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# Aspects of Christianization in the Ecclesiastical Province of Trier from 570 - 630: A Modes Theory Analysis

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By

Jennifer Boyle

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A Thesis Presented to the University of Glasgow, School of Humanities,  
College of Arts, in Fulfilment of the thesis requirements for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

University of Glasgow

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## Abstract

This thesis examines Christianization in the ecclesiastical province of Trier from 570-630, using both traditional and more recent theoretical approaches. It begins by examining the paradigms and limitations of current approaches both to the Merovingian Church and to the concepts of 'paganism' and 'Christianization'. It then introduces the cognitive science of religion focusing in particular on Harvey Whitehouse's postulation of 'doctrinal' and 'imagistic' 'modes of religiosity' as a theoretical tool.

The subsequent section deals with the cult of saints and the figure of the bishop both in general and in the province, using Whitehouse's approach as a means of opening these up and allowing parallels to be drawn between the cult of saints and funerary feasting. At the same time, his theory is challenged by the variation within these activities in terms of participants and frequency of occurrence. The complex nature of Merovingian monasticism also presents a degree of challenge to Whitehouse's perception of medieval monasticism as monolithic. Nevertheless, the application of ideas regarding the imagistic mode to recluses opened up new avenues of discussion. A focus on the ecclesiastical province of Trier suggests that the advent of Columbanian monasticism did not produce an instant surge in the number of rural monasteries in the north-east.

Examination of church councils offered a double opportunity for the application of modes theory, both to the contents of the councils and to the institution of the councils themselves. A closer examination of councils in the context of place allows for consideration of regional variation. Modes theory is once again challenged: while councils may appear at first to be a supremely doctrinal phenomenon (involving policing and uniformity), they also involve negotiation, ingenuity and reflection.

The paucity of sources for the north east tests the regional approach taken here: but it also encourages questions to be asked regarding the spread of manuscripts and ideas. Modes theory reveals the motivations behind apparently prosaic sermon collections as sophisticated, aiming at the policing of the clergy

and laity and ensuring the stability of 'correct' doctrine. The section on the Synod of Auxerre dealing with standards amongst the clergy and parish care raises questions regarding the possibility of shared beliefs. An examination of the *Life of Goar* reveals that although its contents might seem appealing in elucidating more details of parish care, the context of the source called its reliability into question.

Finally, an analysis of burial rites via three cemeteries in the province of Trier tested the limits of modes theory, and other cognitive approaches were recruited to examine the impact of the concept of liminality on burial practice. Presentation of geographical and archaeological evidence is discussed it is suggested that more extensive database work would enable comparative regional study, allowing for a closer examination of belief, burial and Christianization.

This study concludes that the use of modes theory, together with other insights drawn from the cognitive science of religion, offers an alternative and illuminating approach to Christianization. It suggests that future research should regard this as a valid methodological tool for the analysis of medieval religion. It also suggests that a regional focus would benefit future studies of the Merovingian period.

## Acknowledgements

Particular thanks must go to my supervisor, Dr Marilyn Dunn, for introducing me to new ideas, and for her support and patience throughout.

I would also like to thank my examiners, Dr Andrew Roach and Professor Judith George, for the care with which they read the text, and their insights and observations.

Lastly, I would like to offer thanks to my parents, John and Patricia Boyle, and my brother John, for their unstinting support throughout.

## Glossary of terms

Amygdala	Set of neurons in the medial temporal lobe of the brain which plays a central role in the processing of emotion.
Hippocampus	Structures on the ventricle of the brain, postulated to be the centre of memory, emotion and the nervous system.
Hypothalamus	Region of the brain which regulates autonomic activities and some metabolic processes.
Limbic system	The collective term for the structures in the brain which deal with motivation, emotion, and emotional interactions with memory.
Olfactory bulb	Structure in the brain which detects odour and sends it to the olfactory cortex.
Olfactory cortex	The system in the brain which detects stimuli and encodes it as neurons. It is also involved in processing this stimuli centrally.
GIS	Geographical information systems. A system of storing, manipulating and presenting geographical data
MySQL	Open source database software commonly used in web applications.
Semantic Web	A common framework that allows for the sharing of data across the World Wide Web.
URI	Uniform resource identifier. A string of characters which identify a name. This system then enables various representations of the name to interact with each other across networks (usually, the World Wide Web).
Web 2.0	A term used to describe an iteration of the World Wide Web which is largely focused on the sharing of information and collaboration between users.

## List of Abbreviations

AA SS	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i>
AA	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BHL	<i>Bollandia Hagiographica Latina</i>
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
CG	<i>Concilia Galliae</i>
DLH	<i>Decem Libri Historiarum</i>
GC	<i>Liber in Gloria Confessorum</i>
GM	<i>Liber in Gloria Martyrum</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Gesta Historica</i>
SS	<i>Scriptores</i>
SRG	<i>Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum</i>
SRM	<i>Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
VP	<i>Vitae Patrum</i>

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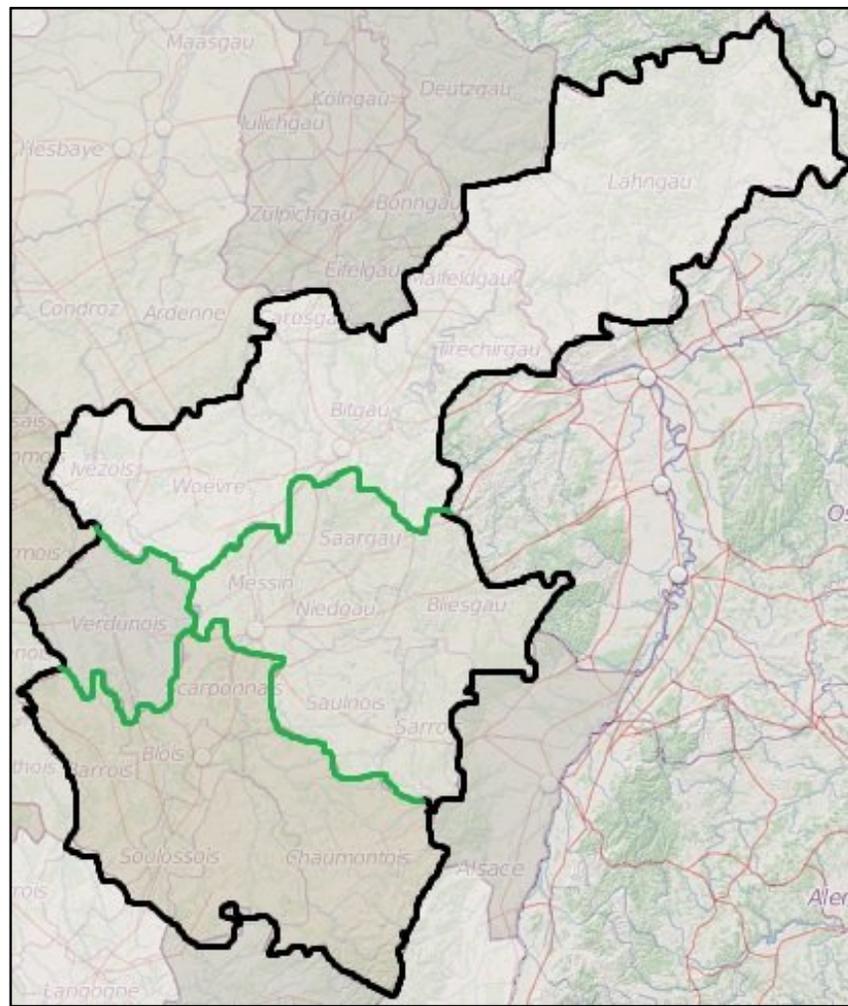
## Map of the Ecclesiastical Province of Trier

This map has been reproduced with the kind permission of Johan Ahlfeldt, owner and creator of the *Regnum Francorum* website.

The ecclesiastical province of Trier is shown in its entirety. Major Roman roads are marked in red, while minor roads are orange. Waterways are also shown.

For a more detailed experience, use of the *Regnum Francorum* is encouraged as a means of testing the ideas discussed within the thesis in the context of GIS.

Fig.1 - The Ecclesiastical Province of Trier, with Subdivisions for Metz, Verdun, and Toul



## Introduction

This thesis examines aspects of Christianization in Gaul, specifically the ecclesiastical province of Trier, from 570-630. While more recent studies have sought to redeem the image of Merovingian Christianity, they have operated within limited theoretical frameworks in terms of the analysis of Christianization. In order to address this problem, this thesis utilises Whitehouse's theory of 'modes of religiosity', as well as other insights from the cognitive science of religion, to offer a fresh perspective on religious belief, transmission and change.

To achieve this, the historiography of Merovingian Francia is discussed in order to gain a sense of discourse and situate this study. Relevant theoretical issues are raised and key terminology is defined. The theory of modes of religiosity is explained and its main principles defined. The specific points of interaction on which this study has chosen to focus are as follows: the cult of saints, monasticism, church councils, parish care, and burial practice. These topics, and the subsidiary issues they raise, are discussed with some general background, and then examined, as far as is possible, in the specific context of the ecclesiastical province of Trier. Finally, they are examined in the light of modes theory to offer new perspectives on the topic, as well as testing the robustness of modes theory itself.

The cult of saints is often seen as the expression of both elite and popular belief, crucial in Christianizing all it touched: behaviour, time, and the land. Several key ideas are raised in this chapter which have repercussions in the other topics under discussion. Monasteries, the next topic discussed, were often the owners of relics, and produced saints themselves. They, too, are often seen as key in the process of Christianization. The imagistic/doctrinal divide raised in the discussion of the cult of saints is scrutinised more closely in the context of types of monastic life. The next chapter, on church councils, looks at the spectrum of behaviour described in the previous chapters in the context of

church legislation, and considers how lines were drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. How these decisions were practically enacted is considered in the chapter on parish care. The final chapter, on burial rites, brings together the approaches used in previous chapters, modes theory, a focus on place and analysis of church legislation, and looks at how these approaches might be profitably combined in analyses of Christianization.

It will be shown that the use of modes theory and the spectrum of understanding it offers allows Merovingian Christianity to be examined from a new angle, one which permits its complexity and elasticity to be made fully apparent, and which allows us to better understand those concepts which enjoyed particular success with clergy and laity, and those which required repeated reinforcement. It also allows for a more nuanced examination of the individual and collective experience, avoiding oppositional models. Overall, a richer understanding of the Christianization process is achieved.

Focusing on the ecclesiastical province of Trier similarly allowed the complexity of Merovingian Christianity to be made apparent. Although the regional variation present in Gaul at this time has often been acknowledged in a number of studies, the same studies still opt for a general approach.<sup>1</sup> Looking at the general background for the themes of this study, and then attempting to place them in the specific context of the ecclesiastical province of Trier allows for a closer consideration of trends and patterns, as well as allowing the regional variation mentioned previously to be demonstrated in practice.

Overall, this study offers a new approach to and new ideas on Christianization. It demonstrates the utility of modes theory and cognitive science of religion as a valid interpretative tool for an examination of medieval religious life. Whitehouse has requested that the theory of modes of religiosity be tested through application in various different disciplines. Just as it is demonstrated

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<sup>1</sup>Young's review points out that both Effros and Geary note the importance of localism in this period, but still opt to look at Gaul in its entirety Bailey K Young, 'Review: Bonne Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and Afterlife in the Merovingian World*', *The Medieval Review*, 2003.

that modes theory can offer fresh insights on Christianity in the Merovingian period, this examination of Merovingian Christianity also evaluates and challenge modes theory.

## Chapter 1.Theory

### Introduction

It is essential to consider how this work is situated within theoretical frameworks. Any discussion of historiography must be accompanied by an examination of theoretical frameworks which have been employed in the past and continue to be employed today, in order to inform our current approach. This section will look at these theories, how they have informed treatments of the topic at hand, and then lay out the theoretical approach of this study.

### Historiography

It is often said that historians are uncomfortable with theory, that they are “mindlessly empiricist” in their tendency to search for “facts” without possessing adequate interpretative frameworks. Hence the claim that when historians need theoretical insights they look outside their own domain, to economic or political theory, for example<sup>1</sup>

‘Uncomfortable with theory’ seems to be a rather ill-deserved characterisation. Functionalist theory, for example, which was prominent in anthropological and sociological thought for much of the twentieth century, informs a great deal of historical thought as regards society’s workings and the function of ritual. In fact, the idea that medieval historians have unthinkingly accepted and proceeded to uncritically overuse these theories of ritual was the focus of Philippe Buc’s *The Dangers of Ritual*.<sup>2</sup>While Buc’s accusations of methodological

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<sup>1</sup>L.J. Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: New York: Arnold; Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Howard Williams, ‘Rethinking Early Medieval Mortuary Archaeology’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 13 (2005), 195-217 <doi:10.1111/j.1468-0254.2005.00155.x>.

crudeness and lack of awareness are often unfair and not always especially constructive, the book itself reflects just how embedded the functionalist idea of the importance of ritual has become in historical analysis. Other concepts, such as gift-giving, have equally become profitably integrated. Perhaps then, contrary to Jordanova's claim, it might instead be argued that historians, especially medievalists, are so familiar with the practice of employing different theoretical frameworks that they might sometimes simply add them to their arsenal of analytical tools? This would account for Buc's criticisms, as well as explaining how and why certain theories are perceived as virtually integral to the study of medieval history.

The theoretical discourses which are specific to Christianization, syncretism and the Merovingian period ought firstly to be taken into consideration. The idea of the grand narrative, of a general decline in 'civilisation' from the fall of Rome to the rise of the 'barbarians', and, conversely, of the move from paganism towards Christianization, does not serve the Merovingian period particularly well in terms of historiography. Earlier studies of the early medieval period tended to perceive the Merovingian era as low ebb between late antiquity and the rise of the 'successful' Carolingian period.<sup>3</sup> The religious culture of the Merovingian period was frequently judged in the same pejorative light, viewed at least partially through the eyes of disapproving Carolingian churchmen such as Boniface, and its 'achievements' compared to those of its seemingly more illustrious Carolingian successor. It was often perceived as an example of barbarian paganism, with a veneer of Christianization and *Romanitas* and judged negatively in terms of the achievements of its institutions and its notable figures. Gregory's protestations about his own lack of sophistication were seemingly taken to heart, and the image presented by Jonas of Bobbio of the impact of Columbanus and activities of such figures as Brunhild accepted rather uncritically. Certain value judgements can be seen to have been at play here regarding how the success of people, places and institutions are judged. Although this stance and its vestiges can still occasionally be found, more recent scholarship on the Merovingian period has attempted to move away from this

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<sup>3</sup>For an example of these types of views, see Pierre Riché's article, 'Columbanus, his followers, and the Merovingian church' in, H.B. Clarke and Mary Brennan, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981), pp. 59-72.

viewpoint, and a more positive reassessment of the period is now often to be found.<sup>4</sup> This study will seek to be sensitive to these discourses and how they affect the discussion whenever they are apparent in secondary literature.

This ‘grand narrative’, or its remnants, causes internal problems in Merovingian historiography. A dividing line is often drawn between north and south, with the north designated ‘barbarian’ and the south ‘Gallo-Roman’ with all of the inherent value judgments implied by these labels.<sup>5</sup> The idea of the ‘barbarian invasions’, which goes hand in hand with the grand narrative, is key in this internal dichotomy in Merovingian Gaul. Much like the pejorative judgments on Merovingian religious culture previously discussed, this idea is also undergoing reassessment, with widely differing views on the degree of change/continuity likely.<sup>6</sup> Again, this study will remain aware of competing discourses in this area, and will address the repercussions of said discourses when they have an impact on areas under discussion.

Using documentary sources from the early medieval period, which are inevitably written by churchmen, involves some reading ‘against the grain’ in order to try and recover any idea of non-Christian belief. Historians’ analyses of these sources are usually acutely aware of their problematic nature. Post-modernist theory can also be employed, to a certain extent, to deconstruct the sources and to think about issues like sanctity or power or identity as constructs. Dealing with non-Christian belief, even trying to figure out whether certain activities and phenomena had religious meaning at all is a notoriously problematic area due to the imbalance of perspectives in the sources and the obviously biased

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<sup>4</sup>See, amongst others, Patrick J Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Lisa Bailey, ‘Building Urban Christian Communities: Sermons on Local Saints in the Eusebius Gallicanus Collection’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2004); Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *Christianity’s Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul*, 1st edn (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); See, amongst others, Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London: Longman, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

nature of the material available. If the search for empirical ‘facts’ regarding non-Christian belief seems intensely problematic, then thinking about how these sources construct non-Christian belief as ‘other’ in some way, whether it be pagan, heretical, barbarian, or rustic, can help to inform us about ideas of unacceptability, anxiety and compromise for the church in early Merovingian Gaul. This approach is especially helpful when approaching the material remains of burial rites, as graves are increasingly described in both historical and archaeological studies in terms of ‘texts’ and ‘performances’ which had creators who sought to bring to mind constructs of gender or class through the use of symbols.

Documentary sources often deal with the past and tradition as ways of either shaming the present or as a means to legitimate their current actions and beliefs. This appropriation of the past and strategic type of ‘remembering’ is, of course, uniquely linked with memory. The function of memory, and practice of constructing memories, has received a great deal of attention in medieval studies in recent years.<sup>7</sup> The study of memory itself, in terms of burial rites and many other contexts, and how it was and is used, is an area which draws upon several theoretical approaches. Matthew Innes and Yitzhak Hen have both edited a volume on how the past was ‘used’ in the medieval period, with contributions ranging across a wide variety of areas.<sup>8</sup> Mary Carruthers’ authoritative book on medieval memory also sparked several other studies.<sup>9</sup> This sensitivity to how historical sources sought to shape and employ the past for

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<sup>7</sup>Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies* (New York; London: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003); Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain*, Cambridge Studies in Archaeology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge: Washington: Cambridge University Press; German Historical Institute, 2002); Matthew Innes, ‘Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society’, *Past and Present*, 1998, 3-36; Patrick J Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, N.J. □; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1994); Zoe Devlin, *Remembering the Dead in Anglo-Saxon England: Memory Theory in Archaeology and History*, BAR British Series, 446 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007); Lucie Doležalová, *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>8</sup>Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, *The Uses of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup>Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

their own ends provides another riposte to the postmodernist ‘threat’; medieval historians are acutely aware of the need to apply a variety of readings to their sources and of the explicit and implicit motivations of their authors. This focus on memory and constructions of the past also has something to do with the extrication of the early medieval period from the overarching theme of the grand narrative. Early medieval authors often show themselves to be acutely aware of the past, as opposed to displaying blind reverence towards a supposed ‘golden age’. They employ the idea of illustrious forebears when they want to, usually to legitimise a present action or denounce an enemy, but always to shape their own idea of the present to their convenience in some way. Churchmen deal with a dichotomy in this respect. On one hand they openly condemn the paganism of the past, yet extol the virtues of Rome, and of their Christian forebears. The past, for churchmen, is to be both emulated and abandoned. The role of memory in this respect will be examined in greater detail in later chapters.

Gregory of Tours’ Histories demonstrate how he imagines himself and his contemporaries as part of a Christian narrative.<sup>10</sup> His *Life of the Fathers*, for example, shows how concerned he is with proving the reliability of his sources:

And perhaps some doubters will try and object to what we have said. But they should know that I have seen the priest Deodatus, who is eighty years old, and he has told me the things which I have written here, declaring under oath that everything is the absolute truth<sup>11</sup>.

More notably, at the outset of the *Life of Nicetius of Trier* he shows an awareness of the precariousness of authorial credibility and justifies his own sources to validate his narrative,

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<sup>10</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, ed. by B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH SRM*, 1,1 (Hanover, 1951); Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, ed. by B. Krusch and Levison, trans. by Lewis Thorpe, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

<sup>11</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Vita Patrum*, ed. by B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 1.2 (Hanover, 1969); Gregory of Tours and Edward James, *Life of the Fathers*, 2nd Revised edn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991).

Some things are believed because they have been confirmed by someone's written account, some are proven by the testimony of other writers....But there are people who by a perversion of the intelligence do not believe what is written, find fault with what is witnessed by others....I fear that I shall be criticised by some, who will say 'You are a young man, how can you know about the deeds of those in the past? How has what they have done come to your knowledge? Surely the things that you have written can only be regarded as fictions made up by you'.... This is why it is necessary to make known the narrator of what I have learnt.....<sup>12</sup>

It has been noted elsewhere at some length that the Carolingians manipulated views of the preceding Merovingian era to cast their own era in a favourable light. This utilisation of the past for personal ends ought to be particularly evident to students of the Merovingian period. See, for example, the messy squabbles that broke out around the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Clovis's baptism. Not only did French nationalists attempt to hijack the occasion to further their own agenda, but French citizens reacted sharply to then-President Chirac's use of the occasion to further blur the line between church and state that had previously been paramount in French culture.<sup>13</sup> On top of this, no 'foreign' academics on Clovis were admitted to the commemoration committee, despite relatively low numbers of French specialists on the subject.<sup>14</sup>

The role of theory in the examination of Christianization itself has a long history. Anthropological theory has been used to examine medieval Christianity in many different ways.<sup>15</sup> Firstly, anthropological theory on the use of ritual has been used extensively in analyses of medieval society. Examining questions of forging community and identities at a time of religious change also involves anthropological and sociological theory. Thinking about religious change as a process also utilises anthropological insights and theory. Studies of conversion

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<sup>12</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (727) 277; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, chap. XVII.

<sup>13</sup>Mary Dejevsky, 'Historians Battle over Clovis, First French King', *The Independent*, section World <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/historians-battle-over-clovis-first-french-king-1306501.html>> [accessed 23 April 2012].

<sup>14</sup>For a full account of the issues at play in this affair, see Susan J. Terrio, 'Crucible of the Millennium? The Clovis Affair in Contemporary France', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41 (1999), 438-457.

<sup>15</sup>Marilyn Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons C. 597-C. 700: Discourses of Life, Death and Afterlife* (London: Continuum, 2009); William E Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

are common in anthropological literature,<sup>16</sup> and have often been used in attempts to draw parallels on the process in disparate cultures and societies, or to cast light on the more obscured parts of the process in the medieval period. Generally speaking, many aspects of anthropological theory have been co-opted by historians to such a degree that their use in historical analysis is now rarely even commented on as an interdisciplinary approach.

It can be seen that anthropological theory and history, then, have had a long and productive association which still continues in many fresh directions. Newer developments in the field of cognitive anthropology involve the use of cognitive science of religion, which can be put to use in a similar way. The approach which will be utilised throughout this study is the theory of modes of religiosity, which belongs to the wider field of cognitive science of religion. The cognitive science of religion and theories within the field, such as Whitehouse's modes of religiosity,<sup>17</sup> recruit neuroscience in order to achieve new insights into religious thought and change. These insights into religious thought can be seen to be immensely useful in a study of Christianization. Furthermore, their observations on identity and memory offer a means of obtaining insights on particularly stubborn sources, such as those dealing with death and burial

A scarcity of evidence of what beliefs came before and the fact that what is available is all either written from the perspective of churchmen means that a process is under assessment with only a very tentative understanding of what lay at the beginning of that process. Many earlier approaches to Christianization could be somewhat extravagant in their interpretations of source materials, especially as regards burial rites, and so subsequent studies have tended to be significantly more guarded; terms such as 'pagan' and 'heathen' now come with their own theoretical baggage. Religious beliefs have been, rather ironically, somewhat edged out of the discussion of Christianization, or at least regarded

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<sup>16</sup>Raymond William Firth, *Rank and Religion in Tikopia: A Study in Polynesian Paganism and Conversion to Christianity* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970); Raymond William Firth, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, Studies in Tikopia Religion (Raymond Firth) (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967).

<sup>17</sup>Harvey Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004).

with extreme suspicion. The approach offered by cognitive science of religion helps to open these ideas up for examination once again.

### Cognitive Science of Religion

The study of the cognitive science of religion is a branch of research within anthropology, building on previous work in the anthropological study of religion. The 1980s saw the majority of the earliest work on cognitive science of religion, although Dan Sperber's *Rethinking Symbolism*, published in 1975, is generally deemed to have raised some key questions and ideas for the field.<sup>18</sup> Cognitive science of religion seeks to examine cultural and social life informed by what cognitive science can teach us about human thought and behaviour; including perception, memory, language and many other areas. Whitehouse's modes theory, in particular, analyses types of religion, religious behaviour, and religious transmission in light of cognitive function, most specifically varieties of memory, and suggests from this that we can see two distinct modes of religiosity with their own specific characteristics and means of transmission. Whitehouse suggests that all religions can be analysed by reference to this theory.

#### Modes Theory

Whitehouse's theory is predicated on the idea that while religions might seem endlessly diverse, they are in fact bound by cognitive constraints.<sup>19</sup> The constraints mould religious thought and transmission. These, in turn, bind and organize communities.<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that only religion is bound by these constraints, brain function and cognitive patterns affect all aspects of culture.<sup>21</sup> What Whitehouse then goes on to suggest is that the frequency of particular 'representational forms'<sup>22</sup> can be predicted if certain types of learning,

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<sup>18</sup>Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>19</sup>Whitehouse, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p. 23.

‘transmissive frequency’<sup>23</sup> and arousal are present. Memory and motivation are central to this model.<sup>24</sup>

Whitehouse posits a particular model with two distinct modes: the doctrinal<sup>25</sup> and the imagistic.<sup>26</sup> These modes are characterised by how they use two different forms of long-term memory: the semantic and the episodic. Semantic memory, central in the doctrinal mode, is a sub-set of long-term memory which deals with generalised knowledge regarding the world.<sup>27</sup> Episodic memory, central in the imagistic mode, deals with specific life events. Each of these types of memory has repercussions on how individuals reflect on their religious experiences, how knowledge is transmitted, and how communities are formed.

Whitehouse states that religious rituals and concepts will have a tendency to group around the doctrinal or imagistic poles.<sup>28</sup> However, where teaching and policing are inadequate, Whitehouse argues that ‘lay versions’ of religions are likely to move away from each of the poles and instead coalesce around the ‘cognitive optimum’ position, that is, those ideas and practices which need neither high levels of arousal or frequent routinization in order to persist.<sup>29</sup> Whitehouse has called for interdisciplinary testing and analysis of this

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. p. 64.

<sup>25</sup>The eight key features of the doctrinal mode are as follows: ‘Frequent repetition activates semantic memory for religious teachings’ ‘Semantic memory for religious teachings and the presence of religious leaders are mutually reinforcing features’ ‘The presence of religious leaders implies a need for orthodoxy checks’ ‘Frequent repetition leads to implicit memory for religious rituals’ ‘Implicit memory for religious rituals enhances the survival potential of authoritative teachings stored in semantic memory’ ‘The need for orthodoxy checks encourages religious centralization’ ‘Semantic teaching for religious teachings leads to anonymous religious communities’ ‘The presence of religious leaders is conducive to the religion spreading widely’ Ibid pp. 66-69.

<sup>26</sup>The imagistic mode consists of the following eight features: ‘Infrequent repetition and high arousal activate episodic memory’ ‘Activation of episodic memory triggers spontaneous exegetical reflection, leading to expert exegetical frameworks stored in semantic memory’ ‘Spontaneous exegetical reflection leads to a diversity of religious representations’ ‘Spontaneous exegetical reflection and representational diversity inhibit dynamic leadership’ ‘Lack of dynamic leadership, lack of centralization, and lack of orthodoxy are mutually reinforcing’ ‘High arousal fosters intense cohesion’ ‘Intense cohesion and episodic memory foster localized, exclusive communities’ ‘Localized and exclusive communities and lack of dynamic leadership inhibit spread or dissemination’ Ibid. pp. 70-73.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. p. 74.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. p. 76.

model, and there have been many responses.<sup>30</sup> Analyses of aspects of medieval history have appeared amongst these responses. The claims that modes theory makes as regards that transmission of religious ideas, and how certain ideas might be more 'successful' than others, are especially attractive for analyses of medieval history, which often deals with such concepts as Christianization and syncretism.

### Conclusions

The competing theoretical discourses at play in the examination of Christianization, and in the study of the Merovingian period, have been shown to be complex. The study would align itself with those more recent studies which perceive Merovingian Christianity as an adaptable and dynamic phenomenon, often unjustly and unhelpfully compared with its Carolingian successors. It will utilise insights from the study of memory in history in order to analyse a number of issues, such as the construction of identity. Most importantly, the use of theories from cognitive studies of religion, and of modes theory in particular, will enable this study to offer insights into aspects of Christian culture in the Merovingian period from a fresh perspective and hopefully elude some of the old problems which have traditionally dogged the topic.

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<sup>30</sup> See especially the following articles: Anne L. Clark, 'Testing the Two Modes Theory: Christian Practice in the Later Middle Ages' (pp. 125-142), Ted Vial, 'Modes of Religiosity and Changes in Popular Religious Practices at the Time of the Reformation' (pp. 143-156), and Ulrich Berner, 'Modes of Religiosity and Types of Conversion in Medieval Europe and Modern Africa' (pp. 157-172), in Luther H. Martin and Harvey Whitehouse, *Theorizing Religions Past: Archaeology, History, and Cognition* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004).

## Chapter 2. Terminology

### Pagan

Several pieces of terminology used in this study are problematic, and should be examined and discussed in order to justify why the decision was reached to use a specific term. Furthermore, the problematic nature of some of the terminology has implications both for the discussion and the general historiography of the subject, and needs to be examined in more detail.

When looking at any study of Christianization, the term ‘pagan’ appears repeatedly. Christianization is often regarded as a process in which paganism is usually seen as the starting point. This idea of a process automatically sets up a binary relationship between the two. This, however, does not always provide the most useful theoretical framework for an examination of early medieval religiosities.

The word ‘pagan’ is rather loaded and vague, although some authors do use it interchangeably with other terms.<sup>1</sup> The problems inherent in using one catch-all term to describe certain types of belief will be discussed in more detail in the section on anthropology, but Jolly (in reviewing a study on Christianization) provides a succinct explanation of one key difficulty,

Although the authors assert that there is no one paganism (pp.7, 55), they continue to use the term as if there were, instead of addressing the term

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<sup>1</sup>Yitzhak Hen uses the terms ‘pagan’ and ‘heathen’ interchangeably for much of his study, although he does look more closely at the terms in the closing chapters; Julia M. H. Smith, ‘Review: Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, AD 481-751 by Yitzhak Hen’, *The English Historical Review*, 112 (1997), 1224-1225.

“pagan” as a Christian-derived construct less real and more conceptual than the volume lets on.<sup>2</sup>

Although there are probably elements of non-Christian practice which were more universal than one might suppose, conceivably as regards wider structural issues, the localised nature of such belief-systems would suggest that, as Effros says, ‘there is no one paganism’. To use one term to encompass so many variations, then, is to over-simplify the concept from the outset. It suggests a monolithic set of beliefs shared by all non-Christians, which in itself seems to be rather implausible. Discussions of medieval Christianity, after all, tend to specify the ‘type’ of Christianity being discussed; for example, Anglo-Saxon Christianity, Celtic Christianity, and so on. While a lack of information means that we cannot apply the same subtleties of terminology to non-Christian belief, we can at least bear in mind that the term may also contain a multiplicity of detail.

Furthermore, the label ‘paganism’ tends to suggest a static belief system; a set of beliefs which did not grow or change in any way. This is particularly unhelpful when discussing Christianization which is, after all, dealing with beliefs which were undergoing constant alteration and compromise. It also rather negates the possible complexity of non-Christian beliefs. Early, and some more recent, accounts of Christianization had a tendency to narrate it as a process, the inevitable shift from paganism to Christianity, and to a Christianity which was itself constantly evolving. Failure to recognise the importance of time to non-Christian beliefs can invoke this, not entirely helpful, model. As above, it ought to be noted that discussions of medieval Christianity tend to be rather more specific; for example, early medieval Christianity, ‘high’ medieval Christianity. Again, it is difficult to confidently apply the same level of specificity to non-Christian belief, but it should be borne in mind that the terminology can falsely impose a sense of static simplicity which is not reflective of reality.

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Louise Jolly, ‘Review: *The Pagan Middle Ages* by Ludo J. R. Milis; Tanis Guest’, *Speculum*, Vol 77, No.1, (Jan 2002), pp. 220-221

Jolly's criticism raises an essential problem with the use of the word 'pagan'. The word 'pagan' is itself a Christian creation. It immediately creates a sense of 'othering'; that is, simply taking all those ideas which the viewer/author felt to be non-Christian and creating a single category for them, simply defined by how they *fail* to be Christian. This oppositional structure can immediately be seen to be deeply problematic, in that it is overly simplistic, privileges one viewpoint, and immediately creates a sense of stark and unbroken difference between Christian and non-Christian beliefs. This can, perhaps, be seen as an inevitable by-product of heavy reliance on written sources produced by churchmen.

This, in turn, raises another issue. How did churchmen decide what sort of behaviour had a religious basis and which did not? Healing, to a medieval churchman, had a religious element to it; the saint could be invoked against illness, for example. However, does this mean that a peasant's use of herbs or decision to visit a local medical figure also had a religious dimension? Equally, ploughing the fields may not have had any religious dimension within a Christian framework, but is it likely that something as intensely important as agriculture had no spiritual dimension whatsoever to a rural community? The issue of how and why certain types of behaviour are deemed to be religious is important to bear in mind.

Speaking of rural matters also raises another aspect of the word 'pagan', its etymology. Pagan comes from the classical Latin *paganus*, which means 'rustic' or 'belonging to the country'. The Oxford English Dictionary traces three possible routes by which 'pagan' may have come to have its present and post-classical Latin meaning of 'heathen, as opposed to Christian or Jewish', which they tentatively judge to have taken place at some point in the fourth century. The explanations are as follows,

- (i) The older sense of classical Latin *paganus* is 'of the country, rustic' (also as noun). It has been argued that the transferred use reflects the fact that the ancient idolatry lingered on in the rural villages and hamlets after Christianity had been generally accepted in the

towns and cities of the Roman Empire; compare Orosius *Histories* 1. Prol. 'Ex locorum agrestium compitis et pagis pagani vocantur.'

(ii)

(ii) The more common meaning of classical Latin *paganus* is 'civilian, non-militant' (adjective and noun). Christians called themselves *milites* 'enrolled soldiers' of Christ, members of his militant church, and applied to non-Christians the term applied by soldiers to all who were 'not enrolled in the army'.

(iii)

(iii) The sense 'heathen' arose from an interpretation of *paganus* as denoting a person who was outside a particular group or community, hence 'not of the city' or 'rural'; compare Orosius *Histories* 1. Prol. 'qui alieni a civitate dei.. pagani vocantur.' See C. Mohrmann *Vigiliae Christianae* (1952) 9ff.]<sup>3</sup>

These etymologies are themselves interesting as regards our discussion of terminology. We can see that paganism instantly carries overtones of pertaining more strongly to the countryside, and that there is an idea that non-Christian behaviour was able to persist in rural areas in a way which was not possible in urban areas. It is enough for the current discussion to simply raise this point, but the issue of rural Christianization will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Similarly interesting and certainly less regularly cited in the context of Christianization, is the idea of 'pagan' referring to all those who are not members of the militant church of Christ. This removes the oft-discussed rural aspect of the word, and for that reason alone is worth bearing in mind.

The third etymological route offers the idea of the pagan as being outside a specific group, as opposed to simply referring to a rural person who did not belong to an urban community. This is interesting in that it makes us think of the term pagan as less about simply subscribing to a different set of beliefs, but as being part of a completely alternative structure. It also reminds us of the importance of taking into consideration the balance of power in this relationship, as this term is used to define the outsider by those who are within the community.

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<sup>3</sup>"pagan", n. and adj. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2010, <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50169199?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=pagan&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50169199?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=pagan&first=1&max_to_show=10)>

While these etymologies open up avenues for further discussion on classifying groups, rural Christianity, etc., it is also informative to briefly mention that the remainder of the entry on the word ‘pagan’ notes repeatedly that the word has over the course of time come to carry connotations such as, to name but a few, savagery, uncivilised, backwards, uncultivated, primitiveness, spiritually lacking, and immoral.<sup>4</sup> While any academic study will strive to examine the concept of ‘paganism’ objectively, it is important to remember that the word carries a great deal of pejorative history along with it.

As has already been noted, several historians have used ‘pagan’ interchangeably with a range of other terms. Pagans might also be called heathens, pagan communities can also be called non-Christian communities, pagan beliefs can be termed folk beliefs, pagan religion might be discussed as a folk religion. Even messier issues arise when remnants of pagan belief are called superstitions. All of these terms, much like the term pagan itself, come with their own baggage. Flitting from one word to the other carries a host of difficulties. Christianization is a process and, as such, frequently involves adaptation and compromise, with a degree of syncretism being the usual upshot of this process. It is often extremely difficult and occasionally impossible to discern which activities or ideas were ‘purely’ non-Christian, and which were informed by some sort of contact with Christianity. Can any act or idea of this time period and region, then, be confidently classified as non-Christian?

Further to this is the consideration of how strictly the appellation ‘Christian’ was applied. Historical studies of the early Christian period often note the apparent ‘shallowness’ of initial conversion, in that behaviours are often given a veneer of Christianity and then deemed to be acceptable. The classic example of this is Pope Gregory I’s advice to Mellitus as regards the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, encouraging him to overlay saints’ days over those days on which the

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<sup>4</sup>“pagan”, n. and adj. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2010, <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50169199?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=pagan&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50169199?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=pagan&first=1&max_to_show=10)>

Anglo-Saxons already seemed to celebrate,<sup>5</sup> instantly rendering unacceptable behaviour praise-worthy Christian devotion. The internal recognition of the importance of saints' days and rejection of the old beliefs could come later. This example demonstrates how easily non-Christian behaviour could be framed as Christian, as well as the shifting degree of acceptability as eventually greater orthodoxy was required. Pagan and non-Christian are perhaps not as readily substituted as first thought.

Another example of the problematic nature of certain terminology can be seen in the rather more complicated area of pagan survivals vs. superstition. When, exactly, does a practice cease to become a stubborn remnant of 'pagan' belief and become instead a less threatening 'superstition'? This specific problem can be found in Yitzhak Hen's study on Christianization in Merovingian Gaul. Hen suggests that the fragmentary mentions of 'paganism' in the sources (sermons, church councils) are really only the remnants of any sort of wider belief system, and so have very little significance.<sup>6</sup> However, this can also be interpreted another way. Surely those ideas which persist despite the best efforts of churchmen and the adoption of other Christian ideas and rituals are deep-rooted and of continuing significance? Hen does take care to differentiate between the terminologies in this instance, clearly defining what he means by 'superstition', but his definition itself is problematic.

The term 'pagan', then, can be seen to come with a host of issues which ought to be taken into consideration. Some of the problems raised, as has been said before, are virtually insoluble. Our lack of detail means that we are often

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<sup>5</sup> 'and because they are used to slaughter many oxen in sacrifice to devils, some solemnity must be given to them in exchange for this, as that on the day of the dedication, or the nativities of the holy martyrs, whose relics are the deposited, they should build themselves huts of the boughs of trees about those churches which have been turned from that use to being temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasting, and offer no more animals to the Devil, but kill cattle and glorify God in their feast, and return thanks to the Giver of all things for their abundance; to the end that, while some outward gratifications are obtained, they may the more easily consent to the inward joys. For there is no doubt that it is impossible to cut off everything at once from their rude natures; because he who endeavours to rise to the highest place rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps." Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Book 1, Chapter 30 'A copy of the letter which Pope Gregory sent to the Abbot Mellitus, then going into Britain [601 AD]

<sup>6</sup>Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751*, p. 157.

simply unable to adequately discern and differentiate between differing varieties of paganism in the same way we can with Christianity. However, stating the terminological issues from the outset and remaining aware of the difficult nature of some of the key vocabulary and concepts throughout helps us to remain aware of the complexities of the argument, as well as moving away from unhelpful existing theories and narratives.

### Christianization

The word 'Christianization' seems to have first appeared in 1833 in a book by Thomas Chalmers, a minister of the Church of Scotland. It has since been employed in many studies. John van Engen takes some issue with the limitations of the term in his overview of the term and of church history in general,

Between 1830 and 1860 "Christianization" emerged as a vague, convenient, all-encompassing term for Europe's inherited sacred history, good or ill, its imagined collective mission since Christ and Constantine, no less its longtime coercive privileging of one religion's mores and ministers.<sup>7</sup>

The term 'Christianization' is often used in modern studies in favour of the word 'conversion'. Christianization implies a process whereas conversion implies an event. Christianization suggests adaptation where conversion suggests simple change. The obvious complexities involved in changing adherence from one religious system to another and the length of time over which such a process might take place means that Christianization often seems to be chosen by historians as the more accurate term. The vagueness and 'all-encompassing'<sup>8</sup> nature of the terms as described by Van Engen means it does also serve us an umbrella term for a huge variety of approaches and discourses: the role played by gender, the role played by outsiders, considerations of orthodoxy and heresy, literacy, orality, politics, and the list goes on. While earlier approaches perhaps

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<sup>7</sup>John Van Engen, 'The Future of Medieval Church History', *Church History*, 71 (2002), 492-522 (p. 496).

<sup>8</sup>Engen, p. 496.

tended to focus on the Church and those yet to be Christianized (pagans), approaches in recent years have looked at the interplay between many different groups and the multiplicity of types of Christian and non-Christian within discussions of Christianization. Increasingly, there is a tendency in recent years to use the word 'Christianization' specifically when referring to groups of people, or communities, whereas 'conversion' is used in relation to individuals.<sup>9</sup>

However, it should be noted the term is not without its baggage. A process, after all, implies an end product. Use of the term 'Christianization' suggests that there is a final state a society can attain wherein it would be completely Christian, with all the stages beforehand somehow imperfect and in a state of development. This, of course, raises some issues. At which stage would a society be classed as completely Christianized? Does attempting to place a society at a specific point on some sort of spectrum of Christianization, from pagan to Christian, force us into some sort of value judgment, with those closer to the 'pagan' end of the spectrum somehow less 'successful' than those towards the Christian end? This should raise concerns as regards the idea of the 'grand narrative': the fall of Rome followed by the slow ascent to civilisation through the medieval period to the renaissance and Reformation.<sup>10</sup> The notion of an inevitably advancing Christianity is surely as historiographically loaded, and indeed implicit in, the idea of a 'grand narrative'.

Many of the issues central to the use of the term Christianization are summarised in John Van Engen's article on the historiographical problems of the Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup> Not only does he question how Christian society in this period has typically been viewed, but he questions what types of interpretative models are in place for its analysis. He further asks whether the dichotomous models frequently employed are actually somewhat problematic. Can it be assumed that

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<sup>9</sup>*Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals: [Selected Proceedings of the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 1997]*, Eds, Guyda Armstrong and Ian Woods, International Medieval Research, v. 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>See Smith's criticisms of the evolutionist narrative as a conceptual framework: Julia M. H Smith, *Europe After Rome: A New Cultural History 500-1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Engen.

the Christianity described by our sources, usually produced by churchmen, was the Christianity of the people? And then again, how is the term 'people' to be defined? Ought they to be divided into elites and peasants, or does this present a false dichotomy? Is the notion of popular religion valid at all? All of these questions remain valid in any study of Christianization.

Dunn's study of the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons takes an alternative approach, viewing the term 'Christianization' as describing an open-ended process which could never really be called complete.<sup>12</sup> Her analysis utilises several different theoretical models from cognitive science of religion as heuristic tools to analyse this process, and moves away from the traditional dichotomy of pagan vs. Christian in an approach which points out that those beliefs and behaviours which might be defined as 'Christian' or 'pagan' are always capable of adaptation and negotiation. This approach offers a way to bypass many of the existing issues with analyses of Christianization, and a similar approach will be utilised in this study.

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<sup>12</sup>Dunn.

### Chapter 3. The Ecclesiastical Province of Trier

The ecclesiastical province of Trier offers a great deal in any study of Merovingian Gaul. Situated in Austrasia, in the north-east of the country, the province sees some of the most remarked upon changes of the period: the decline of Trier, once the imperial city; the selection of Metz as a royal capital and subsequent growth in power and influence, and the growth of rural monasticism after the impact of Columbanus.

On top of this, the cities within the province of Trier itself vary widely: Trier, the old Roman centre, perceived as declining in importance throughout the period; Metz, gradually growing in importance and later highly influential, and Toul and Verdun, both of somewhat lesser importance, but offering useful contrasts to the perhaps atypical first two examples. This also meant that the study had to remain alert to the historiographical issues raised by the ideas of ‘Romanitas’ and ‘Germanic invasions’ in other studies focussing on this region. Gauthier comments that the province of Trier, for example, remained an island of Roman culture until the invasions of the fourth century.<sup>1</sup> The ideas of ‘Roman’ and ‘Germanic’ culture are, as has been discussed elsewhere, issues which require special handling. The ecclesiastical province of Trier has come under scrutiny before.<sup>2</sup> Trier and Metz were of importance at different points in the Merovingian period and have offered other historians an opportunity to look for and gauge the degree of both change and continuity across the north-east and more generally speaking, which is a matter of on-going debate.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nancy Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle: La Province Romaine De Première Belgique Entre Antiquité Et Moyen-Age (IIIe-VIIIe Siècles)* (Paris: Boccard, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Eugen Ewig, *Trier Im Merowingerreich Civitas, Stadt, Bistum*. (Aalen: Scientia Verlag,, 1973); Nancy Gauthier, *Topographie Chrétienne Des Cités De La Gaule: Des Origines Au Milieu Du VIIIe Siècle*. (Paris: de Boccard, 1986); Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*; Guy Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup>There are many studies which look at the issue of continuity versus change in Merovingian Gaul in particular and the early medieval period in general, Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*; Patrick J Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and*

There is sometimes a tendency within studies of the Merovingian period to create broad categories: Roman/Germanic, pagan/Christian, north/south. The north-east is an area which is often poorly served by this type of generalisation: it is short on sources, and only really comes into prominence in studies of the period due to the later growth in monasteries in the region following the influence of Columbanus. It is often simply presented in contrast with the south of the country. The analyses of matters such as Christianization often fail to take this diversity into account in their approach, and ideas can often be applied uncritically across the board without regard to context.<sup>4</sup> It is hoped that a focus on the ecclesiastical province of Trier will demonstrate that the diversity even within one province would indicate the unhelpfulness of such generalisations.

