at Paris in your presence at the universal and great synod of the Gauls,[3] according to the ancient institution of the canons. It is most agreeable to us that those things, which were published widely by your command, edited, and set in order by so many priests, should be preserved in everything. And because several of these chapters, which we wrote in different books of canons, we have assembled, collected into one work, we judge these things to be annexed to this aforementioned constitution. We beseech strenuously that, whatever you have prophesied from these things, the balance of the examination will inspire to this and choose to be applied to the aforementioned rules. These things should be confirmed, by the oracle of your authority, as remaining in perpetual agreement, with God as our patron.

1. A bishop, priest or deacon who solicits interest from debtors should either cease or certainly be condemned. For they should solicit neither one

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[3] The Council of Paris, 614. See Canons 4 and 27, below, for more references.

percent interest nor seek filthy lucre.[4] We prohibit all Christians from charging six or ten times as much.

2. Clerics who have possessed, for any length of time, goods for the remuneration of the church without petition should not allow those goods to pass into their own hands by proprietary law under the pretext of lengthy possession, as long as it is clear that the goods have belonged to the church. Indeed, bishops of long tenure, when they have been ordained, should be seen neither to make petitions, nor be able to have long-held goods of the church transcribed to their own property.

3. If the clergy, by the daring of rebellion, have bound themselves in a conspiracy either by oaths or by writing and have prepared an ambush for their bishop or against him by perfidious pretext – since even this has been prohibited completely by secular laws – if after they have been warned, they disdain to correct [themselves], then they should be stripped entirely of their own rank. Nevertheless, if indeed they themselves had complaints against their own bishop or between themselves, [the causes] may be examined at the next synod.

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[4] "nam neque centesimal exigent aut turpia lucra requirant."

4. We voted to defend with all vigor the edict or articles of canons that was fixed in Paris at the general synod in the basilica of St. Peter and was confirmed by the most glorious lord King Chlothar.

5. And, God willing, since the Catholic faith is now and everywhere persevering among the Gauls, if there are any who are suspected of being *bonosiaci*[5] or secret heretics, they should be inquired of by the pastors of the church in a solicitous manner and, wherever they may be found, they should be recalled to the Catholic faith, with God as their patron, so that wickedness, by the error of the few, should not be imprinted on easily influenced minds.

6. A bishop ought not casually to excommunicate anyone. For the excommunicant, if he thinks that he has been unjustly condemned, should have license to protest in the next synod. If it is proven that he has been unjustly condemned, he should be absolved. However, if he has been justly condemned, let him serve the time of the imposed penance.

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[5] *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1913), *s.v.* "Bonosus," provides a helpful entry on the *bonosiaci* (Bonosians in English). They were heretical followers of Bishop Bonosus of Sardica, who died around the turn of the fifth century. He asserted that Mary had several children after Jesus, which earned him a condemnation by the metropolitan Anysius of Thessalonica in 391 A.D. It is not known whether Bonosus himself denied Christ's divinity, but his followers certainly did. According to the Encyclopedia, they are referred to up to the seventh century, but the text does not tell what happened to them. There is no indication why they are mentioned as

7. If a judge presumes to punish a cleric of whatever rank in public law cases or for any reasons whatsoever, and presumes to detain [a cleric] without the knowledge and permission of the bishop or cause him to be afflicted by slanders and injustices, he should be deprived of communion. However, the bishop should not be tardy to correct the faults of the clerics concerning the reputed conditions.

8. These men who have not paid their taxes should not dare to enter religious life without permission of the prince or the judge.[6]

9. If anyone drags a fugitive out of church on any occasion without having taken an oath, let him be deprived of communion. However, it is permitted for slaves to be led forth from the church by their own masters, once they give an oath. If any man desecrates the law of the oath that has been given, he should be deprived of communion. For this thing must be sworn to the fugitives in the church: that they should come out, assured of their life and secure from torture and maiming. If anyone drags them away in any other way from the church, he should be deprived of communion, a thing that has already been ordered in the ancient canons. Indeed, that person who is liberated from death by the favor of

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separate from other heretics in the councils, nor have I found any mention of them in Merovingian historical texts.

[6] "iudicis." This is the generic term for a royal official, who may have been a *comes*, *dux*, *rector*, or patrician. The difference between these is irrelevant here; for more on these offices see Archibald Lewis, "The Dukes in the *Regnum Francorum*, A.D. 550-751," *Speculum* 51, no. 3 (1976): 381-410.

the holy church should not be free to leave until he promises that he will make penance for the crime of his sins.

10. Concerning incestuous unions: If anyone is married in an incestuous way according to the degree regulated by the canon, both of them will be deprived of communion up until the time when these people to whom it has been prohibited by divine rules should assert their penance by separating, and neither will they have permission to serve in the military at the palace nor will they have freedom to bring suit in the law-court. For however the abovementioned conjoined themselves incestuously, the bishops or the priests in whose diocese or district the deed was done should announce the crime that has been perpetrated to the king and the judges.[7] When the crime has been denounced to these same people, the latter should sequester themselves from communion and cohabitation with those so conjoined. Their possessions should go to their parents, under this condition: that before they are segregated, through no trick shall they come to their personal property, not either through their parents or through a purchase or through royal authority, unless the abovementioned crime is canceled by the separation of sequestering and by penance.

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[7] "iudicibus."

11. If anyone commits murder by free will and kills using force rather than from self-defense, you must not communicate with him. Nevertheless, if he carries out penance, the last provision of communion [last rites] should not be denied him at death.

12. Clerics or secular people who have presumed to keep offerings of their parents either donated or left by a will or offerings which they themselves donated and they think should be taken away from the church or monasteries, let them be excluded from the churches as killers of the poor, just as the holy synod established, until they return [them].

13. Christians should not be sold to Jews and to gentiles. For if any Christian, forced by necessity, should decide that his own Christian slaves must be sold, let him not cede them to another except only to Christians. For if he has sold [them] to pagans or Jews, he should be deprived of communion and the purchase shall lack validity. Indeed, if Jews presume to convert Christian slaves to Judaism or afflict them with oppressive torment, those very slaves should be given over to the public fisc, and those Jews should not be admitted to any public legal case. Indeed eating[8] with Jews must definitely be resisted.

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[8] "conuiuia."

14. If any cleric wants to go away from his own city or province to other provinces or other cities, let him be recommended by letters of his own bishop. Because, if he has set out without explicit letters, he should in no way be received.

15. Indeed, regarding little shacks[9] and slaves of little value[10] or whatever goods pertaining to the law of the church, after their deaths, the bishops, just as the ancient authority of the canons orders, should not presume to sell nor to alienate [transfer ownership] where the poor live through any contracts whatsoever.

16. We have learned that auguries are being observed by Christians, in such a way that it could be compared with a similar crime of the pagans. Indeed, there are some who eat food with pagans! It was pleasing to urge those people in a friendly manner with a warning so that they should be recalled from their earlier errors. But, if they have neglected [the warning] and mix themselves with idolaters and sacrificers, they should serve a time of penance.

17. [It has been agreed] that slaves and base-born people should not be admitted to a formal complaint.[11] Whoever undertakes the accusing role

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[9] "casellas."

[10] "mancipiola."

[11] "Vt serui et uiles personae ad accusationem non admittantur."

[plaintiff], if he is unable to prove one crime, he should not be permitted to bring another accusation.

18. When a bishop dies, if anyone in any position or set up in military service or puffed up by power dares to seize and presumes to inventory the furniture situated in the bishops' house[12] or the goods of any type put into the houses or the fields of the church before the opening of the will or the hearing, or has dared to break the bars of the church, let him be rejected from communion.

19. If anyone wants to reduce a free-born or freed man to slavery and perhaps has already done so and, having been warned by the bishop, he neglects

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[12] "domus."

to recall himself from his disturbance[13] or does not want to correct himself, it is fitting to sequester him just as a defendant charged with fraud.

20. Clerics of any rank ought not to go into the forum [law court] either for their own or for ecclesiastical cases nor should they dare to plead cases, except those that have been completely permitted to them with permission and advice of the bishop.

21. [It has been agreed] that no layman should be appointed priest[14] in the parishes. Whoever is judged to be the elder in the parish itself should be ordained as a cleric.

22. Indeed, having been established in the highest priesthood, bishops[15] to whom something is distributed or donated, either with the church or for safe-keeping, by foreigners will not reckon it as their own property but as the legacy of the church among the goods of the church, if that person who donates is proven to give for the remedy of his own soul, not for the comfort of the priests. Because

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[13] "inquietudine."
[14] "archipresbyter."
[15] "pontifices."

just as the bishop[16] holds that which has been left to the church, so the church ought to get that which the priest leaves [in a will].

23. Clearly, anything that is bequeathed for someone's future use through a trust either in the name of the priest or the church, the church will not be able to reckon or retain it among its own goods.

24. If any bishop should, with any kind of trick or cunning desire, seize things which are presently possessed by another church, and should presume to usurp them without a hearing and recall them to his own dominion or his church's, he should be deposed away from his office and deprived for a long time of communion like a killer of the poor.

25. Unless it becomes necessary for the ransom of captives, no bishop should presume to break the holy plates for whatever condition. If he does so, he will cease from his position of the church for two years.

26. No one should dare to seize or drag off through royal authority nor puffed up with any power whatsoever nor through their own temerity widows who

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[16] "sacerdos."

have asked to consecrate themselves to God or girls consecrated to the Lord. If both consent to this thing, they should be deprived of communion.

27. Judges, who disregard the statutes of the canons confirmed by authority and royal edict and who violate that royal edict which was made at Paris,[17] if, having been warned, they disdain to correct [themselves], it was decided that those [judges] should be deprived of communion.

28. [It was decided] that when a bishop dies, no other should be substituted in his place unless the universal vote of the whole people selects a native of that place and approves the assent of the co-provincials. Whoever has presumed otherwise should be cast away from the position, which he assaulted rather than received. Moreover, we decide that those who ordained him should cease the administration of their own seats.

Bishop Tetricus from the city of Lyon.
Bishop Sulpicius from the city of Bourges.[18]
Bishop Landolenus from the city of Vienne.
Bishop Mederius from the city of Sens.

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[17] The Edict of Paris, issued by Chlothar II in 614, confirmed the canons of the Council of Paris from the same year.

Bishop Medigisilus from the city of Tours.

Bishop Sonnacius from the city of Reims.

Bishop Senotus from the city of Eauze.

Bishop Asodoaldus from the city of Agen.

Bishop Donans from the city of Besançon.[19]

Bishop Hainoaldus from the city of Laon.

Bishop Anastasius from the city of Trèves.

Bishop Regnoberhtus from the city of Bayeux.

Bishop Haidoindus from the city of Le Mans.

Bishop Magnobodus from the city of Angers.

Bishop Leobardus from the city of Nantes.

Bishop Verus from the city of Rodez.

Bishop Caesarius from the city of Aruernus.[20]

Bishop Agricola from the city of Javols.

Bishop Rusticus from the city of Cahors.

Bishop Balladius from the city of Auxerre.

Bishop Raurecus from the city of Nevers.

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[18] Sulpicius was a prominent promoter of monastic houses founded along Columbanian lines. See Friedrich Prinz, "Columbanus, the Frankish Nobility and the Territories East of the Rhine," in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, 79.

[19] Donans (Donatus) was the son of Waldelen, who had begged Columbanus for a son; see above, p. 56. His first son was given to the Church and became bishop. He also signed the canons of the Council of Chalon, see below, p. 156.

[20] Clermont. See Gaudemet and Basdevant, *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens*, 599, and Odette Pontal, *Die Synoden im Merowingerreich* (Paderborn, 1986), 310.

Bishop Nammacius from the city of Angoulême.

Bishop Hildoaldus from the city of Avranches.

Bishop Felix from the city of Châlon-sur-Marne.

Bishop Leodoberhtus from the city of Paris.

Bishop Leoncius from the city of Saintes.

Bishop Babo from the city of Autun.

Bishop Vuilligisilus from the city of Toulouse.

Bishop John from the city of Poitiers.

Bishop Aigahardus from the city of Noyon.

Bishop Gundoaldus from the city of Meaux.

Bishop Ansericus from the city of Soissons.

Bishop Godo from the city of Verdun.

Bishop Aigomaris from the city of Senlis.

Bishop Constantius from the city of Albi.

Bishop Arnulf from the city of Metz.[21]

Bishop Honoberhtus from the city of Cologne.

Bishop Modoaldus from the city of Langres.

Abbot Audo from the city of Orléans.

Deacon Samuhel from the city of Bordeaux.

This council was held on the fifth kalends of October [twenty-seventh September] in the forty-third year of the reign of our lord Chlothar [626/627], by the grace of God the king. Amen.

COUNCIL OF CHALON: 647-653. 24 October

The beginning of the canons of Chalon.

It is known to have been established in the ancient canons that the metropolitans ought to meet each year, God willing, in synods with their co-provincials. Now, as much from everyone's common desire as from the behest and order of our most glorious master Clovis the king,[22] for religious zeal and for love of orthodox faith, we have been gathered together in the city of Chalon, in the church of Saint Vincent. [We are] seeking the intercessionary power of that very saint, that by his suffrage and through divine inspiration, we merit the longevity of the above-mentioned prince. And that which has been omitted by intervening laziness from the canons and corrupted by negligence or ignorance

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[21] Arnulf of Metz is the famous bishop who helped bring down Brunhild and was later attached to the Carolingian family by propagandists.

[22] Clovis II (639-657).

may be reformed by the help of our Lord Christ into its pristine state, just as formerly it had been established by the holy fathers.

1. We have defined, with one inspiration and a unanimous feeling, that the standard of faith, just as it was confirmed at the Council of Nicaea by pious declaration, handed down by the sainted fathers, explained by them, and later confirmed by the holy Council of Chalcedon, should be kept in everything and by everyone.

2. Indeed, the statutes of the canons should be preserved inviolate by all.

3. Given that it was already fixed by the prior canons, it is still pleasing to restate, that, if any bishop, priest, deacon, or anyone from the priestly list except for people who are contained in these canons,[23] should be thought to have intimacy with any strange woman which might bring scandal or the suspicion of adultery, he should be deprived of his order according to the statutes of the canons.

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[23] "praeter personas, quae in ipsis canonibus continentur." No explanation is given who these people might be.

4. [It has been agreed] that there should not be two bishops ordained nor should a city have two at the same time, nor should the goods of the church be parceled out by a wicked division.

5. Indeed, the laity who has not yet converted their lives to the clergy ought not to have in any way the goods of the parishes or the parishes themselves placed in their care to administer.

6. [It has been agreed] that no one should presume to seize or steal the goods of any church whatsoever before a hearing. Whoever will do this, let him be considered a murderer of the poor.

7. [It is agreed] that upon the death of a priest or abbot, nothing should be carried off by the bishop or by the archdeacon nor should anything from the goods of the parish, hospice, or monastery be diminished by anybody. Whoever does this will be corrected according to the statutes of the canons.

8. We think the penitence of sinners, which is the salvation of the soul, to be useful for all men. The body of the priesthood[24] is known to agree that, after

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[24] "uniuersitas sacerdotum."

confession has been made, penance should be prescribed by the priests for the penitents.[25]

9. It is regarded as an act of the greatest piety and religion that souls should be ransomed by Christians from the chains of captivity. Whence the holy synod is known to have decided, that no one ought to sell a slave beyond the borders or limits which belong to the kingdom of Clovis, lest – far from there – Christian slaves should be entangled by such commerce or by the chain of captivity or, what is worse, by slavery to Jews.

10. If any bishop from any city whatsoever should die, an election should not be held by anyone except his fellow bishops, clergy, and citizens. If it is otherwise, an ordination of this sort will be regarded as invalid.

11. It has come to the holy synod, that the public judges are seen[26] to be wandering through all the parishes and monasteries, which it is the habit for the bishops to visit, with undue presumption and against old custom. Even clerics and abbots are being made, reluctantly and by constraint, to be presented before

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[25] According to Pierre Riché, "Columbanus, his Followers and the Merovingian Church," in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, 68, this canon reflects the new "private" penance brought to the Continent by Columbanus and his Irish monks. This is part of his attempts to paint the Merovingian Church in as bad a light as possible before the arrival of the Irish.

[26] "uideantur."

the judges, so that they might get themselves ready for them. This is a thing that in all ways neither conforms to religion nor is permitted by the authority of the canons. As a result, we have voted unanimously, believing that they should amend their ways immediately and, if the judges attempt something against the monasteries and parishes themselves by presumption or the power in which they thrive, except by the invitation of the abbot or the archpriest, it is decided to exclude them from the communion of all priests.