Whenever possible, the topics under discussion, saints, burial, monasticism, church councils, and parish care, have been placed in the context of the province of Trier. Those councils which have received special focus are those at which representatives from the province of Trier were present. The discussion of bishops and the cult of saints has been anchored in a focus on the region. The cemeteries which have been placed in databases are all located in the region, and there is an attempt to focus the discussion on monasticism in the province of Trier. The section on parish care attempts to assess the probability of the circulation of sermon collections in this part of the country and considers the

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*Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures (Peterborough, Ont.: Hadleigh: Broadview; BRAD, 2000); Thomas F. X. Noble, *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, 2006; Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*; Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, 1st edn (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); J. M Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 400-1000*, University Library, History Series, 3rd(revised), ed edn (London: Hutchinson, 1967); R. A Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity, 371-1386 AD* (London: HarperCollins, 1997); Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Haskell Lectures on History of Religions, no. 2 (London: SCM Press, 1981); Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, The Carl Newell Jackson Lectures, 1977 (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1978); Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London: Longman, 1994); Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000*, The Making of Europe (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Smith's criticism of Hen's failure to address the regional diversity of Merovingian Gaul, and his attempt to apply to the sermons of Caesarius of Arles across Gaul as a whole, Smith, 'Review: Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, AD 481-751 by Yitzhak Hen', *The English Historical Review*, 112 (1997), 1224-1225.

*Life of Goar*<sup>5</sup> (situated in Trier) for its usefulness in assessing levels of parish care.

Both Halsall and Gauthier provide a great degree of detail on the physical landscape of the region.<sup>6</sup> The Regnum Francorum web resource also provides a map overlay with details of major and minor Roman roads, as well as waterways, which help give an idea of how easy, or otherwise, it might have been to travel across the region.<sup>7</sup> The geography of the province itself is diverse, ranging from densely wooded areas, to more open countryside, to steep mountain ranges. The Sarre, Moselle and Meuse rivers all pass through the province. The climate will be discussed in greater detail in the section on church councils, in the context of ease of travel to and from councils, but a brief summary can be given here. While summers were generally hot, travel throughout the region was exceptionally difficult in winter. Rain could cause the rivers to become too treacherous to travel on, as well as flooding the roads, and the weather in winter could often be cold enough to make, for example, Vulfoliac's pillar dwelling endeavours particularly uncomfortable.<sup>8</sup>

### Individual Cities

The ecclesiastical province of Trier was made up of four dioceses: Trier (also the metropolitan), Metz, Verdun and Toul. It was located in the north-east of the country, in Austrasia, and was bordered by the ecclesiastical provinces of Lyon, Cologne, Rheims, Besancon, and Mainz. Trier was the most northerly diocese, with Toul the most southerly.

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<sup>5</sup>*Vita Goaris*, St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 567; Wandalbert and Heinz Erich Stiene, *Vita Et Miracula Sancti Goaris*, Europa-ische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 1, Deutsche Sprache Und Literatur; Bd. 399 (Frankfurt am Main: P.D. Lang, 1981).

<sup>6</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*; Gauthier, *Topographie Chrétienne Des Cités De La Gaule*; Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, pp. 4-7.

<sup>7</sup>Johan Ahlfeldt, 'Interactive Maps – Regnum Francorum Online' <<http://www.francia.ahlfeldt.se/index.php>> [accessed 24 April 2012].

<sup>8</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, p. 380; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VIII: 15.

It is generally accepted that Trier declined in importance due to the shift of power to Metz and damage it suffered in the fifth century, although it did remain the metropolitan of the province. It also seems to have retained its 'Roman' character, which Halsall suggests may have played a role in the Austrasian kings' relocation to Metz.<sup>9</sup> Its bishop/saints, Nicetius and Maximin, for example, were of great status. The episcopal group consisted of two basilicas (Most Pious Virgin Mary Mother of God and Church of St Peter) and a baptistery (name unknown) within the walls. There was also a nunnery (St Irmina/Oeren) between the walls (which might just fall within the very end of the study's parameters); and a Roman house (which may have been used for ascetic purposes), two churches and two basilicas (St Paulin and St Maximin) outside the walls. There are some seven churches whose dating is uncertain (St Mary and Martyrs, St Symphorian, St Medard, St Remigius, St Croix, St Laurent and St Gervais).<sup>10</sup> Reuse of Roman buildings was common, which makes identification of church buildings in Trier excessively difficult. Even if we do know a building acted as a monastery, for example, it is often difficult to tell when this might have begun or for how long the building was used in this way. In the instance of smaller scale monasticism, it may simply prove impossible to discern.

By the beginning of the period of interest to our study, Sigibert had moved his seat to Metz, having probably done so at some point in the 560s. The civitas remained highly important throughout our period, 570-630. The city itself saw growth during this period, in the form of cemeteries and churches.<sup>11</sup> The episcopal group here consisted of the Oratory of St Stephen, a baptistery (possibly St John the Baptist). The Church of St Peter might be applicable to our parameters, as well as another two churches inside the walls. Outside the walls, there are around 14 churches which might well be relevant, but dating is, again, problematic.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Guy Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), p. 229.

<sup>10</sup>Gauthier, *Topographie Chrétienne Des Cités De La Gaule*, pp. 13-32.

<sup>11</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 233.

<sup>12</sup>Gauthier, *Topographie Chrétienne Des Cités De La Gaule*, pp. 33-53.

Toul is situated close by the Moselle river. It is difficult to ascertain much detail of the city. The episcopal group consisted of the Cathedral of St Stephen, and a baptistery (St John the Baptist) which potentially lies outside our date parameters. Outside the walls we have two churches, one monastery, and a church whose dating cannot be accurately verified.<sup>13</sup>

Verdun is located near the Meuse. The episcopal group consisted of a church (Mary, Mother of God), a cathedral (St Vanne/Vitonus, upon which the aforementioned church was supposedly constructed), a baptistery (supposedly constructed by Agericus) an episcopal palace (unnamed) and an oratory (unnamed). There is a possible basilica (St Peter and St Vitonus) outside the walls. There is also a church, basilica and monastery of uncertain date (St Maur, St Paul, and St Agericus/Martin).<sup>14</sup> We know that the bishop of Verdun, Desideratus, had to plead for money from King Theodebert due to poverty within the city. According to Gregory, the loan given ensured the prosperity of the city.<sup>15</sup>

### The Countryside

If the cities offer us many uncertainties, the surrounding countryside offers us even more. Stancliffe<sup>16</sup> and David<sup>17</sup> offer some ideas on what might be expected from rural areas. David and Stancliffe both discuss how churches were established in rural areas in the latter half of the fourth century in order to serve communities which were geographically scattered.<sup>18</sup> Stancliffe further suggests that such churches were likely to have been established on the sites of large pagan temples, which themselves were likely to have been located on

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid. p. 55-9.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. p. 61-5.

<sup>15</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp*.129; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. III.34.

<sup>16</sup>C.E. Stancliffe, 'The Christianization of the Touraine', in *The Church in Town and Countryside: Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed, Derek Baker, Studies in Church History (Ecclesiastical History Society), 16 (Oxford: Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1979).

<sup>17</sup>Pierre David, *Études historiques sur la Galice et le Portugal du VIe au XIIe siècle*. (Lisboa: Distributeurs pour le Portugal: Livraria Portugália, 1947).

<sup>18</sup>David, p. 8.

border locations.<sup>19</sup> This is difficult for us to prove in the province of Trier due to a lack of archaeological evidence, but it can be noted that Luxeuil, not far from the border of the province, was founded on the site of an old temple. If a village was small enough that it did not have a church, then there might well be a basilica with relics, built by local landowners.<sup>20</sup> In addition, David further points out the existence of private churches in this period, which later became parish churches.<sup>21</sup> These churches were officially limited in the services they could perform, but the fact that legislation throughout the period repeatedly tries to ensure that these churches did not attempt to step outside these limitations, suggests they were offering more parish services than the Church felt was appropriate. Both Stancliffe<sup>22</sup> and Wood<sup>23</sup> also point out the fact that limiting the activities of such churches forced people to resort to their *vicus* church, which was safely under the control of the clergy. Wood further points out that certain feasts required clergy in oratories to return to their bishop for service.<sup>24</sup> We can see, then, that maintaining control over Christian life in rural areas seems to have caused on-going anxiety.

Kim Bowes' work on rural Christianization<sup>25</sup> calls for a re-assessment of the term 'Christianization of the countryside' on the grounds that it suggests an inevitable increase in the depth/scale of Christianity in rural areas which masks the true complexities of the situation, constantly implying a smooth process of change when in fact there may have been breaks and discord.<sup>26</sup> She also calls for greater specificity when dealing with the countryside, and closer interrogation of the actions of the laity in their own right, but this is exceptionally difficult to find when dealing with such a scarcity of sources. Possible estate-based activities can be hypothesised, given, for example, the conciliar acts already mentioned, but attempting to find solid geographical content to back this up is

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<sup>19</sup> C.E Stancliffe, 'From Town to Country: The Christianization of the Touraine 370-600', p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> David, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> C.E. Stancliffe, 'From Town to Country: The Christianization of the Touraine 370-600' p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> I.N. Wood, 'Early Merovingian Devotion in Town and Country', *Ecclesiastical History Society and Ecclesiastical History Society*, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kimberly Diane Bowes, "'Christianization" and the Rural Home', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 15 (2007), 143-170; Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Kimberly Diane Bowes, pp. 150-2.

almost impossible. Interestingly, Bowes suggests that the strength of the fourth and fifth century bishops has been overstated, 'a rather anemic creature, with neither the resources not the impetus to police the countryside',<sup>27</sup> whether this might explain the range of tasks that estate-based churches seem to have taken on, as well as sixth century efforts to get them back under control, is interesting to consider.

Overall, the ecclesiastical province of Trier offers a good cross-section of types of Merovingian city: Trier in decline, Metz on the rise, and Verdun and Toul carrying on in relative equanimity. We have as good an idea of its geography and urban make-up as is possible, and can glean other details from Gregory of Tours. Source material is often patchy, but this common in any study of the Merovingian period. Its northern location poses a good challenge to a study of Christianization, as many studies are often overly reliant on sources from the south of the country. There are also thorough studies available on the area which gives an invaluable foundation for building further discussion. Importantly, a small fixed geographical area offers a solid basis in which to anchor the wider discussion and its themes, ensuring that we are forced to see how theories and generalisations might have operated in reality.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid. p. 156.

## Chapter 4. Current Approaches

This section will look at the most influential work relevant to this study which deals with the Merovingian period, specific topics under discussion, and the modes theory and ideas of cognitive science of religion which will be used as interrogative tools. It will, where appropriate, mention those points on which it differs, which will then act as points of departure for the rest of the study. Work which has proved especially influential will also be highlighted. While all important studies will be discussed, those most relevant to the topics under discussion shall receive the closest focus. Numerous other works have been of importance, of course, but these will be discussed as and when they arise in the discussion of specific topics. It is hoped that this section will help to situate the study in terms of discourse and approach, as well as providing an overview of the current state of play.

### General Studies of the Merovingian Period

J.M Wallace-Hadrill

Wallace-Hadrill's studies of the Merovingian period are seminal and informed much of what came after.<sup>1</sup> However, some ideas have fallen out of fashion and must be handled with some trepidation. Wallace-Hadrill's ideas on the basic religiosity of Germanic peoples, for example,<sup>2</sup> and the idea that paganism can be read via the use of grave goods are now notions that would find little support. However, his work in *The Frankish Church*, which looks to recognize the intellectual achievements of the Frankish Church, can perhaps be seen to influence later historians such as Hen and Wood in their reassessments of the period.

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<sup>1</sup>J.M Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 400-1000 History Series, 3<sup>rd</sup> (revised) edn* (London: Hutchinson, 1967); J. M Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); J. M Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, p. 17.

Peter Brown

Brown's work has been highly influential in both studies of the early medieval period and Christianization in general, and he is a key proponent of the periodization of 'late antiquity'.<sup>3</sup> For this study in particular, the role played by the cult of saints and the idea of the Christianization of the landscape itself are ideas that have been influential and proved important in the discussion as a whole. Brown utilized anthropological ideas in his analysis of the change experienced in Christianization, which approach has again been influential in many other studies. Other aspects of Brown's work, in particular his model of continuity from Roman to early medieval culture, have been questioned by other historians. This is perhaps unsurprising in the field of Merovingian history, given the debate over the degree and nature of the social change which took place in the fifth century. James and Halsall, for example, contend that the idea of continuity offered by the periodization 'late antiquity' might mask genuine change.

Edward James

James' study, *The Franks*,<sup>4</sup> seeks to trace the development of the Franks up until the seventh century, to,

See how a group of undistinguished barbarians from the marshy lowlands north and east of the Rhine frontier of the Roman Empire founded what was the most powerful and stable of all barbarian kingdoms in the period immediately after the collapse of the Western Empire in the fifth century<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours*, The Stenton Lecture, 1976 (Reading: University of Reading, 1977); Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*; Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*; Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80-101 <doi:10.2307/300008>.

<sup>4</sup>Edward James, *The Franks*, New edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 2-3.

His studies on early medieval burial<sup>6</sup> can be seen to be a direct influence on Halsall, whose work will be discussed in due course. James' more recent work has examined the period of 'late antiquity' as a concept, calling into question whether its emphasis on continuity can perhaps obscure change, and whether its rejection of ideas such as 'decline' and 'fall' is misleading.<sup>7</sup>

Ian Wood

Wood has published numerous works on the Merovingian period.<sup>8</sup> The Merovingian Kingdoms,<sup>9</sup> published in 1994, is one of the studies of the Merovingians which attempts to reassess its generally negative image and draw attention to its underplayed cultural and political achievements. Wood's study largely focuses on politics, although any discussion of politics in this period inevitably draws church matters in also. While the work follows a narrative of sorts, Woods points out that this is only to make understanding easier, as the sources for the period make a true narrative approach deeply problematic. Instead, a thematic approach is generally taken, focusing on areas such as monasticism, women, etc. Particularly relevant to this study is Wood's work on Burgundian monasticism, which acts as a powerful counter-point to the common focus on Columbanian monasticism and helps to put Columbanus's influence in context.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Edward James, 'Burial and Status in the Early Medieval West', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5, 39 (1989), 23-40; Edward James, *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul*, BAR, 25 (Oxford: BAR, 1977).

<sup>7</sup>Edward James, 'The Rise and Function of the Concept of 'Late Antiquity'', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 1 (2008).

<sup>8</sup>Ian N Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, Headstart History Papers (Bangor, Gwynedd: Headstart History, 1994); Ian Wood, 'How Popular Was Early Medieval Devotion? Ian Wood', 1997 <<http://www.illinoismedieval.org/ems/VOL14/wood.html>> [accessed 19 January 2011]; Amongst others, Ian N Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (Harlow; London: Longman, 2001); Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London: Longman, 1994); Clarke and Brennan.

<sup>9</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*.

<sup>10</sup>Ian Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories', in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, eds. Clarke and Brennan, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 113, (Oxford, 1981) pp. 3-32.

Clare Stancliffe

Stancliffe's examination of the differing ways in which Christianization may have operated in the Merovingian town and countryside has been highly instructive to a number of scholars who have looked at the process of Christianization.<sup>11</sup> Stancliffe posits the idea that attempting to Christianize and then monitor a rural population would have posed its own peculiar challenges. A scattered population, for example, presents practical difficulties in providing suitably centralised churches. From what we can ascertain of rural settlements in the north-east, they do seem to have been fairly well-distributed, as opposed to operating around a nucleus. The existing state of Romanisation, which would have differed from that in the towns, may also have affected the reception of Christianity in different areas. Stancliffe also questions whether the different needs and concerns of the rural peasantry, compared to those in urban areas and of higher social status, would have presented more or less of a challenge to those attempting to Christianise the area. Taking nuances such as these into account means that Stancliffe's work raises many perceptive questions which can be profitably considered in an analysis of Christianization.

Yitzhak Hen

Hen's study on the culture and religion of the Merovingians<sup>12</sup> took a similar stance to Wood, albeit somewhat more combatively expressed. The Merovingians, Hen argues, are victims not only of the *damnatio memoriae* of the Carolingians, but of modern historians' passive acceptance of the Carolingians' views. In particular, Hen takes issue with the notion that the Merovingians were largely 'pagan' under a 'vener' of Christianity. He also examines the general pejoratives used in discussion of the Merovingians: barbarian, pagan, etc. However, in strenuously trying to disprove these accusations, Hen lends them more credence as pejoratives. His discussion on Christianization is hampered by

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<sup>11</sup> C.E. Stancliffe, 'From Town to Country, The Christianization of the Touraine 370-600', in *Church in Town and Countryside: Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Studies in Church History, ed by Derek Baker, (Ecclesiastical History Society), 16 (Oxford: Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1979)

<sup>12</sup>Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

both the attitude that the accusation of shallow Christianization is in some way a 'bad' thing which ought to be countered, but also by his failure to adequately define paganism until the study is well under way.<sup>13</sup> There is also a lack of even-handedness in how evidence is considered. Hen suggests that church canons do not necessarily reflect real life, but instead the anxieties of churchmen. On the other hand, he extrapolates from the liturgy to make assumptions regarding levels of religious activity. If canons might simply reflect anxiety, might not liturgy have reflected ambition? The level of religious observance that churchmen wished were the case? This approach creates similar problems throughout the study. While Hen's acknowledgment of the elasticity and practicality of Merovingian Christianity is sound, his approach does not always fully display the nuances within Merovingian Christianity. Although, as noted above, liturgy possesses the same problems as any other source, Hen's examination is thorough and enlightening.

Hen's later work has focused largely on the role played by liturgy in the Merovingian church, focusing particularly on the provenance and possible roles played by the Bobbio Missal.<sup>14</sup>

Bonnie Effros

Effros's works on the Merovingian period have focused on burial ritual and its aims in the Merovingian period, the historiography of the study of burial rites, and the role played by food and drink in demarcating and maintaining communities.<sup>15</sup> Some of her work inevitably overlaps with that of Halsall's, and she is in broad agreement with his views on the knowing and meaningful expression of status through burial rites. She also takes a similar approach in her use of both textual and archaeological sources. While Effros does not

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<sup>13</sup>As pointed out by Smith in her review of Hen, Smith, 1224-1225.

<sup>14</sup>*The Bobbio Missal: Liturgy and Religious Culture in Merovingian Gaul*, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology, 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup>Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Bonnie Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Bonnie Effros, 'Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary Custom', *Viator*, 27 (1996), 1-10 <doi:10.1484/J.VIATOR.2.301119>.

necessarily link burial practice to Christianization, her work nevertheless spends more time on taking religious belief into consideration than Halsall's studies.

Lifschitz notes in her review on H-Francethat in *Caring for Body and Soul. Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World*,<sup>16</sup> Effros's examination of the few pieces of legislation we have available regarding funerary practice is not thorough enough, failing to discuss the source of this legislation. Lifschitz concludes her review by commenting that Effros's argument that Merovingian clerics had by the end of the period sought to gain control over funerary practice via greater use of liturgy is fundamentally flawed. She maintains that there was no sudden surge in the amount of liturgy produced to support this notion, and that the increase was gradual. Overall, she contends that Effros's interpretative model is lacking in nuance, and that Effros's analysis of the evidence is patchy and too eager to fit her model. Effros's response to these criticisms was to point out Lifshitz's overreliance on the written record, and to argue that her argument had been misrepresented.

Overall, Effros can be seen to take a functionalist approach to her examination of Merovingian burial rites. Although she acknowledges that some rites seem to have religious purposes, such as rites employed as a response to the development of the idea of purgatory, her main argument is that funerary rituals are fundamentally employed in order for surviving members of the community to make societal statements about wealth and status.

While this argument is undoubtedly valid, Effros does not generally make any wider observations regarding religious beliefs, her section on the development of purgatory aside. She talks about rites which might have preceded the process of Christianization, but does not attempt to discuss how these rites may have been used originally.<sup>17</sup> Would they have been used to the same ends? Would they have carried more spiritual significance? Effros does not address these issues, except to comment on how malleable such rites are. In rejecting the idea that changes in burial practice reflect religious change, Effros effectively rejects any discussion of the significance such rites may have had to any belief system. This

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<sup>16</sup>Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*.

<sup>17</sup>Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*, p. 44.

also rather hampers her argument. Although such rites may have been used to similarly make statements about wealth and status in pagan communities, she has no way of knowing that they did not also carry spiritual significance which may in turn have been carried through to their use in Christianized communities. This ignores what might have been a significant element of burial rites, as well as the religious changes taking place in Merovingian culture at this time.

Patrick Geary

Geary's study questions the approach taken by historians to the early medieval period which used the classifications of 'peoples' employed by historians such as Cassiodorus and Gregory of Tours, arguing that these categories out to be questioned and that alternative theoretical frameworks may prove to be more fruitful.<sup>18</sup> Instead, Geary suggests that an interdisciplinary approach, utilising the insights of anthropologists, archaeologists and modern ethnographers, would allow us to view the barbarians' world through a lens other than that of classical culture.<sup>19</sup> His study tends to focus on Merovingian society as a development and blending of the Roman and 'barbarian' worlds, and pays particular attention to how they interacted with one another. While his study does emphasise this type of interaction, there are still quite clear divisions drawn between Roman and 'barbarian' (sometimes used interchangeably with the term 'Germanic'). His treatment is also less nuanced than Halsall's approach to the same problem, which looks at issues of construction of identity.<sup>20</sup> His emphasis on the importance of localism in the Merovingian period is one which is repeated across a number of studies, and an idea which helped form the approach of this thesis, as well as a theme of importance throughout.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p.vii

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*.

## Studies Specific to North-East Gaul

Guy Halsall

Halsall's primary work on the Merovingian period, published in 1995, looks at social organisation in what he defines as the region of Metz, and examined burial practice as a means of gaining an idea of social hierarchy and competition in the area.<sup>21</sup> Halsall's study of the Metz region is largely an attempt to examine the socio-economic history of the area, rather than an exclusive focus on religious changes. Halsall suggests that while burial rites seem to have been more extravagant in the sixth century, the seventh century is, by comparison, more muted. Halsall concludes that such display in burial rites acted not only as a statement of wealth, but also as a statement of continuing social status by surviving family members. The relatively austere nature of seventh century burial rites, Halsall feels, can be explained by the newfound security of the elite classes, who no longer need to prove their status through extravagant and ostentatious funerary rituals.

Halsall's study is interdisciplinary, utilising both historical and archaeological sources and methodology. He explicitly rejects the notion of the long period of transition from the late antique to the medieval, and argues that this perception has been produced by the tendency of scholars to focus on broad geographical areas and narrow thematic issues while looking for 'predetermined transformations'.<sup>22</sup> Halsall opts instead for a wide-ranging thematic approach and a tight geographical limit, stating that regional variation has not been adequately discussed. He further puts forward the idea that the region of Metz as he defines it,<sup>23</sup> essentially the *civitas*, was a region where competition for status was fierce and the role of the aristocracy was evolving. This competition, Halsall argues, can be tracked through on examination of social display by the means of burial rites. Theoretically crucial for Halsall's study is the idea that 'cultural practices are deliberate, meaningfully constituted and historically

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. pp. 4-7.

contingent'<sup>24</sup> and not a 'passive reflection of social reality'.<sup>25</sup> In later re-examinations of his earlier work, Halsall has acknowledged Williams' criticisms of the narrowness of his approach and his omission of issues surrounding memory and emotion.<sup>26</sup>

Nancy Gauthier

Gauthier's *L'Evangelisation des Pays de la Moselle*<sup>27</sup> sets out to examine the history of the Christianization of the Moselle region from the third to the eighth century, from the end of late antiquity to the moment in the Middle Ages when it became a 'monopoly'.<sup>28</sup> Gauthier feels that the Moselle is particularly suited to this purpose, allowing us to follow how Christianity, which had already taken hold amongst the Gallo-Roman population, began to grow amongst the barbarian population. Gauthier posits that even in a religion as prescribed as Christianity, the two populations will interpret and follow even key tenets differently; 'un moine franc ne lit pas l'Evangile comme un eveque romain.'<sup>29</sup> Gauthier's opinion is that Christianity engineered an amalgamation, or fusion, between the Roman and Germanic worlds and that we can see the outcome of this amalgamation in the type of Christianity we find in the region.

Gauthier aims to look at Christianization as a whole in this region in some detail, focusing specifically on archaeological, written and epigraphical sources. Where written sources deal with more general matters, she analyses them for matters which might be of regional interest. Gauthier feels that the sources available to us for this era and region are so scarce that we are unable to risk neglecting any of them. She seeks to focus particularly on regional sources which she sees as often neglected and to combine an examination of these sources with a more

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p. 245.

<sup>26</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*.

<sup>27</sup>Nancy Gauthier, *L'Evangelisation des Pays de la Moselle. La Province Romaine de Premiere Belgique Entre Antiquité et Moyen-Age (III-VIII Siecles)* (Paris: De Boccard, 1980) P. 1

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

generalised history to create a new synthesis, moving beyond old hypotheses. Ultimately, Gauthier hopes to make a lesser known and somewhat 'awkward' era more accessible.<sup>30</sup>

She takes a similarly detailed approach in her study of the Christian topography of the ecclesiastical province of Trier, which looks at the physical evidence for Christian life in the province from its origins to the middle of the eighth century.<sup>31</sup> This study is part of a larger collaborative series, which sought to take a similar approach across several regions.

Gauthier's work is meticulous and comprehensive, drawing in many diverse elements to gain an overall picture of the Moselle region over 500 years. Its sheer detail makes it indispensable to any examination of the region. Gauthier's insistence on both drawing sharp distinctions between 'Romans' and 'Barbarians', and the ascribing of certain attitudes and beliefs to both groups is, though, problematic. The notion of ethnic identity is laden with heavy ideological baggage, and has correctly been regarded with suspicion by scholars such as Williams, Halsall, Effros, and more. While Gauthier's catalogue of evidence for the Moselle is highly useful, her thematic approach has to be handled with caution.

### Non-Merovingian Studies

Kimberly Bowes

Bowes' work is a direct challenge to the notion of the 'Christianization of the Countryside' set up by Stancliffe.<sup>32</sup> Bowes, whose studies focus largely on Spain, contends that this term is too vague, and that it disregards the activities of the laity in the countryside, focusing too much instead on the Church. In an alternative approach, Bowes attempts to ascertain more detail on the situation

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>31</sup>Gauthier, *Topographie Chrétienne Des Cités De La Gaule Des Origines Au Milieu Du VIIIe Siècle*. (Paris: de Boccard, 1986).

<sup>32</sup>Kimberly Diane Bowes, 'Christianization' and the Rural Home', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 15 (2007), 143-170; Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, 1st edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

in the countryside, and the role played by the laity, hoping to focus on ‘private’ as opposed to ‘public’ Christianity. Although Bowes’ work focuses largely on Spain in the fourth and fifth centuries, some of the issues she raises may well still have relevance in the sixth century and set the scene for that period. Overall, her study offers a stimulating challenge to traditional approaches and offers a new view on possible Christian activity in the countryside.

Howard Williams

Williams’s many studies on Anglo-Saxon burial<sup>33</sup> have proved influential, especially his detailed treatment of the importance of memory, and how and why burial practice utilises ‘technologies of remembrance’. His critiques of the approaches taken by Halsall and Effros in archaeological matters have also posed important questions for consideration throughout this study. While acknowledging the validity of the idea of using burial rituals in order to construct identity, he contends that issues such as emotion and grief have been overlooked, as well as the relationship between the living and the dead, and that agency of the dead themselves has been downplayed in favour of the agency of the mourners. Given the centrality of the cult of saints in Merovingian Christianity, in which the dead are possessed of powerful agency, Williams’s theories can be seen to be essential in furthering the discussion. His holistic view of burial rites, taking into account smells and sounds as well as visual aspects, enriches the analysis and offers scope for the employment of theories from the cognitive science of religion, offering as they do ways to examine

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<sup>33</sup>Howard Williams, ‘A Place to Believe In: Locating Medieval Landscapes - Edited by Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 15 (2007), 462-464 <doi:10.1111/j.1468-0254.2007.00217\_6.x>; Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain*, Cambridge Studies in Archaeology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Howard Williams, ‘Material Culture as Memory: Combs and Cremation in Early Medieval Britain’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2003), 89-128 <doi:10.1111/j.0963-9462.2004.00123.x>; Williams, ‘Rethinking Early Medieval Mortuary Archaeology’.

rituals from a neurological stance. His critique of Effros's, and others', approach is also illuminating and instructive,

Effros fails to extend the same critical approach to contemporary researchers and her own work. Recent archaeologists have asserted and explored the bias of contemporary politics and ideology upon theory and practice and the necessity of recognizing its impact....Yet an implicit premise of Effros's is that the modern hermeneutic (particularly concerning historical researches) is somehow exempt from the same critical examination of its context and agendas. Consequently, although she criticizes quite recent ethnic and religious interpretations of graves....Effros refrains from applying the same critical approach to recent historical approaches that emphasize the role of mortuary practices as social display and ritual performance.... Similarly, are those fellow archaeologists that she singles out for qualified praise such as Dierkens and Halsall equally free from biases caused by their social, political and academic environment? It is certainly notable that many of these writers are as adamant in rejecting the potential for ethnic interpretations of graves as previous generations were dogged in their defence. Also that Effros (and others) wholeheartedly rejects any possibility of pagan practices in Merovingian Gaul and embraces the ubiquity of Christian ideology in understanding both historical and archaeological evidence, seems to be a product of both racial and religious interpretations as those she critiques, because she creates a polemic to them<sup>34</sup>

Overall, Williams' work is an essential counterpoint to current dominant archaeological analysis in Merovingian studies, and opens up many new ways of thinking about death and burial. The criticism quoted above is a shrewd warning against uncritical acceptance of the orthodoxy in any given field, and is also a reminder of the importance of remaining alert to theoretical stances, no matter how obscured they may be.

### Cognitive Science of Religion and Modes Theory

Harvey Whitehouse

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<sup>34</sup>Howard Williams, 'Rethinking Early Medieval Mortuary Archaeology', *Early Medieval Europe*, 13 (2005), 195-217 (p. 201) <doi:10.1111/j.1468-0254.2005.00155.x>.

Whitehouse's theory of modes of religiosity was the result of anthropological field work carried out in Papua New Guinea in the late eighties.<sup>35</sup> The theory contends that the scale and transmission of religious structures has to do with the nature of the rituals involved. Infrequent, emotionally-arousing rituals tend to create small communities with intense social cohesion. The vividness of the memories (episodic memories) created by these rituals encourage reflection on the meaning behind the rituals themselves. Whitehouse refers to this as the imagistic mode. Alternatively, frequently performed low-arousal rituals tend to create large communities with looser social ties. These repetitive rituals allow a large volume of complex knowledge to be stored in semantic memory and Whitehouse refers to this as the doctrinal mode. Each mode has other distinguishing features which, Whitehouse argues, tend to coalesce around them. Whitehouse has invited testing of this model by academics in other fields, and has published three further collections of articles and other studies wherein this model has been tested, examined and discussed across a wide variety of contexts.<sup>36</sup> While he states that these tests have challenged the model, he maintains that 'bifurcation is out there', and that the challenges posed have served to both enrich and refine his original ideas, strengthening his overall model.<sup>37</sup>

Whitehouse's use of both cognitive and anthropological terms to explain and discuss these ideas situates his theory in the wider field of cognitive science of religion.

Pascal Boyer

Pascal Boyer's work developed a 'cognitive framework' which aimed to explain the tendency for certain religious ideas and customs to recur across different

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<sup>35</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004).

<sup>36</sup>Harvey Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons: Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robert N. McCauley and Harvey Whitehouse, 'New Frontiers in the Cognitive Science of Religion' 'Introduction: New Frontiers in the Cognitive Science of Religion', *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 5, 1-13 (2005); *Ritual and Memory: Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Religion*, Cognitive Science of Religion Series (Walnut Creek, Calif: AltaMira Press, 2004); Quentin D. Atkinson and Harvey Whitehouse, 'The Cultural Morphospace of Ritual Form: Examining Modes of Religiosity Cross-culturally', *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 32 (2011), 50-62; Martin and Whitehouse.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p.188.

cultures. Pascal suggests that religious concepts can be understood as a natural 'by-product' of human cognitive systems. Boyer's work is firmly embedded within the field of the cognitive science of religion. Several of his theories are now perceived as key concepts, and are highly influential in the field, underpinning many other studies. Boyer's work is of particular value in this study in the discussion of burial rites and death belief, providing an alternative means of analysis via cognitive science of religion when modes theory fell short.

Ilkka Pyysiäinen

Pyysiäinen has produced immensely useful work which offers both an overview of the history and theoretical concerns of the cognitive science of religion, and also assesses the ways in which cognitive science of religion might be productively applied to analysis within a number of other disciplines.<sup>38</sup> Pyysiäinen presents what he feels are the key principles and theories behind cognitive science of religion, as well as the gamut of varying approaches that might be taken within the field, from the exclusively scientific to the more philosophical. He also highlights on-going debates regarding issues such as practice and terminology which are still very much under discussion. His work has been of tremendous use for this study in attempting to gain an overview of the field of cognitive science of religion, and of assistance in placing Whitehouse's work in a wider academic context.

### Interdisciplinary Approaches

Marilyn Dunn

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<sup>38</sup>Ilkka Pyysiäinen and Veikko Anttonen, *Current Approaches in the Cognitive Science of Religion* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002); Ilkka Pyysiäinen, *Magic, Miracles and Religion: A Scientist's Perspective* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2004).

Marilyn Dunn's work looks in detail at religion and belief, in particular, in the contexts of Christianisation, and early monastic history. In utilizing cognitive science of religion in the examination of historical religious belief and change, Dunn seeks to better understand how religion was understood and experienced, in turn illuminating the negotiations and compromises found within the process of Christianization. Although, as discussed previously, several studies in medieval history have been informed by anthropological theory, Dunn's work is explicit in its use of the cognitive science of religion as a lens through which to view medieval religion.

Dunn's interdisciplinary approach has informed much of this theoretical approach of this study, especially in the area of death and burial rites, where the current functionalist approach has left the topic somewhat stagnant. More generally speaking, Dunn's approach to Christianization allows for a new approach to the topic, which has underpinned the examinations of several topics within this study.

### Evaluation

Although all of the approaches discussed above have informed the current study, some have been directly utilised in terms of both areas of focus and theoretical approach. As mentioned above, Dunn's methodology has heavily influenced the overall approach of the study. The work of Whitehouse and Boyer offered specific means of applying the cognitive science of religion to Merovingian culture. Yitzhak Hen's study of the culture of the period raised the idea that Merovingian Christianity was a more nuanced and complex issue than had previously been considered. The work of Halsall and Effros pointed towards fruitful ground on which to focus, respectively, burial rites, and food and drink. Howard Williams' studies provided fresh approaches to the archaeological study of ritual. Finally, the work of Nancy Gauthier provided an invaluable survey of the region. Overall, this study combines the methods and insights offered by the work discussed above to provide a solid foundation for an interdisciplinary

approach to the subject, in the hopes of throwing as much new light on the topic as possible.

## Chapter 5. The Cult of Saints and Feasting

### Introduction

The cult of saints and funerary feasting are two activities which linked the living and the dead in early Merovingian Gaul. They are also areas in which the clergy and laity interacted, albeit to varying degrees. The cult of saints has received much attention, due to its centrality to the Christianity of the period and region, as well as its profound influence on the process of Christianization itself. Funerary feasting, conversely, is generally viewed as a rather bothersome relic of earlier belief systems, present in the archaeological record, yet relatively rarely commented upon by our sources, and eventually seemingly swept away entirely by growing Christian influence on burial. This chapter seeks to examine both activities; their roles in the community and Christianization, and suggests a possible relationship between the two. It will also look at the opportunities offered by both modes theory and interdisciplinary analysis of the subject in throwing further light on the decline of funerary feasting and the popularity of the cult of saints. In order to do this, this chapter will look first at the general background of the cult of saints, and the role of the bishop within this phenomenon. It will also try to ascertain what might have constituted feast day activities and look in detail at saints specific to the ecclesiastical province of Trier. Moving on, the activity of funerary feasting, and its place within the wider context of food and drink will be looked at, as well as looking at the details of recent studies in the topic, those of Halsall<sup>1</sup> and Effros,<sup>2</sup> for example, and those of Anglo-Saxon scholars such as Williams<sup>3</sup> and Lee.<sup>4</sup> Finally, both phenomena will be examined via the use of ideas from cognitive science of religion and modes theory in particular, especially in terms of ritual, memory, and participant experience.

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<sup>1</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*.

<sup>2</sup>Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*.

<sup>3</sup>Williams, 'Rethinking Early Medieval Mortuary Archaeology'.

<sup>4</sup>Christina Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007).

### Source Material

Gregory of Tours' ubiquity in studies of the Merovingian period is with good reason. His *Ten Books of Histories* are the most comprehensive source materials for the period, and his hagiographical works provide invaluable material on the cult of saints. As with any other source, it is vital to remain aware of motivation and bias. Gregory is often writing about his contemporaries, and his writing can be coloured by personal opinion, most obvious in his references to Felix of Nantes, for example. Despite this, it would be virtually impossible to undertake a study of the Merovingian period without use of Gregory's writings, and the influence of his eye in studies of the period.

In this study, Gregory's work has been put to many purposes and had opened new avenues of enquiry. In terms of the discussion of Christianisation, Gregory's discussion, and even passing mention, of saints' feasts, the role of bishops, priests' activities, and church councils is invaluable. Gregory's summation, for example, of when certain types of council ought to be held throws some much-needed light on Merovingian church councils. His hagiographical works contain themes and models of holiness vital to the discussion. His description of the difficulties that bishops faced when travelling to councils during winter offered not only a more pragmatic viewpoint on episcopal duties, but also led to a focus on the importance of place and the physical landscape. For these reasons, Gregory of Tours' works will be referred to frequently throughout this study, as a means of accessing models of holiness relevant to the period, and as a way of anchoring theory in practical realities.

In this chapter, Gregory's writings, especially his hagiographical works, are referred to extensively as a means of providing greater detail on the cult of saints.

## The Cult of Saints

It is difficult to overplay the importance of the cult of saints in a study of the religious life of Merovingian Gaul. It was a complex and multi-faceted affair, offering many different things to different parts of society. To the bishop, it often presented a religious ideal (often presented by his predecessor/s in the diocese), and the next step up in spiritual rank after death. It also increased his own worldly prestige during life, since acting as bishop in a diocese with an important shrine carried its own kudos and offered a means for advancement. To the aristocratic layman it offered potential prestige to his lands and family. The saint's influence could also be accessed by means of burial proximity. Gregory's writings and the hagiographies of various saints of the period are replete with tales of miracles elicited by fleeting contact with even the most ephemeral of a saint's possessions. Offering patronage to the saint could carry both political and spiritual advantages. For the peasant, the role of the saint seems to have been rather more personal, as the saint could be petitioned in times of strife (illness, famine, etc.).<sup>5</sup> Celebrating the saint's feast day unified the whole community; the procession on such a day is often described in hagiographies as having comprised all elements of local society. Whether or not the economic advantages of an important shrine centre would have trickled far enough down to have any impact on the peasant is somewhat more difficult to ascertain.

Further, the scope and ambition of Christianization itself at this point can also be better understood through an examination of the cult of saints. Not only did it provide a tangible link between the community and God, linking the land itself to heaven, but it also sought to control behaviour. Gregory of Tours' *Glory of the Martyrs* contains anecdotes which relate how cases of adultery settled by recourse to the saints.<sup>6</sup> Fears over uncertain crops could be addressed at the

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<sup>5</sup>Isabel Moreira suggests that the difficulties of the sixth century might have been a contributory factor to the growth and popularity of the cult of saints at this time: "Without suggesting that the depressing economic and political conditions which prevailed in fifth- and sixth- century Gaul were in any way responsible for the origins of saintly cults there, I do suggest that they explain in part why some shrines flourished" - Isabel Moreira, *Dreams, Visions, and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p.110.

<sup>6</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Liber in Gloria Martyrum*, ed. by B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 1 (Hanover, 1969), p. 84; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, trans. by Raymond Van Dam, *Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), chap. 69.

saint's shrine, as could worry over illness.<sup>7</sup> Oaths were especially significant if they were sworn at the saint's tomb.<sup>8</sup> Those who attempted to work on feast days receive immediate punishment.<sup>9</sup> Caesarius castigates those who indulge in drunken behaviour on feast days,<sup>10</sup> and a Columbanian penitential is severe in its judgment of those who even eat or drink anywhere near temples.<sup>11</sup> The level of control over behaviour here is fairly comprehensive: eating, drinking, working, socialising, health, disputes; the cult of saints can be seen as setting down codes of acceptable behaviour, outside which the disobedient will gain the disapproval of the church authorities, the wider community (potentially) and the saint him/herself.

It is important to note that the widespread popularity of the cult of saints should not create the perception of a uniformly distributed and observed phenomenon. An examination of martyrologies reveals many unexpected discrepancies and gaps which are not readily explained. Wood warns against passively accepting the images of devotion offered to us in the source materials,<sup>12</sup> and suggests that scepticism both amongst the clergy and lay population may have been more prevalent than we might imagine: 'The feasts of the church and of the saints drew considerable crowds, but this did not mean simple credulity'.<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that Gregory of Tours' books of saints' Lives, which Wood largely refers to, seem to be perfectly suited to sermon-making; each *Vita* is reasonably short (or contains short sections which could be extracted), contains at least one vivid and memorable incident, one good example of healing, and one strong message pertaining to morals or behaviour. Perhaps Gregory felt that scepticism was a response that he might have to combat? Wood also notes that theft at saints' tombs is mentioned amongst Gregory's writings. The fact, too, that Gregory includes tales of punishment for those who continued to work on feast days suggests that observance was not always as unquestioning and obedient as

<sup>7</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, p.548 (98); Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 90.

<sup>8</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, p. 519 (69); Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 46

<sup>9</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Liber in Gloria Confessorum*, ed. by B. Krusch, *MGH SRM*, 1 (Hanover, 1969), p. (810) 360; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, trans. by Raymond Van Dam, Reprinted with corrections. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), chap. 97.

<sup>10</sup>Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons [of] Saint Caesarius of Arles*, trans. by Mary Magdeleine Mueller (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1977), sermon 47, p.238

<sup>11</sup>Penitential Columbani 24, Columban, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. by G.S.M Walker, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, v.2 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), p. 179.

<sup>12</sup>Ian Wood. *Essays in Medieval Studies* 14, 1997

<<http://www.illinoismedieval.org/ems/VOL14/wood.html>> [accessed 19 January 2011]

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

might be expected.<sup>14</sup> Tempering the monolithic idea of popular devotion to the saints is essential when considering the complex nature of Christianization, and calls attention to the fact, as Wood points out, that: ‘we should recognise that individuals, even pious ones, negotiated between a host of ideologies--of which official Christianity was only one--to suit their own needs.’<sup>15</sup>

The use of saints’ Lives as historical tools for the medieval period is widespread and varied. One approach in the use of hagiography is to attempt to glean as many facts as possible from the Life; dates, places, people. This can often be of use in a number of tasks; attempting to establish a chronology of events, for example. While this approach can be fruitful and elucidate some useful details; it is, for a number of reasons, a deeply problematic methodological approach to take for the types of Lives which will be examined in this section. Attempting to find saints’ Lives which are contemporary to the Merovingian period is often difficult. We often only have a name on a martyrology, with no background hagiography or any way to know whether the saint’s feast day was actually celebrated. Those saints’ Lives we *do* possess have to be handled with similar care. As will be discovered on closer examination of individual saints’ Lives, some saints were fortuitously ‘found’ by bishops, and their provenance can sometimes only be attested to by a single hagiography.

#### The Cult of Saints and the Landscape

The cult of saints, as well as appealing to many different sections of society, reshaped many areas of life and routine *within* that society via activities such as pilgrimage and the celebration of saints’ days. As Peter Brown points out, they reshape time and place themselves, which for a people so tightly linked to the land and seasons was no mean feat. The saints’ continued presence on the land was demonstrated through their relics. Relics proved the existence of a saint in a particular *place*.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis on place is particularly relevant to the cult of

<sup>14</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGC pp.* (810-11) 360-1; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. 97.

<sup>15</sup>Wood, ‘How Popular Was Early Medieval Devotion?’, *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 14 (1997).

<sup>16</sup>Gregory of Tours, however, does often seem to take advantage of the portability of some relics, relating how he (and his father) took relics on long journeys to provide them with safety. See, for example, *LGM*, The Glory of the Martyrs: ‘my father had been recently married. Because he wished himself to be protected by the relics of saints, he asked a cleric to grant him something

saints in the Merovingian period. Peter Brown's study on the cult of saints explains how this focus on place aided the Christianization process:

It aimed to create enduring religious habits.... A reverential attention to the saints, directed primarily to major shrines, that became pilgrimage places at the time, but applicable also to any number of places and situations. Reverentia was the one sure answer to rusticitas. For when approached with reverentia, Christian saints might, indeed, prevail on their God to touch the mundus at every level. Their interventions could infuse phenomena and places in the natural world, in which people had always sought the sacred, with a new quality.<sup>17</sup>

This 'infusing' of the landscape with Christian significance is clearly visible in Gregory of Tours' *Glory of the Martyrs*.<sup>18</sup> Not only did the cult of saints affect the landscape in that it created shrines and Christian landmarks, but there were also much more tangible and obvious interactions between nature and the saints. Take, for example, St Baudilius,

The glorious tomb of St Baudilius is in Nîmes. Many miracles are revealed at his tomb. A laurel grows from his tomb. Sticking out through a wall, it becomes a tree outside with lush and beneficial foliage. The inhabitants of the region realized that this tomb often possessed a heavenly remedy for many illnesses.<sup>19</sup>

We can see here that the saint's tomb has not only Christianised the area, but his holiness is literally infusing the landscape.<sup>20</sup> Another example of this can be seen in the case of the martyr Genesisius of Arles,

The martyr Genesisius, because of the strength of the fervor of his faith, consummated his struggle for the name of Christ by having his head cut off in the same city, that is, Arles. At the spot where he is said to have been beheaded there is a mulberry tree that with the assistance of the martyr often offered many benefits to ill people.<sup>21</sup>

More impressive is the tomb of the martyr Eulalia,

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from these relics, so that with their protection he might be kept safe as he set out on this long journey' (Chap. 83)

<sup>17</sup>Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000, The Making of Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 102.

<sup>18</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*; Gregory of Tours, *Gregory of Tours*.

<sup>19</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, pp. (539-40) 89-90; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 77.

<sup>20</sup>It is perhaps pertinent to note here that in the later *Indiculus Superstitionem* devotion to natural landmarks is one of those customs singled out for censure.

<sup>21</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, pp. (533-3) 83-4; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 67.

The glorious Eulalia suffered at Meridia. On the anniversary of her sacrifice she demonstrates a great miracle to the people. In front of the altar that covers her sacred limbs there are three trees.... When her suffering is celebrated in the middle of the tenth month [December], the trees are stripped of any ornamenting foliage. But as the sky brightens on her festival day, the trees produce sweet blossoms in the shape of a swift dove....If the trees produce this miracle with the usual spontaneity, the people know that their year will be free from problems and filled with crops. But if flowers bloom more slowly than usual, the people know that this threatens their own affairs. For already before the trees bloom the people bring their grievances and their quarrels to the tomb of the martyr and pray that they might be worthy to see the usual favor. If the blossoms have not appeared, there is no procession or chanting of psalms. But if the martyr is placated by the tears of the people, immediately flowers resembling gemstones blossom on the trees. The flowers emit the fragrance of nectar, and they make the sadness of the heart happy with their appearance and refresh it with their sweetness. Then the blossoms are carefully collected and brought to the bishop in the church.<sup>22</sup>

Even more so than the tales of Genesius and Baudilius, Gregory's account of Eulalia's tomb demonstrates the complex relationship which could and did develop between saint and land. The saint is presented as able to influence natural occurrences close to her burial site. Her judgment of the holiness/worthiness of the people and their prayers is implicated in this relationship; she will provide alternative blossoms if they manage to placate her initial disappointment. Her influence extends beyond the appearance of the blossoms too; these are almost only a sign, as it is their meaning which is more important. The appearance of the blossoms means a successful crop. We know that a good relationship with nature was essential to the well-being of the people in the Merovingian period. Gregory vividly describes the repercussions of crop failure,

In this year almost the whole of Gaul suffered from famine. Many people made bread out of grape pips or hazel catkins, while others dried the roots of ferns, ground them to powder and added a little flour....Vast numbers suffered from hunger to the point that they died<sup>23</sup>

The insinuation of saints into this crucial relationship with the natural world, then, is surely vital for successful Christianization. The natural world reveals

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<sup>22</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, pp. (548-9) 98-9; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 90.

<sup>23</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p.365; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VII: 45.

the state of the relationship between the people and the saint. Just as the saint can bestow fruitfulness if the people demonstrate proper devotion, Gregory hints that plague can be alleviated by the prayers of a bishop devoted to his people. The land is something that can be interpreted and manipulated, crucial when dealing with a people whose very survival depends on it. Its seeming unpredictability can be understood and very often regulated by properly Christian behaviour.

Not only can the cult of saints be perceived as potentially usurping what the role of 'sacred' trees and rivers (often mentioned in penitentials) may have been, but it also acted on place in another way. The cult of saints in this period was, as has been discussed, intensely localized.<sup>24</sup> Saints were, very often, bishops who had lived and served in the community where their relics were kept. The local saint was often, quite literally, local. The community to which the saint had belonged felt that it had a claim over him/her. In the *Life of the Fathers*, Gregory of Tours relates how the archpriest of N ris attempted to gain control of St Patroclus's body.

After his body had been washed and placed on a bier he was carried to his monastery, where he had, while living, directed that he should be buried. The archpriest of N ris assembled a gang of clerics, planning to take the body of the holy man by force in order to bury it in the village from which the saint had once come<sup>25</sup>

Fortunately, the archpriest quickly realises his error, convinced by the brilliance of the white cloth covering the saint's corpse. Nevertheless, it remains clear that he initially thought that the village of Patroclus's birth was the appropriate resting place for his remains and relics, probably not entirely without consideration to the benefits that the proximity of the saint (or even some relics) might have for N ris itself.

Gregory later discusses two villages, Tr zelle and Lipidiacum, squabbling over which had more right to St. Lupicinus's remains.<sup>26</sup> While Gregory always

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<sup>24</sup>Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe, *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2002), p. 428.

<sup>25</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (702) 252; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. IX: 3.

<sup>26</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (715) 265; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XIII: 3.

ingeniously finds some way to legitimise the actions of the successful party, his reporting of the altercation beforehand lets us see how place and identity were used as tools to lay claim to the saint. However, while a focus on locality seems to have frequently been an uppermost concern, this is not to say that the diocese might not have its more universal saints (St Martin, for example). It was very often the case, though, that a bishop might find himself celebrating a feast day for his own predecessor.

The role of the physical remains as a tangible representative of the saint is crucial here, as we can see through the quarrel between Trézelle and Lipidiacum. In the context of the cult of saints, the physical remains are objects of veneration and prestige; a material connection between the world of the living and the dead, capable of conferring miracles upon the faithful. Emphasising this is the way that the relics were displayed. Elaborate jewelled reliquaries housed the relics, which were often wrapped in silk. Further to this, the practice of using raised shrines grew throughout the Merovingian period, making the relics themselves even more visible and conspicuous and underlining their importance.<sup>27</sup> Gregory also mentions that in some instances churches had to be enlarged to deal with the influx of visitors to the saint.<sup>28</sup> Both visiting and possessing the relics were essential in ensuring that the community's prayers to the saint are privileged. It is worthwhile to note, as Isabel Moreira points out, that dream and/or visionary visitations by saints to bishops often seem rather preoccupied with the state of their physical remains and their proper recognition by the community.<sup>29</sup> For example,

Benignus....was perfected by martyrdom in the town of Dijon. After his martyrdom, because he was buried in a huge sarcophagus, men of our time and in particular the blessed bishop Gregorius always thought that some pagan had been buried there. For the countryfolk fulfilled their vows there and quickly received what they had sought. After one man noticed the many blessings there, he brought a candle to the tomb of the

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<sup>27</sup> The development of different means of enshrinement in Gaul/Francia, and the move away from the Roman method in Merovingian Gaul is discussed in detail in Crook's article on enshrinement in Francia and England: John Crook, "The Enshrinement of Local Saints in Francia and England", in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe, *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2002), pp. 190-224.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Perpetuus (sixth bishop of Tours) takes down the church built by Bishop Bricius to house St Martin in order to build a bigger church, Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, p. 259; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. X: 31.

<sup>29</sup> Isabel Moreira, *Dreams, Visions, and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 112.

saint; after lighting it, he returned home. A young boy watched this, and after the man left he went down into the tomb to extinguish the burning candle and steal it. As he approached, behold, a huge serpent....wrapped itself around the candle....Although these stories and others like them were reported to the bishop, in no way did he believe them....Finally the martyr of God once revealed himself to the blessed confessor [Gregorius] and said: 'What' he asked 'are you doing? Not only do you scorn this tomb, but you disdain those who honour me. Do not do this, I ask, but quickly prepare a shelter for me.' Gregorius was disturbed by this vision; he went to the sacred tomb and there at length wept and begged forgiveness<sup>30</sup>

And again, in the hagiography of Quintianus in *The Life of the Fathers*,

The blessed Quintianus, an African, was a person endowed with sanctity....In this episcopacy his virtues increased, and as he advanced in the works of the Lord he enlarged the church of the blessed bishop Amantius and had his body taken there. But the saint was not so disposed. Amantius appeared to Quintianus in a dream and said "Since you have rashly taken my bones from where they rested in peace, I shall force you from this town and you will go into exile in another land; but nevertheless you will not be deprived of the honour which you enjoy"<sup>31</sup>

There are various other examples of these 'discoveries' of saints' tombs in Gregory's writings. They tend to take two distinct forms. In the first kind, the people will first become aware of the holiness of a tomb (through dreams or visitations, sometimes some other sign) and inform the bishop. The similarity between this process of making suspicious places safe, and Gregory the Great's advice to Abbot Mellitus as regards the renaming of temples and special days should be noted.<sup>32</sup> In the second type, the bishop will be visited in a dream by the person who inhabits the tomb, usually a former bishop or martyr, who directs him to his neglected and forgotten tomb. Both of these types of reveals deserve greater attention, as they both help us to better understand the Christianization process and analyse more closely these common hagiographical tropes.

The first type of story can be perceived as the church's attempts to appropriate existing customs. Perhaps the local people's insistence on the significance of a

<sup>30</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, pp. (522-3) 72-3; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 50.

<sup>31</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (674) 224; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. IV: 1.

<sup>32</sup>Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People; with Bede's Letter to Egbert; and Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede*, Penguin Classics, Rev. ed (London: Penguin, 1990), bk. I., Chap 30.

particular place or tomb has become troublesome enough that the bishop feels it need to be neutralised. This approach effectively Christianises the problematic location without forcing a confrontation. Even more effectively, it Christianises the people's motivations themselves. It does away with tiresome *rusticitas* and replaces it with Christian impulse.

The second type of story contains some similar ideas to the first, but has further and more significant implications. Several of Gregory's hagiographies involve reclamation and restoration, saints' tombs discovered in overgrown wilderness, or once-magnificent churches in terrible states of disrepair. The protagonist in question is not evangelising pagan territory, but he is reclaiming a neglected Christian past. This trope ties into a common motif in some Merovingian hagiographies and histories, where it is claimed that the diocese under discussion was founded by an apostle. The overall effect is to portray the Merovingian landscape as having Christianity rooted into it, which might have been forgotten and neglected through circumstance, but is now being rehabilitated, recognised within the landscape.

#### The Bishop

When considering the cult of saints, it is also necessary to consider the figure of the Merovingian bishop. The bishop in the Merovingian period could often not only 'create' a saint through revelatory religious visions in dreams, helpfully pointing out the locations of hitherto unknown saints' tombs, but he could also procure a saint for his own community by the acquiring of relics. Finally, he often became the focus of a saint cult himself after death, his own body transformed into the relics which would then in turn become a major part, if not the focus, of the religious life of the community.

The bishop was a ubiquitous figure in Merovingian society. Usually well-educated and high-born, he dominated the scene, politically and spiritually, acting as protector of the people of his diocese, dealing diplomatically with kings, and sometimes sparring with other bishops. As Ian Wood points out,

King Chilperic I once complained that “There is no one with any power left except the bishops” This was of course an exaggeration, but more than anyone else, the episcopacy held the keys to power, both human and divine, in sixth-century Francia.<sup>33</sup>

The bishop can be seen in many ways as a successor to the Roman position of senator, which is perhaps not especially surprising, given the strands of cultural continuity between late antiquity and the early Merovingian period. The bishop usually enjoyed an illustrious secular career before turning to the religious life. Attaining the position of abbot was often the precursor to taking on the role of bishop, a role which demanded education, breeding, diplomacy and political shrewdness.<sup>34</sup> The bishop had to be many things to many people.

Fortunately, the bishop’s apparent omnipresence in the Merovingian period is almost matched by his ubiquity in our source materials. As Godding comments in his study of Merovingian priests,

Compulsant ces sources à la recherche du prêtre, l’historien voit sans cesse surgir un autre personnage: l’évêque. À l’époque mérovingienne, c’est lui qui occupe l’avant-scène: omniprésent dans les textes, il tient le premier rôle, tant dans la vie religieuse que dans le gouvernement des cites.’<sup>35</sup>

All roads seem to lead back to the bishop. What types of qualities ought the model bishop to possess?

Germanus of Auxerre

One key text to bear in mind when considering the bishop is the hagiography of St Germanus of Auxerre. This text was written by Constantius of Lyon, of whom we know relatively little, at some point between 475-480. It is noted by F.R.

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<sup>33</sup>Geary, pp. 122-3.

<sup>34</sup>As discussed at length in, Adriaan Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority in Sixth-century Gaul*: *the Histories of Gregory of Tours Interpreted in Their Historical Context* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994). Each of the requisite qualities is mentioned alongside a reference to hagiographies which employ the tropes.

<sup>35</sup>Robert Godding, *Prêtres En Gaule Mérovingienne* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2001), p. VII.

Hoare in his translation of the Life in *Soldiers of Christ*<sup>36</sup> that Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Clermont in the fifth century, makes reference to Constantius in some of his writings. The Life itself seems to have been particularly popular and widely known, with notable figures such as Venantius Fortunatus and Bede drawing clear influences from it, and there are still some 100 manuscripts of the Life extant.<sup>37</sup> *The Life of Germanus*, then, although technically composed somewhat earlier than the period on which the study focuses, is valuable as a model of Merovingian hagiography. Although St Martin is probably the first figure who would come to mind when considering Merovingian saints and bishops, he is in many ways an atypical example.<sup>38</sup> There are several tropes throughout which should be noted carefully, as they will recur in many of the Merovingian saints' Lives discussed later.

Firstly, Germanus is noted throughout the Life as much for his adeptness in serving all members of his community as he is for his miracles. He is of noble birth and well-educated,

Germanus, then, was a native of the town of Auxerre, born of parents of the highest rank, and was from earliest childhood given a liberal education. In this, the instruction he received was matched by the abundance of his talent and together these gave him learning doubly assured, by nature and by industry.<sup>39</sup>

but especially noted is his ability to inspire devotion from the peasantry as well as those of his own rank,

On this journey to Arles the bishop was carried down to Lyon on the River Saône. On his arrival the population, in eager excitement, came out together to meet him, regardless of age and sex.<sup>40</sup>

Germanus' ability to protect his community and enhance the prestige of his diocese is also highlighted. The section selected below is particularly relevant, as complaints over heavy taxation appear fairly regularly in source materials.

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<sup>36</sup>Thomas F. X. Noble, *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1995), p. 75.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid p. 76.

<sup>38</sup>Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 27-8.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid p. 79.

<sup>40</sup>Noble, p. 93.

The return of Germanus, in particular, had been prayed for by his diocese with a double intention, since he was looked to as its protector both in the court of heaven and in the tempests of this world. A burden of taxes beyond the ordinary and countless other exactions had crushed the spirit of his people who, without him, had felt like orphaned children. So he took the destitute under his protection, inquired into complaints, condoled with the sorrowing. And when he might have claimed quiet and repose after the dangers of the sea, he incurred the toil of a long journey by land, by undertaking to seek remedies for the distress of the diocese.<sup>41</sup>

The only area in which Germanus' Life differs somewhat from later hagiographies is in the means of enhancing the prestige of his diocese. Most bishops seem to have undertaken ambitious restoration and building projects, but Germanus' fame can be interpreted as the means by which he increased the notoriety of his diocese,

About this time a deputation from Britain came to tell the bishops of Gaul that the heresy of Pelagius had taken hold of the people over a great part of the country and help ought to be brought to the Catholic faith as soon as possible. A large number of bishops gathered in synod to consider the matter and all turned for help to the two who in everybody's judgment were the leading lights of religion, namely Germanus and Lupus<sup>42</sup>

Mastery over nature is another common theme which appears in Germanus' Life. As will be discussed later in more detail, the bishop is often presented as a figure whose prayers can avert natural disasters and illness, and who can interpret the cause of such occurrences.

He, all the more steadfast for the immensity of the danger, in the name of Christ chided the ocean, pleading the cause of religion against the savagery of the gales. Then, taking some oil, he lightly sprinkled the waves in the name of the Trinity and this diminished their fury.<sup>43</sup>

Christianization efforts can also be found in the text. Germanus' efforts against the Pelagian heresy might be classed as a form of Christianization, although there is a more explicit reference,

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid p. 91.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid p. 85-6.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid p. 86.

Furthermore, for the advancement of religion he provided two roads to Christ, by founding a monastery within sight of the town, across the river Yonne, so that the surrounding population might be brought to the Catholic faith by contact with the monastic community as well as by the ministrations of the church. This was all the more likely to succeed since the flame of faith was fanned by such a bishop<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, the *Life of St Germanus* provides us with a checklist of hagiographical tropes for the ideal bishop which might be utilised when examining any text of the period. They are:

1. Noble birth,
2. High level of education,
3. Social adeptness,
4. Protector of the community,
5. Working to enhance the prestige of the diocese,
6. 'Control' over nature,
7. Christianization efforts.

#### The Bishop as Senator/Builder

Another key area of endeavour for the bishop was building work. Not only adept at dealing with any class of citizen, he invested in improving his diocese's status with ambitious building projects. When Gregory, at the end of his *Histories*, gives an account of the history of all the bishops of Tours, he takes care to mention the building and renovation of Church buildings. Eufronius repaired many derelict churches and built many new churches in Thuré, Céré, and Orbigny.<sup>45</sup> In Injuriosus's episcopate the church of St Mary was completed and the church of St Germanus was constructed. Ommatius 'restored the church dedicated to the relics of the Saints Gervasius and Protasius.'<sup>46</sup> There are more examples, with ambitious building projects the norm rather than the exception. Gregory's own entry in his history makes mention of his renovations of St Martin's church',

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid. p. 81.

<sup>45</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p.526; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. X: 31.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

I found the walls of St Martin's church damaged by fire. I ordered my workmen to use all their skill to paint and decorate them, until they were as bright as they had previously been. I had a baptistery built adjacent to the church, and there I placed the relics of Saint John and Saint Sergius the martyr. In the old baptistery I put the relics of Saint Benignus the martyr. In many other places in Tours and its immediate neighbourhood I dedicated churches and oratories, and these I enriched with relics of the saints. It would be too long to give you a complete list.<sup>47</sup>

While he does not provide a complete list in this instance, his writings do take care to detail the building achievements of bishops, and other religious figures,

The blessed Senoch....found in the territory of Tours old walls, and by restoring them from ruins he made worthy dwellings. He also found an oratory in which, it is said, our illustrious St Martin had prayed. He restored it with much care, and having placed an altar inside which had a small compartment suitable for containing relics, he invited the bishop to come bless it.<sup>48</sup>

This Christian claiming of the countryside seems to be that which Peter Brown describes in the cult of the saints, but often contains an element of reclamation, of the restoration of former glories, which ties in with rhetoric found in hagiographies which attests to the ancient Christian lineage of certain regions.

Through increasing the prestige of the towns and villages in his diocese by the provision of new buildings, the bishop also contributes to its distinctive identity. Gregory even comments on less successful building projects,

Dalmatius, Bishop of Rodez....was a pious man, temperate in eating and free from the desires of the flesh....He built a cathedral, but he pulled so much down in order to improve the new building that he never finished it.<sup>49</sup>

Gregory's interest in church buildings is marked, and he specifically comments on those he finds particularly beautiful or ingenious,

In his [Cyprian's] church is a pulpit on which a book is placed for singing and reading. It is said to be wonderfully built. For the whole pulpit is

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (721) 271; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XV: 1.

<sup>49</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p. 256; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. V: 46.

said to have been sculpted from a single piece of marble. On top is a table to which one climbs on four steps; around it are railings; below are columns. It also has a platform beneath which eight people can take shelter. This pulpit could never have been constructed with such craftsmanship if the power of the martyr had not assisted.<sup>50</sup>

Venantius Fortunatus' writings also mention such building projects. Even shorter mentions in episcopal catalogues will note, where appropriate, the building activities of the bishop. This seems to have been perceived as a deeply important role, and is one of the defining features of the 'good bishop'. The bishop materially adds to the land under his control. He helps to physically define the landscape; his Christianization is tangible and visible.

#### Bishop as Protector and Provider

The bishop in life, then, can perform one of the main functions the saint carries out in death. He acts as a figurehead of community, an embodiment of a sense of place. He represents the prestige of the community, as well as a protective force: he exemplifies its Christian identity. As Wood also points out,

The task perceived as more immediate by the episcopate was to provide discipline in the particularly turbulent and unruly world in which they lived. This meant.... establishing a sense of unity and purpose.... establishing and maintaining norms of Christian conduct for clergy and laity alike<sup>51</sup>

The bishop centralises and unifies. Breukelaar takes this idea further, discussing the sociological purpose of the bishop in detail,

Sociologically speaking, holiness was eufunctional for the community. It was a supra-personal standard, attainable by none, but the more so capable of disciplining the individual's conduct. Tensions within the community caused by the deviant behaviour of individuals or minorities damage the community as well as the individual. The extent to which the members of the community adopt the same standard determines the extent to which the community is salutary for the individual. Holiness was such a standard, and it was laid down by the bishop<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, p. (550) 100; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 93.

<sup>51</sup>Geary, p. 135.

<sup>52</sup>Breukelaar, p. 241.

The bishop, then, is emblematic of the Christian status of the community. Whereas the early bishops in hagiography are often described as having been sent by the apostles, thus giving the community a long Christian lineage, the most recent bishop exemplifies the *contemporary* religious identity of the community.

Not only was he active in the earthly life, but the bishop also provided links between the living and the dead. A recently deceased bishop went from being the earthly figurehead of the community to acting as a representative for it in the afterlife, if he achieved sainthood. Living bishops would also go to great lengths to obtain relics, increasing the earthly prestige of the community while ensuring that they had a heavenly representative to whom they could appeal through prayer. As Breukelaar points out, he was also the one who would officiate over saint's days, strengthening this idea of the bishop as a type of conduit between living and dead.<sup>53</sup> Past, present and future, living and dead, the bishop was central to the identity of the community.

Breukelaar's interpretation of the use of signs in the Histories of Gregory of Tours offers more depth to the bishop's relationship with his community. Breukelaar uses Gregory as an example of the Merovingian idea of the ideal bishop. Throughout the Histories, Gregory frequently takes note of odd weather and other events. Breukelaar argues that one of the roles Gregory gives himself and, by default, he gives the putative ideal bishop, is that of augur: a custodian of 'higher knowledge',<sup>54</sup> a role that extends back into the Roman past.<sup>55</sup> Gregory will, on occasion, offer his interpretation of strange natural phenomena, or juxtapose them with other events in such a way that his tacit judgement is evident. The bishop, then, is presented as a figure whose special holiness enables him to interpret these strange natural events for his community. Nature, typically a tricky area to negotiate when it came to Christianization due to ever-present fears of crop failure, illness, etc., can thus be effectively colonised and controlled by Christianity's alteration and reinterpretation of the

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. p. 247.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. p. 248.

landscape.<sup>56</sup> If the Earth itself is holy, then it must require an especially holy figure to interpret it correctly, and the bishop is perfectly qualified for that role. Not only tied to the community through birth and/or duty, he also seems to have a unique ability to interpret the vagaries of nature in the region: a special relationship with the land.

The bishop can be understood as a figure uniquely linked to the land, and intensely representative of place. He is likely to have relatives who held the same position. He ideally serves the interests of his community in both an earthly and spiritual sense, safeguarding it against such things as unjustly high taxation while also seeking to provide it with relics. Natural events such as illness, flooding, fire, odd astronomical occurrences can be interpreted by him, and often remedied through his prayers. He tends to be born in his diocese and his remains are often returned to it upon death, where they continue to protect the community, providing a tangible link between earth and heaven.

#### Feast Day Activities

What actually took place on feast days? Yitzhak Hen comments that the saint's vita would have been unlikely to have been read in its entirety, with churchmen probably keen to avoid potential tedium, which would again mark it out for the imagistic mode. The doctrinal content at these celebrations seems to have been fairly minimal.<sup>57</sup> The types of vita and anecdotes recorded by Gregory in the *Glory of the Confessors*,<sup>58</sup> *Life of the Fathers*<sup>59</sup> and *Glory of the Martyrs*<sup>60</sup> would seem to be ideal for feast days. They are brief, memorable, usually focus on a single key incident and/or moral, and tend to constantly reinforce the efficacy of pilgrimage.

What does seem to have made up a large proportion of the festivities on the saint's day was drinking, singing, and dancing. There are reasonably frequent mentions of such behaviour in our sources, some pleased at the enthusiasm

<sup>56</sup>Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 102.

<sup>57</sup>See Cubitt: 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of early Anglo-Saxon Saints' for the feast day in a monastic context, in Hen and Innes, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGC*; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*.

<sup>59</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*.

<sup>60</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*; Gregory of Tours, *Gregory of Tours*.

shown in the celebration of a saint's day,<sup>61</sup> other more censorious of behaviour which seemed to have been somewhat rowdy on occasion.<sup>62</sup> Other than acting as a probably welcome day of leisure and free alcohol and food, this is must also have been a strong day of bonding for the community as a whole. Not only was the saint likely to have been a 'local' saint (ergo, celebrating the day reaffirms one's sense of belonging to the local community), but participating in this group activity must have helped to maintain bonds within the community. Gregory of Tours describes the feast day of St Remigius,

It so happened that a short time later there was celebrated the saint-day of St Remigius, which is held on the first day of October. A great crowd of the local inhabitants went out of the city with their Bishop and they were accompanied by the Duke and the leading men of the place.<sup>63</sup>

Feast day activities also seem to have been popular. In *Life of the Fathers*, Gregory describes the scene around the tomb of a saint witnessed by Agiulf the deacon.

On his return home he passed by the place where this saint rested and stopped to say prayers....Then he saw an immense crowd of people near the tomb, buzzing around like a swarm of happy bees around their familiar hive.<sup>64</sup>

This sounds like a well-attended tomb. It is not even entirely clear whether this is a saint day, or whether this is merely the normal devotion paid to the tomb. The number indicated, though, would perhaps point to a feast day. Gregory also describes some of the activities observed by Agiulf around the tomb,

Immense crowd of people....some taking from the priest in attendance pieces of wax as holy objects, others a little dust, and others plucked and went away with a few threads from the fringe of the tomb-covering....And he went forward and received some herbs from those which the devotion of the people had placed on the holy tomb.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (696) 246; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. VIII:6.

<sup>62</sup>Caesarius, *Sermons*, sermon 55.

<sup>63</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp*. 387; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VIII: 21.

<sup>64</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (691) 241; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. VIII: 6.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

The saint's tomb does not seem to have been perceived, by this account, to have been in any way distant or unapproachable. Gregory certainly does not seem to voice any disapproval. The people seem to be familiar with the tomb and comfortable approaching it, although Gregory does mention incidences where complacency and disrespect were punished.<sup>66</sup> The prevailing notion of the importance of the relics themselves, their physical presence, is carried over in the behaviour of the ordinary people who are desirous of owning some physical echo of the saint.

From the point of the view of the Church this vividly visible expression of faith must have been pleasing. Even if Caesarius was scornful of the nature of some of the behaviour he witnessed, equally other priests and bishops encouraged drinking and celebration on saints' days. Fervent and visible celebrations of saints' days were vivid examples of Christian faith and enthusiasm. Gregory comments that the site of many people thronged around the saint's tomb leaves Agiulf deeply moved, 'The deacon, full of faith, could not see this without tears'.<sup>67</sup>

Local Saints in the Time Frame: brief biographies

In order to gain a clearer idea of Christian life in the ecclesiastical province of Trier, it would be helpful to try and gain an idea of what the cult of saints might have been in Trier, Metz, Toul and Verdun. This section will focus on those individuals who might conceivably have had a cult in these localities. It will offer a brief sketch of these saints, mentioning appropriate information from the *Vita* if it was written within or before the timeframe under examination. The sanctoral cycles of the areas which our cemeteries of interest are either in or near vary in number. A number of provisos, however, must be kept in mind when considering the individual saints mentioned. Generally speaking, northern Gaul is widely acknowledged to be somewhat barren as a source for documentary evidence (Halsall, Hen, Effros, Wood), at least in comparison to

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<sup>66</sup>In the church of St Venerandus, a beggar who dares to sit on the tomb of the saint is catapulted on to the floor; Gregory of Tours, *LGC*, pp. (769-70) 319-20; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. 35.

<sup>67</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. VIII: 6.

the south. The hagiographies we do have for those saints from the region are intensely problematic. Nancy Gauthier's study of the Christianization of the region meticulously details the many problems to be found within these Lives at some length.<sup>68</sup> These problems will be mentioned here when they are relevant to the particular saint under discussion. Before proceeding with specifics, the general issues will be outlined here.

But there are people who by a perversion of the intelligence do not believe what is written, find fault with what is witnessed by others<sup>69</sup>

Firstly, as is frequently the case with hagiography, these texts are often highly stylised, conforming more to the author's ideas of hagiographic convention than any kind of reality. In extreme cases, the author's rendition of events and dating is shown to be plainly incorrect when compared with corroborating information from other source materials. There is also the issue of temporal distance and motivation: the author was sometimes writing hundreds of years after the death of the saint in question, and was sometimes using the saint more as a means to an end: a tool to cope with some current issue or conflict. Occasionally, for varying reasons, we do not have hagiographies of the saints mentioned, and any information must therefore be gleaned and cross-referenced from lists of council signatories, letters, and perhaps dates recorded in a martyrology. Occasionally, regions can seem to have two saints with very similar names and feast days, in which case difficult questions must be asked which can often prove to be particularly tricky to answer, given the variability of spellings of the same names across different manuscripts.

Trier

Trier seems to be relatively rich in saints, on initial examination at least. Those saints which can be identified as belonging roughly to the relevant timeframe include: Agricinus (feast day 13 Jan),<sup>70</sup> Castor (feast day 13 Feb),<sup>71</sup> Eucharius (feast

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<sup>68</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle: La Province Romaine De Première Belgique Entre Antiquité Et Moyen-Age (IIIe-VIIIe Siècles)* (Paris: Boccard, 1980).

<sup>69</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XVII.

<sup>70</sup>Hrabanus Maurus, *Martyrologium*, ed. by J McCulloch, *CC CM*, XLIV.

<sup>71</sup>*Vita Castoris*, *AA SS Febr.* II.

day 8 December),<sup>72</sup> Felix (feast day 26 March),<sup>73</sup> Magnericus (25 July),<sup>74</sup> Maximinus (feast day 29 May),<sup>75</sup> Nicetius (feast days 5 Dec and 3 Oct),<sup>76</sup> and Paulinus (feast day 31 August).<sup>77</sup> Virtually all are bishops, and Agricius, Eucharius and Maximinus are of particularly high prestige and renown.

The number and importance of the saints located in Trier seems to be largely attributable to its long history and role. It was a recognised centre of political and religious importance in late antiquity, and was deeply involved in the Arian controversy. This history and prestige perhaps led to a tendency towards 'Romanitas'. Halsall comments that,

Its [Trier] aristocracy appears to have had a very self-conscious sense of its own identity, and especially a 'Roman' identity....The immediate Trier region would seem, therefore, to have had a very self-conscious and confident aristocratic stratum, rather different from that across the rest of northern Gaul.<sup>78</sup>

It will be interesting to see whether this *Romanitas* is discernible in Trier's hagiographies, as well as whether it has any impact on its religious culture and identity.

Castor was a missionary and an ascetic. The only Vita we have for him dates to the latter half of the eleventh century to the early part of the twelfth.<sup>79</sup> This Vita suggests that he was responsible for building a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Interestingly, Maximin's Vita, which dates from the second half of the eighth century, does not mention Castor at all, even though Castor's Life suggests that Castor was his pupil.<sup>80</sup>

Eucharius is buried in the church of St John. The details of his Life say that he was sent to Gaul by St Peter to act as bishop.<sup>81</sup> However, as we have seen, this

<sup>72</sup>Hrabanus Maurus, XLIV; *Historia Martyrum Treverensium*, MGH SS.

<sup>73</sup>*Vita Felicis*, BHL 2893.

<sup>74</sup>*Vita Magnerici*, AA SS Iul. VI., pp. 183-191

<sup>75</sup>*Martyrologium Hieronymianum* eds by Delehaye, Peeters and Coens, AA SS, Nov, II, 2, (Brussels, 24, Boulevard Saint-Michel, 1931).

<sup>76</sup>*Historia Martyrum Treverensium*. VIII, pp. 220-223

<sup>77</sup>*Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, Delehaye, Peeters and Coens.

<sup>78</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 229.

<sup>79</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 203.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>*Vita Eucharrii, Valerii Et Materni*, AA SS Ian. II, 1643.

seems to have been a common trope in hagiography of this period, added, it might be suggested, to further amplify the age of the diocese/city and the prestige of its Christian tradition. It is difficult to ascertain which grandiose elements of Eucharius's Life were contemporary and which were elaborated on at a later date. We do know that he was one of the first Christian figures in the community, and that he was buried in the large necropolis to the south of the city.<sup>82</sup> This necropolis was initially named after Eucharius, but the name was later changed to St Matthias to reflect the possession of relics believed to come from the apostle Matthew. Gregory mentions him in the *Life of the Fathers* in the middle of his hagiography Nicetius of the Treveri, commenting that he, along with Maximin and Nicetius, sat at the gates of the city, protecting the citizens within.<sup>83</sup> Eucharius is not mentioned in the Hieronymian Martyrology, although the Raban Maur martyrology mentions that his feast day takes place on December the eighth, as does the Trier martyrology. From what we can gather from the Eucharius's *Vita* his episcopacy seems to have lasted for twenty three years, but it is not possible to either prove or disprove this assertion. Gauthier comments that the Lives of Felix and Maximin offer a similar figure, which leads her to suggest that there might have existed a sort of common catalogue or index of bishops, from which such data may have been obtained.<sup>84</sup>

Agricius seems to have been a model figure, a fourth century bishop who obtained high status relics, was active in the parish and regularly attended church councils.<sup>85</sup> Agricius's reputation seems to have been enhanced by the occasional presence of an emperor. His participation in the Council of Arles in 314 is noted in a number of sources and seems to have raised him to national attention<sup>86</sup>.

Nicetius (525/526 - 566/569) is one of the best-known figures of the period. We have details of letters from Nicetius, council signatories, Gregory of Tours writes of him at some length in the *Life of the Fathers*,<sup>87</sup> and Venantius Fortunatus

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<sup>82</sup> Gauthier, p. 11

<sup>83</sup> Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (782) 382; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XVII: 4.

<sup>84</sup> Gauthier, p. 12

<sup>85</sup> *Vita Agricii*, BHL 178/179.

<sup>86</sup> Gauthier, p. 44

<sup>87</sup> Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (727) 277; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers* bk. XVII: 1-6.

wrote two poems for him.<sup>88</sup> His early career was centred on monastic life, where he attained the position of abbot. He was acutely aware of his role within the greater Church, and was not afraid to admonish Justinian, or to encourage Clothild to convert her husband (in which letter he particularly encouraged veneration of the saints).<sup>89</sup> He courted controversy rather frequently, culminating in his excommunication of Chlothar. This action resulted in his exile, although Sigebert I eventually allowed him to return home. Nicetius seems to have been exceptionally conscientious in carrying out his parish duties; he attended many councils, and maintained an ascetic lifestyle. Gregory makes special mention of his particular consideration of the poor, characteristic of the model bishop,

They arrived near the town at sunset, and as the sun was starting to go down they put up their tents and prepared their camp, and they let their horses go free so that they could feed in the fields of poor people. When he saw that, the blessed Nicetius was touched with compassion and said “Withdraw these horses from the poor men’s crops immediately or I shall withdraw you from communion”....and he was led to the town in the midst of these men’s admiration<sup>90</sup>

He also demonstrates his role as protector of the people by protecting them from illness, a trope which appears repeatedly in Gregory’s writings,

When the bubonic plague was cruelly assailing the population within the walls of the city of Trier, the priest of God assiduously implored divine mercy for the sheep entrusted to him. Suddenly, in the night, a great noise was heard, like a violent clap of thunder which broke above the bridge over the river, so that one would have thought the town was going to split in two. And all the people were lying in their beds, filled with terror....And one could hear in the midst of the noise a voice clearer than the others, saying “What must we do, companions? For at one of the gates Bishop Eucherius watches, and at the other Maximin is on the alert. Nicetius is busy in the middle. There is nothing left for us to do except leave this town to their protection.” As soon as this voice had been heard, the malady ceased, and from that moment no-one else died. Thus we cannot doubt that the town had been protected by the power of the bishop.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 3:11, 3:12, *MGH AA*, Lib III: XI, XII.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.* p. 186

<sup>90</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. 727 (277); Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XVII: 1.

<sup>91</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XVII: 4.

We can see here not only the living bishop in his role as protector and healer, but his predecessors, now local saints, also continuing in their roles. Nicetius is thus placed in context, in Gregory's mind at least, alongside Maximin and Eucherius.

Maximin is mentioned very briefly by Gregory of Tours in his Ten Books of the Franks, who comments that 'Maximinus, the Bishop of Trier, had great influence because of his saintliness'<sup>92</sup> He goes into much greater detail in *Glory of the Confessors*, describing him as 'an effective advocate with God on behalf of the people of the city'<sup>93</sup>

Paulinus, Maximin's successor, died in 358. He was a bishop of Trier who was exiled to Phrygia after speaking against Arianism. He died in Phrygia, and was later repatriated, and a basilica was built in his honour.<sup>94</sup> We have a *Vita* for him which dates from the latter half of the tenth century.<sup>95</sup> Most information we have on Paulinus deals with his deep involvement in the Arian affair.

Felix was bishop in 386. Gauthier dubs him the 'unhappy' Felix, as he suffered somewhat unfairly due to the hostile political/religious situation which accompanied his election.<sup>96</sup> Factions within the Church completely refused to communicate with him at church councils. This made his position eventually untenable, as he apparently eventually renounced his own episcopacy in an attempt to resolve the schism. Gauthier comments that such a disinterested motive would seem to have been rare at this time among his peers. There are two *Vitae* available for Felix, but these are late, the first dating from the late tenth/early eleventh century, while the second was written shortly after 1072.

Magnericus was bishop in 566. He is known to have been a friend of Gregory of Tours. Gregory writes of his giving sanctuary to Theodore of Marseilles. He became bishop during Fortunatus's visit to the Moselle. Childebert chose him to be the godparent to his son. He also recognized the potential of Gaugericus,

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<sup>92</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, p. 27; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. I: 37.

<sup>93</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGC*, p. (807) 357; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. 92.

<sup>94</sup>Gauthier, p. 57

<sup>95</sup>*Vita Paulini*, AA 55 Aug. VI., pp. 676-9

<sup>96</sup> Gauthier, p. 64

whom he ordained. Magnericus is reported to have been responsible for a number of new buildings.

## Metz

Metz seems to have markedly fewer saints who are applicable to the period in question, which appears strange, given the later renown of the city. Our earliest source was written in around 776 by Paul the Deacon at the request of Bishop Angilramnus. It is, unfortunately, somewhat light on any actual details of the bishops of Metz, and instead focuses most of its energies on emphasising that Clement was the first bishop of Metz and that he was given his duties by Peter, which, as we have mentioned, is a common trope in these hagiographies. Nancy Gauthier's explanation for this odd silence on Metz's other saints and bishops is convincing, proposing that the presence of Paul the Deacon and his fame obscures the other figures of the diocese. Fortunately, we have some episcopal catalogues for Metz: the metrical catalogue that was written around 776 and inserted in Drogon's sacramentary,<sup>97</sup> Paul the Deacon's Book of the Bishops of Metz (783-791),<sup>98</sup> another episcopal catalogue from Drogon's sacramentary (mid eighth century),<sup>99</sup> a later catalogue written under Bishop Wala,<sup>100</sup> and lastly a much later mid eleventh century catalogue.<sup>101</sup> However, not every saint mentioned has a *Vita*. This means that we often have a name and perhaps a date of death, but very little else.

Clement of Metz was the first bishop of Metz. We do have some works on Clement, but they are very late, dating from the late tenth and early eleventh century. The information we have from the 776 episcopal list mentions that he constructed and dedicated an oratory to St Peter, and that he converted the people as well as preaching to them. However, there is little extra information, not even regarding the duration of his episcopacy. His feast day is 23 November.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>97</sup>Louis Duchesne, *Fastes Épiscopaux De L'ancienne Gaule*, 3 vols. (Paris: A.Fontemoing, 1907), vol. III., pp. 46-7

<sup>98</sup>Paul the Deacon, *Liber De Episcopis Mettensibus*, MGH SS, II., pp.261-68

<sup>99</sup>Duchesne, vol. III., pp. 46-7

<sup>100</sup>Ibid. p. 49

<sup>101</sup>*Gesta Episcoporum Mettensium*, MGH SS, X, pp. 534-540.

<sup>102</sup>Duchesne, pp. 46-7.

St Patiens dates to the second century and was the third bishop of Metz. He died in 150. Paul the Deacon's episcopal catalogue tells us that Patiens' episcopacy came between that of Felix and Victor. We have a *Vita* dating from the latter half of the eighth century.<sup>103</sup> The building of the church of St Arnoul is attributed to him, but Gauthier comments that architectural features make this somewhat unlikely. His feast day is 8 January, and is listed in the Raban Maur martyrology.<sup>104</sup>

Rufus (feast day 7 November),<sup>105</sup> Urbicius (feast day 20 March),<sup>106</sup> and Terentius (translation 16 May)<sup>107</sup> are all mentioned very briefly in the metrical catalogue. We have a *Vita* for Terence, but this was composed in the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>108</sup>

Verdun

Those saints belonging to Verdun are Agericus (feast day 1 December),<sup>109</sup> Possessor (feast day 4 December),<sup>110</sup> Polychronius (feast day 17 February),<sup>111</sup> Firminus (feast day 4 Dec),<sup>112</sup> Sanctinus (feast day 11 Oct),<sup>113</sup> Maximinus (Mesmin) (feast day 15 Dec),<sup>114</sup> Desideratus and Vitonus (feast day 9 November).<sup>115</sup> Verdun is mentioned by both Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus. Gregory of Tours talks about one of its saints in some detail, Bishop Desideratus, who helped to change the fortunes of the town by asking Theudebert for a loan,

Theudebert was moved to compassion and made a loan of seven thousand gold pieces. Desideratus accepted this and shared it out amongst his

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<sup>103</sup>*Vita Patientis*, ed. by Ioannes Bollandus and Godefridus Henscenus, AA SS, Ianarius I (Antwerp: Ioannes Meursius, 1643).

<sup>104</sup>Hrabanus Maurus, XLIV.

<sup>105</sup>Delehaye, Peeters and Coens; Duchesne.

<sup>106</sup>Hermann Grotefend, *Zeitrechnung Des Deutschen Mittelalters Und Der Neuzeit* (Hannover: Hahn'sche Buchhandlung, 1891).

<sup>107</sup>Grotefend, *Zeitrechnung Des Deutschen Mittelalters Und Der Neuzeit*.

<sup>108</sup>*Vita Terentii*, AA SS Oct. XII., pp. 808-814

<sup>109</sup>Grotefend, *Zeitrechnung Des Deutschen Mittelalters Und Der Neuzeit*.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>*Vita Maximini Miciacensis*, BHL 5814-5816.

<sup>115</sup>Bertaire, *Gesta Episcoporum Virdun.* 3, MGH SS IV.

townsfolk. As a result, the business-people of Verdun became rich and they still remain so today'.<sup>116</sup>

While we do possess relatively little information on Verdun, if Gregory is to be trusted we can say that the town was apparently prosperous while he was writing.

Polychronius was born and died in the fifth century. He was a relative and/or disciple of Lupus of Troyes.

Possessor was a magistrate of Verdun who apparently became bishop in 470, and died in 485. Very little else is known about him.

Firminus was a bishop of Verdun, who died while Verdun was besieged by Clovis. Bertaire claimed that his relics could be found at St Vanne.<sup>117</sup>

Agericus (565/569 - 588) was Desideratus's successor. He was selected by Sigebert and Brunhild to act as godparent to Childebert.<sup>118</sup> As with Magnericus, we benefit greatly from the fact that Fortunatus was present in the region during his episcopacy, as Fortunatus chose to dedicate some panegyric verses to him. Gregory recounts the rather odd tale of his inability to exorcise a possessed woman from Fredegund's court,

At this time there was a woman who had the gift of prophecy. She gained much profit for her masters in divination. She so won their favour that they set her free and let her live as she wished...Every day she acquired more and more gold and silver, and she would walk about so loaded with jewellery that she was looked upon by the common people as some sort of goddess. When this reached the ears of Ageric, Bishop of Verdun, he sent to have her arrested. She was seized and brought before him, and, in accordance with what we read in the Acts of the Apostles, he realized that she was possessed by an unclean spirit which had the gift of prophecy. When Ageric had pronounced over her the prayer of exorcism and had anointed her forehead with holy oil, the devil cried out and revealed his identity to the Bishop. However, Ageric was not successful in freeing the woman of this devil, and she was allowed to depart. She

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<sup>116</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p. 130; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. III: 34.