12. [It is agreed] that two abbots ought not to be in one monastery, lest a dissension and scandal among the monks arise[27] under a pretext of power. However, if any abbot should choose a successor for himself, that one who is chosen shall have no authority for the purpose of ruling over the riches of this same[28] monastery.

13. Just as it is fixed in the ancient canons, [it is agreed] that no one should presume to retain the cleric of another nor should he promote someone to the sacred order without the wish of his bishop.

14. About the oratories, which are established at the estates. Several of the

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[27] "generetur."

[28] "ipsius."

brothers and our co-bishops who are sitting with us in the holy synod have brought a complaint regarding them. The oratories, which were erected long ago, and the resources pertaining to them, namely the same estates, refuse the control of the bishops. They do not permit the same clergy who perform services at these oratories to be sanctioned by the archdeacon.[29] It is agreed to correct that both the ordinations of the clerics and the goods collected in the same place should be in the power of the bishop. The way the divine office should be filled and how the sacred offerings are consecrated at these oratories should also be corrected. Whoever might speak against this shall be deprived of communion, according to the ancient canons.

15. [It is agreed] that abbots or monks or agents of the monasteries should not use[30] secular patronage, nor should they dare to walk in the presence of the king without the permission of their bishop. If they do this, they should be excommunicated by their bishops.

16. [It is agreed] that no bishop, priest, abbot, or even deacon henceforward should accede to the sacred order by bribery. Whoever presumes to purchase a position of honor should be deprived of it.

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[29] In this phrase, *oratoria* is the subject. Obviously, the landowners who control the oratories are the active agents in this dispute, not the oratories themselves.

[30] "utantur."

17. And because many things have appeared through presumption, which are seen to be[31] even less pleasing to God, and contrary to the sacred canons, which are necessary to be corrected by the bishops,[32] the holy synod has established that none of the laity neither in the church nor out in the churchyard itself should incite fights or scandal of any kind, nor should they drag weapons in or attack anyone in order to wound or kill. If someone presumes to do this thing, that man should be deprived of communion by the bishop of that very place where the deed was done, according to the statutes of the canons.

18. Concerning the day of the Lord, which is the first of the week: as it is generally agreed by all Catholics and by those who fear God, it is decreed to observe it. Just as was fixed in previous canons, we, not starting anything new, but renewing old things, have decided that on the Lord's day no one should presume to do rural work, that is plowing, reaping, measuring, harvesting, making furrows or whatever pertains to the cultivation of the land. Whoever is discovered doing this shall be corrected under the discipline of every sort of sanction.[33]

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[31] "uidentur." The passive of *video* is often translated as "seem" in an active sense, but in the councils, as has been pointed out to me, "are seen" is probably better, as the bishops are usually talking about a *fait accompli*.

[32] "sacerdotibus."

[33] "sub disciplina districtionis omnimodis corrigatur."

19. Indeed many things that are not corrected while minor often rise up as bigger things. It is well known by all that it is forbidden during the dedications of the basilicas or at the feasts of the martyrs for people flocking[34] to these very solemnities to be seen to chant obscene and foul songs over and over, certainly not while they ought to be praying or listening to the priests who are singing psalms with female choirs. As a result it is agreed that the priests of the place ought to forbid them from the enclosures or the porticoes of the basilicas – indeed, from the very churchyards. If they voluntarily do not wish to change, either they ought to be excommunicated or endure the sting of discipline.

20. Indeed, we know this fact about Agapius and Babo, bishops of the city of Digne: Because these men have erred and transgressed against statutes of the canons in many ways, we decided to strip them of every honor of their episcopal rank, according to the tenor of the canons.

Candericus, bishop of the church of Lyon, has signed this.

Landolanus of the church of Vienne has signed this.

Audoin, bishop of the church of Rouen, has signed this.[35]

Armentarius, bishop of the church of Sens, has signed this.

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[34] "confluenta."

[35] Audoin of Rouen was one of the most powerful men of the age. This is the only council on which his signature appears, despite the fact that he lived until *circa* 684.

Vulfoleudus, bishop of the church of Bourges, has signed this.

Donatus, bishop of the church of Besançon, has signed this.

Rauracus, bishop of the church of Nevers, has signed.

Deodatus, bishop of the church of Mâcon, has signed.

Pappolus, bishop of the church of Geneva, has signed.

Palladius, bishop of the church of Auxerre, has signed.

Feriolus, bishop of the church of Autun, has signed.

Bertoaldus, bishop of the church of Langres, has signed.

Audo, bishop of the church of Orléans, has signed.

Malardus, bishop of the church of Chartres, has signed.

Leusus, bishop of the church of Troyes, has signed.

Aurilianus, bishop of the church of Vence, has signed.

Baudomeris, bishop of the church of Tarentaise, has signed.

Protasius, bishop of the church of Sion, has signed.

Insildius, bishop of the church of Valence, has signed.

Clarus, bishop of the church of Grenoble, has signed.

Gradus, bishop of the church of Chalon, has signed.

Florentinus, bishop of the church of Belley, has signed.

Aetherius, bishop of the church of Embrun, has signed.

Magnus, bishop of the church [of Avignon].[36]

Likewise[37] Betto, bishop of the church of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, has signed.

Potentissimus, bishop of the church of Gap, has signed.

Arricus, bishop of the church of Lausanne, has signed.

Claudius, bishop of the church of Riez, has signed.

Licerius, bishop of the church of Venasque, has signed.

Petrunius, bishop of the church of Vaison, has signed.

Bertofredus, bishop of the church of Amiens, has signed.[38]

Eligius, bishop of the church of Noyon, has signed.[39]

Deocarius, bishop of the church of Antibes, has signed.

Leborius, bishop of the church of Maurienne, has signed.

Chairibonus, bishop of the church of Coutances, has signed.

Amlacarius, bishop of the church of Séez, has signed.

Launobodis, bishop of the church of Lisieux, has signed.

Ragnericus, bishop of the church of Evreux, has signed.

Betto, bishop of the church of Bayeux, has signed.

Betto, abbot, in the place of Latinus, bishop of the church of Tours, has signed.

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[36] See Gaudemet and Basdevant, *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens*, 563, and Pontal, *Die Synoden im Merowingerreich*, 316.

[37] "Item."

[38] Bertofredus is probably Berthefred, who was still bishop in 662, when Balthild extracted a privilege from him for the foundation of Corbie. See Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, 79-81.

[39] Eligius of Noyon was part of Dagobert's court in the 620s and 630s. He and Audoin were part of a literate and epistolary circle.

Chaddo, archdeacon, in the place of Sallappius, bishop of the church of Nantes, has signed.

Germoaldus, abbot, in the place of Audobertus, bishop of the church of Paris, has signed.

Paternus, abbot, in the place of Felix, bishop of the church of Limoges, has signed.

Chagnoaldus, abbot, in the place of Chadoaldus, bishop of the church of Le Mans, has signed.

Bertolfus, abbot, in the place of Rioterus, bishop of the church of Rennes, has signed.

A synodal letter to Theudorius, bishop of Arles.

To our own lord, who is always dear to us, [from the synod] which recently was in Chalon united with the grace of God.

It has been made clear to everyone a thing indeed we believe you are not unaware of: That our glorious master King Clovis had ordered that there be a synodal council in the aforementioned city of Chalon on the twenty-fourth of October. We fully expected you when all of us were sitting together, in the basilica of Saint Vincent, because we heard you were in the neighborhood, indeed in the very city. Because so many things are told against you and made common knowledge both concerning your ignoble life and your departure from the canons, at which things we are greatly pained, we understand why you did not want to be present in the council itself. We see writings attesting to the fact that you have made your profession of penance, confirmed both by your own hand and the hands of your fellow bishops. Whence, we believe that you are not ignorant that one who publicly acknowledges penance can neither hold nor rule an episcopal seat. Therefore, while saluting your beatitude, we respectfully declare that until you have an audience before your brothers you ought in all ways to keep yourself from the seat of Arles, where it is agreed you held the pontifical seat, nor should you take anything from the goods of that very church for your own control.

COUNCIL OF GARNOMUS, OR OF BORDEAUX: 662-675.[40]

The beginnings of the canons of Bordeaux.

In the name of the holy Trinity. When we had been united in the diocese of Bordeaux, in the castle of Garnomus, on the river Garonne, through the order of the glorious prince King Childeric,[41] and when we came together and in the same place, in the church of Saint Peter the Apostle with the provincials of

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[40] The actual dates of this council should be 673-675, because Childeric was only king of the Bordeaux area for those years.