<sup>117</sup>Bertaire.

<sup>118</sup>Gauthier, p 223

realized that she could no longer live in that neighbourhood, so she made her way to Queen Fredegund and sought refuge with her.<sup>119</sup>

This odd failure aside, the rest of his career seems to have been notable. Like many other bishop saints, he undertook the construction and restoration of many buildings. He also played an important political role by attempting to mend the situation between Brunhild and Childebert. Agericus seems to have been politically courageous, defending Guntran Boso's right to sanctuary in his church, despite his own political ties to Brunhild. Some sources report that Agericus died in 558 of a bilious complaint, although Gregory states that guilt over the death of Guntram Boso and murder of Berthefried in his church preoccupied him,

Then there was this last straw, that he faced the daily reminder of having Guntram's sons living with him. 'It is my fault that you are left orphans,' he kept saying to them. As I have told you, these things weighed heavily upon him. He suffered from black depression, virtually gave up eating, and so died and was buried.<sup>120</sup>

There are conflicting accounts of where he was buried. His feast day seems to be the first of December.

St Maximinus was apparently the founder and first abbot of the monastery of Micy in Orléans. We have virtually no other information regarding his career in Verdun, and Gauthier points out that the foundation for siting him in Verdun is, at best, fragile.<sup>121</sup>

Sanctinus exemplifies the problems we have when attempting to ascertain details of the early Christian life of Verdun, in that we have very few reliable sources on which we can depend.<sup>122</sup> Bishop Dadon composed some work in 893, but he only seemed to be interested in his two immediate predecessors. His canon, Bertaire, offered him a history of Verdun since its inception, but this seems to have subsequently been lost in a fire.<sup>123</sup> The catalogue that we do have from the cathedral of Verdun mentions that Sanctinus was the first bishop.

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<sup>119</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p. 365; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VII: 44.

<sup>120</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p. 443; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. IX: 23.

<sup>121</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 151.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid p. 96

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

After this, the situation becomes somewhat complicated, due to Sanctinus sharing the same name as the Bishop of Meaux. In short, Bertaire seems to have, probably inadvertently, seized on the more illustrious details of the Life of the Bishop of Meaux and ascribed them to Sanctinus of Verdun.

Vitonus was the first sixth-century bishop of the sixth century.<sup>124</sup> While Bertaire often mentions this *Vita*, we unfortunately have no record of it. The Life of which there is a copy extant was written in the early eleventh century by the Abbot of St Vanne. From the information mentioned by Bertaire in the *GEV*, Vitonus seems to have been buried in the same basilica as his predecessors.<sup>125</sup>

Toul

Nancy Gauthier, whose study of the Christianization of the Moselle region is exhaustive and meticulous, describes Toul as ‘une histoire sans éclat’,<sup>126</sup> and goes on to remark that ‘On se presque rien de Toul a l’époque merovingienne. Selon toute apparence, la cite continue a vegeter.’<sup>127</sup> The evidence for Toul is scant even in comparison to other Merovingian regions, and we can therefore know very little of its bishops and saints. It was located, however, at the junction of some main Roman roads, and was the first port of delivery on the Moselle, which might suggest it had more importance or vitality than our meagre sources suggest.

St Aper (also known as St Evre) was made a saint in the second half of the seventh century. His feast day is 15<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>128</sup> He also has a *Vita*.<sup>129</sup> He was born near Troyes, and apparently had planned to have a basilica built where he would be interred. From what we can tell, the basilica was eventually built, but dedicated instead to St Maurice. Gauthier comments that Aper perhaps lived an ascetic life, with a small group of monks around him in a makeshift

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid. p. 221

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid. p. 230.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup>Delehaye, Peeters and Coens.

<sup>129</sup>*Vita Et Miracula Apri*, AA SS. Sept V., pp. 66-78.

monastery. This might explain, she feels, why there is no evidence of inhumation; Aper is buried in the monastery instead.<sup>130</sup>

Mansuetus has a *Vita*,<sup>131</sup> but it was written in the second half of the tenth century by Adso of Montier en Der and, according to Gauthier, is far from reliable.<sup>132</sup> We do not have a *Vita* from an earlier date. We know that he was born and died in the fourth century. His feast day was on 3 September (*Vita*).

### Conclusions

The unevenness in terms of quantity and quality of information for those saints listed above speaks for itself. The difficulties of analysis of the cult of saints both in Merovingian Gaul and in general have been discussed at length in many different studies. Mark Handley points out that increasingly sophisticated understanding of the problematic nature of hagiography has caused a ‘concomitant decrease in the ability to use it for anything other than literary construction of cult.’<sup>133</sup> Wood questions the whole notion of the universal devotion offered to the cult of saints in the Merovingian period, and suggests that scepticism, from both laity and clergy, may have been a more common response than one might anticipate.<sup>134</sup> These are only some of the provisos to be borne in mind during a consideration of the cult of saints.

Particularly relevant to this particular study is regionality, and this has been shown to be key in the cult of saints. Local identity and autonomy is paramount. The locality of the saint was of high importance, and Raymond van Dam has

<sup>130</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 231.

<sup>131</sup>*Vita Mansueti*, AA SS Sept I.

<sup>132</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 104.

<sup>133</sup>Mark A. Handley, “Beyond Hagiography: Epigraphic Commemoration and the Cult of Saints in Late Antique Trier” in Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources*, illustrated edn (Aldershot, Hants ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, c2001.), p. 187.

<sup>134</sup>Ian Wood, ‘How Popular Was Early Medieval Devotion?’ *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 14 (1997).

discussed the ramifications of this in some depth.<sup>135</sup> He maintains at the outset of his study on saints in late antique Gaul that three things are vital: to reject the notion of a homogenised cult of saints, to bear in mind the regional differences in Gaul, and to note the extent to which local autonomy was defended.<sup>136</sup> Wood talks at some length about the importance of locality in this period,

The language and ritual of international Roman culture was used to emphasize local concerns. This was particularly true in the essential elements of Merovingian power - saints, bishops, kings and aristocrats. In late antiquity and in the Merovingian period, each of these derived its authority from local, indigenous roots.<sup>137</sup>

Attempting to ascertain whether cults had a particular local character is, due to the examples and their various complexities listed above, a difficult task. An abundance of evidence for saints' cults in one particular locality might simply suggest that more texts were produced in that region, that more of them have happened to survive, or that a later bishop decided to rehabilitate the cult of an early saint for his own ends. Those who have been the focus of Gregory's work inevitably tower above the rest, as we have so much more information on them. We cannot necessarily follow that they received his attention due to greater contemporary importance; Gregory may have chosen to focus on them to make some point of his own. So, while it might be possible to draw tentative conclusions about religious culture in the province through the use of correlative evidence, we must always keep in mind that documentary evidence for the region and period is notoriously uneven.

The fact that Gregory relates tales of laypeople and clerics lying in wait to pounce on the remains of recently dead holy men and women suggests that not every locality had its own history of notable saints, or perhaps that a local saint had fallen out of favour and a 'replacement' was required. Maybe the local saint was proving problematic for other reasons. Van Dam discusses, for example, the problems encountered by Briccio, the successor of the illustrious St

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<sup>135</sup>Raymond Van Dam.

<sup>136</sup>Raymond Van Dam, p. 11.

<sup>137</sup>Geary, p. 229.

Martin<sup>138</sup>. There may have been other reasons that a saint was not celebrated that we cannot now ascertain. There is an instance, for example, in *Glory of the Confessors* where Gregory mentions a known saint who is not celebrated,

The blessed martyr Liminius is also buried in this church. Although the inhabitants possess the history of his [life's] struggle, no ritual of veneration is offered to him.<sup>139</sup>

Why the local community chose not to celebrate Liminius is unclear, especially given that they possessed his relics and a *Vita*. Van Dam, though, also warns against the failure to recognise that the cult of saints changed over time, with cults waxing and waning in popularity,<sup>140</sup> so perhaps occasional replacements were necessary. As Wood points out, although the cult of saints was an essential factor in Christian life, it was also used by bishops to consolidate power, or aid family authority; so it is understandable that some cults may have been encouraged more than others.

For example, we saw that Trier, with its long history and illustrious bishops seems to be particularly rich in saints. Even though it declined throughout the Merovingian period from its high point in late antiquity, one would assume that it was still seen to be a notable city which would observe many feast days and act as a centre for pilgrimage. On the other hand, Toul, which seems to be relatively humble, might be assumed to celebrate relatively few feast days. Could size and wealth have had an effect on how many saints were celebrated?

There are also practical matters to take into consideration in terms of pilgrimage. Travel across Gaul does not appear to have been easy and weather conditions often made travel very difficult. Bishops would sometimes offer weather-related excuses to explain failure to attend councils, and Gregory relates the difficult conditions suffered by Clotild and the other nuns travelling from Poitiers,

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<sup>138</sup>Raymond Van Dam, p. 16.

<sup>139</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGC*, pp. (769-70) 319-20; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. 35.

<sup>140</sup>Raymond Van Dam, p. 13.

She and her fellow-nuns had come on foot from Poitiers. They had no horses to ride on. They were quite exhausted and worn out. No one had offered them a bite to eat on the journey. They reached our city on the first day of March. The rain was falling in torrents and the roads were ankle-deep in water.<sup>141</sup>

If a shrine was particularly difficult to reach and, as a result, failed to attract many devotees via pilgrimage, then a perhaps notable local saint might appear to hold less significance. Much like the issue of distribution of source materials, this complication again serves to muddy the waters when attempting to look more closely at saints' cults.

### Funerary Feasting

As we have considered the cult of saints, a phenomenon centred on a special relationship between the living and the dead, it is instructive to consider funerary feasting, another activity shared between the living and the dead. As the cult of saints grew in scale and popularity throughout the Merovingian period, so funerary feasting seemed to go into a decline. However, its traces remain visible to us through the archaeological records. Effros comments that evidence for the activity was most common during the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>142</sup> Several grave sites in the Moselle region alone, part of the province of Trier, exhibit some evidence of food deposition and/or funerary feasting, such as Ennery, Bouzonville, and Varangéville, amongst others.<sup>143</sup>

The study of food and drink has become popular in medieval history in recent years. Food and drink can be viewed as tools: they can define identity, community, status and beliefs. Food and drink, and the provision of the same, and the company it is consumed in, and those occasions on which it is consumed

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<sup>141</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp.* 460; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, chap. IX: 39.

<sup>142</sup>Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 79.

<sup>143</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 247.

can all offer information as regards cultural beliefs and societal structure in Merovingian Gaul. The bishop, for example, often used provision of food and drink and feasting as a way to enhance the status of his own office and that of the community in general.<sup>144</sup> The provision of food for the needy was considered to be an essential part of the bishop's role, and it crops up as an exceptionally common trope in hagiography. For example, the *Life of Bishop Quintanius* notes that he was especially known for his charity, and his diligence in feeding the poor:

Run, I beg you, run to this poor man and give him the food that he needs. Why are you so indifferent? How do you know that this is not the very one who had ordained in His Gospel that one should feed him in the person of the poorest?<sup>145</sup>

Gregory of Tours *Life of the Fathers* contains several instances of this type of food providing/sharing behaviour in holy men, both bishops and abbots. In fact, three different common food and drink themes often appear: Ensuring provision of food for the poor, disapproval of gluttony and luxurious tastes, and provision of food for other while abstaining oneself. Abbot Lupicinus, for example, disapproves of the buffet being prepared for monks in Alamannia, instead tipping all the food into one dish and preparing one big stew for the monks. This does not appear to have been well-received; the monks were discontented and twelve actually left the monastery. Lupicinus later goes to King Chilperic (of the Burgundians), to ask for food for the monks: 'I am the father of the Lord's sheep....The Lord nourishes them with spiritual food, under the yoke of discipline, but they now lack bodily food'.<sup>146</sup> We can see here how the provision of spiritual food and actual food is tightly linked in the role of the holy man. Carrying this idea on, the consumption of meagre and spartan rations is seen as nourishing spirituality. Conversely, gluttonous or luxurious eating poisons spirituality. In this instance, Gregory presents Lupicinius as assisting God in his provision of spiritual sustenance, but also gives him the additional task of being responsible for providing food for the faithful.

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<sup>144</sup>Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 34.

<sup>145</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (676) 276; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. IV: 4.

<sup>146</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (667) 217; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. I: 5.

The acts of dispensing food and sharing food are loaded with other meanings and associations which have implications for social relationships. Venantius Fortunatus's writings not only make mention of events, great and small, which involve food and drink, but also use many metaphors and similes involving food and drink. For example,

Poem 11.23: verses composed after a feast

Whilst I was drowsing and feasting in the midst of various delights and mingled savours, (I was opening my mouth, and shutting my eyes again and was chewing away, seeing many a dream), (5) my wits were muddled, believe me, dear ones....For it seemed to me, and to everyone drinking the free-flowing wine, (10) that the table itself was swimming with neat wine.<sup>147</sup>

He also thanks Gregory for his gift

Poem 5.13: to the same for the apples and the grafting slips

Gregory, holy in your high office, generous in your noble kindnesses, in your absence you are present through your gift, highest father; you send me the parents with their offspring, the grafts with the fruit; the slips, together with the apples. (5) May almighty God grant that, abundantly provided with the fruits of your merits, you eagerly pluck the apples which paradise grows.<sup>148</sup>

Venantius mentions apples noticeably often in his poetry. He comments on them when he sees them or receives them as gifts, and also likes to use them in metaphors. Judith George comments that this might have to do with the association of the apple tree and the cross.<sup>149</sup>

In turn, Venantius sends Radegund and Agnes a gift of a basket of chestnuts. George comments that this type of gift, humble but personal, is in the classical tradition,<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, MGH AA XI, 23 p. 267, Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*, trans. by Judith W George (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 107. See on Venantius in general, Judith W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>148</sup>Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, MGH AA, V: 13, p. 260, Fortunatus, *Poems*, p. 22.

<sup>149</sup>Fortunatus, *Poems*, p. 52 (footnote).

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.* p. 106 (footnote).

## Poem 11.13: to Lady Radegund and Agnes, for the chestnuts

That small basket was woven from osiers by my hands; believe me, dear ones, mother and sweet sister; and I give here rustic gifts, which the countryside produces, which the countryside produces, sweet chestnuts, which the tree gave to the fields.<sup>151</sup>

Remembering to provide food, then, is crucial in the maintenance of relationships. One of the hagiographies in Gregory's *Life of the Fathers* demonstrates how important this is in the following example. St Abraham, an abbot, is giving a feast at his church and is admonished by one of his monks for failing to procure adequate stocks of wine. He is then seen to cause an 'abundance' of wine to be produced by praying to God. Gregory, typically meticulous, takes care to let us know both the size of the jar and approximately how much wine was left over. Failure to have provided the wine is apparently shameful enough not only for one of the monks to scold his abbot, but also for a miracle to be performed in order to produce the necessary wine and rescue the abbot's reputation.

Not only provision of food, but the method of consumption is also perceived as holding symbolic importance. Food is a useful means to define oneself as part of the community. Note the archdeacon of Bourges' vexation in this incident at St Patroclus' table manners,

Having become a deacon, he [Patroclus] devoted himself to fasting....and exercised himself in study and prayer to such an extent that he did not come with his fellow clerics to eat at the communal table. Learning of this the archdeacon was very annoyed, and cried, "Either you take your meals with the other brothers, or you leave us. It is not right that you neglect to eat with those whose ecclesiastical duties you share."<sup>152</sup>

This relationship between food and drink and holiness can also, importantly, be seen at play in a different way in the cult of saints. There are various occasions throughout in *Life of the Fathers*, as well as *History of the Franks*, where it is mentioned that plants or herbs which have come into contact with a saint's

<sup>151</sup>Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, MGH AA, XI: 13, p. 263, Fortunatus, *Poems*, p. 106.

<sup>152</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (702) 252; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. IX: 1.

tomb can be made into a special healing infusion or simply eaten raw.<sup>153</sup> Dust from a saint's tomb can apparently have a similar effect.<sup>154</sup> The link between physical and spiritual nourishment can be seen be blurred by this practice. It also provides an interesting link between the cult of saints and funerary feasting, with food consumption near a grave being perceived as not only free of contamination, but in some way desirable. The food, in this instance, is a conduit between the living and the dead.

Funerary feasting, then, is best explored not as an isolated phenomenon, but in the wider context of food and feasting, as well as that of burial rites. Food is a way to define one's role, as well as the role of others. Not only can it bind the community together, but it can also be used as a tool to exclude those who refuse to conform to norms. Its imagery and associations occur frequently in the sources we have available to us. When food is used in funerary feasts, then, what kind of insights can we gain from this practice? Halsall, who has carried out in-depth studies on burial rites in the region of Metz<sup>155</sup> suggests that the burial ought to be read like a text, and that funerary feasting ought to be regarded in the context of gift-giving,

In addition to the displays of grave goods, the funerals were the occasion for feasting. The distribution of food, as gifts, served to maintain relationships between people. The use of food within such gift relationships is well attested in the literature of the period.<sup>156</sup>

It can indeed be assumed that such feasting would have helped to solidify bonds within the community. Halsall further suggests that this was another strategy to not only maintain one's position within the community, but also to attempt to elevate social status.<sup>157</sup> It does seem plausible that this form of feasting might well have had competitive aspects to it. It might also perhaps be noted at this point that, although deposition of food and the discovery of funerary pits are often mentioned together under the umbrella term of funerary feasting, our lack of specific information means that there may well have been many different types of feast that took place. For example, a larger communal feast may well

<sup>153</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (686) 236; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. VI: 7.

<sup>154</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, p. (522) 72; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 49.

<sup>155</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*.

<sup>156</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 253.

<sup>157</sup>*Ibid.*

have taken place at the funeral, along with deposition of food and vessels (or without deposition), but subsequent smaller rituals might have taken place on anniversaries of deaths, or other meaningful dates.

It is important, while acknowledging the role feasting might have played in projecting an image of a family's status to the rest of the community, to ensure that we do not forget the deceased themselves. As the sharing of food is a way to create bonds and relationships, the practice of funerary feasting and food deposition also suggests a need to maintain familial networks throughout a time of crisis and change. Such a rite asserts the continuity of family bonds to everyone in the community. Anthropological studies of this type of feasting suggests that as ancestors were often still perceived possessing the ability to interact in some way with the world of the living.<sup>158</sup> The deposition of food would suggest that the dead are involved in this exercise in the creation of bonds, too. Feasting, therefore, could be seen as a way of maintaining good relations between the living and the dead, although to what end is unsure. Certainly, those who visited saints' shrines, the very special dead, do not seem to have found it inappropriate to ask them to help with 'mundane' matters, as well as assuring assistance during any difficult times, be they illness, dispute or crop failure.

While we can discuss funerary feasting with the evidence we have available, it is difficult for us to determine precisely what form the activity might have taken, and many gaps remain in our knowledge and understanding. Was it carried out in every instance? How formalised and ceremonial might the activity have been? What other facets were there to it? Singing? Drinking? It seems that only late antique stone sarcophagi contain libation holes - does this mean that this practice was limited to those who could obtain this type of sarcophagus? As with burial rites as a whole, there are many gaps which make it difficult to paint a complete picture. Furthermore, such rites may well have changed over time, with some practices perhaps becoming more or less fashionable as time passed, or perhaps becoming influenced by practices seen elsewhere. As Effros comments, the original practice seems to have been adopted by Christians

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<sup>158</sup>Halsall notes Williams' suggestions regarding ancestor worship, and notes that this idea has gained ground in early medieval archaeology, Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 245-6.

because the communal and social functions it offered remained relevant. It should be remembered, though, that key aspects of it might well have been abandoned, or altered their significance in the process. While many unknowns remain, the popular consensus on funerary feasting seems to be that as it had to do with the exchange/sharing of food, its primary function is to do with the forging and maintaining of relationships

Effros has studied funerary feasting in Gaul in some detail.<sup>159</sup> The use of food and drink in medieval culture is already a well-researched field, and Effros adds to this discourse in the specific context of the Merovingian period. She acknowledges that of all the practices she discusses, funerary feasting seems to have been the most prevalent (given the frequency of the archaeological evidence), yet it is curiously poorly documented in the sources we have available to us.<sup>160</sup> Effros feels that one of the primary roles of funerary feasting is the transmission of the memory of the dead throughout the generations.<sup>161</sup> Generally, her views on funerary feasting coincide with many of Halsall's conclusions on burial rites in general; that it primarily acted as a means of defining bonds within the community and projected an idea of one's importance and role. As such, it was utilised often when that community was unstable and new positions could be forged. Problematically for this study, Effros does not choose to focus on any particular region in her discussion, although she does note at one point that geographical variations were likely to have occurred.<sup>162</sup> The evidence of funerary feasting is presented for Gaul as a whole. Effros' conclusions, therefore, must be handled with care.

As has been noted, the church authorities are not particularly voluble on the subject of funerary feasting in the sources that we have available to us. When they do mention it, it is generally to (rather gently) discourage the activity. Effros points out that clerics often sought to condemn funerary feasting by drawing parallels between it and the Roman activity of Parentalia. However, her analysis of the Church's response to this activity is not entirely satisfactory.

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<sup>159</sup>Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*.

<sup>160</sup>Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 69.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid. p. 71.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid. p. 90.

While it is true that Merovingian clerics seem to have sought fairly high levels of behavioural control over the faithful, her assertion that

Since these foodstuffs were not identified by contemporaries as intended for transport to the afterlife, funerary feasting and drinking were discouraged practices but not identified by most early Christian clerics as contrary to Christian belief.<sup>163</sup>

is problematic. We know that medieval clerics' writings on what they perceived as undesirable were often heavily coloured by their knowledge of classical paganism. It is difficult to guess what their level of contact with those who practiced such activities might have been; Gregory talks of seeing 'rustics' indulging in ignorant behaviour, while Caesarius talks of people reporting to him of undesirable activities in the countryside - but the idea that they might have had a clear idea of the motivations and symbolism behind their funerary rites is somewhat implausible. It would be somewhat more likely that they might project their own beliefs on them and, as the Christian Church seems to have been rather disinterested in burial rites at this point, did not ascribe religious meaning to rites which could well have had some sort of symbolic meaning.

In fact, the whole issue of whether the rites hold some sort of religious value at all is a deeply problematic issue. Early approaches to burial archaeology tended to focus on grave goods and whether the goods (or the mere presence of them at all) might be interpreted as 'pagan' or Christian. Analyses of burial sites could sometimes tie themselves in knots in attempts to discern the religious beliefs of the graves' inhabitants and those who had buried them. As a result, there seemed to be a move away from this type of analysis, towards the idea that burial rites were a social phenomenon which aimed to express ideas about status. This issue will be discussed in more detail later in the context of modes theory.

Funerary feasts, then, in studies of Merovingian Gaul tend now to be perceived, not as religious ceremonies, but as rituals which served specific social functions. As has been pointed out in other studies<sup>164</sup>, funerary rituals often served to

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75-6.

<sup>164</sup> See Halsall, for example, discussed earlier in this chapter.

reaffirm bonds within the community after the destabilising effects of a death. This would seem to especially be the case with funerary feasting, where the dead were often included in the activity by means of deposition. Not only is it a recognition of the dead's continued role as a member of the family, but the sharing of food/ritual may well also helped to have cemented bonds within the wider community. As Effros comments, 'the ties created through funerary meals thus functioned simultaneously on two levels: that of the surviving community and that of the more difficult to define relationship between this world and the next'<sup>165</sup>

How might the cognitive science of religion offer ways in which to analyse the phenomena?

The theory of modes of religiosity posits two poles, one of which is imagistic, while the other is doctrinal. Whitehouse states out that it is rare for any belief system to exist entirely at one end of the spectrum. Most exist as gradations on the scale, or contain activities and beliefs from different parts of the spectrum. When looking at syncretism, as this study is, it is probably to be expected that most activities considered will compromise and meet nearer the middle of the spectrum. It might further be posited that those activities which remain stubbornly at the far ends of the pole may not be those which are seen to have been enthusiastically co-opted in popular culture. They might remain, for example, strictly the province of the ecclesiastical or monastic elite, or they might be censured in penitentials and denoted 'rustic' by church authorities. How, then, might funerary feasting and the cult of saints be examined and described in the context of this theory, given what we have discussed so far? There are a number of factors to be taken into consideration when attempting to see whether it is possible to place both of these activities at their appropriate points on the imagistic/doctrinal scale.

Ritual and Memory

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<sup>165</sup>Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 73-4.

The first issue to be addressed if examining these activities in the context of modes theory is frequency of recurrence. This is paramount in Whitehouse's theories, as he suggests that those activities which are repeated on a regular basis are stored as a different type of memory from those activities which only occur rarely. Habituation causes frequently repeated events to be stored as a different *type* of memory to that of events which only rarely occur. The way in which these memories are recalled is also different. In turn, the type of memories created has an effect on how the activity is regarded and the type of response it will elicit. This raises further questions of classification. How often is often, and how infrequently must an event occur for it to be classed as 'rare'? Funerary feasting seems to have taken place at the time of burial and, sources suggest, on subsequent anniversaries. Saints' days took place at the same time each year. Is a yearly pattern of repetition frequent, and what of pilgrimage to a shrine? In the respect, the cult of saints can be perceived as presenting a problem to the modes approach. It is clearly a valuable tool in the transmission of religious ideas. However, it cannot be shown that every member of the community experienced it in the same way. Even discounting the obvious division between the clergy and the laity, and then between rich and poor, a range of experiences must have been available: Those who made pilgrimage and those who could not, the cynical and the faithful, men and women. The investigations into regional saints' cults undertaken above, from what we can ascertain, do not suggest an especially even distribution of cults, which again raises questions about the 'common' experience of the cult. Although the cult of saints is perceived as a phenomenon which was uniformly present in early medieval society, it was not experienced in a uniform way. This makes it somewhat difficult to handle if we are to use Whitehouse's theories regarding frequency of ritual. Equally, funerary feasting presents us with similar problems. We might assume that a feast was held on the day of the burial, but at what intervals after that, if any? Would attending the funerary feast of another family count as participation in the ritual?

McCauley and Lawson agree with Whitehouse that sensory stimulation is essential in exciting an emotional response, in making a ritual more memorable, and in encouraging the transmission of their 'religious representations' to

others.<sup>166</sup> We have already shown how many different types of sensory stimulation were implicated in the celebration of the cult of saints: sight, sound, taste, smell, etc. The cognitive science of religion maintains that sensory stimulation plays an important role in the reception and transmission of religious ritual.

Stimulating ritual participants' senses is the most straightforward, sure-fire means available for arousing their emotions....no sensory modality has been forgotten. Religious rituals are replete with the smells of burning incense and the tastes of special foods, the sounds of chant and the sights of ornate attire, the kinaesthetic sensations of the dancer and the haptic sensations of the fully immersed.<sup>167</sup>

Saints' days, from what we can ascertain, might be classed as a combination of both the imagistic and doctrinal. An extract of the saint's *vita* would be read, not the entire life. It is presumed that the extract would be from one of the more dramatic sections of the Life; as has been noted before, those *vitae* composed by Gregory consist of a number of memorable and dramatic incidents which could easily be utilised for this purpose. The clergy seem to have been aware that a reading of the entire life may not have been an attractive prospect to the gathered faithful (Caesarius certainly seems to have been acutely aware of the potentially wandering attention of the congregation).<sup>168</sup> The celebrations outside the church might be assumed to belong in the Whitehouse's imagistic category. The idea that the saint had to be acknowledged and celebrated in some way in order to gain favourable intervention (remember the dream visitations from forgotten saints and martyrs), and the fact that the feasting and singing were virtually the only aspects of the day in which the people could actively participate are important details. It might be suggested that the combination of both of these factors would create a certain anxiety around these celebrations, that there might have been a need to ensure that one's celebrations were seen as sufficiently enthusiastic in order to obtain a favourable response.<sup>169</sup> According to Whitehouse's theory, this might move the

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<sup>166</sup>Robert N. McCauley and E. Thomas Lawson, *Bringing Ritual to Mind: Psychological Foundations of Cultural Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 103.

<sup>167</sup>McCauley and Lawson, *Bringing Ritual to Mind*, p. 102.

<sup>168</sup>Caesarius, *Sermons*, Sermon 55.

<sup>169</sup> Of course, there is also the more prosaic option that the alcohol supplied may have contributed to the occasionally riotous nature of the celebrations.

cult of saints closer to the imagistic end of the spectrum, which he feels tends to utilise ‘flashbulb’ memory.

Funerary feasting also raises questions regarding memory. In his latest book on the region, Halsall talks about the different types of memory created by different funerary customs, prompted by Howard Williams’ criticism of his treatment of transient burial rites in his earlier studies.<sup>170</sup> Halsall goes on to elaborate on the way that in which such rites may have created memories,

If we can identify the contents of vessels deposited in graves, if we can recover hints as to the nature of any meals cooked in the funeral process, if we can find what herbs and other substances were used in the preparation or embalming of the corpse....we might have a way into suggesting what the ‘distinctive smell’ of the funerary process may have been....It is well known that smells are some of the most effective mnemonic triggers. Such analyses would add considerably to my interpretation of the way the funeral worked emotionally, in telescoping time and perhaps providing reassurance.<sup>171</sup>

We can see here that it is not necessarily frequency playing the key role in the creation of memories of this ritual, but sensory stimulation. It is interesting to consider how transferable more transient experiences within the funerary feast, like those Halsall describes to do with smell, might also have been to the celebration of events like saints’ days. We know, for example, from the information related by Gregory in *Life of the Fathers*<sup>172</sup> and *The Glory of the Martyrs*<sup>173</sup> that specific herbs seem to have been sprinkled on and around the tombs of saints by worshippers,

Then he saw an immense crowd of people near the tomb, buzzing around like a swarm of happy bees around their familiar hive....And he went forward and received some herbs from those which the devotion of the people had placed on the holy tomb.<sup>174</sup>

And again,

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<sup>170</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*.

<sup>173</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*.

<sup>174</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (696) 246; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. VIII: 6.

The singer Valentinianus... who is now priest, found himself taken with quartan fever while he was still a deacon, and was gravely ill for several days. Then it happened that during a brief recovery ....he came to the tomb of St Gallus and prostrated himself before it, saying, “Remember me, holy and blessed bishop for it is by you that I was raised, instructed and encouraged; remember your pupil whom you loved with a rare love, and deliver me from the fever which grips me.” Having said this, he took some of the herbs which had been strewn around the tomb by the faithful in honour of the saint, and since they were green he put them in his mouth, chewed them with his teeth and swallowed the juice. The day passed without any fever, and in the end was so restored to health that he had no sort of relapse.<sup>175</sup>

Gregory mentions this custom again in *Glory of the Martyrs*, this time when relating a story of when his brother-in-law was very ill, and his sister visited the tombs of Ferreolus and Ferrucio,

She knelt before their tombs, and she pressed her hands and face to the hard pavement. By chance it happened that the palm of her outstretched right hand closed on a leaf from the herb sage that had been scattered in the crypt in honor of the martyrs.<sup>176</sup>

While it is difficult to be specific, as references are often vague in given only in passing, such examples show that there is scope for the application of this type of theory.

As Halsall comments, smell is an ‘effective mnemonic trigger’.<sup>177</sup> One could go further than this, especially when considering the physiology of why it acts so effectively. The olfactory bulb, the section of the brain which deals primarily with the handling of scent, is part of the limbic system, and is closely structurally linked with the amygdala and the hippocampus (as well as the rest of the olfactory cortex and the hypothalamus.) A recent study on smell and memory discusses the nature of and the consequences of this relationship,<sup>178</sup>

In *Swann’s Way* (Proust 1919), the smell of a Madeleine biscuit dipped in linden tea triggers intense joy and memory of the author’s childhood, This experience, now referred to as the “Proust phenomenon” is the basis for the hypothesis that odor-evoked memories are more emotional than

<sup>175</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (686) 236; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. VI: 7.

<sup>176</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGM*, p. (535) 85; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chap. 70.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup>Rachel S. Herz and others, ‘Neuroimaging evidence for the emotional potency of odor-evoked memory’, *Neuropsychologia*, 42 (2004), 371-378.

memories elicited by other sensory stimuli.... Herz and colleagues have consistently shown that when a cue is presented in its olfactory form, memories are more emotional as indicated by self-report and physiological response<sup>179</sup>

Rituals conducted by the graveside, if they involved feasting and were, as they may well have been, emotionally significant events, would seem to lend themselves to this phenomenon. If the practice of scattering herbs around a tomb or burial site was not newly invented for the cult of saints (this seems unlikely), but a practice already in existence, then it is perhaps possible that the scent of these herbs would call up vivid memories and emotions involved with the burial and remembrance of kin. This intense visceral reaction would help to create deep meaning for the new practice. We can see, then, a possible way in which the two practices may have become linked and meaning shared between them. In turn, if the cult of saints came to be seen not only as equivalent to honouring one's ancestors (footnote Halsall), but actually covered more bases in terms of function, then we can see how emotional resonance might have been transferred from one ritual to another by means of sensory stimuli, without any *active* Christianization ever taking place.

Overall, then, Whitehouse's theory of modes places paramount importance on frequency of recurrence of ritual, which (in his view) helps to define the nature of the belief system, as well as *how* it is remembered. The cult of saints and funerary feasting, two activities theoretically disparate in terms of official recognition, presence of religious specialists, etc., can be seen to present similar challenges to this theory. Levels of observance seem to have been highly variable, and the experience of these activities cannot be assumed to have been uniform. Furthermore, sensory stimulation, not frequency, seems to have played a key role in both funerary feasting and the cult of saints. Both of these activities, then, might be seen to present a challenge to modes theory, and suggest that, in this instance, further interpretive tools would be required to better analyse them.

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<sup>179</sup>Rachel S. Herz and others, p. 371.

## Participants

There are other aspects of these activities which modes theory might help us understand. For example, what other factors affect how a ritual/performance might be differently received and understood by different participants/spectators? Common sense would probably suggest that a priest, an aristocrat and a peasant are unlikely to understand a ritual in the same way. If we are to think of it in terms of modes theory, we might suggest that while the religious specialist may stand at the doctrinal end of the spectrum, understanding and transmitting an idea in doctrinal terms, the lay listener might stand at the other end of the spectrum, receiving, translating and understanding the idea in imagistic terms. Seligman and Brown's recent article on anthropology and neuroscience<sup>180</sup> raises this point,

Anthropologists also have access to cross-cultural knowledge and a relativist epistemology that can help expose subtle cultural biases.... For instance, the prevailing experimental paradigm, which involves having members of two different cultural groups perform the same cognitive task, needs a more explicit recognition of the fact that the same task may have different meaning for different groups, and may therefore tap very different cognitive processes. The possibility that activation of different neural mechanisms might actually represent entirely different, and even unrelated, responses to the same task has not been adequately considered.<sup>181</sup>

Is it likely that the bishop officiating at the celebrations of a saint's day would experience it as a 'high arousal' event in the same way that a peasant might?<sup>182</sup> He is probably unlikely to have experienced hunger due to poverty, would he respond to provision of food and drink in the same way the poorest peasant might? Would he respond to the visual stimuli offered by the interior of the church in the same way? It is worth bearing in mind that when considering modes theory in the context of Christianization that it is a sliding scale, and that participants may move from one part of the scale to another depending on the ritual or idea under discussion. This distinction is especially important to bear in

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<sup>180</sup>Rebecca Seligman and Ryan A. Brown, 'Theory and Method at the Intersection of Anthropology and Cultural Neuroscience', *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 5 (2010), 130 -137 <doi:10.1093/scan/nsp032>.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, pg. 131

<sup>182</sup>See Cubitt's discussion of the differences between lay and ecclesiastical devotion in: Catherine Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England' in, Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe, *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2002), p. 426-7.

mind given the nature of our source materials, virtually without exception written from the point of view of religious professionals. Still, it is problematic for Whitehouse's model. If some participants are experiencing the ritual in an imagistic context, and others doctrinally - where exactly does that place it? Is there a defining boundary? Is one experience favoured over the other as the defining experience?

Questions such as these can be taken further. Whitehouse suggests that the physical conditions at certain rituals have a concrete impact on what they actually do. The types of terror-inducing rites which have a revelatory value on the participants also possess a sensory element. For example, he talks of Pfeiffer's ideas of what might have constituted religion in the Upper Palaeolithic period.<sup>183</sup> Pfeiffer suggests that initiation ceremonies were likely to have been carried out in underground caves and labyrinths, and that these provided an optimal environment for such rituals, the strangeness of the dark, cramped spaces and odd echoes created helped to embellish the traumatic revelatory event. As we have discussed above, participants at saint's days are likely to have experienced the event very differently. Gregory of Tours, for example, writes of the saints fairly often. They are practical Christian role models to him. He mentions that he has relics in a private reliquary, and dust that he carries around his neck. This is a massively different experience of the saints when compared to someone who might only encounter the saint at the tomb (which sources suggest were frequently cramped and packed with other people), and have the experience reinforced (if it was a saint's day) with pomp and ceremony, tales of miracles performed by the saint, and the provision of food and drink. Surely this experience is much closer to the type of 'high-stress' ritual Whitehouse mentions, with the prospect of a miracle the ultimate revelatory event? The spectrum of experiences available within the cult of saints, which could, at face-value, be regarded as a doctrinal phenomenon within a doctrinal belief system, calls into question how the labels 'imagistic' or 'doctrinal' are applied, and whether they can satisfactorily cover the complexity of this aspect of medieval Christianity

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<sup>183</sup>Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*, p. 163.

This issue of how the cult of saints might have been perceived by various participants highlights a larger issue in Christianization of this period. The means of recording the responses of the people are almost exclusively in the hands of churchmen. When we think about how laypeople might have engaged with the cult of saints, we are frequently thrown back on reading between the lines in source materials. With funerary feasting, this issue becomes more acute, given the relative lack of written sources on this topic, as well as the fact that the activity would seem to emanate from those who did not record their motives or ideas in the written record. If we are to take such feasting as a non-Christian activity, likely to be situated at the imagistic end of the spectrum, then our hopes of discerning more about it become slimmer yet, as Whitehouse claims that imagistic modes tend not to provide explanations for the meanings of rituals; as this would detract from the personal emotional experience. Steven Mithen points out, in his article examining the viability of Whitehouse's theory for early pre-history,<sup>184</sup> that Boyer's ideas on free interpretation of religious rituals in some societies backs up this view. Searching for a coherent set of motives behind funerary feasting, if we were to work by this rationale, would be virtually meaningless, as each example would be unique. If we were to label non-Christian activity as tending towards the imagistic, then, looking for patterns in funerary feasting and similarities with the cult of saints would become an almost impossible task.

However, Whitehouse's views on the primary purposes of burial rites depart from his general views of ritual in imagistic religions. Here, he seems instead to coincide with many of the prevailing historical and archaeological views: in that he suggests that political and societal meanings may have been of more importance than any religious symbolism,

Mortuary rites ....are not primarily directed at triggering religious revelations, even though they are often deeply moving and costly occasions....The vast amounts of money and wealth that may be directed into mortuary rites and ceremonial exchanges are intended primarily to reflect glory on the deceased/donor and his relatives/faction, rather than open up new forms of religious experience and understanding<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>From Ohalo to Catalhöyük: The Development of Religiosity during the Early Prehistory of Western Asia, 20,000-7000 BCE, in Martin and Whitehouse.

<sup>185</sup>Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*, p. 20.

While this may be the case, and while the sharing of food at feasts seems to be primarily about creating and maintaining bonds, this is not an entirely satisfactory explanation for deposition. Even if feasting had nothing to do with inspiring a revelatory experience, it still does not seem to fit completely into the idea of 'reflecting glory' on the participants. While the deposition of food and drink in the grave (along with the necessary vessels), might suggest the fact that the participants can afford to use these items for ceremonial purposes, it also creates a bond between the living and the dead; just as it does between the living participants in the funerary feast. Plus, the libation holes which can be found in some sarcophagi are not exactly showy. Would food or drink have been deposited in the grave via these libation holes on regular anniversaries as a continued obligation to the dead which maintained bonds? Would there have been others present? What of sites where there is no evidence of feasting at all? This is an area where gaps in our knowledge prevent us from drawing solid conclusions. It might be suggested that while there was an element of social display, the relationship between the living and dead still played a central role.

As regards figures of power, both funerary feasting and the celebratory aspect of the feast day would seem to be those areas in which religious specialists, as Whitehouse terms them, were not paramount. Although bishops and prominent members of the community seem to have been conspicuous on feast days, or it would appear to have been so - according to Gregory's description, it seems that *everyone* was still perceived to have been participating in the event. Whitehouse comments that the 'high arousal involved in the imagistic mode tends to produce emotional bonds between participants. In other words, there is intense social cohesion'<sup>186</sup>. It might be imagined, then, that feast days were an opportunity to define the Christian community and emphasise its unity. As we have discussed before, the bishop seems to have been a figure that could almost literally embody place. He is the representative of the diocese and the protector of those in it in both the earthly and spiritual sense. To have the spiritual head of the community lead a ceremony involving the whole community honouring the remains of a holy figure (often a local figure) who could intercede with God on behalf of the community must have produced intense social cohesion even without the imagistic element Whitehouse discusses. It is a

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<sup>186</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 14.

statement and affirmation of local identity as well as Christian community. As has been demonstrated, regional identity seems to have held some importance in this period, and part of the reason Merovingian Christianity seemed to thrive is due to its ability to embrace this regionality. This aspect of the cult of saints must have helped to affirm a sense of community, place and identity.

### Conclusion

‘It is never clear whether Christian relic cults were replacing the functions of pagan cults, ignoring them, or creating and satisfying new roles’<sup>187</sup>

While the idea that the cult of saints managed to fulfil many of the needs of funerary feasting is both interesting and persuasive, it does not do to forget the many other aspects of funerary feasting that it may *not* have fulfilled. The emotional aspect of commemoration and remembrance can perhaps be too easily dismissed in favour of attempts to discern wider social significance when considering cultural meanings behind funerary practice, and it should be borne in mind that these rituals may well have been closely tied to emotional needs. Howard Williams’ work addresses the importance of the emotional aspect of burial rites, and Halsall accepts his criticism that this dimension of the ritual may be somewhat absent from his own analysis. The complexity of the motivations and emotions involved in burial rites prevent us from drawing any easy comparisons.

Effros rightly comments that further intensive study of funerary feasting would involve analysing the frequency with which evidence of feasting and deposition is found in specific types of graves: male, female, elderly, children, high-status,

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<sup>187</sup>Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (University of California Press, 1985), p. 178.

etc. Later chapters will discuss the applicability of databases for such a project. Further, is funerary feasting and deposition geographically concentrated in certain areas? Does it occur more or less often in rural areas? All of these questions do merit closer examination and may offer fresh insights. It should be kept in mind, however, that the varying quality and availability of archaeological reports, as well as the disparity in excavated sites from region to region means that any results would have to be handled with extreme care. In short, those provisos which apply to our interpretation of written sources would have to be applied with equal consistency to any archaeological remains. As has been mentioned here repeatedly, a focus on specific regions would pay dividends, as opposed to a generalised approach to Gaul/Francia as a whole. This would give a clearer picture of the state of play across the region, and possibly throw fresh light on the topic as a whole. It would also be interesting to see whether funerary feasting, given that it plays a role in social display, is more concentrated in those areas and to those times where Halsall suggests that anxiety over status led to more lavish burial rites.

Another avenue of research in this area would be to examine the role played by purgatory and intercessory prayer, which develops later in the period. Effros focuses intensely on this idea in her studies of burial rites. The use of modes theory and other insights offered from the study of the cognitive science of religion in the area discussed here, that of the cult of saints and funerary feasting, would suggest that employing similar interrogative methods would be both interesting and productive. The ideas of memory and commemoration would seem to be particularly fruitful avenues for research.

Merovingian Christianity in the context of the cult of saints has been shown to be adaptable. It can offer an over-arching sense of unifying Christian identity, but also cater to local needs. It offers an ideal of holiness to clergy and laity alike, but also provides support and comfort for everyday issues. In fact, its very adaptability makes it a unique challenge for analysis using the cognitive science of religion. Its plasticity means it is difficult to place it definitely at one pole, or even at one point on a spectrum; it slithers from one point to another depending on who is experiencing it. While Merovingian Christianity has often been perceived as lacking in sophistication, it is actually this very quality of

being all things to all people which presents modes theory with its greatest difficulties in analysis.

Equally, funerary feasting can be seen to pose some interesting questions. While it was officially the subject of disapproval, the Church does not seem to have been particularly active in curbing this activity. Does this influence whether we ought to regard it as imagistic or doctrinal? Are all activities which might have been carried out without the approval of 'religious specialists' automatically imagistic? Further, when some religious specialists express disapproval while others remain silent - how do we judge the activity? This again raises questions about the cognitive science of religion and how it might interact with the wider historiographical discourse: if we are to designate clergy-led activities as generally doctrinal and those emanating from 'the people' as imagistic, does the utilisation of modes theory in the examination of Christianization reinforce the discourse of 'elite' versus 'popular' religion? Is the notion of elite and popular religion, with its suggested monoliths, helpful in an examination of Merovingian Christianity at all?

## Chapter 6. Monasticism: Part One

Furthermore, for the advancement of religion he provided two roads to Christ, by founding a monastery within sight of the town, across the river Yonne, so that the surrounding population might be brought to the Catholic faith, by contact with the monastic community as well as the ministrations of the church.<sup>1</sup>

### Intent

This section will look at monasticism and its role in Christianization in the north-east, focusing on the ecclesiastic province of Trier. While Merovingian monasticism (especially that described as Columbanian or Iro-Frankish) is often perceived to be a major influence on Christianization, the evidence for monasticism in the north-east is rather scarce and difficult to interpret. The usual problems presented by the paucity of our sources are exacerbated by the practice of re-use of buildings, which will be discussed in more detail later. For the region and time in which we are interested, only a relatively small number of monastic foundations can be named with confidence:

St Evre in Toul seems to have been founded in the early sixth century, around 507, by St Evre. It was situated slightly outside the city walls. Remiremont was founded by Romaric in 620. Sainte-Marie ad Martyres in Trier is difficult to date, but could have been founded either in the first half of the seventh century, or the first half of the sixth century, which means it might belong within our parameters. St Pierre-aux-Nonains in Metz was founded, Halsall suggests, at some point in between 595-610. Gauthier suggests a later date of foundation. It provides a good example of the re-use of Roman architecture, which will be discussed in more detail later. St Pient à Moyenvic was located in the diocese of

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<sup>1</sup>From the *Life of Germanus of Auxerre*, by Constantius of Lyon, in Noble, ed, *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1995), p. 81.

Metz and founded by St Pient. St Symphorien in Trier, a female community, was founded by Modoaldus (then bishop of Trier) in 630 for his sister Severa. There seems to have been a monastery which served St Rémi, a basilica in Metz. This is mentioned by Gregory, which gives us an idea of when the monastery was in existence.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to gain a sense of the date of foundation. All we can tell is that it seems to have been in existence in 585. There was possibly a St Symphorien in Metz, too, founded by Papolus in the early seventh century, but Gauthier points out that it is difficult to ascertain the nature of this foundation, and this may simply have been a basilica. There is a monastery of St Martin/Airy in Verdun which might fit our criteria, but it is difficult to get an idea of a foundation date. Luxeuil and Annegray will also be mentioned. Although they are technically beyond the boundaries of our regions, they are close enough to the border and of such high prestige that they exerted a strong influence over monastic life in the region. Also to be taken into account here should be smaller establishments, possibly villa-based, of which it is virtually impossible to find any mention, not to mention recluses.

### Context

In order to analyse monasticism in this area and period in more detail it is necessary to provide some context for monastic culture across Francia in general, which will include a look at the historiography of the topic. After some of the key themes have been identified, the discussion will then return to the north-east.

Most studies of Merovingian monasticism are still influenced by earlier German scholarship. Geary's assessment of the monastic situation in Gaul prior to the arrival of Columbanus,<sup>3</sup> for example, is largely drawn from Prinz's influential survey of Merovingian monasticism.<sup>4</sup> Prinz's study asserts that there were essentially two main strands of monasticism in Gaul before the arrival of

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<sup>2</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, p. 421; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VIII: 21.

<sup>3</sup>Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 140.

<sup>4</sup>Friedrich Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum Im Frankenreich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1965).

Columbanus: one of which was inspired by the tradition of Lérins, the other by St Martin of Tours. Cassian's work is largely grouped alongside the Lérins tradition.

The key figure of one of the two main strands of asceticism described by Prinz, Martin of Tours was unique in that his particular style of asceticism was combined with public office, in this case, his role as bishop. Subsequently, the type of monasticism which evolved from his example is a style which Geary describes as, 'a rather eclectic form combining Eastern traditions of asceticism with the life of the Gallic clergy in the West'<sup>5</sup> However, this presents us with some difficulties in actually identifying examples of it. We know that Marmoutiers and Ligugé are two earliest foundations in this tradition. It is often difficult to discern much of the internal organisation of the communities that appeared in response to Martin's example, as is the case with many Merovingian monasteries, although we might guess at the general principles. Its spread (along with Martin's cult) from the Aquitaine region as far east as Trier can be largely attributed to the attention paid to it by Clovis.

The other main strand described by Prinz, the Lérins strand, is largely found in the Rhône area. Lérins, founded in the first decade of the fifth century, was heavily coloured by Eastern, or purportedly Eastern, traditions, such as Cassian's Conferences. As Geary points out, the timing of its arrival was also convenient for those aristocrats from the north who were perhaps looking for safety and stability.<sup>6</sup> Lérins maintained a culture of learning which, alongside its ability to attract aristocracy, meant that it produced religious men who would eventually become influential in the wider Merovingian church, the most notable of whom is probably Caesarius of Arles. Prinz's study contains maps which demonstrate how influence spread out from Lérins, giving a sense of just how far its reach was: Troyes, Paris, and Tours. As Dunn comments:

If the aristocratic leadership of Lérins had initially been drawn to the religious life out of feelings of insecurity, these feelings must have begun to fade somewhat as imperial restoration in Gaul got underway and they could now resume more conventional aristocratic careers by becoming bishops....Lupus left Lérins ostensibly to dispose of his property but was

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<sup>5</sup>Geary, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p. 144.

prevailed upon to become bishop of Troyes....Maximus and Faustus were successively bishops of Riez<sup>7</sup>

The 'Eastern' style of asceticism and culture of learning which characterised Lerins was thus spread to other parts of Gaul.

While Prinz's idea of two categories of monastic culture offers us a useful way to think about monasticism before the arrival of Columbanus, it runs the risk of simplifying an incredibly diverse picture. Although there are gaps in our knowledge of monastic life at this time, the information we do have suggests that flexibility, diversity and innovation were the norm, as opposed to two rigid models.

The period on which this study is focused (570-630) was a period which saw great changes in the monastic life of Francia. Any examination of monasticism in Merovingian Francia inevitably runs the risk of being almost entirely dominated by Columbanus, whose arrival in the late sixth century (around 590) radically altered the monastic landscape and in many ways set the stage for later major political and religious figures, casting a long shadow over any monastic tradition which existed before his arrival. However, more recent analyses have tempered this view. Wood points out that there was rather more nuance in Columbanus' impact than it might sometimes seem, noting that if adherence to his Rule is taken as an indicator of influence, then there was actually a rather wide spectrum of influence<sup>8</sup>. This nuance, however, is not always reflected in the historiography, which tends to focus almost exclusively on Columbanian monasticism<sup>9</sup>, especially in the northeast, where the contrast in the number of monastic foundations before and after Columbanus is especially striking. Columbanus himself seems to have taken a rather negative view of the standards of the Christian culture he found in Gaul,

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<sup>7</sup>Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, New edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), p. 83.

<sup>8</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, (London: Longman, 1994), p. 188-9.

<sup>9</sup>See Gauthier, for example. While she discusses monastic foundations within sections on individual towns, her main discussion of monasticism focuses almost entirely on Columbanus and his impact. Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle: La Province Romaine De Première Belgique Entre Antiquité Et Moyen-Age (IIIe-VIIIe Siècles)* (Paris: Boccard, 1980), pp. 271-345.

I render thanks to my God, that for my sake so many holy men have been gathered together to treat of the truth of faith and good works.... Would that you did so more often; and though you have not always leisure to maintain this *canonical practice*<sup>10</sup>

It is worth noting that Columbanus had, by this point, managed to make enemies amongst the Frankish episcopacy over the many issues with which he found fault, not least of which was general standards within the Church, as well as the proper dating of Easter. Columbanus' observations, coupled with Boniface's later scathing comments<sup>11</sup> and the general disapprobation heaped on the period by its Carolingian successors, helped to contribute to the image of Merovingian Gaul as almost entirely undistinguished as regards monasticism, with Lérins, Marmoutiers and Marseilles perhaps the only exceptions to the rule. The fact that the evidence we do have for Merovingian monasticism prior to Columbanus is fragmented and inconclusive only adds to the difficulties.

An excerpt from Pierre Riché's article on Merovingian monasticism, 'Columbanus, His Followers and the Merovingian Church'<sup>12</sup> provides an instructive example of this rather old-fashioned and negative view of the likely state of Merovingian monasticism (and the entire Merovingian church) prior to Columbanus.

Thanks to Gregory of Tours and to the canons of Merovingian councils, we are well acquainted with the Merovingian Church. The resulting picture is rather gloomy....If some bishops - like Gregory of Tours - were worthy of their office, many others, appointed by the king, were administrators and politicians and were unconcerned with their role as pastors....urban and rural clergy lived like laymen....Monasticism was powerless to regenerate the secular clergy, for it, too, had much wrong with it. Rules differed from monastery to monastery and no kind of union was possible....Political reasons retired men to monasteries, which had often to welcome thoroughly unstable recruits thrust on them by royal policy....Both religious education and monastic spirituality were at best mediocre.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Columbanus, *Letter II*, trans. by G.S.M. Walker and Ruth Murphy, *The Letters of Columbanus* (CELT, University College, Cork, 2008).

<sup>11</sup>Boniface, *Bonifatii Et Lulli Epistolae*, ed. by Ernst Dummler, *MGH Epistolarum III* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892).

<sup>12</sup>Pierre Riché, 'Columbanus, His Followers and the Merovingian Church' in Clarke and Brennan, eds, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, *British Archaeological Reports, International Series*, 113, (Oxford, 1981) pp. 59-87.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 59-61.

This is a dim view, indeed, but this was the view of Merovingian Christianity often presented before its more recent rehabilitation. Riché's assertions of mediocrity and unsatisfactory bishops suggest that he is (unconsciously or otherwise) comparing them to the Carolingian church which benefited from the reforming impulses of both Columbanus and Boniface. His use of the lack of uniformity in Merovingian monasticism as a means by which to condemn it, however, confirms that he is falling into the common pattern of using the Carolingians as a stick with which to beat the Merovingians and applying an arbitrary 'standard' of Christianity against which they have to be judged to measure 'success'. As we have seen elsewhere in this study, it is the very flexibility and heterogeneity of Merovingian Christianity which aided its growth and vitality.

The view of Columbanian monasticism and its impact upon the religious life of Merovingian Francia has undergone recent re-assessment. While there was a period where Columbanus was viewed as some sort of tonic for Christian life in Francia, it is now increasingly accepted that there was monastic life before Columbanus, and that his influence is not as immediate or obvious as might be imagined. Wood's article on Burgundian monasticism probably provided the roots of this argument.<sup>14</sup> Fouracre's discussion of the impact of Columbanus in his article on seventh-century Francia points out that the degree of his influence has come into question. The divide between 'old' and 'new' monasteries does not seem to have been as clear as previously thought, and he also suggests that Columbanian monasticism was *part* of the slow spread of Christian life to the countryside, instead of the principal impetus. On top of this, Wood argues that the Columbanian Rule itself only had a limited impact on monastic life.<sup>15</sup> While a dismissal of Columbanus's influence would obviously be incorrect, the critical reappraisal of his impact in recent studies creates a more nuanced view of the situation.

The dim view of Merovingian monasticism has been partially enabled by the usual scarcity of evidence across Francia throughout this time period, which

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<sup>14</sup>Ian Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories', in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, pp. 3-32.

<sup>15</sup>Paul Fouracre, 'Francia in the Seventh Century' in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: C. 500-c. 700*, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 383-4.

makes it appear as if the monasticism of the sixth century was in something of a decline, or simply stagnating. Wood makes the excellent point,

In the sixth century, however, there is an apparent decline in the quantity and quality of evidence for monasticism, which has sometimes been taken to imply a decline in monasticism itself....In other respects the case for monastic decline in the sixth century is less easy to substantiate: there is a danger in expecting the same sort of evidence from a period of consolidation as from one on innovation.<sup>16</sup>

The north-east is a particular example of this issue, then, as lack of documentary evidence is especially stark in this region. It is extremely difficult to tell what the monastic situation may have been in this region prior to the arrival of Columbanus, after which point there is a definite growth in the number of monastic foundations. Wood comments that early monasticism in the north may simply be 'underrepresented'.<sup>17</sup> The nature of some types of monastic formation itself in this period also presents its own difficulties. Although some established monasteries existed and possessed set procedures and practices, it does not seem to have been particularly unusual for men and women to simply gather around relics and shrines and for loose communities to spontaneously develop. Wood cites the monastery of St Benignus as an example of this,<sup>18</sup> and mentions that the journey St Benignus took towards becoming an established monastery may have been as 'ill-defined' at the time as it seems to us now.<sup>19</sup>

### Monastic Rules

If identifying and defining monastic activity presents unique difficulties, then it must also be noted that identifying the types of monastic rules followed by monasteries offers up similar problems. The practice in Gaul prior to Columbanus' arrival seems to have been essentially eclectic, with many different influences at play. Cassian's *Institutes*, which purported to be sources of Eastern monastic knowledge, seem to have been some of the earliest writings

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<sup>16</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 182.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Ian Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus: The Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories', in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

influencing monastic culture in Gaul. Cassian himself seems to have arrived in Marseilles around 420, where he established two monasteries. His own style of monasticism shows influences from the Rules of Basil and Pachomius, especially in the focus on physical work; Cassian was apparently critical of the amount of liturgical offices in the pre-existing monasticism he found, preferring instead a focus on work and contemplation. In turn, the writings of Cassian, Basil and Pachomius all seem to have exerted a degree of influence over Lérins. The Jura monasteries (founded by Lupicinus and Romanus towards the middle of the fifth century) also show evidence of their influence, as they in turn were influenced by Lérins, but they also seem to have had their own Rule.<sup>20</sup>

On top of these influences, The *Augustinian Rule* and the *Rule of the Fathers* also seem to have been in circulation, although it is not always easy for us to tell which Rule was used by specific monasteries. If Lérins and Jura are to be taken as examples of how monasteries operated, it is probably the case that monasteries selected parts of various rules which suited their special needs. As for the early tradition of small, home/villa based monasteries which seems to have existed (possibly only one resident living a monastic lifestyle), it is virtually impossible to tell what sort of Rule might have been used in these instances, if indeed one was used at all. However, our knowledge of the sorts of monastic Rules which were in circulation allows us to guess at some of the general principles deemed central to monastic thought and life.

Early monastic life in Francia, then, seems to have been informed by various texts and Rules which emphasised key principles and some organisational details. While the *Rule of the Fathers* has traditionally been considered to be contemporary to the Rules we have just discussed, Dunn has now revised her opinion on this, stating that the level of detail and prescriptiveness found in this Rule does not fit with the more generalised, rather loose Rules we have seen in early Gaul/Francia. Instead, she suggests that it was the revolt of the monks at Bobbio which directly inspired this Rule. The problems caused by the vagueness and harshness of Columbanus' Rule, and an abbot who lacked Columbanus' particular charisma can be seen in many ways to be dealt with directly by this *Rule*. The *Rule of the Fathers* does seem incongruous when considered

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<sup>20</sup>Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 85.

alongside its so-called contemporary Rules and contexts, and fits much more convincingly into this later context. The so-called *Rule of Eugippius*, which incorporates many other texts, would also come under this category, and seems to be especially tailored for individual cells.<sup>21</sup> Dunn's discussion of Weber's idea of the charismatic leader in the monastic context is also relevant to the role of the ascetic, and will be discussed in more detail later.

The final notable monastic Rules to be mentioned are Caesarius of Arles' *Rule for Monks* and *Rule for Virgins*. Caesarius produced the *Rule for Nuns* after he founded a female community on becoming bishop. The fact that he was asked to do so perhaps suggests the lack of any one dominant Rule, as well as the fact that the Abbess felt it was appropriate to ask for a specific Rule for the needs of their foundation. The *Rule* Caesarius produced emphasises enclosure and intercessory prayer, and shows the influence of Cassian, Augustine and Lérins.<sup>22</sup> It seems to have persisted, and is still in use in the seventh century.<sup>23</sup> The *Rule for Monks* emphasises basic principles and offers some structures for monastic life in terms of prayer and fasting, but still does not show the same level of detail as can be found in the *Rule of the Fathers*.

The monastic situation in terms of Rules, then, which Columbanus found on his arrival, is likely to have been varied, a combination of liturgy, contemplative study, and manual labour, with varying degrees of emphasis on each depending on the nature of the establishment. It is not likely to have seemed entirely alien to Columbanus and his colleagues either; as Dunn points out, Cassian and Basil seem to have been fairly influential in Irish monasticism.<sup>24</sup> As for the type of Rule Columbanus himself sought to impose, *The Monastic Rule* and *The Communal Rule* are much less focused on administrative matters than the *Rule of the Fathers* mentioned above,<sup>25</sup> for example, preferring to emphasize instead key monastic principles: obedience, abstention, silence, etc. The role of the abbot is invested with much power, and obedience is paramount, with harsh punishments for disobedience. Increased enclosure (Rule Twenty-Six), a focus

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<sup>21</sup>Marilyn Dunn, 'Columbanus, Charisma and the Revolt of the Monks of Bobbio', *Peritia*, 2006, pp. 1-27 (p. 19).

<sup>22</sup>Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 100.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. p. 174.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. pp. 88-9.

<sup>25</sup>Dunn, 'Columbanus, Charisma and the Revolt of the Monks of Bobbio', pp. 1-27.

on liturgy and relatively harsh dietary restrictions are also notable (Rule Three - Of Food and Drink V, although it should be noted that Columbanus is similarly prescriptive regarding the eating and drinking habits of laymen also). Later, a mixture of the Columbanian and Benedictine Rules would be employed, in the north of Francia first before later spreading to the south. Given the relative vagueness of Columbanus's *Rule*, and the detailed instructions of the Benedictine *Rule*, the popularity of the so-called 'mixed rule' is readily explicable.

In short, the picture across Gaul/Francia was far from uniform in terms of monastic rules. A variety of monastic rules seem to have been employed, with founders choosing those which suited their own foundation best. It is difficult, therefore, for us to gain an entirely accurate idea of the monastic experience prior to Columbanus's arrival, although we can probably pick out the most plausible features. Further, the degree of adherence to Columbanus's *Rule* following his arrival is now generally deemed to have been more varied than previously believed with, as mentioned before, Wood suggesting more of a spectrum of adherence and influence. As we have seen with other facets of religious life in Merovingian Gaul, then, adaptability and innovation seem to have been both common and acceptable.

### Monastic Structures

This adaptability and innovation can also be seen to be at play when it comes to monastic structures themselves. Detecting the sites of Merovingian monastic foundations is far from easy, due to both archaeological reasons and the nature of the phenomenon itself. There seems to have been a habit of re-use of buildings, in the north east of the country, at least. James comments on this,

One question that the archaeologist ought to pose more often is whether the site he is excavating is monastic or not....One passage from Gregory of Tours will make the point very clearly. Gregory tells how St Senoch 'found, in the territory of Tours, old walls on the ruins of which he constructed suitable buildings; he also reconstructed an oratory....But what could the excavator of such a site learn? Could he recognize a building as Merovingian if it has Roman walls for its foundations, or recognize as a Merovingian monastic church a late Roman oratory probably rebuilt with Roman masonry? Obviously he could not. Nor would

he be likely to identify a Roman villa put into service as a monastery, or an urban house converted to monastic use.<sup>26</sup>

This means, as James goes on to point out, that archaeologists searching for evidence of monasticism are more likely to gravitate towards those sites which are known to have been used, and which are easily identified as monastic. As James comments, this makes it very difficult to talk accurately about how the structure of monastic foundations changed and developed in Merovingian Gaul.<sup>27</sup> It is also possible, as he says, that there was no standard model monastery and, as with monastic rules, founders could devise or adapt whichever model suited best.<sup>28</sup> This type of adaptability would certainly fit in with what else we have seen of Merovingian Christianity. More worryingly, it means that smaller buildings which could have been utilised for monastic purposes have the ability to fly complete beneath the radar, which means there may be a false picture painted of monasticism for this period, with a whole strand of smaller scale monasticism whose existence can only really be guessed at. Percival's article on monasteries in late Roman Gaul<sup>29</sup> suggests two main ideas on this subject: seamless transition from villa-based monastic life to a more defined small monastic community, and the opportunistic appropriation of derelict buildings by monks.<sup>30</sup> Lack of documentation makes it difficult to assess which is more likely for our region, as well as the possible scale of such activities.

To conclude this section, it can be seen that monasticism in Francia consisted of an array of differing practices, ideas and establishments. Innovation and adaptability were central in its spread and vitality. Although attempts to categorise it more tidily, such as Aquitainian vs. Lérinian, or pre-Columbanian vs. post-Columbanian, offer us useful ways to think about the topic, they also create division where none may have existed. Further, the questioning of traditionally-held ideas on the *Rule of the Fathers* offers a new insight into the development of monastic life. Monastic rules, heavily influenced by Cassian and Basil, were adopted and adapted according to need and, while the advent of

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<sup>26</sup>Edward James, 'Archaeology and the Merovingian Monastery', in *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, eds. Clarke and Brennan, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>29</sup>John Percival, 'Villas and Monasteries in Late Roman Gaul', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 48 (1997), 1-21 <doi:10.1017/S0022046900011957>.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. p. 11.

Columbanian monasticism obviously led to the introduction of a new style of establishment, older forms still persisted, and the Columbanian Rule was by no means universally adopted; instead, it was 'mixed rules' which probably were most common.

### Gregory of Tours and Monasticism

What is there to be gained from an examination of Gregory of Tours' writings on monasticism? Gregory is generally quiet as regards the subject in the *DHF*, although he goes into the revolt at Holy Cross in some depth. Gregory's main writings on asceticism are mostly featured in his hagiographical works, where all of those figures whom Gregory feels are worthy of inclusion are presented as models of Christian life in some respect. The same signs of saintliness which were discussed earlier in the context of bishop saints largely appear here too: healing, freeing of prisoners, etc. The building projects we see bishops undertake appear here too, but usually in the guise of the founding of monasteries, although some oratories are mentioned. However, James counsels caution. Not only are the ascetics mentioned by Gregory generally of a lower social order than his bishops (which might be seen as a bar to achieving the episcopacy), but their errors are instructive,

they lose heart (VP I 1 and VP IX 2), they fail to make a success of communal living (VP IX 1), and they succumb to vainglory (VP X 2; VP XI 2), or to quarrelling (VP XX 3). Two of them, Senoch and Leobardus (VP XV and XX), have to be recalled to the paths of righteousness by their bishop, Gregory of Tours himself, in passages whose lesson is less that than the glory of the eremitical life than of the necessity to obey bishops.<sup>31</sup>

We see in these accounts Gregory's approval of discreet personal asceticism, either in a communal or solitary monastic life. As James points out, inspirational recluses could easily attract attention and followers. Dunn's discussion of Weber's charismatic leaders in the context of monasticism also underlines the risks posed by recluses, as they often match many of the

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<sup>31</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, p. xv.

characteristics mentioned in her discussion.<sup>32</sup> Alternative sources of authority are risky enough when they are visible and easily monitored by the bishop (deacons seem to be volatile individuals, for example). A recluse living out in the countryside, however, has the potential to become a large threat, perhaps even a heretical threat, before he is noticed.<sup>33</sup> His very presence might even draw attention to the bishop's possible lack of reach into rural areas. This tension regarding the correct 'degrees' of asceticism occurs twice in *VP*. Interestingly, Gregory often seems to simply treat it as an issue of appropriateness to setting. Asceticism beyond the norm in a communal setting seems to attract the hostility of fellow monks. Gregory does not seem to be judgmental of this hostility, but will usually then go on to remark that the monk in question decides to leave the monastery to pursue the solitary ascetic life. For Gregory, some monks are simply suited to the coenobitic life, others to the solitary. There does not seem to be any great tension surrounding a monk's departure from the monastery in this type of circumstance, nor in them apparently leaving a trail of foundations in their wake.

It is worth thinking about the possible role of recluses in Christianization from another perspective. We can see from *VP* that whilst Gregory is often admiring of recluses as model Christians, he is also cautious. Good recluses take care to avoid fame, and usually found monasteries for any followers who gather around them, containing their enthusiasm in an acceptable organisational structure which can be controlled by the bishop and then move on. This is also an effective way of Christianizing the landscape, establishing groups of the faithful in previously barren places, who are also safely under the control of the local bishop. This idea of a physical relationship between Christianity and the land can be seen to be deepened in the interactions between recluses and nature. It has already been discussed in previous chapters that in Gregory of Tours' hagiographies, saints' tombs often infuse the landscape with holiness; Christianity and the natural landscape can often be seen to be acting together, with healing trees and flowers blooming around saints' tombs as one example of

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<sup>32</sup>Dunn, 'Columbanus, Charisma and the Revolt of the Monks of Bobbio', 1-27.

<sup>33</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, p. xv.

this.<sup>34</sup>The idea of Christianity reclaiming the landscape has also been discussed, with martyrs' tombs being discovered in overgrown and ruined areas, creating saint's shrines out of previously neglected land, or bishops undertaking the restoration or rebuilding of earlier Christian building that had fallen into disrepair and ruin. If we look more closely at these themes, they can be seen to especially be at play with recluses and abbots. St Senoch, an abbot, founds a monastery in old ruins at Tours. Leobardus digs his own cell out of a rocky hillside,<sup>35</sup> as does Caluppa.<sup>36</sup> Friardus plants sticks in the ground which miraculously grow into trees, attracting crowds of the faithful (although he is careful to cut down the first tree to avoid vainglory from his fame).<sup>37</sup> The activities of these recluses emphasise the essential Christian character of the landscape.

There are other interesting details to be gleaned from Gregory's writings regarding monasticism. For example, as mentioned previously, when Leobardus and his neighbours are arguing over 'monastic matters',<sup>38</sup> Gregory feels that the *Vita Patrum (Life of the Fathers)*, and Cassian's *De Institutis Coenobiorum (The Institution of Monks)* are suitable texts to recommend in order to remind everyone of their duties, and to ensure future harmony,<sup>39</sup> thus supporting earlier suggestions that these texts were the basis of monastic life. It is also mentioned that Leobardus almost serves a sort of 'apprenticeship' by living in a cell near Marmoutier, 'There he began to make parchment with his own hands, and prepare it for writing; there he learnt to understand the Holy Scriptures and to memorise the Psalms of David'. Leobardus gains 'proper' learning, which is implied to be 'correct' as it occurs near Marmoutier, before he sets out on his solitary career. Abbot Brachio has to return to the monastery at Menat to enforce proper discipline, as the rule 'had been relaxed through the negligence of the abbot'.<sup>40</sup> (This again harks back to Dunn's point regarding the need for a

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<sup>34</sup>Made especially apparent in Gregory of Tours, *LGC*, p. (810) 360; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. 96, where Gregory remarks 'the Redeemer orders the very elements [of nature] to be obedient to them'.

<sup>35</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (741) 291; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XX: 3.

<sup>36</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (709) 259; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XI: 1.

<sup>37</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (705) 255; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. X: 3.

<sup>38</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (743) 293; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XX: 3.

<sup>39</sup>This asks more questions of Geary's idea of an active divide in monasticism. Cassian's writings can be closely linked to Lérins in terms of Eastern influence and theological outlook, yet Gregory seems comfortable suggesting his work as an exemplar of monastic living.

<sup>40</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (715) 265; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. XII: 3.

detailed and carefully drawn rule in the absence of a charismatic leader). While Gregory does not discuss his dealings with monasteries in his diocese in the *Histories*, he mentions the foundation of several monasteries in Tours in passing in *Life of the Fathers*. He seems to have access to some version of the Life of the Jura Fathers, as he writes about Lupicinus and Romanus.<sup>41</sup> In short, Gregory of Tours is far from silent on the subject of monasticism, despite the rarity of the topic in the *Histories*, and there is much to be gained from close examination of his writings.

### Monasticism and the Wider World: monks and bishops, monks and laity

This relationship between bishops and monks in the Merovingian period has come under frequent scrutiny in many different studies, usually in the context of changing models of holiness and power struggles. As discussed above, the reasoning behind bishops' desires to maintain episcopal control over any type of monastic endeavour would seem obvious, both in terms of the possibilities of incorrect doctrine and/or usurpation of the power of the bishop. Further to this, monastic foundations which contained influential men and women, possibly from rival families, might well have been threatening institutions to a bishop. Royal monasteries came with very evident potential pitfalls, an extreme example of which can be seen at Holy Cross in Poitiers.<sup>42</sup> Both Geary and Wood highlight the issue of episcopal control over monastic foundations, with Geary noting especially anxiety over control of relics, and Wood commenting on the level of 'spiritual authority' that a prominent monastery could achieve.<sup>43</sup>

How else, then, can we gain any further insights into the relationship between bishop and monks at this time? Church councils might offer some useful inroads. While institutions such as Lérins produced noteworthy churchmen, and while the route to the diocesan office often went through the role of abbot, we have already noted that bishops can be seen as having a rather uneasy relationship with monks and monasteries. Competition over the control of relics is one issue that could spark conflict, but, generally speaking, bishops preferred to be in

<sup>41</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, pp. (663-7) 213-7; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, bk. I.

<sup>42</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 460-4; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. IX: 39.

<sup>43</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 74.

control of any type of religious community in their region. We have seen elsewhere that the church's ambitions regarding behavioural control of the laity were advanced and sophisticated. It would logically follow that their ambitions over control of monastic life would be equally high. What we do tend to find in church councils are, first and foremost, concerns over discipline, which are understandable given the context. Abbots are to ensure that their monasteries are well-disciplined, but equally to recognise that they themselves are under the control of the bishop, who can in turn control the abbot's powers and call into question any unacceptable behaviour. Also highly visible is the bishops' assertion of control over the creation of new monasteries.

The diocesan synod of Auxerre<sup>44</sup> contains some interesting canons which pertain particularly to monasteries. They are as follows:

CanonTwenty-Three - If a monk commits adultery, steals, or owns private possessions, and his abbot does not correct this or inform a superior, then he shall be sent to another monastery to do penance.

CanonTwenty-Four states that no abbot or monk may attend a wedding.

CanonTwenty-Five states that they may not act as godfather.

CanonTwenty-Six states that if an abbot allows a woman to assist at festivals within the monastery, or even enter the monastery at all, then he will be enclosed in another monastery for three months and only given bread and water.

While these canons might superficially paint a bleak picture of monasticism in this period, suggesting a general ignorance or disregard of the principles of monasticism, it is worth noting that councils were called to check any problems and to try and enforce uniform standards. What do these canons tell us?

Firstly, they suggest some blurring of the divisions between lay and monastic life. These canons do betray some tensions between fulfilling the monastic role and continued involvement in family life. It should be noted throughout that many of the issues raised are key principles set out by Caesarius in his *Rule for Monks*, most noticeably in regards to private possessions, relationships between the monastery and the outside world, and the admittance of women to the

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<sup>44</sup>*Synodus Autissiodorensis a. 561 - 605 CC SL*, 148A; de Clercq, 1963, pp. 265-272.

monastery. They also do, unavoidably, raise the image of the aristocratic monk with no real vocation, carrying on his usual lifestyle. It is important to note that the abbot is included in these canons. Not only might the abbot be the one carrying out the forbidden activity, but he is also perceived as someone who may not be enforcing discipline properly. The earlier council of Orléans (507) is clear regarding the authority of bishops over monks. It is interesting to note, given the earlier discussion on monastic rules, that the wording here suggests that monasteries may follow a variety of different rules.

19. Abbots, because of the humility of religion, shall be under the control of bishops, and if they do something outside their Rule, they shall be corrected by bishops. Every year they shall gather at his summons in the place he chooses. But monks shall be subject to their abbots in all obedience. If one of them is contumacious or wanders around or presumes to have something of his own, all he may have acquired shall be taken from him by his abbots, according to the Rule, for the profit of his monastery. But those who wander around where they are found, shall be brought, as fugitives, with the bishop's aid, under guard, and the abbot who in future does not discipline such persons with correct punishment, or who receives an alien monk, shall know he is guilty.<sup>45</sup>

This same council also mentions some of the same disciplinary issues raised by Auxerre, albeit in more detail. For example, the issue of personal possessions arises again,

20. No monk may use a stole in the monastery or may possess rings with gems.<sup>46</sup>

The issue of inappropriate familial connections outside the monastery is raised too,

21. If it is proved that a monk has lived in a monastery or received the habit and later marries a wife, one guilty of such a deception shall never ascend to ecclesiastical office.<sup>47</sup>

This preoccupation with ensuring that family ties were not maintained in any form between the monastery and the outside world could also be seen to be,

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<sup>45</sup>*Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe*, Middle Ages Series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 102.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.* p. 102.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

again, an anxiety over social networks existing beyond the control of the church. Although such relationships are obviously inappropriate for a monk, it is also conceivable that bishops may have seen these connections as threatening, in some way, and sought to ensure that they were forbidden.<sup>48</sup> Rivalries could often exist between powerful families, as Ian Wood points out.<sup>49</sup> It is understandable that a bishop, who perhaps had a troublesome and powerful local family, or untrustworthy underlings, would prefer to keep a tight hold on the development of potentially hostile networks between monasteries and those in the wider community. The issue of maintaining a clearly defined boundary between the monastery and the outside world is raised in several church councils: Orleans (511)<sup>50</sup> Epaone (517),<sup>51</sup> Tours (567),<sup>52</sup> and Auxerre (578/85).<sup>53</sup>

Also interesting in the context of the spread and control of monasticism is this canon from the Council of Orleans,

22. No monk who has abandoned the monastic congregation, impelled by ambition and vanity, shall presume to build a cell of his own will, without permission of his bishop and abbot.<sup>54</sup>

This would suggest that a tight control over the spread of monasteries was seen as desirable. This is understandable; bishops would prefer to have control of influential religious institutions within their dioceses, especially given the possibility of rivalry mentioned previously. There is also the issue, of course, of maintaining control over the spiritual life of the community. The creation of new monasteries without first informing the bishop was also forbidden at the council of Epaone.

Church councils, then, offer some insights into the practicalities of monastic life. The issue of control over the monastery and the monks, by both the abbot and bishop, is seen to be an on-going and key concern. The relationship between the monastery and the wider world is highlighted, and the importance

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<sup>48</sup> It is worth remembering, however, that there was some disapproval of married bishops.

Gregory of Tours is particularly keen to discourage this practice.

<sup>49</sup> Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 79.

<sup>50</sup> *Concilium Aurelianense*, a. 511 CC SL, 148A; de Clercq, pp. 4-14.

<sup>51</sup> *Concilium Epaonense*, a. 517 CC SL, 148A; de Clercq, pp. 22-23; 24-37.

<sup>52</sup> *Concilium Turonense* a. 567 CC SL, 148A; de Clercq, 1963, pp. 176-199.

<sup>53</sup> *Synodus Autissiodorensis* a. 561 - 605 CC SL, 148A; de Clercq, pp. 265-272.

<sup>54</sup> *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750*, p. 102.

of clear boundaries between ascetics and the laity first hinted at earlier in Gregory of Tours' writings on recluses can be seen to be emphasised again.

Although the Christianization of the countryside is often mentioned as a by-product of the growth of monasteries in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, the actual nature of the engagement between the monastery and the laity is seldom made clear. While Martin of Tours' Christianization of the Touraine seems to have taken the form of the frequent foundation of churches which had more obvious ways of interacting with communities, monasticism's methods are not as obvious. Constantius of Lyon's comment, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, on Christianizing the locals 'by contact' with the monastery is vague. Christianization by dint of claiming, or reclaiming, the landscape is a fairly common theme in the hagiographies we have examined so far. Acquiring relics might well have been another means by which a relationship could form between the people and the monastery. Economic activity probably also played a role in this relationship. Halsall comments, for example, that the St Pient a Moyenvic monastery, along with minters and a salt works, would made Moyenvic a 'higher order of settlement'.<sup>55</sup> It is possible, therefore, that the presence of a monastery (and possibly relics) would have increased visitors and trade to the area, heightening its status, and having a positive impact on the locals. Penitentials probably offer the most solid example of engagement between monasteries and surrounding communities. Meens comments that Merovingian nuns seem to have dealt with penance for the laity.<sup>56</sup> He further suggests that public penance was fairly rare in Gaul, and that different forms of penance had been in development; once again, it seems, Jonas' *vita* exaggerated the situation which Columbanus found on his arrival. Columbanus' ideas could build upon existing trends.<sup>57</sup> Where Columbanus does seem to have provided something new is in the linking of monasticism with penance. As Meens points out, the spiritual status of the Columbanian monks must have played a role in the popularisation of penitence.<sup>58</sup> This means that

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<sup>55</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 210.

<sup>56</sup>Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith, *Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume 3, Early Medieval Christianities, C.600-c.1100: Early Medieval Christianities, C.600-c.1100 V. 3* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 400.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.* p. 404.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.* p. 405.

interactions between the laity and monks must have increased gradually over time.

Overall, while rural monasteries are cited frequently as playing an instrumental role in the Christianization of rural areas, we have to look to a variety of possible means of influence to gain an idea of how this might have taken place, none of which are clear. Wood suggests that

most was probably achieved through the steady influence and example of the more impressive clergy....At this level Christianization....could develop into a much deeper transformation within the life of an individual.<sup>59</sup>

Penitentials, as we have seen, also played a role. The type of behaviour they seek to regulate is wide ranging, and it can be seen how Christianity might have become more deeply embedded in this way. However, as we have seen elsewhere, much is likely to have depended on regional variations; the willingness of the abbot/abbess to offer penance to outsiders, geographical location (ease of access), the nature of the rule followed, etc.

### Eusebius Gallicanus

Lisa Kaaren Bailey's observations on interactions between ascetics and the laity as discussed in the Eusebius Gallicanus sermon collection (written from the mid-late fifth century and largely circulated in south-east Gaul) offer more thoughts on monastic life in this period.<sup>60</sup> While the church councils and other sources we have previously discussed would seem to indicate some tension regarding the fluidity of the boundary between the monastery and the wider community, as well as some anxieties over authority, Bailey's analysis of the sermon collection suggests a quite different relationship. She contends, first of all, that the fact that a set of ten sermons for monks was included in a general handbook for

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<sup>59</sup>Ian Wood, 'Christianization and the dissemination of Christian Teaching' in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: C. 500-c. 700*, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 734.

<sup>60</sup>Lisa Bailey, 'Building Urban Christian Communities: Sermons on Local Saints in the Eusebius Gallicanus Collection', *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2004), pp. 1-24.

preaching to the laity at all suggests that (to the compilers of the sermons, at least) monks were viewed very much as part of the wider Christian community.<sup>61</sup> She supports this argument by pointing out that, some differences in emphasis aside, the sermons for monks contain very similar themes to those for the laity: focusing largely on the idea of harmony within the Christian community<sup>62</sup> (although this interpretation should be considered in context, Bailey's whole analysis of the Eusebius Gallicanus is centred around its central theme being the building of Christian communities). She takes this idea further, noting that there are reminders that the monks ought not place themselves above other Christians or become complacent within the walls of the monastery.<sup>63</sup> On top of this, the abbot is perceived as more of an equal; he is to be obeyed as one who enforces the rules of the community, rather than in his own right as leader.<sup>64</sup> It should be emphasized, though, that Bailey also notes the importance of the monastery as part of the Christian community, with their communal prayers helping to protect the whole community.

What can Bailey's observations add to our discussion? Although these sermons do, as she suggests, preach harmony and community within the wider Christian community, they do still ensure that monks and abbots are kept in their place. The abbot is a leader amongst equals, and monks are warned repeatedly against the dangers of pride. From the point of view of a bishop (and some sermons were delivered by monk-bishops), these sermons do still help to keep any overweening ambitions under control. Bailey does state that many of the sermons for monks deal with obedience and the importance of communal monasticism, but rather downplays this issue of control. The notion of solitary ascetic life is not encouraged, which is interesting to contrast with Gregory's saintly recluses in *VP*. Equally, the idea of retreat to private chapel on estates is not viewed in a positive light. The idea that a monastery could act as an example of an ideal Christian community within a Christian community, guiding by its mere presence, harks back to the quotation at the beginning of the chapter regarding St Germanus' founding of the monastery at Yonne. They do, tacitly, deal with the type of internal problems mentioned in the canons; monks

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<sup>61</sup> Bailey, p. 105.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 106.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p. 116.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114.

are reminded that the mere fact of being in a monastery does not mean they can err without consequences. There are points of agreement. The main new insight these sermons offer, in Bailey's eyes, is the idea of monastic communities as part of the community. This possibly ties in with where and when they were produced, also; monasteries in the south-east (especially prior to Columbanus) were likely to be urban affairs and very visible in everyday life. This does not necessarily contradict the information we can gain from councils: councils were more likely to deal with specific problems than offer a guide to how monastic communities might be perceived. Plus, if they are part of the wider Christian community, as Bailey repeatedly emphasizes throughout, then that means they are, like the rest of the community, united under the bishop. Its approach might differ from that of other sources but as Bailey points out and this study seeks to underline, the multiplicity of Christianity's approaches to issues in Merovingian Gaul displays that elasticity and local focus which makes it successful.

## Part Two: The North-East

### Background

Firstly, the turmoil of the fifth century does not seem to have lent itself either to the production of manuscripts from which we can attempt to understand the situation, or the stability of monastic life. Certainly, throughout the fifth century aristocrats seem to have gone to Lérins to pursue a monastic life, although the stability it offered, as well as a possible route into high ecclesiastical office, must also have been another factor which made it seem like an attractive alternative to the north east. Halsall has alternative theories as to the issue of manuscript production and scarcity of source materials. He notes that our earliest documents from the region seem to date from the early seventh century, and suggests that documents began to be stored around this time because the social situation was stabilizing, meaning that aristocrats could now see the benefit in documents which attested ownership into the

future.<sup>65</sup>Possibly, both of these factors contributed to the relative obscurity of monasticism in the region in this period.

The whole issue of the upheaval of the fifth century is one that needs to be addressed for this section of the discussion. This is an area where it pays to be careful regarding use of language. Use of the word ‘invasion’ versus ‘migration’, and ‘transformation’ versus ‘fall’ gives us a sense of some of the historiographical complexities of this issue. Complex issues involving ethnicities and ideologies mean that it is important to handle the issue with care. We know very little of the fifth century in north east Gaul, but we do know that changes were taking place. What were they?

Where existing institutions are concerned, it has long generally been acknowledged that, besides the fact of wide-scale change, it is difficult to ascertain what the situation in the north east might have been. Certainly, some of the larger cities of late antiquity seem to be ghosts of their former selves. It must be stated, though, that the decline of the city can be seen on a more general level at this time, and is not unique to the north east. The most common hypothesis is that while the Roman structure of the land (*civitates*) remained largely unchanged in the south and west, the north-east was restructured. There is also a tendency to think of the south as retaining its urban character, while the north is seen as developing towards more rural settlement. Chris Wickham argues this point,

The north of Gaul has seen crisis from much earlier on than any other part of the Western Roman Empire, even Britain. Its villas became steadily less numerous after 350 or so, and few exist at all in stone and brick after 450.... The *Pactus legis salicae* of c.510, the earliest Frankish law-code, focuses on the sorts of disputes that are most important in a peasant, not an aristocratic-dominated, society, giving a lot of space to agricultural delicts, and it gives little or no sign of any firm status-differences at all apart from that between free and unfree. The archaeology of the north between 450 and 550 so far discovered is unimpressive in the extreme, privileging small wooden houses and *Grubenhauser* rather than more developed/expensive architectural patterns<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 266.

<sup>66</sup>Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 44.

By the time we reach the time-frame in which we are interested, the latter part of the sixth century and the early seventh century, the situation seems to have stabilised. As Gauthier points out, there has been change, but there has also been growth and prosperity,

La situation telle que nous découvrons dans la deuxième moitié du vi siècle est bien différente: les villes exsangues vivent à la limite de l'anitition dans leurs remparts trop vastes, tandis que les campagnes, sillonnées par le roi et sa cour, les évêques visitant leur diocèse, sont relativement moins à l'écart.<sup>67</sup>

She further makes the point that the episcopal lists seem to show increasingly long episcopacies, suggesting a gradual reduction in instability, and that these shorter episcopacies do not seem to have occurred in smaller towns such as Toul and Verdun at all, suggesting that smaller towns fared better amidst the instability.<sup>68</sup> If, as has been suggested elsewhere, the instability in the north east allowed bishops to restructure areas to their own benefit, then this might explain the increase in long episcopacies.

This argument can be further developed by looking at some of Ian Wood's observations on the north east. Woods suggests that,

“The structure of the Merovingian Church was taken over directly from its Gallo-Roman predecessor. It was based on dioceses which for much of the kingdom were the ecclesiastical counterparts of the *civitates*, with which they became coterminous. In the north and east, however, where the barbarian invasions had caused most disruption, dioceses had to be re-created, with the result that their extent reflected the connections and interests of the clergy involved in their re-creation, rather than the geography of the Roman *civitas*.<sup>69</sup>

Again, this has significant repercussions on what might have constituted monasticism in the north east. If, then, as Wood suggests, that diocesan structure was largely redrawn in the north east in order to suit the interests of the clergy, might it not follow that the clergy (primarily the bishops, who held the most important roles) would seek to ensure that the establishment of monastic foundations was controlled in such a way that they did not present a

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<sup>67</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 236.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 71.

threat to the episcopacy, or could be harnessed to enhance their prestige in some way? We have already seen that bishops sought to control the acquisition of relics. Any competitor in this arena would be unwelcome. In this case, then it would seem that smaller scale monasteries would be more desirable. This hypothesis is also supported/supports Halsall's theory regarding the use of grave goods for social competition. If the ecclesiastical life of the region was structured in such a way to tightly control the establishment of monasteries, then it makes sense that families would look for other ways to express their actual or desired social status. This would also explain the enthusiasm with which Columbanian monasticism was seized upon. The opportunity for religious ambition and expression of status that it offered would have been highly attractive to frustrated aristocratic families who were finding it difficult to gain a foothold in the religious life of the region and escape the control of the bishop.