[41] Childeric II (662-675).

Aquitaine for the state of the church and the stability of the kingdom, many contrary things against the statutes of the fathers and authority of the canons were found there. The reason for this is that stubborn clerics have looked down upon their own bishops by wearing the secular clothing and, which is worse, committing all kinds of diverse transgressions more than the secular people. There, it was decreed, according to the statutes of the fathers, that:

1. The clerics ought to religiously keep the lawful habit and neither have nor carry either lances or other weapons or secular garments, according to what is written: "not by their own sword did they possess the land, nor did their own arm liberate them, but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance."[42] It is decreed that whoever, after this definition is given, presumes to do or to try this thing should be struck by canonical judgment.

2. Any priests, deacons or anyone from the clergy who dares with temerity to have protection[43] of or is a servant of a layperson, except with the agreement of the bishop, brotherly love and esteem, and without contumacy toward his bishop, shall be subject to a similar sentence.

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[42] Psalms 44:3.

[43] "mundeburdo." See above, p. 108 for a further explanation of this rather tortuous canon.

3. About secretly introduced women: if a bishop or an abbot or anyone from the sacred order should presume to have a woman against the ancient statutes of the Fathers (except that which the canons contain[44]), hereinafter he should be judged by that very same canonical sentence.

4. Indeed, the bishops who, as it is written, stand forth like the head of the church, and ought to be just like the apostles, as St. Jerome wrote, should show an example of such kind to the churches, namely that they should esteem the clergy and should be esteemed themselves by the clergy and they should be an example to the faithful, with respect to their habits, their conduct, in speech, in obedience. They should hold their religion in every way and let pass everything that is secular. Just as the apostle says, they should make such a true example of their religion that both the stability of the kingdom ought to stand through them and the health of the people ought to endure through these men, with the help of the Lord. And if they presume to attempt anything against the canonical order, let them know that they themselves are to be corrected by canonical judgment. As a result, with the illustrious man Duke Lupo mediating, through the command of the abovementioned glorious prince Childeric, all these things, which had been introduced above, are decided to be preserved in everything. If anybody is forgetful of the things that have been included, he will be considered a hater of the

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[44] "nisi quod continent canones."

synodal council. Let him know that he will incur judgment. Indeed the abbots and the monks ought to live[45] in every way under the rule of the holy fathers.

Adus, metropolitan bishop of the city of Bourges.

John, metropolitan bishop of the city of Bordeaux.

Scupilio, metropolitan bishop of the city of Eauze.

Ermenomaris, bishop of the city of Périgueux.

Leutadus, bishop of the city of Auch.

Saluius, bishop of the city of Béarn.

Gundulfus, bishop of the city of Bazas.

Ursus, bishop of the city of Aire.

Agnebertus, bishop of the city of Saintes.

Bosolenus, bishop of the city of Lectoure.

Sesemundus, bishop of the city of Couserans.

Artemon, bishop of the city of Oloron.

Tomianus, bishop of the city of Angoulême.

Maurolenus, bishop of the city of Couserans.[46]

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[45] "conuersari."

[46] That Bishops Sesemundus and Maurolenus were from the same city, Couserans, is debatable. The Latin for Sesemundus's city is *Coseramnis* and for Maurolenus is *Coserannus*. Gaudemet and Basdevant, *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens*, 573, translate both cities as Couserans, and Pontal, *Die Synoden im Merowingerreich*, 316, 319, also states the bishops were from the same city. However, a footnote in Gaudemet and Basdevant states: "Un autre évêque est donné plus haut comme étant celui de Couserans. Mgr Duchesne (*Fastes*, II, p. 98-99) suppose que

Beto, bishop of the city of Cahors.

Siboaldus, bishop of the city of Agen.

John, abbot, envoy of the bishop of the city of Limoges.

Onoaldus, abbot, envoy of the bishop of the city of Albi.

COUNCIL OF LOSNE: 673-675.

The Canons of Losne.

When, with the favor of God, who said to His disciples: “Where two or three will be congregated in My Name, I am in your midst,”[47] and who filled the hearts of 318 orthodox bishops that they should fortify and fix the stability of the Holy Church by divine mandates, and we had congregated in Losne in the presence of our most glorious prince Lord Childeric the king,[48] he ordered that that which the most holy fathers, who congregated in the first five synods for the state of the Holy Church and for strengthening the faith, defined, ordained, and

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l’un des deux était en réalité évêque de Comminges, également dans la province d’Eauze. Déjà l’édition Baluze-Pardessus donne: *Sesemundus, Conuenarum ... Maurolenus, Coseranensis ...*

[47] Matthew 18:20.

[48] Childeric II.

left behind for our memory to educate the whole multitude of the faithful, we should also confirm and maintain in every point, with firm stability for future times. This most especially pertains to our religion:

1. That bishops, after they have abandoned and rejected secular things, should live canonically under the zeal of a holy lifestyle.

2. That none of the bishops or clerics should presume to bear arms in the secular custom.

3. That no bishop should try a legal case unless through an advocate lest, while he is involved in the commotions of the cases, he should seem to rise up by the kindling of anger.[49]

4. Clearly, none of the clerics should presume to have in their own house any other woman except for those [allowed] according to the things instituted by the writings of the Fathers.

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[49] "a fomitem iracundiae." The accusative instead of the ablative after a preposition is not uncommon throughout the canons.

5. The consent of the people is expected to elevate a bishop according to the canonical decrees, as with a legal age and election.[50]

6. There should not be two bishops in one city unless one is a pilgrim.

7. That no one should presume to welcome the cleric of another without the letter of his own bishop or abbot, nor, as we have said, should monks presume to be unoccupied or roam around through countries without royal or pontifical letters.

8. Truly, all the bishops ought to celebrate Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost[51] in their own cities, and that only the order of the king should have cause to summon him away.

9. That laymen established in the secular habit should not be set up throughout the parishes in the office of the archpriests.

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[50] "Vt [a]etas legitima et electio."

[51] "quinquagesimae festissimos dies."

10. Bishops who do not live spiritually now ought to correct or emend themselves within a set time or they should certainly be deprived of office.

11. This especially it is pleasing to add, that the synodal council should be celebrated at a place to be decreed in the middle of the month of September, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our lord King Childeric [i.e. 675].

12. Indeed,[52] women who have lost their husbands and who wished in zeal to remain in widowhood and with changed clothes should be held under the protection of the king.[53] Certainly if they choose to take the holy veil, they should be set up in a monastery.

13. Indeed,[54] those women whom the priests of the Lord know to live in a religious way should be permitted to live in their own homes chastely and piously. But, if they stand out as being negligent concerning their chastity, they should be impelled into the monasteries in order to come to their senses.

14. Indeed we have confirmed in all ways through the present arrangement the privileges, which either long ago or in modern times have been permitted to

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[52] "sane."
[53] "principis."
[54] "uero."

monasteries living according to the rules of the holy fathers, so that they should assure their own stability.

15. That bishops, priests, and deacons should not presume to practice hunts in the secular custom. If they should do this, they should be corrected by the arrangements of the former canons.

16. That bishops, according to what the canons advise, should not presume to choose their own successor unless one of them[55] is removed and divested away from all the property of the church.

17. We have decreed that bishops or abbots who have been condemned formally for their particular errors or who have been removed from the churches by their own accord should not return in any way to their own churches or offices.

18. We decide and institute absolutely that whoever shall be bishop of the church should address the people given to him with a divine proclamation on all the Lord's days and holy solemnities, and should be extra vigilant with holy purpose to nurture the flock assigned to him with spiritual food.

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[55] The Latin in this phrase is *ipse*, but the singular form does not indicate to whom it refers. It has been suggested to me that it refers to the successor to the office, being the closest in space to the pronoun, but a case could be made for reference to the one who holds the office, as he

19. It has come to the notice of our sacred synod that, when some monks who were nurtured in the monastery are roaming or running around through diverse locations, and certain men are receiving them into their own communion, for that reason, it seemed good to decide that no one should presume to receive the monk of another without leave of his own abbot or a letter of recommendation.

20. If anyone should try to violate this thing after this decision,[56] we decided to suspend him from communion for the entire year.

21. If any bishop, having been called to the synod, neglects to come, he should be controlled by the rules of those canons, especially because this thing is decreed by the holy canons.