### Specific Monasteries

The main source for the study of monasticism in Gaul and Francia, as already noted, is Friedrich Prinz's *Frühes Mönchtum Im Frankenreich*,<sup>70</sup> which is still widely used in modern Merovingian studies. As regards the north-east in our time period, Prinz indicates there do not seem to be many monastic foundations, at least comparatively speaking, with the real increase in numbers taking place much later in the seventh century and well into the eighth century (mostly Carolingian). Even so, Prinz's map showing monasteries between 590-730 which were Irish or directly influenced by Irish tradition shows relatively little in our region; only two monasteries appear, both founded at some point between 641-660.

Prinz also shows the paths of the clergy sent out from Aquitaine. Nicetius, of course, is sent to Trier by Theuderic, and it is possible he brought something of the monastic tradition of his region with him (especially as he had been an abbot). Remaclus passes through our region on his way to Stablo-Malmedy, but it is impossible to ascertain whether he had any impact in passing through. St

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<sup>70</sup>Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum Im Frankenreich*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1965).

Symphorian in Trier seems to have been reformed later by Benedictine/Columbanian rule. Prinz's map on foundations before 500 and between 500 and 590 is the most telling for the north east, which appears to be noticeably more sparsely populated by monasteries than the rest of Gaul, with apparently no foundations in Verdun at all, and only St Evre at Toul. The map dealing with the later seventh century, however, tells a different story, with many more foundations appearing. Metz is especially richly served, which might be expected, given that the locus of power shifted there.

Gauthier is the most detailed source on the region, and her work expands greatly upon Prinz's study. As stated above, there are few monasteries which we can be relatively sure of in the region from 570-630. These are: St Evre in Toul, Remiremont, Sainte-Marie ad Martyres in Trier, St Pierre-aux-Nonains in Metz, St Pient à Moyenvic in the diocese of Metz, St Symphorien in Trier, and the monastery which served St Rémi, a basilica in Metz. There may also have been a St Symphorien in Metz. The monastery of St Martin/Airy in Verdun might be contemporary, but it is difficult to get an idea of a foundation date. Luxeuil and Annegray also played a role due to their proximity, size, and status. That makes eight monasteries within the province, with two just outside the borders, as well as smaller establishments and recluses who left no traces.

The lack of monasteries in Trier, given its history, seems surprising. However, it might be reasonable to assume that there were small scale establishments in Trier of which we have no traces. Secondly, it might be noted that there seems to have been a pattern of aristocrats from Trier going to Lérins if they chose to follow a monastic path. While this might initially have had its roots in the instability of the region, it is worth considering whether it became a tradition, and whether that meant that Trier did not develop any large establishments of its own. It is also interesting to consider, given that the establishments we have for Trier seem to be female, whether there was a stronger tradition of female asceticism in the city, due the earlier preference of men for monastic life in the south.

St Evre in Toul was founded in the early fifth century. It was located just outside the city walls, and had had St Evre as its founder, who died before

construction could be completed. Bishop Albaut completed the task. St Evre was buried at the monastery. Gauthier notes that accounts of the foundation of the monastery differ somewhat.<sup>71</sup> While the tenth century *Vita* simply states that Aper began the construction, but died before it could be completed, the *Gesta Episcoporum Tullensium* implies that St Evre had taken up the ascetic life and gathered disciples. The place of his burial became a focus for these ascetics, and later bishops formalised this arrangement as a monastery. Gauthier further points out that it was dedicated to Maurice of Agaune, which was a popular cult in the sixth century.<sup>72</sup> Most material on St Evre deals primarily with its later history during the Gorze reform.

Ascertaining any information on monastic life in Verdun within our date parameters is very difficult. We have a charter which mentions that St Airy was buried in the Abbey of St Martin, but little else. Gregory comments on Verdun's prosperity due to the business agreement between Theudebert and Desideratus, but does not provide us with any more information.

We have one definite monastery in Metz, two possible monasteries, and one in the diocese of Metz. The real growth in monasticism in Metz comes much later. The influence of Arnulf and his political circle is important here. St Pierre au Nonains, which seems originally to have been a fourth century church, is a good example of the reuse of Roman buildings, which was discussed earlier. Originally a basilica, then a church, and eventually a monastery, it seems to have been established as a monastic establishment at some point between 595 and 612. Its history is discussed in the *Life of Waldrada*. A tenth century document tells us that the nuns were given the right to choose their own abbess.<sup>73</sup> St Symphorien is not only difficult to date, but also difficult to definitively describe as a monastery. Gregory of Tours mentions that there was a monastery near St Rémi which served the basilica, but gives us no other information regarding it.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Gauthier, *Topographie Chrétienne Des Cités De La Gaule: Des Origines Au Milieu Du VIIIe Siècle*. (Paris: de Boccard, 1986), p. 59.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 295.

<sup>74</sup>Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, p. 387; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VIII: 2i.

Luxeuil, Annegray and Remiremont are of course well-known. Their proximity to the areas under discussion is of importance here. Prominent figures such as Arnulf and Romaric had allegiances to Luxeuil, and it can be easily understood how being admitted to any of these monasteries could confer political and social prestige on the wider family, as well as spiritual prestige. While Luxeuil and Annegray are technically over the border, the pull they exerted must still have been immense.

## Observations

### Political

Halsall points out that the establishment of monastic foundations in the north east seems to have been closely tied to the changing position of the aristocracy in the region from the late sixth to the early seventh century.<sup>75</sup> We might reasonably have expected to see an increase in the establishment of rural monasteries with the introduction of Columbanian ideas; an aristocracy finding a new way to define itself and assert some power in contrast with the episcopacy and royal control. Surprisingly, this is not what we see. While the developing aristocracy did adopt Columbanus' monastic ideals with some enthusiasm in Austrasia, it is important to note that there were no rural aristocratic monasteries founded in the Metz region (as the Metz region is defined in Halsall's study) until the ninth century (although there were episcopal rural foundations), possibly due to the fact that the see of Metz was the most notable landholder in the area, and this itself was under royal control.<sup>76</sup> This fact probably also partially accounts for the scarcity of monastic foundations throughout the sixth century. This is not to say that the aristocracy of this region did not utilise Columbanian monasticism to their benefit, this can be seen in hagiographical literature and in changing power relations with the episcopacy, but that this did not find expression in terms of rural foundations until much later. It should also be noted that the new ideas and relationships brought

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<sup>75</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 264.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

about by Columbanian monasticism also impacted upon older urban houses,<sup>77</sup> so a lack of rural foundations should not be taken to suggest a lack of Columbanian influence.

The initially confusing gaps in both monastic foundations in the north east, and our knowledge of what might have been there, begin to become more understandable. Firstly, royal and episcopal control of land means that some areas of Austrasia do not see that type of large, rural monastic foundations that we see elsewhere with the impact of Columbanian ideas. Secondly, this same control of the land means that even pre-Columbanian foundations are likely to have been limited. This, coupled with a lack of surviving records, helps to explain the situation. There is unlikely to have been the same level of monastic activity in this region as we find in other areas of Francia and, even then, what there was is unlikely to have been recorded in any way. Further to this, if reuse was common, then it is difficult to ascertain much from the archaeological record. The contrast between the north east region and the rest of Francia thus seems more readily explicable.

Added to this are the conditions found in the rest of Gaul. As Germanus' hagiographer points out in the opening quotation for this chapter, monasteries were perceived as another means of Christianizing the general population. Bishops were not always especially comfortable with this alternative locus of power, and the canons already discussed reflect this anxiety, showing that bishops were keen to maintain control over monasteries wherever possible. If change in the fifth century did allow for tighter episcopal control, then it might explain the relative lack of monastic foundation in this region. Add to this the fact that monastic foundations tended to be urban in nature anyway, and that bishops tended to wield the power in this environment. Prinz points out that monasteries played an important role as centres of power/control for the bishop, and further notes that churches and monasteries in Trier were clustered around the centre of the civitas.<sup>78</sup> Although the north east can be contrasted with rest of Gaul in terms of numbers of foundations, then, it can also be seen to share some common factors in terms of episcopal control and urban setting.

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<sup>77</sup>Clarke and Brennan, p. 80.

<sup>78</sup>Friedrich Prinz, 'Columbanus, the Frankish Nobility and the Territories East of the Rhine' in Clarke and Brennan, p. 75.

The political situation is also likely to have played a role in the state of monastic life in the region. Until the death of Brunhild in 613, the political situation in Austrasia was subject to the instability caused by the ongoing conflict between the factions of Chlothar II, Brunhild, Theudebert and Theuderic. The meeting of Brunhild and Columbanus in Burgundy is probably one of the best known examples of interaction between church and royalty in the Merovingian period, and heavily coloured and simplified by the agenda of Jonas of Bobbio. As presented by Jonas, the course of events is as follows: Brunhild and Theuderic ensured that Columbanus was expelled from Burgundy for his slighting of Brunhild's grandchildren by refusing to bless them. Theuderic also proceeded to make life difficult for Luxeuil following this quarrel.

It is worthwhile to look at this incident, and indeed the possible relationship between Brunhild and Columbanus in more detail. Firstly, it is important to note that the Brunhild and Theuderic initially welcomed Columbanus; this is pointed out by Ian Wood, who further notes that Jonas' hagiography makes the deliberate mistake of claiming that Sigibert, not Childebert, was Columbanus' original protector and supporter in the region in order to hide the evidence of Brunhild's likely initial support (O'Hara points out that the author of the *Vita Sadalbergae* corrects this). On top of this early support, if we are to credit Jonas's narrative it seems that Brunhild apparently held Columbanus in such esteem that she wanted him to bless her grandchildren. Furthermore, both Luxeuil and Remiremont were close by, rapidly growing in fame, and yet were apparently not the subject of ill-will from Brunhild or Theuderic.

In fact, both Columbanus and Brunhild might have been assumed to have some common ground on religious matters, given that they both shared an epistolary relationship with Pope Gregory I. Columbanus' relationship with the papacy is well-known. While he was not afraid to criticise the pope and argue his own case if he saw fit (Boniface IV, for example), his usual purpose in communication was to look for the authoritative stance on certain issues, or to seek the pope's backing to give his *own* views validation.<sup>79</sup> Brunhild's relationship with Gregory

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<sup>79</sup>Columbanus, *Letter to Boniface*, CELT letter 5, trans. GSM Walker and Ruth Murphy, *The Letters of Columbanus*, (CELT, University College Cork, 2008).

was different. In Gregory's letters to Brunhild, she is: praised for her son's education, sent relics, asked to aid the mission to the Angles, warned about the dangers of simony and schism, asked for her protection of a number of people, asked to call a synod, and is praised for founding a church, hospital and monastery in Autun. These letters are not simply empty flattery of Brunhild, she is admonished repeatedly on the state of the Church and asked to hold councils, but they *do* show a continuing relationship between Brunhild and Gregory I, as well as the fact that Gregory thought she could be prevailed upon to offer support to the Church. Despite the differing nature of their correspondence, Columbanus and Brunhild can both be seen to place importance on the role of the papacy and maintain lines of communication, which makes both of them relatively unusual in Francia at this time. This also lends more weight to the idea of Brunhild offering initial support to Columbanus, perhaps through Childebert or Theuderic; if Gregory was sending missionaries through Francia under Brunhild's protection, would it not also make sense that he would have commended Columbanus to her attention, or vice-versa?

It is interesting to consider what Columbanus might have made of this relationship between Brunhild and Gregory. Gregory the Great seems to have seen Brunhild as the most powerful figure in Gaul/Francia at this point (she seems to have been acting as regent for both Theudebert II and Theuderic II by the time he writes), someone who could control abuses in the Frankish church (although Gregory's more veiled hint in these letters was probably hopeful that she stop using bishops herself for political ends), as well as someone who could provide valuable support for the English mission, and protect other members of the clergy he sent to Francia. Brunhild's obtaining of papal privileges for her foundations in Autun suggests that she also perceived papal approval and authority as carrying special weight. It is difficult to tell how Columbanus might have perceived Brunhild herself, as the waters are so muddied by Jonas of Bobbio. While her personal piety might have been received well (and her obtaining of papal privileges to free a monastery from control of the local bishop ought to have received special approval from Columbanus), it is hard to imagine his being anything other than disapproving of her practices regarding the patronage of bishops. If the dates are examined, it can be seen that Columbanus writes to Gregory about simony and the conduct of bishops in the

Frankish Church in 595, or shortly thereafter.<sup>80</sup> Gregory writes to Brunhild about this issue in September 597,<sup>81</sup> and writes again in July 599 (twice),<sup>82</sup> June 601 (three times),<sup>83</sup> and November 602.<sup>84</sup> It is possible to hypothesise that Columbanus' complaints might have contributed to Gregory's appeals to Brunhild, which might have been enough to create conflict. If the council at Chalon-sur-Saône, where Columbanus fails to attend but sends a scolding letter to the bishops in attendance, is the one which Brunhild held after repeated prompting from Gregory, then surely this might be enough to suggest some on-going friction? An alternative interpretation might be that Brunhild did not perceive anything wrong with her utilisation of the Church for political ends, and perceived that she and Columbanus were working towards the same ends, as directed by Pope Gregory. Whichever interpretation is most likely, the relationship between Brunhild and Columbanus seems to be more complex than has always been previously assumed.

Wood has, amongst others, thrown light on the degree of politicisation in Jonas' hagiography of Columbanus, pointing out that it acts alongside other sources as yet another *damnatio memoriae* for Brunhild. Charles-Edwards takes this one step further, in that he not only effectively deconstructs much of Jonas' hagiography of Columbanus, but also calls into question their famous disagreement regarding the blessing of Brunhild's grandchildren and puts forward plausible alternatives for Columbanus's abrupt departure from Burgundy.<sup>85</sup> Columbanus's relationship with the Frankish bishops was, as we have seen, famously fractious, and it seems inevitable that he would have created internal divisions in Burgundy by the simple fact of his presence. Still, though, as Charles-Edwards points out, relations between Theuderic and Columbanus still seem to have been reasonably good, at least up until 610.<sup>86</sup> At this point he argues that it was Theudebert's increased aggression and the danger it posed to

<sup>80</sup>Columbanus, Letter I, trans. by G.S.M. Walker and Ruth Murphy, *The Letters of Columbanus* (CELT, University College, Cork, 2008).

<sup>81</sup>MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.8.4, 2.5-8, and HGF4 ep.20 pp.22-24.

<sup>82</sup>MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.9.212, 2.197 and HGF4 ep.27 p.29 and MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.9.213, 2.198-200 and HGF4 ep.22 pp.25-26

<sup>83</sup>MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.11.46, 2.318-19, HGF4 ep.35 p.32-33, and MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.11.48, 2.320-21, HGF4 ep.33 p.31-32, and MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.11.49, 2.321-22, and HGF4 ep.34 p.32.

<sup>84</sup>MGH, *Gregorii Pape Registrum Epistolarum*, ep.13.7, 2.371-73, HGF4 ep.36 p.33-34.

<sup>85</sup>T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 1st edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>86</sup>Ibid. p. 371.

Theuderic which meant the divisive Columbanus' presence was no longer tenable: external threats were enough of a burden on Theuderic without the addition of internal divisions caused by Columbanus.<sup>87</sup> While he does stop short of completely discarding the blessing incident, suggesting that its bluntness seems in keeping with Columbanus' general behaviour, he also points out that links between the blessing and ideas about royal inauguration suggest that Jonas possibly inserted it as a comment on the likely future of Theuderic's children. While the blessing incident might have spurred Columbanus's removal, then, it is still important to note the other contributory factors at play.

During this conflict there were still factions in Austrasia who were both supportive of and hostile to Brunhild and Theuderic. Although Brunhild was driven out of Austrasia, Halsall points out that Chlothar had Berthechramn of Le Mans hand estates over to Arnulf of Metz in 616 which had formerly been held by Agiulf and Arnoald, who had both been bishops of Metz and, presumably, supporters of Brunhild. Brunhild was not, then, without supporters in Austrasia; she was especially strategic in her selection of supportive bishops, even though her position was not have been strong enough to prevent her from eventually being expelled to Burgundy.<sup>88</sup> These supporters might have been another contributory factor in Columbanus's relatively short stay in Austrasia, despite Theudebert's warm welcome.

Further to all this, the foundation and patronage of a monastery was itself often a politicised act. Brunhild's gift of a monastery to Autun in the late sixth/early seventh century had the effect of strengthening ties with Guntram, as well as effectively demonstrating her piety. Chlothar's enthusiastic reception of Columbanus and sponsorship of Columbanian houses might well have had something to do with the fact that Columbanus had become a recognized enemy of Brunhild and Theuderic, and also that this was an effective way to build favourable ties and loyalty with Burgundian and Austrasian aristocrats. Wood summarises the web of influence and bonds which formed around Luxeuil, the ties between Arnulf of Metz and Romaric, for example, and how the subsequent aristocratic enthusiasm for Columbanian houses is therefore rather to be

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 15.

expected.<sup>89</sup> The political context of the late sixth and early seventh centuries, then, can be seen to have a nuanced and deep impact on monasticism in the north east.

### Monasticism as part of religious life in the north east

Overall, the complexity of this setting for monasticism gives us a few different models to consider when thinking about monasticism in the north east. We can see that at the beginning of the period in which we are interested, there were few large-scale monasteries, and apparently no large rural establishments. There may well have been smaller-scale monastic foundations, but they remain hidden from us due to both the problems of building reuse and lack of documentary evidence. The presence, or otherwise, of recluses carries the same issues as small-scale foundations: lack of documentation, as equally of archaeological evidence. The situation as we can understand it also helps to back up Halsall's theory regarding the competitive use of grave goods in the sixth century. Monasteries could be seen as sources of power and influence; this becomes even more apparent after Columbanus, when large rural foundations offered a way to control and retain lands (although, as discussed above, not until later in the north east). If this outlet was frustrated by tight episcopal and royal control, then its use of grave goods may well have become an alternative outlet for ambitions and anxieties over status and roles.

### Cognitive Science of Religion and Modes Theory

What of the experience of monastic life itself? As discussed above, there seems to have been a degree of flexibility and heterogeneity regarding use of monastic rules, which makes it difficult to speak confidently of specific routines. Nevertheless, we do know the general principles followed and so can think about these. Can cognitive science of religion and modes theory perhaps offer alternative means of looking at monastic life in N/E Gaul?

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<sup>89</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 192.

Anne L Clark has already tested the two modes hypothesis in the context of later medieval monasticism and mystics and provides much material for discussion. Firstly, Clark points out that, by Whitehouse's reckoning, monastic life is the very epitome of the doctrinal mode: frequent repetition of routinized rituals, one authority figure (abbot or abbess), and seemingly low arousal. A more careful examination reveals that this is not necessarily the case. Clark notes that the reuse of familiar texts could 'enable greater imaginative freedom during singing',<sup>90</sup> and that the type of reading which took place in monasteries was often 'a meditative practice which encouraged free association rather than linear reading from start to finish'.<sup>91</sup> On top of this, there was the music of the chants, as well as the visual stimuli offered by the monastery. Ultimately, Clark's discussion looks to the twelfth century mystics as examples of how a seemingly strictly doctrinal tradition could actually produce an imagistic effect.

It is difficult to fully assess this argument in the Merovingian period for a number of reasons. Firstly, as we have seen, it is often difficult to know precisely what sort of rule was being followed in a monastery. After Columbanus, there seems to have been a general habit of employing 'mixed rules', a combination of established rules which could be tailored to a specific community. It is possible to generalise about the type of routine followed, but not always possible to go into specifics. Secondly, Whitehouse's conception of medieval monasticism also ignores the idea of the ascetic recluse of which, as we saw, Gregory of Tours seems to write most frequently. How is the hermit's experience of monasticism to be described in the context of modes theory? In fact, how would Whitehouse classify them at all, given that earlier recluses seem to have lived completely outwith the community, often deliberately moving on after followers had coalesced around them? They are technically sort of 'outposts' of what he would classify as doctrinal religion, but if they *are* truly doctrinal then where is the leader to maintain orthodoxy? Dunn's article on the Rule of Columbanus talks about the 'charismatic leader' as defined by Weber.<sup>92</sup> Recluses can also be seen to fit that role, which increases the chance that they might prove a problematic alternate focus of religiosity. What of their activities? One might

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<sup>90</sup> Anne L. Clark, "Testing the Two Modes Theory: Christian Practice in the Later Middle Ages", in Martin and Whitehouse, *Theorizing Religions Past: Archaeology, History, and Cognition* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004), p. 128.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Dunn, 'Columbanus, Charisma and the Revolt of the Monks of Bobbio', 1-27.

presume that frequent repetition of prayer might be one activity that a recluse would undertake. Whitehouse ordinarily suggests that these activities reduce the opportunity for individual reflection, but then this would seem to run counter to the nature of reclusive asceticism. Then, there is the issue that traumatic physical deprivation is described by Whitehouse as belonging in the imagistic spectrum.<sup>93</sup> Lastly, it should be acknowledged that recluses seem to have frequently attracted many followers, which as we saw before, could be a source of anxiety for bishops. The way in which Gregory handles them in his hagiographies is notable. Those followers seem to have been encouraged to form a settled community, after which point the recluse would move on. This would seem to suggest, then, that the presence of a recluse could encourage group cohesion (usually a feature of the imagistic mode), and that the group was then encouraged to form a doctrinal community. So, could a recluse be classed as some sort of imagistic catalyst which somehow supported the formation of communities of the doctrinal mode? As we can see, then, the recluse would seem to be another aspect of medieval monasticism, much like the mystics discussed by Clark, which would seem to pose particular problems for Whitehouse's modes theory, ricocheting as they do from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Whitehouse has various responses to Clarke's criticism of his modes model's application to medieval monasticism. He states that while 'high-arousal' revelatory experiences occur in doctrinal religions, their effects are very different than their corresponding experiences in the imagistic mode.<sup>94</sup> He states that the experiences in the doctrinal mode are often fairly 'formulaic', and that they are rarely 'collective experiences', instead striking 'lone individuals' and failing to create 'localized group cohesion'.<sup>95</sup> Essentially, Whitehouse's response to Clarke is that although phenomena may appear imagistic, the mechanics of it still operate doctrinally, and so her ideas of a fusion of modes are mistaken. He does qualify this slightly, however, stating that,

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<sup>93</sup>Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons: Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 112.

<sup>94</sup>Martin and Whitehouse, *Theorizing Religions Past*, p. 217.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.* p. 217.

Cognitive mechanisms underpinning doctrinal and imagistic modes are activated in different ways and to different degrees among religious individuals. Within a tradition dominated by the doctrinal mode....there might be some individuals who attach particular salience to personal revelatory experiences. While reflecting deeply on the significance of those experiences, they might accord rather little importance to authoritative teachings and display a limited grasp of the orthodox canon. Such individuals thus engage in patterns of thinking that are characteristic of the imagistic mode, even though the tradition to which they belong does not exhibit full-blown imagistic features.<sup>96</sup>

Do Whitehouse's responses and observations add to our discussion of Merovingian monasticism? While his organizing principles offer new ways for us to think about monasticism, as mentioned above, it is difficult to fit recluses into Whitehouse's ideas on medieval monasticism. Recluses are much praised by Gregory of Tours in his hagiographies, although there is also a noticeable sense of anxiety surrounding them in writings of the period. They are not part of a community, although communities often formed around them. Columbanian recluses occupy a different role in relations to their monastic community, within the community, yet separate. It is difficult to know what the daily lives of such recluses were like, although increased levels of self-denial seem to be plausible; Gregory of Tours certainly seems to suggest that those who wish to participate in more severe ascetic practices either do it secretly, or leave the community, in order to minimise disruption. Would recluses, perhaps, be examples of the type of individuals discussed by Whitehouse in the excerpt above, individuals within the doctrinal mode who attach more importance to personal experience while respecting authority less and possessing a meagre grasp of doctrine? This does not necessarily seem to follow. Most recluses, according to our sources, spent time as coenobitic monks before becoming recluses, and probably carried out many of the same prayers as recluses as they had in the monastery. Remember, too, Gregory of Tours' mention of Leobardus's study in the vicinity of Marmoutier. Attaching additional significance to the personal experience does not automatically imply rejection of major elements of the doctrinal mode. Monastic recluses, then, can be seen as phenomena which pose particular problems for modes analysis. Whitehouse's common response, that such phenomena are examples of 'interacting modes' is not always satisfactory.

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid. p. 218.

The issue of penance is another which might challenge modes theory. We know that Columbanus was not entirely innovative in the area of private penance, and it is likely that public penance had been fairly rare. Columbanian monasticism, though, does seem to have been willing to offer penance to the laity. Although there were standardised ways to deal with this (penitentials), and it sought to impose the moral ideals of a doctrinal religion, it was still a private experience which would have involved personal reflection. Further, it is clear that the reputation of the monks had to do with why people sought penance from them. Again, then, a type of personal charisma can be seen to be at play. This can be seen to be another facet of early medieval monasticism which poses real challenges to modes theory.

Lastly, there is an incident described in the Life of Gregory of Utrecht<sup>97</sup> which might sum up the challenges presented to modes theory by early medieval monasticism. In the Life, Gregory of Utrecht visits the monastery of Pfalzel at the same time as Boniface. The abbess, his grandmother, requests that he read aloud from the scriptures for them while they eat. Gregory does so, but is then asked by Boniface if he has truly understood what he has read, and if he could translate it into his native tongue. It is not enough to recite by rote; understanding is also required. As we have seen above, this is rather far from the way in which Whitehouse has characterised medieval monasticism. Here, personal reflection is a definite requirement, by no means something limited to imagistic practices.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, the changing nature of monasticism from the late sixth to early seventh century in north-east Gaul paints a complex picture. Generally speaking, the number of monastic foundations increased across Gaul at this time, and many others were influenced in varying degrees by Columbanian ideas. The north-east region in which we are interested also saw growth, but it is important to note that this growth was slower than in other regions, and without quite the same push into the countryside. It should be recognised,

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<sup>97</sup>Liudger, *Vita Gregorii*, ed. by O Holder-Egger, *MGH SS* 15, 1 (Hannover, 1887).

though, that neighbouring regions did experience greater growth and the foundation of prestigious monasteries, and their influence on surrounding areas should not be discounted. A complex network of influence and loyalty existed around these monasteries. The extent of these ties might be illustrated by noting the fact that Arnulf, bishop of Metz, chose to retire to the area near Remiremont, which was founded by his friend Romaricus (who had formerly been part of Chlothar II's court), in order to live as a hermit. He was then buried at the monastery itself (although his remains were later taken to Metz). Halsall suggests that there may have been other reasons behind this, citing the possibility that Arnulf has enemies in Metz, but the pull of ties to the monastery, and perhaps its obvious prestige, should not be discounted.

Expanding on this idea, the sheer proximity of such great monasteries such as Luxeuil and Remiremont might also have been a factor in Metz's lack of foundations until the second half of the seventh century. Why found a monastery when both these institutions are less than 100 miles away, and so replete with both spiritual and worldly prestige? Further, large foundations appeared on the border between Neustria and Austrasia a little later in the century, for example; Faremoutiers appeared in 620, Ado founded Jouarre in c.630, and Rebais was founded by Dado c.655. As well as religious prestige, these foundations also had political meaning. Régine le Jan points out in 'Convents, Violence and Competition for Power in Seventh Century Francia'<sup>98</sup> that the establishment of monasteries was often used as a way to establish or consolidate a political presence and build networks. Those mentioned above; for example, illustrate the Faronids' consolidation of power in Neustria.<sup>99</sup> It should be noted that this does not detract from the religious motivation; in fact, a division of political and religious motivation is possibly an unhelpful notion, as both areas of life seem to have been intertwined. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the selection of a monastery could play a role in becoming part of a powerful network.

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<sup>98</sup>Régine le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition for Power in Seventh Century Francia', in Mayke De Jong and F. Theuvs, eds, *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>99</sup>Ibid. p. 252

The nature of aristocratic involvement with monasticism itself was changed, as later hagiographies of noble monastic saints demonstrate. While the first generation of those affected by Columbanus arrival show enthusiasm regarding his ideas, it is the next generation who show the degree to which Columbanian ideas had successfully embedded themselves in Frankish culture. This is not only an example of how Christianity galvanised the aristocracy on a new level, but of a reciprocal process, with the emergence of new patterns of sanctity and monasticism. It could be argued that this allowed Christianity to become more deeply embedded in Merovingian society, with new roles available for the aristocracy within Christianity, and now models of holiness to be created and emulated. It is unlikely that Columbanian monasticism could have spread so successfully without aristocratic and royal support. Political ends were served as well as religious ones, and the political dimension in how and why monasticism spread so rapidly in the seventh century must be taken into account.

This discussion also shows the importance of a focus on the specifics. The common picture generally presented of monasticism in Merovingian Gaul/Francia is one of stagnation until the arrival of Columbanus, at which point monasteries then bloomed in the north east. While more recent work has questioned this somewhat, the northeast is still often perceived to have gone from barren to blooming due to the presence of Columbanus. A closer examination has revealed a more complex picture. Monasticism prior to Columbanus' arrival was diverse, and informed by several different monastic texts. Although there was a general growth in the north east after Columbanus' arrival, there were patches in the region where the stereotypical large rural monasteries took much longer to materialize. A greater focus on areas such as these can furnish more information on the context for the growth of monasticism, as well as offering up a more detailed image of Merovingian Francia.

Cognitive science of religion and modes theory can also be seen to have been of use here too. Ascertaining details of monastic life in this region from the late sixth to early seventh centuries poses many problems, in everything from the scale of the monastic house formed to the details of the monastic rule that was followed. The type of broader observations offered by use of cognitive science

of religion and modes theory allows us to think about the monastic experience itself, both reclusive and coenobitic, and its place in religious life at the time. It also allows us to get closer to the nature of the individual's engagement with Christianity, which is most often the most opaque aspect of any discussion of Christianization.

## Chapter 7. Church Councils

### Introduction

Old men report that the Franks have not held a synod for eighty years<sup>1</sup>

I render thanks to my God, that for my sake so many holy men have been gathered together to treat of the truth of faith and good works, and, as befits such, to judge of the matters under dispute with a just judgement, through senses sharpened to the discernment of good and evil. Would that you did so more often; and though you have not always leisure to maintain this *canonical practice*<sup>2</sup>

If we were to take the criticisms of Boniface and Columbanus at face value, then we might expect a discussion of Merovingian councils to be somewhat disappointingly brief and unrewarding.<sup>3</sup> Modern historians' assessments of the value of these councils can also tend towards the negative, searching for deficiencies:

It was here that the Merovingian church failed so dismally. One searches through the sixth-century synods in vain for demands that priests should teach the people about Christianity....It is here that we see the limitations of the fifth and sixth century attempts to convert the countryside; and it throws the attitudes and achievements of the Carolingian period into strong relief.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Boniface, *Bonifatii Et Lulli Epistolae*.

<sup>2</sup>Columbanus, *Letter 2*. <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201054/index.html> (last consulted 25/03/12)

<sup>3</sup>Halfond also comments in their role on prevailing views on Frankish church councils in, Gregory I. Halfond, *Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, AD 511-768* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>C.E Stancliffe, 'From Town to Country: The Christianisation of the Touraine 370-600', in *Church in Town and Countryside: Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Studies in Church History, ed by Derek

Again, we see here the tendency to compare the Merovingian and Carolingian period to the detriment of the Merovingian period. Interestingly, Yitzhak Hen also looks for what *isn't* there, in his case, a significant number of admonitions regarding 'pagan' behaviour, in order to make his point that society was Christian and churchmen had no need to address such behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Stancliffe and Hen both interpret silences and then come to very different, virtually opposing, conclusions. Merovingian church councils for the period in question can in fact provide us with a good deal of invaluable information regarding the running of the Church and how its various members sought to define its role, as well as their own. They also act as a point of interaction with the laity, usually in the form of admonishments, but also in terms of defining their own responsibilities in the wider community.<sup>6</sup> They also help us to understand what parish care might have consisted of, and how effectively it was being administered.

It should be noted that Merovingian councils are subject to the same issues we face when attempting to utilise other documentary evidence for this period. Details are often sparse, and we are heavily reliant on Gregory of Tours, which slants much of our knowledge towards particular regions and a specific timeframe. As mentioned before, however, there is still much information to be gained, not only from the analysis of their contents, but from details such as where they were held, who could attend them, and how they were circulated. Church councils can give us insights into matters such as interactions between laity and clergy, relations between members of the church, and what areas of everyday life gave the clergy cause for concern. In the most recent study on Merovingian church councils, Halfond counts some seventy nine councils as

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Baker, (Ecclesiastical History Society), 16, (Oxford: Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1979).

<sup>5</sup>Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 13, 176.

<sup>6</sup>Cubitt does note that laity could attend, as a council was technically a 'gathering of the faithful'. There is evidence for this at Epaone 517, Orange 526, Marseille 553, Bordeaux 663/5, in Cubitt, p. 44.

having taken place between 511 and 768, excluding those which are suggested to be inauthentic.<sup>7</sup>This number shows that there is much to work with.

The most recent and comprehensive studies of these councils have been carried out by Odette Pontal and Gregory Halfond, although other historians have used them in attempts to elucidate details about religious life in this period. For Pontal, the councils demonstrate how the church acted as a unifying force, setting norms for society to live by. She suggests that they ought to be considered in terms of their format, motivation and results,<sup>8</sup> and further suggests thinking of them in four chronological stages: the reign of Clovis, the period from 561-612, the period under Chlothar II and Dagobert I, and then the end of the Merovingian period, characterised thusly by Pontal, 'Une époque de décadence le l'État mérovingien entraînant la décadence de l'Église et une dégénérescence des conciles sous les derniers rois mérovingiens et les maires du palais'.<sup>9</sup> She further suggests the following contexts for study: the persistence of certain themes, bishops' shared preoccupations in certain periods and regions, and the different character of councils called by ecclesiastical or civil authorities.<sup>10</sup>

Halfond takes a different approach. In his own words, his study's 'purpose is to explicate the functions and procedures of an administrative body in order to determine its importance to the community it serves'.<sup>11</sup> Halfond's focus is more squarely on procedural matters and organisational structure, as he suggests that these have been somewhat disregarded in favour of analysis of the contents of these councils. His work on the mechanics of these councils is crucial to consider alongside the analysis on legislation undertaken by Pontal and others. It gives us a sense of how churchmen and laity themselves perceived the councils, and their effectiveness in actually disseminating and enforcing legislation. Practical matters such as travel to a council offers useful information on difficulties of terrain, the dangers of travel, and perhaps allow us to make side

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<sup>7</sup>Halfond, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup>Odette Pontal, *Histoire Des Conciles Mérovingiens* ([Paris]: Editions du Cerf: 1989), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>Halfond, p. vii.

observations on matters such as the difficulty of administering to rural parishes. Importantly, Halfond prefers to avoid the type of classification used by Pontal to define councils, viewing it as ‘artificial, even anachronistic, categories for the convenience of historians’<sup>12</sup> which can pigeonhole councils into artificial categories which do not take account of the details and complexity of the contents. Instead, he uses the categories employed by Hinschius in *Kirchenrecht*<sup>13</sup>: ‘(1) general or ecumenical councils; (2) provincial and plenary councils (i.e., representative bodies of major ecclesiastical units); (3) interprovincial, national and imperial councils (i.e., representative bodies of ecclesiastical units greater than individual provinces); or (4) diocesan synods’, which he feels do not impose artificial thematic categories.

#### Intent

So, while the evidence of church councils is, like virtually all the other evidence we have to hand, both fragmented and concentrated towards certain regions and periods, there have been valuable modern studies on the material which offer much food for thought on which we can build. As with the rest of this study, the analysis will try, whenever it is feasible and fruitful, to focus on the areas mentioned before: Trier, Metz, Verdun and Toul, which together make up the ecclesiastical province of Trier. The councils will be examined in the context of interactions: between clergy and laity, priests and bishops, bishops and monks. It will also utilise some familiar themes from studies of such legislation: norms, anxieties and deviations. Modes theory will also be employed to see if it might offer some fresh insights. It is hoped that this approach will help to fill in the details of how Christian culture might have looked in this region from 570-630.

#### General Concerns

Before looking at specific councils, it might be worth taking an overview of the general concerns which seem to recur at councils during the time period in

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<sup>12</sup>Halfond, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup>Paul Hinschius, *Kirchenrecht*, Vol I. (Berlin: Guttentag, 1869).

which we are interested. Pontal has compiled a list of topics, containing 128 main topics (although some of these could be condensed), with many subdivisions within those headings. These deal with everything from large, controversial issues such as the correct dating of Easter and the responsibilities of the bishop, to forbidding the wearing of sandals within a monastery. The regulation of the community itself is the focus of most of the canons: how abbots, bishops, priests, monks and deacons should and should not act, regulations surrounding rituals, relationship of the laity. This also informs us, of course, of how the Church perceived itself in day to day life, the roles it, most specifically bishops, wished to play and the aspects of life it sought to control. Gregory of Tours gives us exceptionally useful information regarding a bishop's view of councils when he talks to Guntram,

‘You have put the request to your nephew,’ said I in my turn, ‘that all the bishops of his realm should meet together, since there are so many other matters which need to be settled. Your nephew has always been of the opinion, and in this he follows the canonical use, that each metropolitan should hold a meeting of the bishops of his own province, and then anything which is wrong in his own diocese can be put right as they may decide. What reason can there be for calling such a huge council together in one place? No threat is being made to the doctrine of the Church. No new heresy is being spawned. What need can there be for so many bishops to meet together?’<sup>14</sup>

From Gregory's point of view, then, local matters are to be settled locally; specifically, in the form of a provincial council called by the metropolitan. At Auxerre, however, the synod is not called by the metropolitan, but by the bishop of Auxerre. Could this be due to the importance of the city? It is difficult to tell how the metropolitan system actually functioned in reality from province to province.<sup>15</sup> Large councils are there to deal with problems of the magnitude of heresy. Presumably, the disciplinary matters which are handled at large councils are those occurring across of number of regions and are therefore of general relevance. Guntram's response to Gregory is equally instructive, ‘Many evil deeds are being committed, there is a decline in personal morality, for

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<sup>14</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp.* 434; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. IX: 20.

<sup>15</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 71.

instance, and there are many other things which we need to discuss together.<sup>16</sup> Gregory does not disagree with him.

The interpretation of council canons can be difficult. One frequent use that has been made of Merovingian councils is to search for evidence of traces of pagan behaviour and how the Church was tackling the same. The very different conclusions of Yitzhak Hen and Clare Stancliffe demonstrate the range of interpretations possible when utilising this approach. Yitzhak Hen has suggested that the church councils' relatively infrequent and repetitive<sup>17</sup> mentions of pagan behaviour indicate that paganism was not only no longer a real concern, but that when it was mentioned it was merely due to 'well-rooted literary conventions'<sup>18</sup> which only really reflected a 'mental reality'.<sup>19</sup> While the idea that councils reflected the anxieties of their participants is, of course valid, not all points of Hen's argument hold. Churchmen's disinclination to learn and describe the intricacies of behaviour they sought to condemn, or to contextualise it in a way they understood (classical allusions, for example), does not mean that they are simply mindlessly repeating old prohibitions. Gregory of Tours and Sulpicius Severus' responses to behaviour which might easily have been classed as pagan is important here. The behaviour is recognised as undesirable, but they are generally content to dismissively define it as 'rustic' or ignorant. If, then, there was existing legislation which dealt with deviant behaviour, then it seems to have been acceptable to simply reiterate it, lending it the weight of tradition while utilising it to tackle a current issue. Details were not necessary. Indeed, if a bishop were taking concerns to a council, perhaps reported to him by a priest, he simply might not have been aware of the details of the complaint. Real fear seems to have been reserved for heretical behaviour, which is discussed in detail in order that it might be disproved and discredited. Stancliffe, on the other hand, suggests that the lack of any information on basic Christianization of the laity suggested that the Merovingian church was a failure

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<sup>16</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp.* 434; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. IX: 20.

<sup>17</sup>Hen is inconsistent in this respect. He claims that mentions of paganism can be dismissed as they are infrequent and repetitive, yet suggests that three mentions of baptism repeated at Mâcon (585), Auxerre (578/85) and one each at Orleans in 511 and 533 offer definite proof of the practice of baptism being widespread.

<sup>18</sup>Hen, p. 171.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

as regards the Christianization of rural areas. However, this could equally suggest that the Church did not feel that this particular task was necessary, and that the population was adequately Christianised.

### Specific Councils

As the north-east is as poorly served in terms of documentary evidence in regards to church councils as it is to other areas, it has been necessary to relax the time parameters of the study slightly in order to utilise as much evidence as possible. Councils where any of our areas of interest were represented have been included from 549-627. These are as follows: Orleans 549<sup>20</sup> (ecclesiastical province of Trier in attendance, amongst others. Nicetius of Trier was present), Toul 550<sup>21</sup> (ecclesiastical province of Trier in attendance, as well as Rheims and possibly others unknown. Location is also significant), Metz 550/5<sup>22</sup> (ecclesiastical province of Trier in attendance, as well as Bourges and possibly unknown others. Location is also significant), Verdun/Metz 590<sup>23</sup> (Childebert II's kingdom present. Location is significant), Chalons-sur-Saône 602/4<sup>24</sup> (important for region, as Brunhild and Theuderic II convoked this council), Paris 614<sup>25</sup> (ecclesiastical province of Trier in attendance. This was attended by Bishop Charimeris of Verdun), Clichy 626/7<sup>26</sup> (ecclesiastical province of Trier in attendance). Modoaldus of Trier was in attendance). Altogether, then, there are seven councils from 549-627 which are relevant to the province of Trier. This excludes councils with unknown participants who might well have been from Trier, and of course councils of which we simply have no direct or indirect evidence. As well as these councils, the diocesan council of Auxerre will also be examined in some detail. As the only diocesan council of the period for which

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<sup>20</sup>*Concilium Aurelianense a. 549*, CCSL 148A, Charles de Clercq, *Concilia Galliae: A.514 - A.695*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963), p. 147-61.

<sup>21</sup>*Epistle of Mappinus of Rheims*, ed. by Wilhelm Gundlach, *MGH Epistolae* III (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892).

<sup>22</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 139-40; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. IV: 7.

<sup>23</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 510-13; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. X: 19-20.

<sup>24</sup>Fredegar, *Chronica*, ed. by Bruno Krusch, *MGH SRM* II (Hanover: Hahn, 1888), bk. IV: 24; Sisebut, *Vita Vel Passio Sancti Desiderii Episcopi Viennensis*, ed. by Bruno Krusch, *MGH SRM* III (Hanover: Hahn, 1896); Bruno Krusch, *Passio Desiderii Episcopi Viennensis II*, *MGH SRM* III (Hanover: Hahn, 1896), chap. 7-8.

<sup>25</sup>*Concilium Parisiense a. 614* CC SL, 148A, de Clercq, pp. 275-82; Edict of Chlothar II, de Clercq, p. 283-5.

<sup>26</sup>*Concilium Clippiacense a. 626 - 627* CC SL, 148A, de Clercq, pp. 290-7; Fredegar, bk. IV: 55.

we have any evidence, Auxerre offers an excellent opportunity to view an example of a micro-Christendom and what its ambitions and anxieties might have been, and fits in well with the rest of this study's method of focusing on specific regions whenever possible. Its more northerly location, and the fact that it almost borders the province of Trier, also means that it might offer a clearer idea of concerns for an area like Austrasia. Moreover, having had an overview of concerns across a selection of councils, it will be interesting to see if these concerns are represented at Auxerre.

While we might have gaps in council activity in the north-east, then, we are not completely without evidence. We can also see that bishops and possibly priests, abbots and deacons were travelling to and from church councils. It is almost 260 miles from Trier to Orleans, a journey which is likely to have taken around ten days, assuming good weather and decent roads, and just over 200 miles to Paris. Both of these councils were convoked by Childebert I, and it is perhaps worth considering whether this might have been one reason that bishops were willing to undertake these long journeys. Halfond points out that additional difficulty of such journeys which could be posed due to factors such as weather: as Gregory of Tours mentions,

Meanwhile, as I have told you, the King sent letters to all the bishops of his realm, ordering them to meet in the city of Metz in the middle of November to take part in the trial. It rained continually and in torrents, and it was unbearably cold, the roads were deep in mud and the rivers overflowed their banks; nevertheless they were unable to disobey the King's orders.<sup>27</sup>

Not only distant councils could prove arduous, then. Any travel might conceivably present difficulties. This might have particularly been the case in the province of Trier. Vulfoaic described the weather as follows,

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<sup>27</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp.* 510; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. X: 19.

When winter came in its season, it so froze me with its icy frost that the bitter cold made my toenails fall off, not once but several times, and the rain turned to ice and hung from my beard like the wax which melts from candles. This district is famous for its harsh winters.<sup>28</sup>

It is also worth noting that this is a royal council, which perhaps explains why the bishops were willing to undertake such an arduous journey.

It was not only difficult and weather which could make travelling to a church council somewhat fraught. Examples furnished by Gregory of Tours demonstrate that leaving one's diocese to the care of an ambitious or hostile deacon could occasionally be unwise. This particular example offers us an idea of some of the difficulties a bishop might encounter on travelling from his diocese:

By the grace of God I returned home safe to Tours. I found my church had been thrown into great confusion by the priest Riculf. This man had been raised up from very humble beginnings by Bishop Eufronius and had been made archdeacon. When he was promoted to the priesthood, he showed his true nature. He was always above himself, boasting and presumptuous. While I was away answering these charges before the King, he had the impudence to enter the church-house as if he were already bishop. He gave valuable presents to the senior clergy, handing over vineyards and meadows. The lesser clergy he rewarded with blows from sticks and even cudgels, which he administered with his own hand, saying as he did so: 'It is I who am in charge now and with masterly skill I have purged the city of Tours of the rabble from Clermont.'... When I returned to Tours, he continued to treat me with contempt. He did not come out to receive my greeting, as all the other citizens did, but went on threatening me and saying that he would kill me.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, leaving one's parish was not without its dangers. Gregory does not appear to be too perturbed by this priest's activities, for, as he points out, 'The poor fool appears not to have realized that, apart from five, all the other bishops who held their appointment in the see of Tours were blood relations of my family'.<sup>30</sup> While Gregory is confident that his position is secure, it is difficult

<sup>28</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp.* 380; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VIII: 15.

<sup>29</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH* p. 259; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. V: 49.

<sup>30</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 259-62; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. V: 49.

to say whether other bishops would have been similarly confident. Gregory mentions other bishops who had cause to regret leaving their diocese. Theodore of Marseilles, for example, experiences significant problems when he leaves his city, as Dynamius and the local clergy took advantage of his absence to plot against and prevent his return.<sup>31</sup> When King Guntram suspects Palladius of assisting Fredegund, he sends Antestius to intercept Palladius, who had been returning to his city from a Lenten stay on a remote island, and prevent him from re-entering his city (Saintes). It is worth considering, then, that the internal politics of a bishop's diocese, as well as his relationships with outsiders, might have played a role in his willingness to attend councils.

Of the individual councils themselves where a direct link to the north-east can be found, the following matters are dealt with.

#### Councils Directly Relevant to the Province of Trier

The information for each council is as follows:

The first council to be examined is the Council of Orléans in 549. Although this is slightly outside the time parameters (twenty years), it is close enough to remain relevant and is too important a council to be omitted. On top of this, it has to be considered in the context of previous Orléans councils and so gives us a sense of continuity from previous councils, of what issues and concerns were recurring and which were new. This particular council sought primarily to address heretical concerns and judge the case of the bishop of Orléans. Pontal points out that the bishops assembled took advantage of the royally convoked council to address their own disciplinary concerns.

As a royally convoked council, it had a large amount of representatives. The metropolitan of the province of Trier attended, as did the bishops of the dioceses of Verdun and Toul.

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<sup>31</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 280-82; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. VI: 11.

Twenty-four canons were produced in total. The first condemns Nestorianism and Eutychus. Canons two to eight deal with bishops' abuses of authority, nine to twelve with the proper recruitment of clergymen, thirteen to sixteen with ensuring that the rights of the church are protected, and seventeen with the peaceable resolution of conflicts. The remainder dealt with a variety of what Pontal terms 'social problems': slavery issues, the extension of the right to sanctuary and, most importantly, the first formal acknowledgment that church resources ought to be used for the solace of lepers and prisoners. Canons three&four specifically reopen canons two&four of the third council of Orléans, which dealt with interactions between the clergy and women, and changed the penalties for prohibited behaviour. Lastly, issues regarding women in religious life were discussed, specifically the maintenance of vows and their lives in convents and their own homes.

Pontal suggests that this council ought to be considered in the light of political interference in church matters. However, there are several other matters of interest, especially for the north-east. The fact that female recluses who were following an ascetic life in their homes were significant enough to be addressed at a large council suggests that this practice may have been widespread. We have hypothesised elsewhere in this study that this type of asceticism might have been reasonably common in the north-east in the absence of rural monasteries. The formal recognition of church responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of lepers and prisoners is also important. The role of the bishop within the community as portrayed in hagiography and the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus was discussed earlier: freeing prisoners, caring for the sick, etc. Here, we can see the formal codification of this role; it is not merely a hagiographical trope, but a recognised part of the bishop's identity.

The next councils which can be directly related to the Province of Trier are the Councils of Austrasia, specifically: Toul (550) and Metz (550/555). Pontal notes that after Orléans in 549, and for at least ten years after that, there do not

seem to have been any large councils held in the north-east. These councils were called by Theudebald. Unfortunately, we have very little information on these councils. The first seems to have dealt with the issue of incestuous marriage, but we do not know much else in detail as virtually the only evidence we have is Mappinius' letter in which he apologises for his absence from the council. The second council (to which all regions under the control of the King seem to have been called) seems to have dealt primarily with the issues surrounding Cato and Cautinus.

The next relevant council is that of Metz in 590. This was held in November. It might be assumed that travel to this council would have been unpleasant and difficult, given the likely weather conditions. Again, this council was royally convoked, in this instance, by Childebert II. It seems to have dealt primarily with the metropolitan of Rheims, Egidius, who was suspected of treasonable activities, as well as the punishment of the nuns of Holy Cross, Poitiers. While the nuns' excommunication was lifted, Egidius was exiled to Strasbourg.

The Council of Chalon-sur-Saone in 602 is of importance to the region, even though it is slightly outside Austrasia. We cannot definitely confirm whether any representative from the province of Trier was present, although as this council seems Burgundian it would be unlikely. Neighbouring provinces, such as Lyons, were present. What is of interest is that this is the council where Bishop Desiderius of Vienne was deposed, and possibly the same council that Columbanus declined to attend.<sup>32</sup>This is a much smaller council, and we have no evidence that anything else was discussed. However, if this is the council that Gregory the Great had exhorted Brunhild to hold, then it might be suggested that the issues he repeatedly exhorted her to address (mostly simoniacal abuses) were raised, but we simply have no record of what was discussed and decided. This council is an example, then, of how we might have incomplete records of proceedings, and how councils could be used almost entirely to further the ends of those who convoked them.

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<sup>32</sup>Columbanus, *Letter II*, trans. by G.S.M. Walker and Ruth Murphy, *The Letters of Columbanus* (CELT, University College, Cork, 2008)

The Council of Paris was held on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 614. This council was convoked by Chlothar II, and primarily intended as a means to draw everyone under his jurisdiction together and underline his authority. In the preface to the canons, the bishops state that there is a need to look again at the old canons and adapt them to fit the needs of the present. In fact, eight canons in total can be seen to be going over old material: one, two, five, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fifteen and seventeen. Some important decisions proclaimed were that episcopal elections must be conducted without interference, that the bishop had special rights when investigating the wrongdoing of priests, and that the canons must be observed by all.<sup>33</sup>

The Council of Clichy was held in 626/7. It aimed to reform the church, revisit the council of Paris in 614, and eradicate the final vestiges of heresy. It, again, was a royally convoked council (Chlothar II). It was well-attended, with thirty bishops and ten metropolitans present. Of the twenty-three canons produced, most simply repeated the canons of 614, which is unsurprising given that it explicitly aimed to go over the legislation produced by that council. Elements which might be seen as new (in relation to Paris 614) are the reiteration of the rules of episcopal election, and some regulating relations between monasteries, royalty and the clergy.<sup>34</sup> It is mentioned by Fredegar.

Firstly, the majority of councils for which we have records were royally convoked. This might imply that large councils tended only to be called when secular authorities felt it appropriate, when there was some sort of widespread issue, or something that a king or queen felt it would be useful to deal with at a council. This suggests that there were smaller, more locally-minded councils, but that large royally-convoked councils had their councils more widely promulgated, and it is therefore more likely that we possess records of them. It also suggests, as both Pontal and Halfond point out, that there was noticeable interaction between clergy and laity. The ecclesiastical province of Trier has a

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<sup>33</sup>Council of Paris 614, c.7, c.2, c.1.

<sup>34</sup>Council of Clichy 626/7,c.28.

presence at the major councils from 570-630, often travelling considerable distances in order to attend. Nancy Gauthier has largely used council attendance as a means of verifying the identity of the occupants of episcopal seats. However, they also serve another purpose, which is to let us see exactly which ecclesiastical policies and ideas are likely to have been in circulation in the region, and the degree of their involvement in national affairs.

The frequency and candidness with which old canons are re-examined and adapted argues strongly against Yitzhak Hen's assertion that items were retained merely out of habit and a reverence for tradition. The Council of Orléans (549) examined here openly revisits two canons from the previous council and makes changes to them. The Council of Paris (614) explicitly expresses the need to adapt the old canon to the present day. The Council of Clichy (626/7) states its intent to look again at the canons of the Council of Paris, and, indeed, reiterates many of those canons. The repetition of legislation which Hen seems to view as simple tradition seems to have been carefully considered. Not every piece of legislation from previous council is carried over and, even when it is, it is sometimes re-evaluated or changed in some way. There is a recognition that circumstances can change, and that the canons often have to be adapted to meet new circumstances. As those present at these larger councils presumably also held smaller regional councils, it might be assumed that a similar approach was taken there. We can see that far from empty repetition, imaginative re-use, rejection and adaptation took place. As Halfond points out, bishops could use canons from older councils to lend weight to their own ideas, 'however dissimilar in motivation and original in principle',<sup>35</sup> and generally show a willingness to innovate in order to address any concerns.

Auxerre

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<sup>35</sup>Halfond, p. 100.

The Synod of Auxerre is unusual, as it is the only diocesan council for which we have evidence of the Merovingian period.<sup>36</sup> As such, it offers an excellent opportunity to view wider concerns in a microcosm. In this section, some brief background of Auxerre will be given, and the canons themselves will be examined.

As regards location, Auxerre is fairly centrally situated, very slightly to the northeast. While it has already noted that it is hazardous to fall into the idea of considering Gaul as consisting of two distinct halves, the civilised south and barbarian north, Auxerre's centrality perhaps gives us a sense of balance when looking at the ideas its content raises. Furthermore, it was a largely rural region, which might, therefore, have had similar concerns to the largely rural ecclesiastical province of Trier.

Yitzhak Hen chooses Auxerre as one of his case studies on the sanctoral cycle, as the growth of the cult of saints here can be clearly tracked throughout the early Middle Ages.<sup>37</sup> The rapid growth of the cult of saints in Gaul at this time can be viewed in microcosm in Auxerre. It might be surmised from this that Auxerre was a city of no small prestige possessed, as it was, of a particularly rich sanctoral calendar and powerful bishops. This is perhaps backed up by an observation of Wolfert van Egmond in his study of Merovingian hagiography.<sup>38</sup> Van Egmond's observations on multi-tasking Merovingian bishops are convincing,

As noted above, the bishops of Auxerre gradually assumed so many public duties that it is unclear whether there were even any counts in the region from the second half of the sixth century to the early eighth century. This episcopal power was reflected in their involvement with education in the city. Around 600, the bishops of Auxerre were probably responsible not only for the training of higher-ranking ecclesiastics, including their possible successors, but also for organizing the education of children of the richer citizens of the city.<sup>39</sup>

Van Egmond suggests that the synod of Auxerre was held 'as a result of this council of Mâcon in order to make known its decisions as well as a number of

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<sup>36</sup>*Synodus Autissiodorensis a. 561 - 605*, CC SL, 148A, (C. de Clercq, 1963) p. 265-272 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963); Pontal; *Christianity and Paganism*, 350-750.

<sup>37</sup>Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 97.

<sup>38</sup>W. Van Egmond, *Conversing with the Saints: Communication in Pre-Carolingian Hagiography from Auxerre* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2006).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.* p. 142.

regulations with regard to the local diocese to the clergy of Auxerre.<sup>40</sup> Guntram called the council of Mâcon after his unification of Neustria and Burgundy under his control, primarily to address issues of discipline, reiterate rules which were being ignored, and to adapt some canons to new circumstances.<sup>41</sup> The idea that smaller local councils might have been held after a larger council in order to effectively disseminate the canons and perhaps to refine them further to suit local concerns is an appealing one. It would have managed to both ensure uniformity on important Church issues, whilst still addressing specifically local concerns. This would seem to fit in with what we have learned of Merovingian Christianity so far, a willingness to innovate for specific needs.

The names of those priests, bishops and other clerics who attended the diocesan synod of Auxerre are as follows:

Thirty-one priests, six abbots, three deacons and one bishop attended. Their names were as follows: Anacharius, Bishop of Auxerre; Vinobaudus, Abbot of Saint-Germain d'Auxerre; Vigilius, priest; Gregorius, priest; Aprovius, deacon; Claudius, priest; Baudovius, abbot; Fracolus, abbot; Anianus, priest; Cesarius, abbot; Saupaudus, priest; Audovius, priest; Teudulfus, priest; Roricus, priest; Niobaudis, priest; Antonius, priest; Sindulfus, priest; Vinobaudis, priest; Medardus, priest; Badericus, priest; Syagrius, priest; Friobaudis, priest; Eominus, priest; Theodomodus, priest; Launovius, priest; Desideratus, priest; Barbarius, deacon; Amandus, abbot; Ledegisilus, deacon; Meard, priest; Tegredius, abbot; Eunius, priest; Filmatius, priest; Nonnovius, priest; Ballomeris, priest; Romacharius, priest; Medard, priest; Audila, priest; Genulfus, priest; and Sagrius, priest.

If the attendees are only from the diocese of Auxerre, then this is a fairly impressive turnout. Deacons were supposed to attend in the absence of their bishop (two deacons per bishop), so their presence might indicate the absence of some bishops. Interestingly, six abbots are also in attendance, which implies that there were at least six monasteries in the diocese. While the general lack

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid. p. 184.

<sup>41</sup>Pontal, *Histoire Des Conciles Mérovingiens*, p. 187.

of information on priests and their activities makes the appearance of their names here intriguing, Robert Godding, who has published a book on Merovingian priests,<sup>42</sup> has been unable to find the priests in attendance mentioned in any other source material, and further investigations in the course of this study has failed to locate them in any other source material. Bishop Aunacharius, who convoked the synod, was, of course, a prominent figure. As well as being active in the important church councils of the period, Aunacharius was also seemingly well regarded by Pope Pelagius II<sup>43</sup> and close to King Guntram.

### The Canons

To place the canons in context, it is useful to see how they related to earlier councils, especially as Aunacharius seems to have called the council with the express purpose of adapting the canons of Mâcon (585) for his own diocese. There are forty-four canons in total. Some seven canons from the Council of Mâcon are revisited,<sup>44</sup> as are two from Mâcon (581/83),<sup>45</sup> four from the Council of Tours (567),<sup>46</sup> six from Orléans (541),<sup>47</sup> one from Orléans (533),<sup>48</sup> and one from Orléans (511)<sup>49</sup><sup>50</sup>

Canon one prohibits dressing as a stag or calf on the Kalends of January, as well as the presentation of gifts. The mention of such activities on the Kalends appears repeatedly across a number of sources from the fourth to the eleventh century. Caesarius of Arles mentions it in his sermons,<sup>51</sup> as do Martin of Braga and Isidore of Seville. It appears again in the *Vita* of Eligius of Noyon.<sup>52</sup> Meslin suggests that although the practice had its roots in pagan Roman belief, it has

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<sup>42</sup>Godding, *Prêtres En Gaule Mérovingienne*.

<sup>43</sup> Van Egmond comments in *Conversing with the Saints* that the Pope asked Aunacharius to appeal to the Frankish kings in order to help resolve difficult issues with the Langobards, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup>Mâcon (585), c.1, c.3, c.6, c.10, c.16, c.18, c.19.

<sup>45</sup>Mâcon (581-3), c.8, c.11.

<sup>46</sup>Tours (567), c. 19, c.20, c.22, c.23. c.19,

<sup>47</sup>Orléans (541),c.1, c.2, c.4, c.13, c.17, c.20.

<sup>48</sup>Orléans (533), c.12.

<sup>49</sup>Orléans (511), c.11.

<sup>50</sup>Pontal, *Histoire Des Conciles Mérovingiens*,p. 192-3.

<sup>51</sup>For an analysis of Caesarius of Arles' view on the Kalends, see, Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 216-8.

<sup>52</sup>Dado, bishop of Rouen, 'The Life of Saint Eligius', *Medieval Sourcebook*, trans. by Jo Ann McNamara <<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/eligius.asp>> [accessed 28 January 2012].

become detached from those beliefs by late antiquity.<sup>53</sup> The church seems to treat the celebrations as indicative of ignorance. What bothered the clergy more, Meslin states, was the scale and visibility of the celebrations.<sup>54</sup>

Canon two states that all priests must say mass before epiphany, and that they must inform the people of the date of epiphany. This seems to be a fairly basic requirement, and perhaps points to problems in education levels among the clergy.

Canon three forbids offerings or vigils for the saints being made at private houses, or for vows to be made in the woods or at springs. No-one is to make images of men or feet out of wood. Isabel Moreira points out that the tradition of votive offerings existed since antiquity at pagan shrines, and that the traditions seems to have continued in some form or another during the Merovingian period. Certain offerings, however, were clearly more acceptable than others.<sup>55</sup> Gregory of Tours mentions similar practices in *Glory of the Confessors*,

‘In the territory of Javols there was a mountain named after Hilary that contained a large lake. At a fixed time a crowd of rustics went there and, as if offering libations to the lake, threw [into it] linen cloths and garments ....many threw models of cheese and wax and bread....Much later a cleric from that city [of Javols] became bishop and went to the place. He preached to the crowds that they should cease this behaviour lest they be consumed by the wrath of heaven....He placed relics of Hilary in the church and said to the people: ‘Do not, my sons, do not sin before God! For there is [to be] no religious piety to a lake. Do not stain your hearts with these empty rituals, but rather acknowledge God and direct your devotion to his friends’....The men were stung in their hearts and converted. They left the lake and brought everything they usually threw into it to the holy church.’<sup>56</sup>

Gregory mentions such rites again in *Life of the Fathers*,

There was a temple there filled with various adornments, where the barbarians of the area used to make offerings....and placed there wooden

<sup>53</sup>Michel Meslin, *La Fête Des Kalendes De Janvier Dans l'Empire Romain. Étude D'un Rituel De Nouvel An*. (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1970), p. 104.

<sup>54</sup>Meslin, *La Fête Des Kalendes De Janvier Dans l'Empire Romain*, p. 96.

<sup>55</sup>Moreira, *Dreams, Visions, and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 118.

<sup>56</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGC*, p. (751) 301; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. V.

models of parts of the human body whenever some part of their body was touched by pain<sup>57</sup>

We can see here that the Church is not content for the simple transference of habits, but wants to ensure that special days, places and events are correctly observed. Control over activities associated with the cult of saints is maintained as much as possible.

The fourth canon maintains that soothsayers and augurs are not to be consulted. The ‘lots of the Saints’ are not to be consulted, and nor are those of wood or bread. The *Lots of the Saints*, or the *Sortes Sanctorum*, are also mentioned in the eighth century *Penitential of Bede* seems to have been a form of divination which involved opening a bible at random and interpreting the first passage found in relation to the question they had in mind. This, of course, implies access to a bible and the ability to read, so it is interesting to ponder which section of society is being admonished here. The Council of Orléans of 511 is even more explicit on this point, canon 31 of that council specifies, ‘cleric, monk or laymen’<sup>58</sup> when it talks about those who should avoid augury and/or casting lots. Hen mentions these canons in the context of pagan remnants,<sup>59</sup> but it seems that they might be better considered in the context of clerical discipline and education. Not only how priests conduct themselves, but how they are interacting with the laity. We have seen in other sources that clerics were admonished for handing out wine to the gathered faithful on saints’ days. There is also the issue of differing standards across the clergy: while Caesarius of Arles condemns phylacteries in his sermons,<sup>60</sup> Gregory of Tours seems to have found them acceptable.

The fifth canon asks especially that such observances are not held on the vigils of St Martin. The cult of saints, as we have previously discussed, came to hold massive importance in Gaul in this period. Their role in Christianization is undeniable. This canon in the council suggests a general recognition by the people that St Martin’s feast day as a day of special importance, and that they

<sup>57</sup>Gregory of Tours, *VP*, p. (680) 230; Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, chap. VI: 2.

<sup>58</sup>*Christianity and Paganism, 350-750*, p. 103.

<sup>59</sup>Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*. 176.

<sup>60</sup>Caesarius, *Sermons*, The Fathers of the Church, v. 31 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1956), vol. 2.

are therefore specifically choosing to carry out these rituals, appropriate or not, on this specific day. As mentioned before, what is definitely expressed here is the importance of the cult of saints and the Church's desire to control all aspects of it whenever possible. This can also be seen in canon three, which forbids vigils for the saints to be held in private houses. It is not enough that it is recognised as a special day, there must also be recognition of what is appropriate on such a day. This can be seen as perhaps a more complex ambition than that suggested by Pope Gregory to Abbot Mellitus,<sup>61</sup> which was content with giving old habits new names in the hopes of a smooth transference to new beliefs.

Canon six mentions that the archdeacon or the archsubdeacon can perform the priest's duties during Lent if the priest is ill. Although this might seem prosaic, this type of practical issue suggests that smaller parish issues were being raised at this council by the clergy.

The seventh canon deals with clergy; asking that all presbyters come to the synod in the city in the middle of May, and that all abbots meet at the council on the first of November. This seems to be a fairly basic requirement which would ensure that the clergy across the region were all adhering to the same strictures. Importantly, it also suggests that this diocesan council was to be a regular event.

Canon eight is concerned with the purity of wine offered at communion, and warns against the use of 'mellita/mulsa', or any 'potion' other than diluted wine. This canon warns the erring presbyter that to offer anything incorrect is a 'great sin and crime'. This might suggest that priests are falling into error (or were perhaps not especially well-trained), or perhaps that certain areas of the country were simply experiencing difficulty in obtaining wine.

Canon nine says that it is 'forbidden for choirs of laymen or girls to sing songs or prepare banquets in the church'. Again, this reads more like a reminder to erring clergymen than a castigation of laypeople. It also calls into question the

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<sup>61</sup>Gregory to Mellitus, Letter LXXVI in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Edinburgh: Grand Rapids, Mich: T. & T. Clark; William B. Eerdmans, 1988).

effectiveness of the clergy in separating ecclesiastical and secular life. Given the social role played by the bishop, it can be seen how the lines between religious and secular behaviour could become blurred.

Canon ten states that mass must not be recited twice in the same day at the same church, and that a priest may not say mass if it has already been performed by a bishop.

Canon eleven is concerned with proper behaviour during vigils at Easter.

Canon thirteen specifies that deacons may not be wrapped in ecclesiastical vestments for burial.

Canon fourteen states that people must not be buried in baptisteries.

Canon twelve and fifteen deal with regulations surrounding the disposal of the dead. Canon twelve specifically forbids the offering of the Eucharist or the kiss of peace to the dead. It also requests that corpses may not be wrapped in veils or palls. Canon fifteen requests that dead bodies are not placed on top of each other in the grave. Clermont (535) also forbids the practice of wrapping the dead in a pall.

The fact that the general clergy seem to need to be reminded of these regulations is instructive. Sections of canon twelve do not seem to have appeared in any other council. Although we do have to be cautious, due to the patchy nature of our sources, it is also possible that this indicates a local problem, or an item considered too petty to be considered at a larger council. Further, canon twelve, given that the Church does not generally seem to have taken much interest in the burial rites of the laity at this time, suggests perhaps that the clergy were falling into error when they were burying each other. If the clergy themselves were unclear on which burial rites are acceptable and which are not, and were generally disinterested in the customs of the laity, then it might be suggested that burial practices were generally unmonitored (this will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter). Canon fifteen may be attributed to the fact that burial in the vicinity of a saint was considered desirable at any

cost, and that the clergy wished to control exactly who obtained this high prestige position in the cemetery. It may also be attributed to the fact that stone sarcophagi were considered desirable, 'high prestige' items and were being re-used specifically for this reason. In those cemeteries which have earlier been analysed in detail, it is stone sarcophagi where the most reuse takes place.

Canon sixteen asks that no work be undertaken on Sundays, in particular, the 'harnessing of oxen'. It is again interesting to consider whether the local aristocracy, who may have had estates to be worked, would have been opposed to such an idea. This may, potentially, have been a particularly rural issue. This is particularly interesting to consider in the light of Bowes' work, which looks at estate-based worship.<sup>62</sup> Gregory of Tours hagiographical writings contain many examples of swift punishment for working on holy days.<sup>63</sup>

Canon seventeen is particularly significant, both within the scope of the study and beyond. This piece of legislation states that it is forbidden to commit suicide. Some methods of suicide are enumerated, and it is mentioned the sacrifice will not be offered for those who choose to commit suicide. This is the first known piece of western legislation to prohibit suicide in this way. The fact that the council felt the need to enumerate suicide methods may suggest that certain methods of committing suicide were perceived as acceptable.<sup>64</sup>

Canon eighteen states that baptisms can be performed during Easter.

Canon nineteen offers more advice on baptism, and how the priest should deal with this.

Canon twenty returns to matters pertaining exclusively to the clergy. If a presbyter, deacon, or subdeacon has a child or commits adultery after his ordination and this is not reported by the archpriest to the archdeacon or

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<sup>62</sup>Kimberly Diane Bowes, "'Christianization' and the Rural Home', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 15 (2007), 143-170; Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, 1st edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>63</sup>Gregory of Tours, *LGC*, pp. (810-11) 360-1; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, chap. 97.

<sup>64</sup>For a detailed examination of suicide in the Middle Ages, see Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

bishop, then the archpriest will be excommunicated for a year. This might seem like a fairly basic piece of legislation, but canons warning against such behaviour appear across a number of councils: Clermont in 535, Orleans in 538, 541 and 549, Mâcon in 585 and Lyon in 583. This canon at Auxerre is the only one to mention the archpriest's role in reporting the behaviour.

Canon twenty-one reminds that presbyters, deacons and subdeacons may not sleep or have sex with their wives. Again, this would perhaps suggest that members of the clergy are simply attempting to continue their secular lives while in their new roles. Geary comments that while bishops could retain their wives after their appointment, they were not permitted to continue marital relations. As he goes on to point out, however, some of Gregory's anecdotes suggest that this may not always have been the case. It is entirely probable, then, that the same problem was repeated throughout the ranks of the clergy. This might seem like a fairly basic piece of legislation, but appears across a number of councils: Clermont in 535, Orléans in 538, 541 and 549, Mâcon in 585 and Lyon in 583.

Canon twenty-two details the abbot's responsibility over wandering monks.

Canons twenty-three to twenty six deal with discipline within monasteries. If a monk commits adultery, steals, or owns private possessions, and his abbot does not correct this or inform a superior, then he shall be sent to another monastery to do penance. Canon twenty-four states that no abbot or monk may attend a wedding. Canon twenty-five states that they may not act as godfather. Canon twenty-six states that if an abbot allows a woman to assist at festivals within the monastery, or even enter the monastery at all, then he will be enclosed in another monastery for three months and only given bread and water.

These items are particularly interesting to consider more closely. Those canons forbidding abbots to attend weddings and to act as godfather do not appear in the Council of Mâcon, or any other council for which we have evidence, and might be assumed to be specific to Auxerre. Although these canons, like the others mentioned before, deal with apparent misbehaviour amongst churchmen, they can also be seen to be attempting to remove churchmen from other

'networks' (i.e. familial relationships). Abbots and monks at this time were, by and large, aristocratic men. As has already been discussed, the bishops' role carried significant political clout and kept him in contact with familial and wider networks. It can be seen in these sections of the council that those in monastic orders seemed to be either unaware of the level of dedication required for monastic life, or regarded it more as a training ground for a later, more exalted career. Those regulations aimed at abbots and monks might be regarded as damning in the context of possible standards in monasteries at this time in the region. The owning of private possessions, removal from the outside world, and associating with women are essential principles of the monastic life. The impression ultimately gained from the inclusion of these regulations is that of monks who, although they have taken vows and live in a monastery, are essentially carrying on a secular life. Furthermore, questions are raised as to the character and authority of the abbot. These canons are instructive when considered alongside Lisa Kaaren Bailey's observations on the *Eusebius Gallicanus*.<sup>65</sup> While Bailey argues that the inclusion of sermons for monks alongside those for laity demonstrate the creation of a Christian community, many of the ideas in these sermons regarding discipline and obedience can be found in these councils. When considered alongside canons such as these, then, an alternative reading of the sermons is possible, one which stresses the proper place of monks and bishops as firmly under episcopal authority.

Canons twenty-seven to thirty-two all contain strictures on marriage. A man may not marry his stepmother, stepdaughter, brother's widow, dead wife's sister or the daughter of his brother or sister. The children of two brothers or sisters are not permitted to marry, and a nephew may not marry his uncle's wife. This is raised repeatedly in councils of this period, across fourteen councils from Orleans in 511 to Clichy in 626/7.

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<sup>65</sup>Lisa Bailey, 'Monks and Lay Communities in Late Antique Gaul: The Evidence of the Eusebius Gallicanus Sermons', *Journal of Medieval History*, 32 (2006), 315-332 <doi:16/j.jmedhist.2006.09.001>; Lisa Bailey, 'Building Urban Christian Communities: Sermons on Local Saints in the Eusebius Gallicanus Collection', *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2004); Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul*, 1st edn (Notre dame; Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

These strictures could potentially impact local communities by affecting family structures, and so may have needed to be carefully and consistently enforced. Again, we can see an attempt here by the Church to try and control relationship networks. As has been discussed before, bishops often sought to control regions by utilising their family. Maintaining control over their families in this manner may have been perceived to be desirable.

Canons thirty-three to thirty-five return to regulations for the clergy. A presbyter or deacon cannot be present at the place where criminals are tortured. A presbyter must not act as a judge in any case where a man may be sentenced to death. Presbyter or deacons must not hand a fellow cleric over to a secular judge for any reason. Clear divisions are drawn between secular and ecclesiastical law. These legal matters were addressed in the Council of Mâcon (585), and we can see them reiterated here in a more specific regional context.

Both canons thirty-six and thirty-seven deal with matters relating to women. Canon thirty-six states that a woman may not receive the Eucharist with her bare hand. Canon thirty-seven states that a woman must not place her hand on the ecclesiastical pall.

Canon thirty-eight reminds that no one ought to communicate or eat with the excommunicate. This seems to be a fundamental idea, and it seems odd that this should need to be mentioned in a church council. However, this is not the only instance of this issue. That no-one should eat with the excommunicate is mentioned in Orléans (511). It is interesting to see this recur after a 70 year gap, although it is hard to say if other councils for which we do not have evidence contained similar canons. Other councils which mention excommunication tend to deal with issues of jurisdiction, for example, that a bishop must not have contact with a person excommunicated by another bishop (Tours, 567), or that a bishop may not lift the excommunication placed on someone by another bishop (Paris 562, Tours 567, Lyon 567/70).

Canon thirty-nine follows on from this, stating that any presbyter or member of the clergy who receives converses or eats with an excommunicated person without the knowledge of the person who performed the excommunication shall

then be subject to excommunication himself. The fact that legislation regarding excommunication seems fairly persistent and required specific punishment to be legislated raises questions. Were excommunicants especially common?<sup>66</sup>

Canon forty states that a presbyter must not sing or dance at a banquet. Similar restrictions regarding the behaviour of priests can be found in English sources. Again, this raises questions regarding both the education and conduct of parish priests.<sup>67</sup>The recurring problem of successfully separating religious and secular life and enforcing correct behaviour can be seen again in this canon. This particular stricture seems only to appear in the synod of Auxerre, although canons in other councils also contain the idea of keeping the priest under the control of his bishop.

Canon forty-one returns once more to the clergy's relationship with secular law. It states that a presbyter or deacon 'may not cite anyone before a secular judge', but if he has a cause, then he may ask a layman or brother to act for him. Again, this can be seen to be an attempt to separate clergymen from non-religious concerns.

Canon forty-two states that a woman must have her head covered by her veil when she receives the Eucharist. If she does not have her veil, she must wait until another Sunday to receive communion. This cannot be found in any of our other conciliar sources.

Canon forty-three deals with the protection of the clergy. If any layman or judge harms any member of the clergy, then he shall be excommunicated for one year.

Canon forty-four again discusses legal issues. Any layman or judge, who injures any presbyter, deacon, or member of the clergy, without recourse to the court

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<sup>66</sup>It is interesting to consider which section of the population might be more liable to the punishment of excommunication. There are examples of excommunicated bishops from this period: Ursicinus of Cahors, for example, was excommunicated at the Council of Mâcon (583/5) as punishment for having assisted Gundovald.

<sup>67</sup>For standards of behaviour in the Anglo-Saxon clergy, see Cubitt, pp. 119-20.

of the archpresbyter, archdeacon or bishop, 'shall be held a stranger from all Christians for a year.'<sup>68</sup>

Lastly, any layman who refuses to be admonished by his archpresbyter 'shall be held a stranger from the thresholds of the Holy Church until he fulfils the saving command. Furthermore, he shall sustain the many penalties which the Most Glorious Lord King commanded in his precept'.<sup>69</sup>

What, then, can be learned from the diocesan Council of Auxerre? There is no danger to Church doctrine or new heresy under discussion, which, as mentioned previously, are the reasons offered by Gregory of Tours as justification for the convocation of a large council.<sup>70</sup> Instead, what we can see here largely disciplinary issues for both clergy and laity, some carried over from the Council of Mâcon, others specific to the Synod of Auxerre.<sup>71</sup> The majority of the canons deal with unacceptable behaviour in the clergy, most specifically priests. While one or two of the canons refer to errors which might conceivably have been committed by bishops, they are never explicitly referred to by name. Instead we see priests reminded that they must not dance at banquets, they must offer the proper wine at communion, and they must tell the laity when epiphany is to be celebrated.

The Council of Mâcon, to which the diocesan synod of Auxerre is directly related, was convoked by Guntram. Rob Meens regards it as a council which ought to be regarded in the wider context of a move towards general church reform at this time.<sup>72</sup> He perceives Auxerre, then, in much the same light, as a synod which must be considered in the wider light of Guntram's attempts to reform the Church with the help of the bishops.<sup>73</sup> Its focus on clerical discipline certainly makes it seem like a good 'fit' for synod dealing with reform. Meens

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<sup>68</sup>Auxerre (585/605), de Clercq., p.269

<sup>69</sup>Auxerre (585/605), de Clercq, p. 270.

<sup>70</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLHp.* 434; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. IX:20.

<sup>71</sup>It is interesting to consider Auxerre alongside the Anglo-Saxon council of Clofesho (747), with which it shares specific themes as well as range and depth of aims, Cubitt, pp. 99-152.

<sup>72</sup>For more on this reform see Ian Wood, 'A prelude to Columbanus: the monastic achievement in the Burgundian territories', in Clarke and Brennan, pp. 3-32.

<sup>73</sup>*The Bobbio Missal: Liturgy and Religious Culture in Merovingian Gaul* (ed. Hen and Meens), Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology, 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 161.

goes on to add that the council canons seem to have been used in penitentials, as their focus on discipline was particularly suited to this type of material.

It is interesting to point out here that the examples of deviant behaviour offered in the canons of Auxerre are much more specific than this found at the larger councils, suggesting perhaps that priests (of which many are attendees) were more informed on these issues, active on the ground in a way that bishops were not. Given that some of these issues, although they may superficially appear to be referring to pagan remnants in the laity, also seem to relate to priests, bishops might have seen this behaviour for themselves, or had priests explain their error to them. It might also mean that a diocesan synod could go into more detail on issues such as these, as it dealt more exclusively with local disciplinary matters where this level of detail might be appropriate. A bishop or metropolitan travelling to a large council may not have had the time or inclination to pass on the details and minutiae of every type of undesirable behaviour which went on in his own diocese, and may simply have kept such matters for a small local council, have been content to address a variety of issues like these under one catch-all term. These issues will all be discussed in more detail in the following section, which looks at the councils in the light of modes theory.

### Church Councils and Modes Theory

Church councils would appear to belong definitively to what Whitehouse would describe as the doctrinal mode. These councils were attended by religious specialists who were generally in the upper echelons of the church hierarchy. Their purpose was to reiterate and sometimes strengthen key points of doctrine, establish norms, regulate behaviour, and to address any deviant behaviour, whether committed by their fellow clergymen or the laity (although they could also often be used by secular powers for their own ends). As Whitehouse puts it, the reiteration of doctrine prevents 'unintended deviation'.<sup>74</sup> Some aspects of the councils do fit neatly into this model. Auxerre's censure of those who hold

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<sup>74</sup>*Ritual and Memory*, p. 171.

vigils for or make offerings to the saints in private houses,<sup>75</sup> for example, points to the Church's concern with maintaining control over an important part of Christian culture. Those canons which condemn heresies are obviously protecting 'correct' doctrine. The behaviour of various church officials themselves is monitored constantly on a range of levels; shameful or illegal behaviour might cause a loss of *auctoritas*, which is vital.

However, an examination of church councils, in particular what they can tell us about the north-east, shows us that the councils were actually more complex than this and challenged their own ideas and behaviour constantly. As Halfond points out, the councils demonstrate the Merovingian tendency to innovate and adapt: Auxerre alone shows how the general concerns of Maçon have been honed and made more appropriate to the local area in the Synod of Auxerre. As has been discussed, the repeated use of existing legislation is not simply habit, as Hen suggests, but a careful way to legitimise new ideas by appearing to defer to tradition.<sup>76</sup> The Merovingian church shows a capacity to carefully negotiate within boundaries, and to gauge the best way to tackle pressing issues. Points of doctrine are not simply repeated: they are reflected upon, challenged and often altered. This activity is carried out by a group. There is personal reflection and negotiation involved here.

As with monasticism, what this again questions in the modes model is the dichotomy it suggests, with Whitehouse's tendency to perceive the 'doctrinal', in this case, the Church, as monolith. The Church can be seen here policing itself, negotiating power between various members. Bishops are keen to assert authority over abbots, monks are reminded of their role under the abbot, and various canons attempt to correct erring. There is an entire spectrum of behaviour within the Church alone, with all of its members deciding what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Further, while Whitehouse points out that the doctrinal mode usually 'encourages centralization of power structures', we

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<sup>75</sup>Auxerre (585-605), de Clercq., c.3

<sup>76</sup>The strategies underlying apparent reliance on previous legislation is discussed in Halfond, especially chap. 3.

see here that local councils seem to have adapted canons to suit their specific needs, or sometimes raise entirely regional issues. As Halfond points out,

The Franks' subsequent monopolization of political power in Gaul....did nothing to mitigate the localism that marked the Gallic production of canonical collections. The Merovingian kings and their bishops showed little interest in sponsoring the compilation of an official collection.<sup>77</sup>

There is a degree of nuance here which Whitehouse's model perhaps does not account for. Although the councils aim to promote common standards, there still seems to have been a tendency to take regional differences into account and mould canons as required, as is characteristic of Merovingian Christianity.

Another area where modes theory might profitably be applied is to those practices identified by the councils as deviant and in need of correction. If the model of modes theory were to be applied, then we might assume that it is anything counter to doctrine which is forbidden. The danger of assigning those beliefs and behaviours seen as incorrect to the imagistic end of the spectrum, simply because Christianity can be seen to occupy the doctrinal end, is apparent. It is not clear that those practices explicitly forbidden by the Synod of Auxerre, for example, are infrequent or particularly traumatic, or that they fulfil any of the criteria Whitehouse sets out for the imagistic, yet the oppositional model encourages this analysis. We have a number of behaviours here which are classed as undesirable among the laity and would usually fall into the category usually designated as 'pagan' or at the least 'superstition': Dressing as an animal at the Kalends and making offerings; making offerings or vigils to the saints in private houses; making vows in woods or at special trees; making feet or images of men out of wood; talking to augurs and soothsayers; looking at the Lots of the saints and making items from bread or wood. Might these activities be regarded more specifically?

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<sup>77</sup>Halfond, p. 161.

The Kalends of January was discussed briefly above. This activity is forbidden outright, with no alternative offered. It seems to have involved animal masks, dancing, gift-giving and alcohol. The behaviour censored here is behaviour which is also castigated by men such as Caesarius of Arles, who was troubled that saints' days were being celebrated in this fashion. It is difficult to tell whether Caesarius simply found the behaviour unseemly, or found the links to pagan celebrations unacceptable, but a combination of both seems likely. There is also the fact this is a celebration in which the church has no stake, where an alternative social network is formed in which it played no part. Klingshirn argues at some length that, aside from complaints regarding immorality, it was really the reinforcement of relationships outside Church control that the Kalends facilitated, which caused the church the greatest consternation.<sup>78</sup> The fact that the custom persisted unabated probably has to do with the fact that the Church did not really attempt to replace it or subsume it into some other celebration. Meslin suggests, too, that the celebration of the beginning of the New Year fulfilled a psychological need that the church did not successfully fill.<sup>79</sup>

Making wooden models of feet or men is completely forbidden, with no alternative activity offered. As discussed above, Gregory mentions this practice elsewhere, and specifically states that it is to ward off illness and pain. He also discusses how it was handled at the lake at Javols, where the people were encouraged not to throw these items into the lake, but bring them into the church and offer them to the saint. We can see here that no such suggestion is made, but that the practice is simply to be stopped. If we assume that this activity had primarily to do with alleviating pain and sickness (or to offer thanks for having illness alleviated), then we can see why it might be especially persistent. It does seem to have continued on from ancient Greece and Rome, and continues to the present day in many places. Fear of sickness and death is conceivably one of those conditions which could prompt backsliding, or stubborn adherence. Given that Gregory does not seem particularly censorious of the incident at Javols, it is interesting to consider whether there might have been

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<sup>78</sup>Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, pp. 216-8.

<sup>79</sup>Meslin, pp. 119-121.

some heterogeneity regarding clerics' responses to such behaviour.<sup>80</sup> This would mean that this canon might serve a double purpose, to eradicate the practice in the laity, but also to remind clerics that it must not be tolerated.

Those activities concerned with foretelling the future are completely forbidden; even seeking out those who would carry out the acts is prohibited. Some syncretism can be seen to be at play in this canon. The *Sortes Sanctorum* has often been understood as a label for divination using the bible, which would therefore have necessitated access to a bible, as well as someone who could read and interpret the text. Klingshirn instead suggests that *Sortes Biblicae* refers exclusively to divination using the bible, and that the *Sortes Sanctorum* refers to a text dealing with divination (referring the enquirer repeatedly to pray to God) which can be found in several manuscripts.<sup>81</sup> Still, though, the linking of this divinatory activity with feast days is, as Klingshirn notes, suggestive of syncretism.<sup>82</sup> The canon suggests that people are deliberately choosing St. Martin's feast day to carry out these practices. This would imply that the day was generally recognised as significant, perhaps an especially propitious day to undertake such activities. It should also be noted, however, that St Martin's feast day (11<sup>th</sup> November) coincided with harvest time, so it is also possible that some other custom was being observed (or had been partially subsumed by St Martin's Day).

Vows at woods or springs are not to be carried out, with the alternative of making such vows at a saints' shrine offered instead. There are mentions of vows made at saints' shrines in Gregory of Tours' writings.<sup>83</sup> Again, it is not so much the behaviour itself which is objectionable to the church, but where it is being performed. The use of saints here as a tool with which to actively

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<sup>80</sup>Alternatively, Moreira suggests that it is not the practice of votive offerings which is prohibited in Auxerre and other sources, but the fact that the practice is being carried out in pagan shrines. Moreira, *Dreams, Visions, and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul*. 118.

<sup>81</sup>William E Klingshirn, 'Defining the Sortes Sanctorum: Gibbons, Du Cange and Early Christian Lot Divination', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 10 (2002), 77-130.

<sup>82</sup>Klingshirn, 'Defining the Sortes Sanctorum: Gibbons, Du Cange and Early Christian Lot Divination', pp. 88-9.

<sup>83</sup>For example, Chilperic and Fredegund make vows for the health of their youngest son at the shrine of St Medard, Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, p. 239; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. V.34.

Christianize behaviour shows how crucial it was in the period. The idea of Christianization in terms of appropriation of the landscape has already been discussed, and we can see here an attempt, not just to designate parts of the land as unacceptable, but to ensure that they are forgotten by providing an alternative. There are also, perhaps, practical considerations which might be taken into account. Access to saints' shrines might not necessarily have been easy for everyone in terms of travel and time required to reach them.

The fact that making offerings or vigils to saints in private houses is forbidden in the canons of Auxerre probably has to do more with the Church's anxieties over keeping control over the cult of saints, as well as avoiding possible heretical practices. Bowes's work focuses on the issue of religious practice at private houses in the countryside, and the clergy's anxieties over such practice. This is a possibility here, although it should be noted that the location of the private houses in question is not specified; these practices might well have been taking place in urban locations. It is not so much the behaviour itself here which is problematic, but the context in which it is being carried out.

We now have some background on those canons which have often been interpreted as referring to 'pagan remnants' or 'superstition', and so are particularly relevant to the discussion of Christianization. As we have seen, these practices can be profitably sub-divided into those activities which are simply to be stopped, and those which are allowed to continue, providing they are carried out in the correct manner. The practices themselves might be further broken down in terms of the following criteria: who is undertaking the practice, what the practice is, where it is being undertaken, when it is undertaken, and why it is undertaken.

The Kalends, from what we can tell, seem to have been practised by the laity, although there may also have been clergy involved.<sup>84</sup> Caesarius specifies that it was *rustici* who celebrated the Kalends,<sup>85</sup> but Auxerre does not make this distinction. It seems to have consisted of gift-giving, feasting, drinking, dancing, and the wearing of masks. Caesarius claims that the practices had symbolic value: ensuring that the table was covered in food, for example, ensured the plenty of food would be available throughout the year.<sup>86</sup> It is difficult to know where it was carried out. It took place once a year, in January, over the course of three days. We know that the practice celebrated the arrival of the New Year. This is a regularly celebrated event, then, consisting of a variety of practices, celebrated by the whole community. Not only was the event pleasurable in itself (drinking, eating, general celebration), but it reinforced ties within the community, and the acts carried out were possibly perceived as ensuring positive outcomes throughout the rest of the year. While the Church assigns pagan meaning to aspects of the Kalends, it is hard for us to know to what extent this was true for the celebrants. Klingshirn suggests that the ‘potency associated with the annual renewal of time’<sup>87</sup> was also a contributory factor.