22. If a bishop has substituted a successor for himself against the decrees of the canons, the latter,[57] contented with a changed life, should depart from his

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would already be in control of the property of the church. See canon 22 for a similar use of the pronoun.

[56] "definitionem."

[57] Again, the pronoun *ipse* is used here, and as both the bishop (*episcopus*) and his successor (*sucessorem*) are singular, it is even more difficult to decide to whom the canon is referring. In this instance, as the bishop has already substituted the successor (*subrogauerit*) the canon is probably referring to the successor.

position. Indeed, we have decided that he should devotedly fulfill the task given to him, according to the canons.

COUNCIL OF LEUDEGAR, BISHOP OF AUTUN: 663-680.[58]

The Canons of Autun:

1. If any priest or deacon or cleric has not blamelessly recited a profession of faith, which the apostles handed down by the inspiring Holy Spirit and the creed of Saint Athanasius our patron, he should be condemned by the bishop.

This is the first title of monastic discipline: that abbots or monks should not have private property and that monks should accept the usual food and customary clothing from the abbot.

5. That none of them should dare to have godparents.

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[58] We have met Leudegar in the chapter dealing with the political and ecclesiastical history of the Frankish kingdoms. See Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, 219 n. 96 for whether or not Leudegar had anything to do with the council, or if his name was simply appended after his death because of his fame. His *vita* makes no mention of the council.

6. That they should not be found to wander in the episcopal cities.[59] If they do so with a letter written by their own abbot for the advantage of the monastery, they should be directed to the archdeacon of the community.

8. That they should be obedient to their abbot.

10. That no one should presume to have knowledge of outside women. Whoever will be found doing this; he should be correctly very seriously.

That women by no means should enter into the monastery of the monks.

We set up and have decided, that no one should presume to detain a monk of another apart from the permission of his own [the detainer's] abbot; but when he shall have been found wandering, he should be returned to his own cell. There he is to be punished according to the merit of his crime.

15. Indeed, concerning abbots and monks, it is agreed thus: that they ought to fulfill and guard in all ways whatever the order of the canons and the rule of Saint Benedict teaches. For if all these things will be lawfully preserved in the hands of the abbots or the monasteries, both the number of monks will be

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[59] "ciuitatibus."

increased, God willing, and all the world will be free from all bad contagions through their persistent prayers. All the monks should be entirely obedient; they should be rich in the decor of frugality, fervent in the work of God, eager in prayer, and preserving in charity, lest on account of negligence or disobedience they should be made food for the enemy, who is prowling and roaring and seeking whom he might devour. There should be for them one heart and one spirit. No one should say anything is his own; there should be for them all things in common; they should work in common; they should be harborers of hospitality in every way. But whoever has tried to destroy by some transgression these things which have been dictated to us, when God moved us, for the strengthening of the monastic rule; if it is an abbot, his power of communion should be suspended from him for one year; if a provost,[60] two years; if a monk, he should either be beaten by cudgels or suspended from communion and table and charity for three years. For it is just, that the seeds of vices should be pruned by the sickle of justice, lest, if they are fed by a simulation of temperance, they run so wild that they cannot even be cut out by axes.

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[60] "praepositus."

APPENDIX B: DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Who's Who in the Merovingian World

Arnulf, Saint: Bishop of Metz, 614-629. Legendary founder of the Pippinids (with Pippin I); advisor of Dagobert I; retired to a monastery.
Audoin, Saint (a.k.a. Dado, St. Ouen): Bishop of Rouen, 641-*circa* 684. Powerful secular presence at the court of Dagobert I, attendee of Council of Chalon (647-653).
Aunemund, Saint: Bishop of Lyons, *circa* 653-660. Baptized and possibly was godfather of Chlothar III. Later charged with treason and murdered.
Balthild, Saint: Anglo-Saxon queen of Clovis II, mother of Chlothar III, Childeric II, and Theuderic III. Regent for Chlothar III (657-664/5). Founded monasteries and championed monastic immunities.
Bilichild: Queen of Childeric II, daughter of Sigibert III. Killed along with her husband in 675.
Boniface, Saint: Anglo-Saxon missionary to the eastern Germans, early to mid-seventh century. Complained about the sad state of the Merovingian Church.
Brunhild: Visigothic princess, queen of Sigibert I, mother of Childebert II, grandmother of Theuderic II and Theudebert II, great-grandmother of Sigibert II. Her fifty-year career in Gaul earned her lasting enmity from writers of the time. Fought desperately with Columbanus. Brutally murdered by order of Chlothar II in 613.
Caesarius, Saint: Bishop of Arles, 502-542. Pioneered female monasticism in Gaul. Radegund's nunnery used his Rule.
Charibert: King of Paris (Neustria), 561-567. One of the four sons of Chlothar I to receive a share of the kingdom when his father died.
Charlemagne: Carolingian Emperor, 768-814.
Charles Martel: Grandfather of Charlemagne. Mayor of the palace, 716-741. Most famous for Battle of Poitiers against the Arabs, 733/4.
Childebert I: King of Paris, 511-558. Son of Clovis I.
Childebert II: King of Rheims (Austrasia), 575-596; king of Burgundy, 592-596. Son of Sigibert I and Brunhild. Primary participant in treaty of Andelot (587), which ended the enmity between he and Guntram.
Childebert "the Adopted": Son of the Pippinid Grimoald, placed on the Merovingian throne after the death of Sigibert III. May have outlived his father and ruled until 662. Debate over dates of his reign.
Childebert III: Merovingian king, 694-711. Son of Theuderic III. May have been the last effective Merovingian ruler.
Childeric (I): Salian Frank war-leader, d. 481. Father of Clovis I. Grave discovered in 1653 full of fabulous gold trinkets and other jewelry.

Childeric II: King of Austrasia, 662-675; king of Neustria, 673-675. Son of Clovis II and Balthild. Assassinated in 675 by Neustrians because he ignored their counsel.

Childeric III: Merovingian king, 743-751/2. Last Merovingian; deposed by Pippin III.

Chilperic I: King of Soissons (Neustria), 561-584. Son of Chlothar I. Assassinated by unknown assailant.

Chilperic II: King of Neustria, 715/6-721. Alleged son of Childeric II. Taken from a monastery and raised as king by the Neustrians as a counter to Charles Martel.

Chimnechild: Queen of Sigibert III, regent for Childeric II in Austrasia until he reached his majority.

Chlodio: First "Merovingian"? Leader of the Franks, mid-fifth century.

Chlodomer: King of Orléans, 511-524. Son of Clovis I, father of St. Cloud.

Chlodovald: Son of Chlodomer. Fled to a monastery after his father's death in 524 and became known as St. Cloud.

Chlothar I: King of Soissons (Neustria), 511-561. Longest-lived son of Clovis I.

Chlothar II: King of Neustria, 584-629; king of Austrasia, 613-623; king of Burgundy, 613-629. Re-united Merovingian kingdoms, began period of the "high water mark" of the dynasty.

Chlothar III: King of Neustria and Burgundy, 657-673. Son of Clovis II and Balthild. Judged Grimoald guilty of treason and had him killed, may have left his son Childebert "the Adopted" alone.

Chlothar IV: Merovingian puppet of Charles Martel, 717-719.

Chlothild, Saint: Burgundian wife of Clovis I. Pressured him into accepting Christianity and was canonized for her efforts.

Chramn: Son of Chlothar I. Rebelled against his father and murdered for his trouble in 560.

Clovis: Son of Chilperic I. Killed on his father's orders (with persuasion from Fredegund) in 584 for claiming he would inherit the whole of Chilperic's kingdom.

Clovis I: Merovingian king, 481-511. Unified the Franks, converted to Roman Christianity, conquered most of Gaul.

Clovis II: King of Neustria and Burgundy, 639-657; king of Austrasia, 656(?)-657. Son of Dagobert I, husband of Balthild. Began practice of granting immunities to monasteries in 655.

Clovis III: Merovingian king, 690/1-694. Son of Theuderic III.

Columbanus, Saint: Irish monk who brought a new style of monasticism to Gaul. Clashed often with Brunhild and Theuderic, received favorable biography from Jonas, abbot of Bobbio.

Dagobert I: King of Austrasia, 623-632; king of Neustria and Burgundy, 629-639. His reign is considered the high point of Merovingian civilization.

Dagobert II: King of Austrasia, 676-679. Exiled in early 650s as part of "Grimoald *coup*," brought back to rule by Pippin II after Childeric II's murder. Assassinated in 679.

Dagobert III: Merovingian king, 711-715/6.

Desiderius, Saint: Bishop of Vienne, early seventh century. Exiled by Brunhild for questioning her morals, later martyred on her orders.

Ebroin: Notorious Neustrian mayor of the palace, 659-*circa* 680. Rivaled the Pippinids for many years, promoted Theuderic III over the wishes of the nobility, exiled by Childeric II to Luxeuil, returned when that king was killed.

Eddius Stephanus: Hagiographer of Wilfrid, bishop of York. Wrote in the early eighth century.

Einhard: Biographer of Charlemagne, early ninth century. Largely responsible for Merovingians' poor image.

Eligius, Saint: Bishop of Noyon, 641-660. Important advisor to Dagobert I before becoming bishop. Attendee at the Council of Chalon.

Erchinoald: Neustrian mayor of the palace, *circa* 641-659.

Fredegar: Name by which seventh-century chronicler is known. Provides Merovingian political history for period 590-642.

Fredegund: Wife of Chilperic I, mother of Chlothar II, bitter rival of Brunhild. One of the two powerful women in late sixth-century Gaul. May have ordered the assassination of Sigibert I. Died 597.

Galswinth: Visigothic wife of Chilperic I, sister of Brunhild. Chilperic had her garroted not long after her arrival in Gaul because his wife Fredegund egged him on.

Gregory, Saint: Bishop of Tours, 573-594. Wrote a massive history of the Merovingians.

Gregory I: Pope, 590-604. Known as "the Great." Sponsored missionary work in England, praised Brunhild's reforming work in the Gallic Church.

Grimoald: Son of Pippin I. Austrasian mayor of the palace in the 640s and 650s. Placed his own son Childebert "the Adopted" on the throne after Sigibert III died, exiled true heir Dagobert II to Ireland. Killed by Clovis II for his effrontery.

Gundovald: Merovingian Pretender, possible son of Chlothar I. Backed by Constantinople, arrived in Gaul to carve out a kingdom. Killed by Guntram's forces in 585.

Guntram: King of Orléans (Burgundy), 561-592. Son of Chlothar I. Gregory of Tours' favorite king.

Jonas: Abbot of Bobbio in Italy, hagiographer of Columbanus, who founded the monastery. Sharply critical of anyone who did not unequivocally support his hero.

Leudegar, Saint: Bishop of Autun, *circa* 662-676. Politically active bishop martyred in the aftermath of Childeric II's assassination.

Maroveus: Bishop of Poitiers, mid-sixth century. Rival of Radegund for temporal power in the Poitiers region.

Martin, Saint: Bishop of Tours, d. 397. Gregory of Tours' favorite saint, patron saint of Tours.

Medardus, Saint (a.k.a. St. Médard): Bishop of Soissons, mid-sixth century. Consecrated Radegund to religious life after she left her husband.

Merovech: Son of Chilperic I. Married his aunt Brunhild, which did not make his father happy. Driven out of favor by Chilperic, asked his servant to kill him in 578.

Mummolus: Able general of Guntram. Went over to Gundovald's side and was killed with him after his defeat.

Nanthild: Queen of Dagobert I. Ruled as regent for Clovis II until her death *circa* 642.

Pippin I: Austrasian mayor of the palace, first "Carolingian." Helped bring down Brunhild in 613, advised Dagobert I. Died *circa* 640.

Pippin II: Austrasian mayor of the palace, *circa* 675-714. Defeated Neustrians at Battle of Tertry (687), mistakenly believed to be fight that marked Pippinid ascendance.

Pippin III: First Carolingian king, 751-768. Father of Charlemagne.

Pippinids (a.k.a. Arnulfings): Early family name for the Carolingians.

Praejectus, Saint: Bishop of Clermont, d. 676. Martyred because of his involvement in factional politics.

Radegund, Saint: Queen of Chlothar I. Founded the monastery of Poitiers. Friend of Venantius Fortunatus, who wrote many poems to her. Died 587.

Ragamfred: Neustrian mayor of the palace in the 710s. Last real rival of Charles Martel in Neustria.

Remigius, Saint (a.k.a. St. Rémy): Bishop of Rheims, late fifth and early sixth centuries. Baptized Clovis I.

Rigunth: Daughter of Chilperic I. Betrothed to Reccared, Visigothic prince, but never reached Spain.

Sigibert I: King of Rheims (Austrasia), 561-575. Son of Chlothar I, first husband of Brunhild. Assassinated by men allegedly sent by Fredegund.

Sigibert II: King of Austrasia, 613. Great-grandson of Brunhild, son of Theuderic II. Killed by Chlothar II in the general purge of Sigibert I's line after the fall of Brunhild.

Sigibert III: King of Austrasia, 632-656 (651?). Son of Dagobert I. His death led to so-called "Grimoald *coup*" of the 650s.

Theudebald: King of Rheims (Austrasia), 548-555. Son of Theudebert I.

Theudebert I: King of Rheims (Austrasia), 533-548. Son of Theuderic I. Gregory of Tours heaped praise on him. Invaded Italy in the 530s and earned the scorn of Procopius.

Theudebert II: King of Austrasia, 596-612. Grandson of Brunhild, brother of Theuderic II. Killed fleeing his brother after being defeated in battle.

Theuderic I: King of Rheims (Austrasia), 511-533. Oldest son of Clovis I.

Theuderic II: King of Burgundy, 596-613; king of Austrasia, 612-613. Grandson of Brunhild, brother of Theudebert II. Persecuted Columbanus on his grandmother's orders. Lived a dissolute life. Died of dysentery while going to war against his cousin Chlothar II.

Theuderic III: King of Neustria, 673, 675-690/1. Son of Clovis II and Balthild, brother of Chlothar III and Childeric II. Exiled early in his reign, but returned to the throne after the assassination of Childeric II.

Theuderic IV: Merovingian king, 721-737. Puppet of Charles Martel.

Tiberius II: Byzantine emperor, 578-582. Harbored the Pretender Gundovald as a bargaining chip to get Merovingians to fight his Italian wars.

Venantius Fortunatus: Italian poet, *circa* 540-600. Spent most of his life in Gaul, and was bishop of Poitiers late in life. Wrote many paeans to Merovingian royalty, especially Radegund.

Wilfrid, Saint: Bishop of York, mid-seventh century. His *vita* contains the only contemporary evidence for the reign of Dagobert II.

Wulfoald: Austrasian mayor of the palace under Childeric II. Banished to the East after that king's assassination, died not long after.

Zacharias: Pope. Sanctioned Pippin III's usurpation of the Frankish crown in 751.

APPENDIX C: GENEAOLOGIES OF THE MEROVINGIANS

Underlined names are mentioned in the text
Names in bold indicate a violent death (assassination, battle)

TABLE ONE

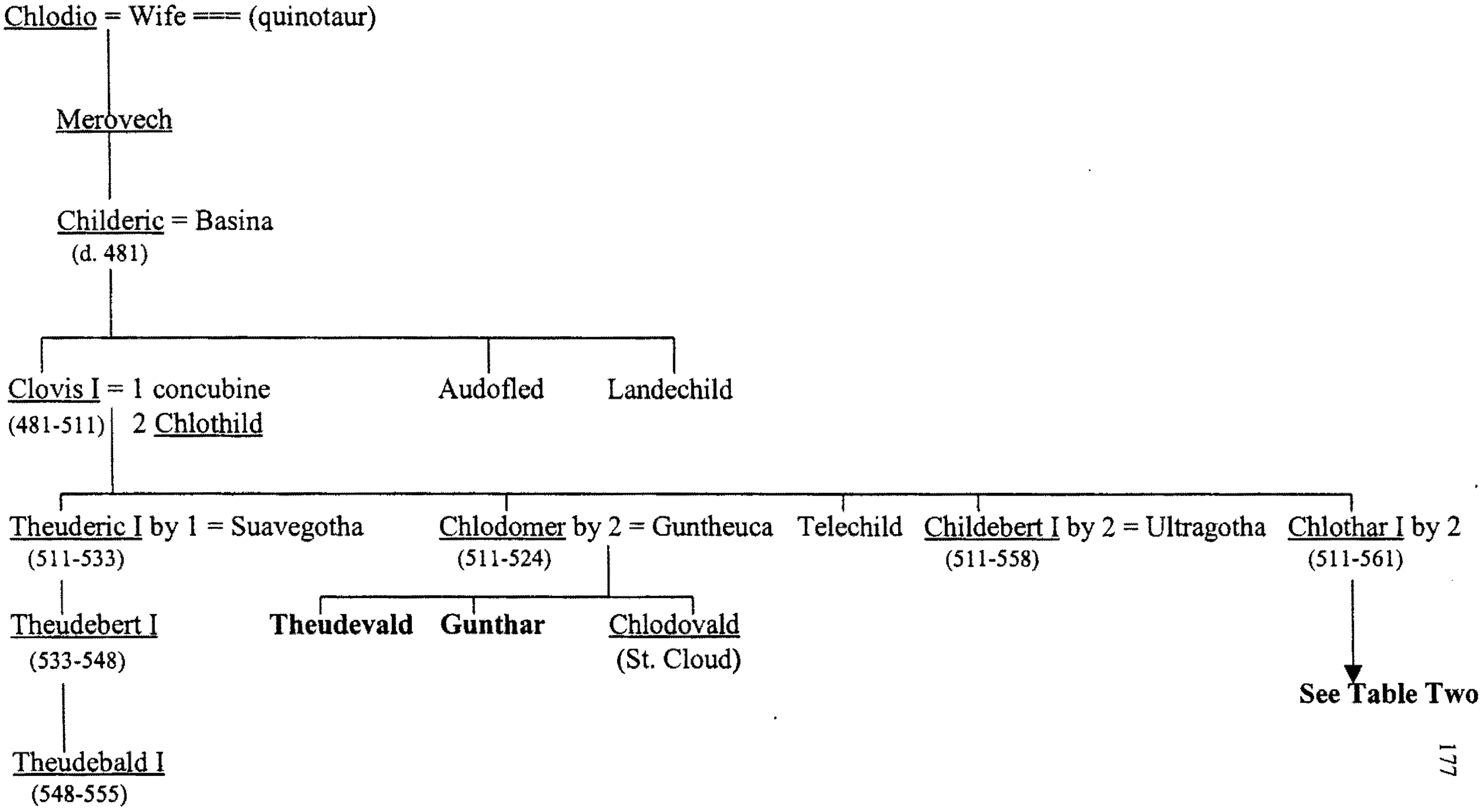

Chlodio = Wife === (quinotaur)
Merovech
Childeric = Basina
(d. 481)
Clovis I = 1 concubine
(481-511)
2 Chlothild
Audofled
Landechild
Theuderic I by 1 = Suavegotha
(511-533)
Chlodomer by 2 = Guntheuca
(511-524)
Telechild
Childebert I by 2 = Ultragotha
(511-558)
Chlothar I by 2
(511-561)
Theudebert I
(533-548)
Theudevald
Gunthar
Chlodovald
(St. Cloud)
See Table Two
Theudebald I
(548-555)

TABLE TWO

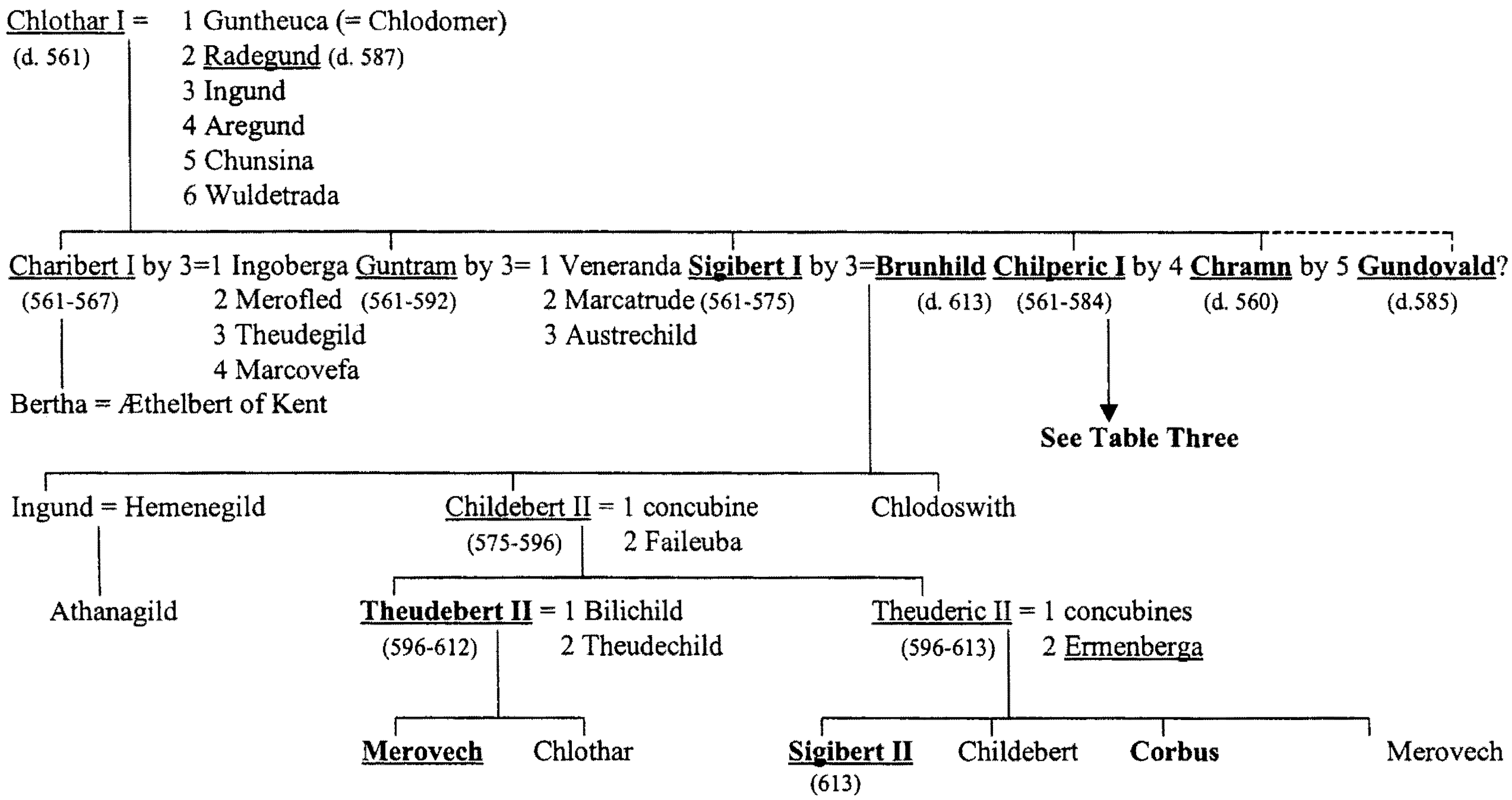

Chlothar I =
(d. 561)
1 Guntheuca (= Chlodomer)
2 Radegund (d. 587)
3 Ingund
4 Aregund
5 Chunsina
6 Wuldetrada
Charibert I by 3=1 Ingoberga
(561-567)
2 Merofled
3 Theudegild
4 Marcovefa
Bertha = Æthelbert of Kent
Guntram by 3= 1 Veneranda
(561-592)
2 Marcatrude
3 Austrechild
Sigibert I by 3=**Brunhild**
(561-575)
(d. 613)
Chilperic I by 4
(561-584)
See Table Three
Chramn by 5
(d. 560)
Gundovald?
(d.585)
Ingund = Hemenegild
Athanagild
Childebert II = 1 concubine
(575-596)
2 Faileuba
Chlodoswith
Theudebert II = 1 Bilichild
(596-612)
2 Theudechild
Merovech
Chlothar
Theuderic II = 1 concubines
(596-613)
2 Ermenberga
Sigibert II
(613)
Childebert
Corbus
Merovech

TABLE THREE

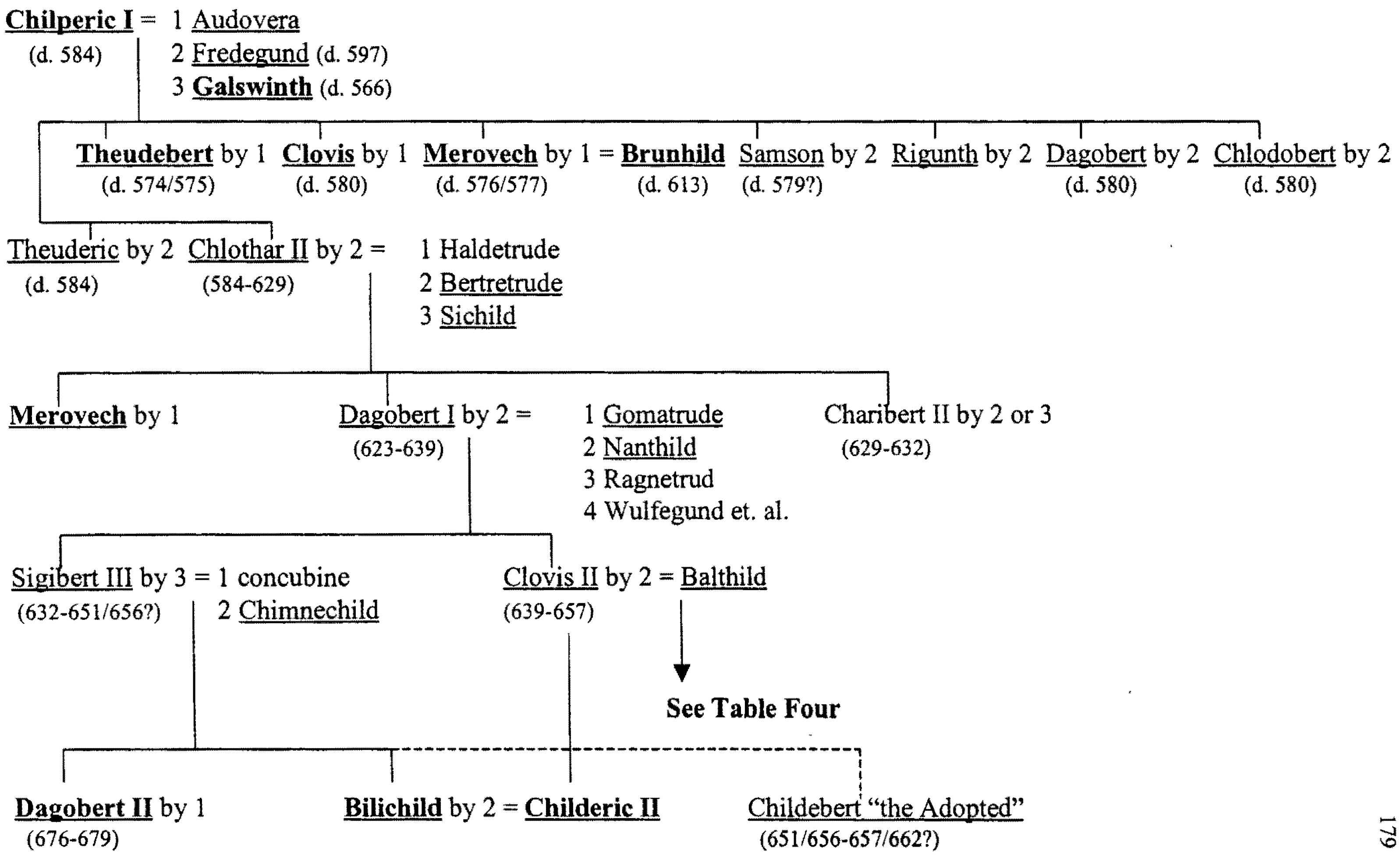
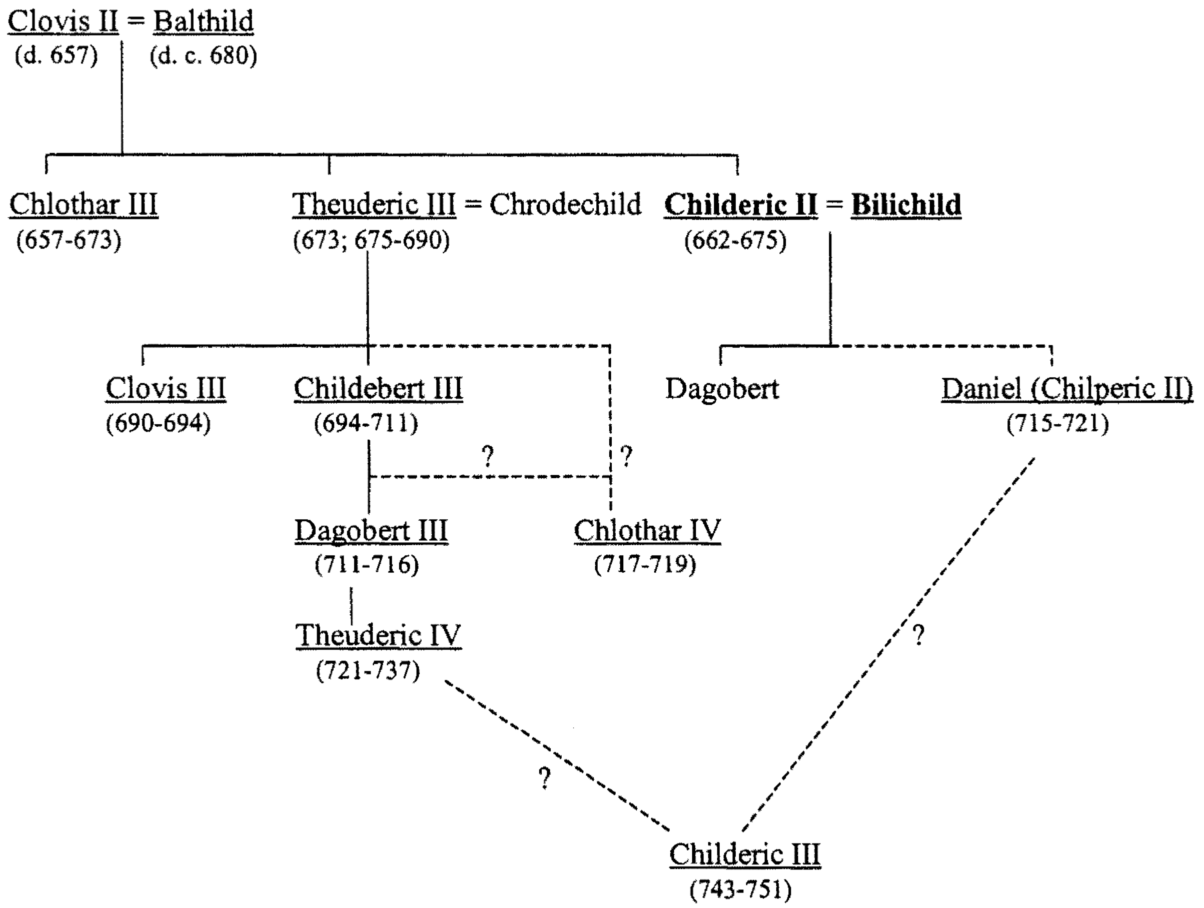

Chilperic I = 1 Audovera
(d. 584)
2 Fredegund (d. 597)
3 Galswinth (d. 566)
Theudebert by 1
(d. 574/575)
Clovis by 1
(d. 580)
Merovech by 1 = Brunhild
(d. 576/577)
(d. 613)
Samson by 2
(d. 579?)
Rigunth by 2
Dagobert by 2
(d. 580)
Chlodobert by 2
(d. 580)
Theuderic by 2
(d. 584)
Chlothar II by 2 = 1 Haldetrude
(584-629)
2 Bertretrude
3 Sichild
Merovech by 1
Dagobert I by 2 = 1 Gomatrude
(623-639)
2 Nanthild
3 Ragnetrud
4 Wulfegund et. al.
Charibert II by 2 or 3
(629-632)
Sigibert III by 3 = 1 concubine
(632-651/656?)
2 Chimnechild
Clovis II by 2 = Balthild
(639-657)
See Table Four
Dagobert II by 1
(676-679)
Bilichild by 2 = Childeric II
Childebert "the Adopted"
(651/656-657/662?)

TABLE FOUR


Clovis II = Balthild
(d. 657)
(d. c. 680)
Chlothar III
(657-673)
Theuderic III = Chrodechild
(673; 675-690)
Childeric II = Bilichild
(662-675)
Clovis III
(690-694)
Childebert III
(694-711)
?
?
Dagobert
Daniel (Chilperic II)
(715-721)
Dagobert III
(711-716)
Chlothar IV
(717-719)
Theuderic IV
(721-737)
?
?
Childeric III
(743-751)

Sources: Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 344-49; Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, xii-xiii.