Votive offerings seem to have to do with anxieties over pain and illness. It can be assumed that these were made whenever necessary, and carried out by whoever required relief (although they might also have been carried out on behalf of someone else). It is not clear in the canon where this practice is being carried out; although other sources suggest that this practice was acceptable in a church setting, but not at lakes or woods, the synod of Auxerre does not make this distinction. It might be imagined that as this practice was tied to the cessation of pain and illness, there was some anxiety surrounding it.

Those activities to do with foretelling the future seem to have involved some sort of specialist. The *sortes* would have required both a bible and someone who

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<sup>84</sup>Cubitt questions whether a clear distinction can or ought to be made between clerical and lay religion in, Catherine Cubitt, ‘Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England’, in Thacker and Sharpe, pp. 429-30.

<sup>85</sup>Caesarius, p. 192.3.

<sup>86</sup>Caesarius, bk. 192.3.

<sup>87</sup>Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, p. 216.

could read (and presumably interpret) the contents. The wording of the canon also suggests that there are specialists who carry out the augury and divination. It is difficult to know if a certain location would have been specified for such activities. It is also hard to tell exactly when such people would have been consulted, or why.

### Conclusions

Overall, councils represent an attempt to provide what Whitehouse calls the 'effective detection of unauthorized innovation'.<sup>88</sup> The practices discussed above which require policing have a common feature: they are taking place outside the control of the church. Even those practices which would otherwise be acceptable are viewed as potentially dangerous when performed in the wrong setting, and without the supervision of specialists. Whitehouse suggests that such 'checking' also results in centralization. This observation is relevant to this discussion; Auxerre was a direct result of the Council of Mâcon, which itself was an attempt by Guntram to reform and standardise practice across Neustria and Burgundy. However, there is an important element of variation here within this standardization which Whitehouse's model does not account for: the fact the Merovingian churchmen seem to have held smaller regional councils in order to translate the findings of larger councils to their uniquely local needs. There is a sort of hierarchy of centralization in the Merovingian church which Whitehouse's conception of a doctrinal religion does not successfully cover.

The importance of specificity in terms of place has also been demonstrated here. As stated frequently in this thesis and in other studies of Merovingian Gaul, recognition of the importance of localism in this period is vital. Assuming that concerns expressed at a council carried in the south-west, for example, might be equally valid for a council carried out in the north-east would be hazardous. It is important, therefore to try and focus on those councils where some kind of link can be made to the region. The issue of geography and the practicalities of

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<sup>88</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 67.

travel also demonstrate the commitment of clergy, and argue against the notion that councils were merely empty repetitions of earlier canons.

## Chapter 8. Parish Care and The Life of Goar

### Introduction

Parish care offers us an opportunity to get a sense of both the church's level of involvement in the community, as well as how the clergy and laity interacted. However, what can we know about parish care in early Merovingian Gaul? How did the clergy actually engage with the laity? While liturgy and sanctoral cycles might offer an idea of the Church's ideals, and sermons, penitentials and councils an idea of those practices and ideas they found unacceptable, it is very difficult to get a sense of what parish care existed<sup>1</sup> and how it was actually carried out. Hagiographies offer us many bishops as heroic protectors, stepping in at moments of crisis to rescue prisoners, or to intercede with kings to have heavy taxes lifted, or gaining heavenly intercession at times of plague in their cities. As informative as these models are, this is all somewhat removed from what might have been daily parish activities. This discussion will attempt to gain an idea of what might have constituted parish care, focusing on the ecclesiastical province of Trier wherever possible. Sources such as the *Eusebius Gallicanus*,<sup>2</sup> dating from the mid-late fifth century and still in circulation in the seventh century, and the Bobbio Missal,<sup>3</sup> dating from the later seventh to early eighth century, will be examined to see what they can tell us about pastoral care. The archaeological record offers us an opportunity to look at the physical distribution of church provision. Church councils give us a sense of care provided by the church. The dating of these sources conveniently frame the time period under examination. Further, the *Eusebius Gallicanus* remained in circulation throughout the seventh century, and material contained within the Bobbio Missal can be seen to have roots in sixth-century conciliar sources.

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<sup>1</sup>Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul*, 1st edn (Notre Dame; Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), p.13.

<sup>2</sup>Fr. Glorie, *Eusebius Gallicanus*, CCSL 101, 101A, 101B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>E.A. Lowe, *The Bobbio Missal: A Gallican Mass-Book*, HBS 58 (London, 1920).

Although these sources both seem to have originated in the south-east, it seems likely that their circulation would have been wide. Furthermore, we have no sources of this nature from the north-east.

The *Life of St Goar*<sup>4</sup> will also be examined in this chapter. This hagiography is unusual in that it focuses on Goar, who was not a bishop, but a priest. Further, the events described in the *Vita* bring us back to the same ecclesiastical province of Trier, on which we have focused on in the rest of the study; Trier and Metz are both mentioned. The hagiography was written by a monk, Wandalbert of Prüm, in 839, some 190 years after Goar's death. The Life itself is problematic, and the difficulties surrounding its use will be discussed in detail.

Modes theory will be utilised in order to see what insights it might offer into the topic, and vice-versa. The dissemination of key doctrine and the creation/maintenance of community are central ideas in Whitehouse's theory, and it is hoped that his observations on these activities in the doctrinal mode might prove fruitful when applied to a discussion of Merovingian parish care.

### Sermons

There have been recent studies undertaken of sermon collections in order to try and discern something of parish care. Yitzhak Hen and Rob Meens have both looked to the Bobbio Missal in order to glean more information as well as study the Missal in its own right,<sup>5</sup> while Lisa Kaaren Bailey has examined the contents of the *Eusebius Gallicanus*,<sup>6</sup> more usually noted for disagreements over authorship. The sermons of Caesarius of Arles, have, of course, been put to use

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<sup>4</sup>*Vita sancti Goaris confessoris*, BHL 3565; Wandalbert and Stiene, *Vita Et Miracula Sancti Goaris*, Europa-ische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 1, Deutsche Sprache Und Literatur; Bd. 399 (Frankfurt am Main: P.D. Lang, 1981).

<sup>5</sup>Yitzhak Hen and Rob Meens (eds.), *The Bobbio Missal: Liturgy and Religious Culture in Merovingian Gaul*, *Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology*, 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup>Bailey, *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection*.

frequently across many studies in the examination of many different topics, but the most comprehensive study has been that undertaken by Klingshirn.<sup>7</sup>

The Eusebius Gallicanus

Bailey's study of the *Eusebius Gallicanus*,<sup>8</sup> which would seem to have been in circulation in the sixth century, appearing in 477 manuscripts, reveals a collection of sermons which can reveal much about pastoral care.<sup>9</sup> Bailey's study looks to how the sermons helped to build Christian communities, and she analyses the texts from many different angles in order to build up a complete picture of its approach to pastoral care. The local nature of the cult of saints in this period is stressed in the sermons, for example, creating small, bonded communities around the saints. Another key issue is the issue of explaining the central tenets of Christianity in a way which was memorable, understandable and avoided excessive confusion,

Yet as they sought to explain the faith, preachers were also conscious that explanation must stay within carefully corrected and directed limits. Questions must be posed within frameworks which provided correct answers, a strategy that created the illusion of access while it actually sought to make disagreement unthinkable<sup>10</sup>

This style of preaching seems to tie in perfectly with Whitehouse's ideas on the dissemination of doctrinal religions. Here we have a method which prefers to prevent personal reflection whenever possible, but sets up instead standard, easily memorised answers to difficult questions. Whitehouse points out that 'repetitive sermonizing' allows complex doctrine to be effectively stored in semantic memory,<sup>11</sup> ensuring that 'difficult' information could be easily

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<sup>7</sup>Caesarius has been focused on most closely in Klingshirn, William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup>Eusebius, Johannes Leroy and Frans Glorie, *Eusebius 'Gallicanus' Collectio Homiliarum: De Qua Critice Disseruit Ioh. Leroy* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1970).

<sup>9</sup>Bailey, *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection*.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* p. 60-1.

<sup>11</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 66.

memorised. Bailey suggests that while sermons had, in one respect, to act as a persuasive dialogue,<sup>12</sup> their aim was to tell their audience exactly what and how to think. An understanding of the basics was important, which means it was vital that this was carefully preached to the laity via sermons by a trained clergy.<sup>13</sup> Misunderstanding and misinterpretation were dangerous, potentially even sources of heresy, and could not be tolerated.<sup>14</sup>

It is also important to note that it was not solely the laity who were the focus of this effort to provide correct understanding. The general level of education across the clergy is difficult to determine. While Whitehouse states that it is generally those who are capable of ‘infectious oratory’ (good preaching) that are able to enthuse their congregations and shape traditions, it ought to also be noted that such individuals are relatively uncommon. Dunn’s article, “Columbanus, Charisma and the Revolt of the Monks of Bobbio”,<sup>15</sup> looks at how Columbanus’ rather meagre monastic rule, relying as it did on the charisma of the abbot to maintain authority, had to be replaced with the much more thorough and prescriptive Rule of the Master, possibly devised in response to revolt of the monks of Bobbio. Collection of sermons such as the *Eusebius Gallicanus* can be perceived as fulfilling a similar sort of role. They ensured that priests were preaching ‘safe’ material and not wandering into error, and also that effective preaching was not only the preserve of the charismatic. The audience for these sermons was by no means exclusively laity, either. Other clergymen or monks could often be those for whom the sermon was intended.<sup>16</sup> One of Whitehouse’s key hypotheses for the doctrinal mode is that it requires ‘orthodoxy checks’;<sup>17</sup> there must be agreement on key principles by religious specialists, and any ‘unauthorized innovation’ detected and eliminated, or, better still, prevented. While church councils are perhaps the most explicit evidence for this that we have examined so far, the standardising effect of collections of sermons such as the *Eusebius Gallicanus* can also be seen to have the same type of policing effect, albeit that its aim is prevention as well as cure.

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<sup>12</sup>Bailey, *Christianity’s Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection*, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. p. 60.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. p. 62.

<sup>15</sup>Dunn, pp. 1-27.

<sup>16</sup>Bailey, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 67.

Whitehouse's hypotheses on the methods of transmission of the doctrinal mode are insistent on routinization as a key factor in ensuring 'the establishment of a great deal of explicit verbal knowledge in semantic memory'.<sup>18</sup> Further, repetition would mean that any rituals could be stored in implicit memory.<sup>19</sup> Combined, these factors, Whitehouse claims, reduce the rate of reflection and potentially dangerous innovation. Lastly, the use of semantic memory for a great deal of religious ideas means that the creation of community is not down to small, local activities, but shared belief in doctrine which could unite wider, anonymous communities.<sup>20</sup> While these aims can be said to be present in the *Eusebius Gallicanus*, a stumbling block in applying Whitehouse's argument comes in the form of frequency. Whitehouse goes on to hypothesise that daily or weekly routine would initiate the processes described above.<sup>21</sup>

#### The Bobbio Missal

The Bobbio Missal was produced in the south-east of Gaul, most likely in the late seventh or early eighth century, and probably for the practical use of priests attempting to administer to both clergy and laity.<sup>22</sup> It combines a sacramentary, a lectionary, and a penitential, and a variety of material such as commentaries and sermons.<sup>23</sup> As Hen and Meens point out, although the contents of the Missal may seem diverse, they were gathered together with a specific purpose in mind: to act as a practical handbook for a priest.<sup>24</sup> In many respects, it bears similarities to the *Eusebius Gallicanus* as analysed by Bailey, in that much of the material is aimed at the proper discipline of the clergy as well as the laity. Meens argues persuasively that the penitential material ought to be considered in the wider context of the general reform movement which can be perceived in

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<sup>18</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.* p. 68.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.* p. 68.

<sup>22</sup>Rosamond McKitterick, 'The scripts of the Bobbio Missal', *The Bobbio Missal*, chap. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Meens also comments that the *Joca monachorum* might well have been used as source material for preaching. Meens, 'Reforming the clergy: a context for the use of the Bobbio penitential', *The Bobbio Missal*, p. 155.

<sup>24</sup>Hen and Meens, 'Conclusion', *The Bobbio Missal*, p. 219.

Burgundy at the end of the sixth century. The Council of Auxerre had already been discussed in this context, and it can be seen that many of the issues addressed there were still considered relevant for inclusion in the Bobbio Missal: the *Sortes*, vows at sacred places, and celebration of the *Kalends* of January.<sup>25</sup> It can be seen, then, as something which sought to establish norms in the community for both laity and clergy, and also as a source which suggests that priests were very much on the ‘front line’ of parish care.

The issue of clerical discipline is common to both the Bobbio Missal and the *Eusebius Gallicanus*. Bailey argues that the inclusion of sermons for the clergy in the *Eusebius Gallicanus* means that the clergy were being classed as part of the community and cites this as an example of the *Eusebius Gallicanus*’ role in building a Christian community.<sup>26</sup> Meens points out that while the clergy are included as possible targets for sermons and penance in the Bobbio Missal, they are also carefully differentiated from the laity, much as can be seen in the Council of Auxerre.<sup>27</sup> This is strengthened, Meens suggests, by the Columbanian element in the Missal, which is concerned with the special purity of clerics.<sup>28</sup> How might this be interpreted via modes theory? Religious specialists in Merovingian Gaul, if we go by this approach, were both of the community, yet not of the community. They are sometimes the deliverers of parish care, and sometimes its recipients. Whitehouse suggests that the doctrinal mode requires its leaders to ‘rise above the common herd’, but he also suggests that their very importance necessitates orthodoxy checks. The very credibility of their authoritative position is dependent on agreement on correct teachings.<sup>29</sup> The positions that Bailey and Meens observe in the *Eusebius Gallicanus* and Bobbio Missal respectively, then, need not be contradictory. While a religious leader is separate from the laity, given authority and made responsible for the dissemination of religious teachings, then he is even more in need of policing and correction in order to maintain the stability of the corpus of teachings.

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<sup>25</sup>Rob Meens, ‘Reforming the Clergy: a context for the use of the Bobbio penitential’, in *The Bobbio Missal*, p. 158.

<sup>26</sup>Bailey, p. 126.

<sup>27</sup>Meens, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.* p. 167.

<sup>29</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 67.

## The Sermons of Caesarius of Arles

The sermons of Caesarius of Arles have been used frequently in studies of the Merovingian period in citing examples of pagan behaviour which Christianizing efforts sought to address. The most recent extensive study of Caesarius' sermons and their function is Klingshirn's study: *Caesarius of Arles: the making of a Christian community in late antique Gaul*.<sup>30</sup> These sermons had a wide circulation.<sup>31</sup> Klingshirn's focus is on the creation of a Christian community and, as Bailey does with the *Eusebius Gallicanus*, he utilises Caesarius' sermons as a way of analysing how this community was created and maintained: assessing the extent of Caesarius' ambitions and failures. Klingshirn points out that Caesarius tried to produce clear, brief and memorable sermons above all. He also exhorted both lay and religious members of his congregation to memorise not only religious texts, but even the key points of his sermons.<sup>32</sup> Texts such as the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, for example, he suggested might be recited by peasants as they worked in the fields. Klingshirn suggests that Caesarius saw memorisation as a route to establishing in the mind a repository of Christian knowledge which could then be used to establish a 'template'<sup>33</sup> of appropriate Christian behaviour. Here we can see here the key role of preaching in disseminating doctrine which bound the Christian community, a shared belief which, as Whitehouse states, could link otherwise anonymous communities.

Overall, it can be seen that sermons acted as a means by which parish care could consolidate correct Christian knowledge in the minds of the faithful, clergy as well as laity. This provided a corpus of stored doctrine which enabled the community to live a Christian life in terms of large issues, such as understanding the importance of prayer, to the seemingly mundane matters which actually went towards shaping everyday life. While the sermons discussed here do not

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<sup>30</sup>William Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 274.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid p. 274.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. pp. 184-6.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. p. 150.

originate in the north-east of Gaul, far less specifically the province of Trier, there are some factors which suggest they might well have reached the region. The sermons of Caesarius of Arles were copied throughout the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries,<sup>34</sup> and the *Life of Eligius of Noyon*, as mentioned before, seems to contain a large fragment of one of Caesarius' sermons. Dado, the author of the *Life*, was bishop of Rouen and founder of the monastery of Rebais. If he had access to the sermons of Caesarius, then it might be imagined that they were in general circulation. Rebais was a Columbanan foundation, and it might further be suggested that, if it possessed copies of the Sermons, then they were in circulation between other Columbanan monasteries in the region. Bailey also points out that the Eusebius Gallicanus was circulated widely.<sup>35</sup> The Bobbio Missal seems likely to have originated in Burgundy, according to Wood.<sup>36</sup> It must therefore have travelled widely to reach Bobbio. All of these sermons originated in the south-east, in which the monastery of Lerins was prominent. Prinz's map illustrating the destination of Lérinian monks demonstrates that both Trier and Verdun had Lérins-educated bishops.<sup>37</sup> It seems likely that they would have not only absorbed the religious ideas in circulation in that region, but perhaps even taken resources from the area with them to their bishoprics.

### Church Councils

#### The Synod of Auxerre

Robert Godding's study of Merovingian priests correctly identifies the diocesan synod of Auxerre as a key source in attempting to discern something of the realities of parish care.<sup>38</sup> There were thirty one priests in attendance at this council and, more than any other group mentioned, they are the focus of many of the canons. Here we can see, in more detail than any other source available, some of the practical issues facing priests.

<sup>34</sup>Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul*, p. 274.

<sup>35</sup>Lisa Bailey, 'Building Urban Christian Communities: Sermons on Local Saints in the Eusebius Gallicanus Collection', *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2004), p. 23.

<sup>36</sup>Wood, 'Liturgy in the Rhône Valley and the Bobbio Missal', *The Bobbio Missal*, pp. 206-18.

<sup>37</sup>Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum Im Frankenreich*, Map 4.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Godding, *Prêtres En Gaule Mérovingienne* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2001).

For example, we might consider the phenomenon discussed previously in the discussion on church councils: the *Sortes Sanctorum*. Demanding as it did both access to a bible and someone literate to interpret the result of the practice, it might be suggested here that priests were participants in this activity, and the canon sought to reprove their behaviour as much as that of the possibly erring laity. It must be ensured that priests were not encouraging deviant behaviour. One of Clare Stancliffe's main criticisms<sup>39</sup> of Godding's study is that it does not take into consideration how priests actually 'related to their parishioners'.<sup>40</sup> We can see here, as in other sections of the synod, that there do seem to have been real issues with the clear differentiation of priests from laity, and with the correctness of their behaviour. In many ways, a key theme of this synod is defining what clerics ought and ought not do.

Given, too, that so many priests were in attendance, it might be expected that this synod offers a unique insight into practical issues faced by priests in the carrying out of everyday parish tasks, in comparison with larger councils with largely bishops in attendance. Of those canons pertaining explicitly or implicitly to priests, the following topics are raised, which might be subdivided into the following categories for clarity: Policing one's own behaviour, and liturgical issues.

Liturgical issues: the celebrant must fast before saying mass; mass cannot be given twice in one day; a priest may not deliver mass on the same day as a bishop.

Policing one's own behaviour: communion wine must be wine and not any other liquid; priests are to attend a regular synod; choirs of women and/or laity were not to be allowed to sing in the church or prepare feasts; the Eucharist is not to

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<sup>39</sup>Clare Stancliffe, 'Review: Prêtres En Gaule Mérovingienne. By Robert Godding.', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 56 (2005), 712-715 <doi:10.1093/jts/fli197>.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. 712-715 (p. 715).

be offered to the dead, and they must not to be wrapped in ecclesiastical garments; work must not be carried out on a Sunday; arch priests must report inappropriate sexual conduct by priests or face excommunication; priests must not sleep with their wives; the prevention of incestuous marriages; a priest may not be permitted to be present when a man was tortured; a priest must not act as a judge if a man could be sentenced to death; a priest must not hand a fellow member of the clergy over to a judge; in matters involving a secular judge, a priest must ask a layman to act on his behalf; a woman may not receive the eucharist on her bare hand; priests who communicate with excommunicates in any way are subject to excommunication themselves; priests must not sing or dance at banquets; women must cover their heads with a veil when receiving the eucharist.

As mentioned previously, Meens suggests that the Council of Mâcon, of which the synod of Auxerre is a direct offshoot, ought to be considered as part of a general reform movement. If this is the case, then we can see here a real attempt to address standards amongst priests, ranging from issues of liturgical correctness to appropriate behaviour within the community. The synod of Auxerre gives us a sense of the type of parish care the priest was expected to provide, a recognition of his importance in policing behaviour, and a sense of the type of 'separateness' he was expected to maintain. If Stancliffe's criticism above is borne in mind when considering these canons, we perhaps get a picture of a priest who can relate too well to his parishioners. 'Correct' or 'adequate' parish care is not always being delivered, because this priest is apparently not sufficiently educated and differentiated from the wider community.

What can Auxerre, then, tell us about parish care? Firstly, it suggests that education levels amongst priests were possibly not always as high as might have been desired. We can see again here the type of anxiety which Whitehouse argues will be present with doctrinal religions in terms of both adequate policing and ensuring that unauthorised innovation did not occur at any level in the hierarchy. We can also see parish care at work in a variety of areas, from provision of mass, to prevention of deviant behaviour, and the general

maintenance of Christian norms in important areas of life: marriage, death, etc. The status of those providing the parish care was equally as important, with Godding's argument the idea of an increased demand for ritual purity on the part of priests throughout the Merovingian period lent further credence by the evidence found in the synod of Auxerre.

#### Other Councils

As well as Auxerre, with its particular focus on issues of parish care, other councils do contain some canons of interest. As with the previous chapter on church councils, an attempt will be made here to focus on those councils within the time-frame parameters of the study which might have conceivably had some influence on the province of Trier.

The Council of Orleans in 549 sought to ensure that clergymen were properly recruited, and that any abuses of power perpetrated by bishops were adequately addressed. Importantly, it also established that the church should use its resources for the solace of lepers and prisoners, the right to sanctuary, matters concerning slavery, and how the clergy ought to interact with women (on which issue it altered the penalties laid down in the third Council of Orleans).

We have very little detail from the Council of Metz in 590 in terms of canons, but we do know that one of the issues to be addressed at this council was the suspected treason of Bishop Egidius of Rheims. While the lack of any other information is infuriating, this at least tells us that specific disciplinary matters within the clergy were deemed appropriate to be raised at church councils.

The Council of Paris in 614 made clear the importance of ensuring that bishops had special rights when they were investigating the wrongdoing of priests. It asked that the canons be observed by all, and maintained that episcopal elections ought to be carried out without any outside interference.

Lastly, the Council of Clichy in 626/7, revisiting the Council of Paris in 614, covered much of the same ground. Of interest for the discussion of parish care is the reiteration of the canon regarding episcopal elections, and further canons which aimed to regulate of the relations between the clergy, monasteries, and royalty.

Church councils do, then, offer up important material for a consideration of parish care. While the diocesan synod of Auxerre is remarkable for the period in that we have no other records of such synods extant, and offers us an unparalleled opportunity to look at parish care issues in detail, it seems plausible that similar synods, dealing with similar matters, were held in other dioceses. Other councils which can be directly related to the province of Trier reveal not only attempts to formalise those aspects of community life for which the church was responsible, but to properly regulate relations between the clergy and the laity and within the laity itself. As was demonstrated in the discussion on sermons, there is an effort to define and formalise parish care in order to ensure correctness and avoid error.

### Churches

While the discussion above puts forward some hypotheses on how people might have responded to the sermons they heard in church, it is very difficult for us to actually tell how frequently people actually attended church. Woods cites the Council of Orléans (511) in describing how the Church set out markers in the life of the laity: baptism, prove belief via church attendance (especially at important feasts), prohibition of Sunday work, and goes on to state that it ‘is not difficult to depict the early medieval church as a power-house of psychological oppression’<sup>41</sup>. Although we can glean information regarding how often priests were expected to deliver mass, it is almost impossible to tell how often people attended. It would perhaps seem most plausible to suggest that heterogeneity

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<sup>41</sup>Ian N Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, p. 72.

of observance was likely. This would also account for the need for constant policing: while some might well have effectively absorbed the key tenets of Christianity, others may still require instruction and correction. It is interesting to consider how a sermon might have been experienced, by both regular and non-regular worshippers. Would they have differed? James suggests that while it is exceedingly difficult to confidently identify many specifically Merovingian churches, it might be suggested that the type of churches seen in Byzantine Ravenna would have been similar. This would mean that mosaics, marble and light were key features.<sup>42</sup> Take for example, Gregory of Tours description of the church built by St. Namatius, the eighth bishop of Clermont-Ferrand,

It is one hundred and fifty feet long, sixty feet wide inside the nave and fifty feet high as far as the vaulting. It has a rounded apse at the end, and two wings of elegant design on either side.... It has forty-two windows, seventy columns and eight doorways. In it one is conscious of the fear of God and of a great brightness....Round the sanctuary it has walls which are decorated with mosaic work made of many varieties of marble.<sup>43</sup>

Smaller churches were, of course, not likely to have been quite so grand, but paintings would still at least have been probable.<sup>44</sup> Wightman's study of the Roman province of Gallia Belgica<sup>45</sup> discusses the distribution of mosaics across the region, noting that Trier seems to show the greatest concentration in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, with the workshop becoming particularly notable in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> Although this is temporally distant from the late fifth and sixth centuries, it does suggest that there may have been a supply of tiles in the region which could have been re-used/utilised for later church building projects. Then there are other stimuli: singing, incense, etc.<sup>47</sup> Whitehouse suggests that sensory stimulation is likely to increase arousal and so help to alleviate the

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<sup>42</sup>James, *The Franks*, New edn (Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), p. 150.

<sup>43</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 63-4; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. II.14.

<sup>44</sup>James, *The Franks*, p. 151.

<sup>45</sup>Edith Mary Wightman, *Gallia Belgica* (London: Batsford, 1985), pp. 138-9.

<sup>46</sup>Wightman, *Gallia Belgica*, p. 138-9.

<sup>47</sup>See again Gregory's description of the church built by Namatius, 'those at prayer are often aware of a sweet and aromatic odour which is being wafted towards them', Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp.64-5; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. II.16.

tedium effect.<sup>48</sup> It is worth bearing in mind the possible effect these factors might have had on how often church was attended and perceived.

The simple physical presence of the church, cathedrals, monasteries, churches, oratories, and shrines, would seem to be one of the most obvious signs of parish care. Stancliffe's work on the Touraine suggests that the balance of provision in the Touraine by the year 600 was slanted towards the city, with sixteen monasteries, oratories and churches in the city, compared to forty two in the countryside.<sup>49</sup> Despite the unevenness of distribution, the numbers still suggest a decent level of provision as a whole. Gregory of Tours's focus on the building and restoration of ecclesiastical buildings in his histories and hagiographies offers an indication of how important this activity was deemed to be. Gregory's list of the bishops of Tours takes care to give details of every building activity undertaken by the bishops, from roof restoration to the building of large churches.<sup>50</sup> The provision and maintenance of church buildings, then, was considered to be an important duty.

The location and number of churches in the cities of the ecclesiastical province of Trier has been discussed in some detail in the chapter on the province. It is difficult to draw confident conclusions regarding the distribution of churches and subsequent provision of parish care due to the unevenness of the archaeological record in this area, especially in regards to rural churches. Stancliffe suggests in her study on the Touraine that churches were likely to be established on the former sites of pagan temples, which themselves tended to be located at borders,<sup>51</sup> but this can only be hypothesised in Trier. Gauthier suggests that rural churches, constructed by bishops or other nobles, were not a surprising

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<sup>48</sup>Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, p. 72.

<sup>49</sup>C.E. Stancliffe, 'The Christianization of the Touraine 370-600', in *Church in Town and Countryside: Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Studies in Church History, ed by Derek Baker, (Ecclesiastical History Society), 16 (Oxford: Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1979), p. 51.

<sup>50</sup>Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, pp. 526-7; Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, bk. X.31.

<sup>51</sup>C.E. Stancliffe, 'The Christianization of the Touraine' in, *The Church in Town and Countryside: Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Studies in Church History, ed. Derek Baker (Ecclesiastical History Society), 16 (Oxford: Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1979).

sight in the early sixth century.<sup>52</sup> Bowes further suggests that private churches on estates are a neglected area of research in terms of the provision of Christianity in the countryside.<sup>53</sup> Proof of the existence of such private rural churches is lent further credence by repeated attempts in conciliar legislation to limit their powers throughout the Merovingian period. Unfortunately, while we can keep the notion of private rural churches in mind as in the context of general distribution and provision of parish care, it is difficult to find much reliable evidence to back this up, particularly in the province of Trier.

Nancy Gauthier discusses further the difficulty of drawing up a list of the churches present in the dioceses which made up the ecclesiastical province of Trier. We can see, for example, a redaction in the *Gesta Treverorum* which suggests that Modoaldus, who was bishop of Trier from c.626 - 647, built a number of churches and monasteries.<sup>54</sup> It should be noted, though, that Gauthier points out the unreliability of this list, which wrongly attributes several later foundations to Modoaldus, for example, the church of St Martin, which cannot be reliably attested prior to 956.<sup>55</sup> The *Gesta*, in fact, given as it is a twelfth-century document whose main aim seems to have been asserting the authority of the bishops of Trier over ecclesiastical foundations, is far from reliable as a source for determining the accurate dating and sites of churches.

Attempting to ascertain the location and spread of churches to furnish more information regarding parish care poses severe problems. Documentary sources are sparse and often deeply unreliable. Archaeological evidence for the region is fragmentary and, even when it does exist, often problematic. While we can gain some idea of what buildings were present in the cities, towns and rural areas present much greater difficulties. Yitzhak Hen cites the fact that Gregory of Tours mentions some 400 churches across Gaul in its entirety, and further quotes James' estimate of a minimum of 4000 churches by the year 600.

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<sup>52</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 237.

<sup>53</sup>Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kimberly Diane Bowes, 'Christianization' and the Rural Home', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 15 (2007), 143-170.

<sup>54</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 352.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.* p. 353.

However, as pointed out by Halsall, church and monastery building seems to have been relatively slow and late in the areas around Metz,<sup>56</sup> possibly due to royal control of the land. So, while we can say relatively little about the distribution of churches in the province of Trier, we can perhaps hypothesise that there were fewer private churches, and that provision to rural areas was perhaps somewhat sparser.

### The *Life of Goar*

#### Background

There were two versions of the *Life of Saint Goar* extant. The earlier Life is anonymous and was written around the middle of the eighth century.<sup>57</sup> The later version of *Life of Goar* was written by Wandalbert of Prüm in 839.<sup>58</sup> Both versions of the Life deal with St Goar, who was born to noble parents in the region of Aquitaine.

#### The Life

In the narrative offered by the earlier Life, Goar is born to noble parents in Aquitaine. He becomes a priest, but eventually decides that he is better suited to the role of hermit. Goar then relocates to rural Trier and, as is perversely common for early medieval hermits, soon attracts frequent visitors. The bishop of Trier, Rusticus, then sends legates to ensure that Goar is not falling into error in any way. The legates decide to accuse Goar of wrongdoing, and call him before Rusticus under the pretence of a friendly visit. On the way to Trier, Goar performs some miracles with food and drink. When Goar goes before Rusticus, the bishop suggests that these miracles might instead have been some form of sorcery. By coincidence, a cleric brings an abandoned child to Goar and Rusticus. Rusticus, somewhat ill-advisedly, as it turns out, asks Goar to name the

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<sup>56</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 277.

<sup>57</sup>*Vita Sancti Goaris*.

<sup>58</sup>Wandalbert and Stiene, *Vita Et Miracula Sancti Goaris*.

parents of the child, as a test of his powers. Goar correctly names the mother: Aflaia, and the father: Rusticus himself. Rusticus confesses all and expresses contrition for his misdemeanours. This story reaches King Sigebert. Impressed, Sigebert offers Goar the episcopacy of Trier, supported by the people, which he rejects. Instead, Goar chooses to return to his cell and spend his time in prayer. Sigibert sends another legate, but Goar again opts to stay in his cell. Three years later, Goar takes ill and dies. He is buried by the priest Aggripinus and Eusebius where the Vocare meets the Rhine. Goar's cell seems to have been a popular location for miracles and become a small cult centre after his death, hence the squabbles between Prüm and the bishops of Trier over ownership.

The two Lives, though superficially similar in terms of content, are markedly different in style. The later Life is written in more sophisticated Latin, and is much longer than the original. It also elaborates and adds more detail and drama to various sections. Most importantly, the early section of the Life, which deals with those matters of most interest here, Goar's activities, are made more dramatic in the later Life. The early Life has Goar preaching to *pagani*, educating country-dwellers, generally undertaking standard parish care in a rural area. While this can be seen as Christianizing activity, ensuring that rural communities were adequately educated and instructed, it stands in fairly stark contrast to the later Life, which has Goar eradicating superstition and the worship of idols. While the later Life might simply have sought to cast Goar in a heroic light, the image offered is very differently to the rather more prosaic duties which we see Goar carrying out.

The second *Life of Goar* was produced for political reasons. Wandalbert was apparently asked by his abbot to rework the earlier life, seemingly in response to an on-going situation regarding conflict between the monastery of Prüm and the bishops of Trier over control of Goar's cell. The bishop in the second Life has his ignorance and immorality enhanced in order to deliberately cast him in a poor light. It should be noted, however, that the first Life also presents Rusticus in a particularly poor light. Even his name, Rusticus, seems to hint at ignorance.

What is notable in the *Life of Goar*, outside the usual miracles, is the fact that Goar was originally a priest, and is overtly praised in the Life for his success in preaching. As we have seen from our earlier examination of saints' lives, which focused mostly on the writings of Gregory of Tours, those holy men who became saints were usually bishops, hermits, or abbots. Adding to the priestly image of Goar is that when he becomes a hermit in the countryside around Trier, he continues many of his pastoral activities. Usually, those hermits described by Gregory of Tours seem to have simply acted as an inspiration to others by their presence, as well as perform occasional miracles (see earlier chapter on monasticism). However, Goar interacts extensively with those around him: he obtains relics and creates a cult centre, builds a church, he offers hospitality to travellers, celebrates mass regularly, offers the Eucharist, feeds the poor, reads the psalter, and preaches. His solitary cave is essentially performing the sort of pastoral activities that are frequently ascribed to Columbanian monasteries in the seventh century, or which might reasonably have been ascribed to a parish priest.

Tempting as it might be to extrapolate from this, some considerable care must be taken here. Although Goar's activities might be interpreted to suggest that there was a complete absence of parish care in this particular area of the countryside around Trier, or that priests *were* present but perhaps not adequately fulfilling their duties, the background of the Life itself must be taken into account. In the later version of the *Vita*, Wandalbert sought to ensure that Goar's cell remained the possession of Prüm, despite the objections of the archbishops of Trier. The earlier Life can be seen to have similar motivations. Both Gauthier<sup>59</sup> and Godding<sup>60</sup> briefly discuss Goar, and the difficulties of effectively utilising it. Gauthier dismisses even the earlier Life as 'sans valeur',<sup>61</sup> even as she notes that the possibility of extracting much-needed information regarding parish care from the text is enticing. Godding prefers to focus on the section of the Life where Rusticus confesses his crimes, for which

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<sup>59</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*.

<sup>60</sup>Godding.

<sup>61</sup>Gauthier, *L'évangélisation Des Pays De La Moselle*, p. 441.

Goar reproves him, pointing out that private confession would be more beneficial. Goar points out that this is indicative of the progress of the system of private confession, as introduced by Columbanus, to be contrasted with the earlier method of public confession.<sup>62</sup> While it is tempting to extrapolate such ideas from the *Life of Goar*, it must be remembered at all times that the very detail which is of most interest is also that which could conceivably have been created to further the ends of the writer.

What can be said about the *Life of St Goar* as a means of garnering more details on parish care? There are aspects of the Life which are extremely appealing in this respect, as both Godding and Gauthier point out, in relation to penance in particular, as well as more general details on parish care. However, it must be kept in mind that the earliest version of the Life was composed around 100 years after the life of the saint in question. Not only does the issue of temporal distance present difficulties, but the Life itself clearly politically motivated: it is in the interests of both the earlier anonymous author and Wandalbert of Prüm to present the bishops of Trier in a poor light, and Goar in a good light, and possibly even to emphasise the role played by forms of monasticism in parish care.

### Conclusions

What have we learnt about parish care, especially in the ecclesiastical province of Trier? Much has to be extrapolated from source material originating from other areas, specifically the south-east. However, as this material seems to have been distributed widely and over a long period of time, we might assume that it was known and used in the north-east. The true difficulty lies in trying to remain aware of the aims, ambitions, and anxieties of the material while attempting to ascertain the realities of pastoral care. Whitehouse's modes theory has proved to be productive in this respect: several of the key features of the sermons examined here comply with Whitehouse's hypotheses regarding the

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<sup>62</sup>Godding, pp. 396-8.

doctrinal mode, which helps us understand their rationale more clearly, and those behaviours which were censured become more explicable when the modes model is applied.

While the *Life of Goar* might offer some useful information on pastoral care, it offers a salient example of the difficulty of using saints' lives as a source. Not only was it written many years after the life of the saint in question, but is also likely to have been heavily affected by the writer's motivation and political situation. Negotiating the text, then, presents many difficulties. It must be questioned whether the difficulties of the *Vita* outweigh its potential usefulness as a source. Wandalbert of Prüm's abbot certainly seems to have been pursuing an agenda in commissioning a new version of the *Vita*. While it is true that current scholarship on hagiography inevitably involved reading through many competing discourses within the text, the problems here are especially explicit. While some tentative hypotheses might be made, they must be considered with strong provisos in mind.

We can see an attempt at regulation, not only of the life of the laity, but also of the activities of the clergy. The heterogeneity of practice within the Merovingian church has been remarked upon elsewhere in this study in terms of tailoring broad practice and ideology for local concerns, but we can see here that this approach had its limits, and that a measure of uniformity amongst the clergy was perceived as desirable for the maintenance of 'correctness'. We can perhaps also see, as suggested by Godding, a shift in how the priest was perceived, due to the practical fact that bishops could no longer feasibly perform all the tasks required for parish care.<sup>63</sup>

Modes theory can be seen to be of great analytical use here, especially in the examination of sermon collections. It allows us to find the unifying features between three seemingly disparate sermon collections, which let us think about how and why they were used: the ambitions and concerns of the churchmen who

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<sup>63</sup>Godding, *Preches En Gaule Mérovingienne*, p. 435-40.

used them, and the practicalities of their day-to-day interactions with the laity, as well as each other.

## Chapter 9. Cemeteries and Databases

Studies of burial archaeology and associated ideas regarding the relationship between the dead and the living have arguably been at the forefront of work on the Merovingian period in recent years. Effros and Halsall are probably the most influential in this area, producing five books on the topic between 1995 and 2009, as well as numerous articles.<sup>1</sup> As both the topics of funerary feasting and the cult of saints have already been profitably analysed in this study using both cognitive science of religion and modes theory as a heuristic tool, the following chapter will look at some other aspects of the analysis of death and burial. Firstly, it will discuss the historiography and theory of the topic. It will then discuss the possibility of employing databases as a means of analysing burial data in the hopes of revealing patterns and trends, and will look at currently existing databases and other relevant online resources. Three databases have been created using archaeological reports for three cemeteries in the ecclesiastical province of Trier, and this chapter will discuss the possibility of garnering useful results from them, as well as the process of creation itself. Lastly, cognitive science of religion, modes theory in particular, will be used as a means of analysis in the hopes that it might offer fresh perspectives on a well-worn and often problematic topic

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<sup>1</sup>Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages: The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul, New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010).

## Overview of Current Ideas on Death and Burial

Before looking at our north-eastern cemeteries in detail, it would be useful to generally consider current ideas in death and burial, most particularly those theories pertaining particularly to the Merovingian period and/or of special interest to this study. The analysis of the archaeology of burial rites, in particular, is an issue which has come under repeated scrutiny in the study of the Merovingian period.<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps due to the scarcity of written sources, and knowledge of the historiography behind the issue is essential before undertaking any discussion.<sup>3</sup> Halsall's work on the relationship between history and archaeology,<sup>4</sup> and Effros's study on the interpretation and utilisation of Merovingian mortuary archaeology have proved to be highly beneficial to this discussion.<sup>5</sup>

### Approaches Specific to Merovingian Gaul

A look at the historiography of burial in Merovingian Gaul/Francia reveals it to be replete with thorny issues and ideas which are no longer in vogue. Most notably, the use of skeletal remains and grave goods in order to ascertain ethnicity and religious orientation are the issue which have attracted the most attention and come under most criticism in recent years.

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<sup>2</sup>Edouard Salin, *La Civilisation Mérovingienne: D'après Les Sépultures, Les Textes Et Le Laboratoire* (Paris: Picard, 1949); Bailey K Young, *Quatre Cimetières Mérovingiennes De l'Est De La France: Lavoye, Dieue-Sur-Meuse, Mézières-Manchester Et Mazerny: Étude Quantitative Et Qualitative Des Pratiques Funéraires*, BAR, 208 (Oxford: B.A.R, 1984); Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*; Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*; Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*; James, *The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul*; Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*.

<sup>3</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*; Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*.

<sup>4</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 21-88.

<sup>5</sup>Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*; Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*.

There is a general degree of nervousness and suspicion surrounding the discussion of religion in the context of burial rites.<sup>6</sup> Early studies could often be overconfident in this area (the idea that grave-goods automatically suggested a pagan occupant, grave orientation, etc.), and a great deal was often extrapolated from very little.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Halsall discusses this issue (in the specific context of Gaul) as illustrative of how problematic combined archaeological and historical approaches have been in the past, pointing out that an overly simplistic reading of sources which suggested clear pagan/Christian division in the countryside led to incautious assumptions regarding the discernment of religious orientation from funerary archaeology and some precarious conclusions. As Halsall points out, this work was heavily criticised.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent studies have moved away from these readings almost completely, acknowledging that there *may* well have been a religious element to burial, but effectively shying away from any serious hypotheses, and certainly avoiding anything it might reflect of Christianization. This has resulted in something of an imbalance. The rush to debunk the idea that the presence of grave goods signalled pagan belief (while it is correct) has resulted in the somewhat wider and more problematic idea that nothing in burial archaeology relates to religious belief.

Halsall's views on burial rites probably help offer an example of some of the key ideas in current studies, especially in the Merovingian context. His study focuses on burial in the region of Metz (as he defines it), and suggests that the use of grave goods and prestigious burial rites has to do with political instability in the region. Position and status were unstable, and had to be maintained, or could be grabbed, through ostentatious rites to express position within the community. When social position became more stable, Halsall argues, we can see the decrease in the use of grave goods, as this strategy is no longer necessary as a means of contesting, obtaining or maintaining status. While Halsall's general hypothesis is valuable and will be discussed in more detail later, it is useful now to draw out the more general ideas and assumptions underlying his argument:

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<sup>6</sup>Martine C. van Haperen, 'Rest in Pieces: An Interpretive Model of Early Medieval "grave Robbery"', *Medieval and Modern Matters*, 1 (2010), 1-36 (p. 5) <doi:10.1484/J.MMM.1.100807>.

<sup>7</sup>For more discussion on this, see Patrick J Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 42.

- Burial rites express status (either that actually possessed, that desired, or that imagined).
- Burial rites are an active expression of identity, not passive. People sought to define themselves and their families through these rites.
- Grave goods, in particular, express power and wealth.
- Identity itself can be constructed. It is both fluid and malleable.
- Burial rites can often be regionally specific and responsive to context.

The ideas recur often in current thinking regarding burial rites, both in Merovingian Gaul/Francia and more generally speaking. Halsall's ideas have been generally well-received by both historians and archaeologists, and his ideas on the active construction of identity through such rites are thought-provoking and useful, challenging many paradigms. However, the imbalance mentioned above in terms of analysis of burial rites can be seen to come into play here. If burial rites are an active expression of identity, then might not that identity include religious belief? It seems strange to suggest that it would not. It should be noted here that this is not to suggest a resumption of those ideas discussed above, that religious orientation can be ascertained via burial archaeology; nor is to suggest that Halsall's conclusion that these rites reveal much about status and instability is incorrect: but surely identity includes a multiplicity of factors? An expression of status need not preclude an expression of religious orientation.

Effros holds to most of the ideas put forward by Halsall: burial rites have to do with status; identity can be actively constructed via these rites, that identity is fluid. However, Effros also suggests that shifts in burial practice were not due to some sort of advance in the depth of Christianization, but that the growth of ideas regarding purgatory and intercessory prayer led to increased Church involvement in burial and that these also provided new ways for families to express status and power. This point is problematic. While Effros is keen to deny any traces of pagan belief in burial rites, and shies away from the notion of Christianization being reflected in the grave, she is happy to suggest that the issue of purgatory, for example, could have a definite impact on funerary rites.

Why is it acceptable for this to have an impact on burial, but not changing religious ideas via Christianization? This does not seem quite consistent. Moreover, as others have pointed out, Effros' interpretation from the lack of sources that the earlier Merovingian church did not possess a funeral liturgy is precarious.<sup>9</sup>

#### Alternative Approaches from Anglo-Saxon Archaeology

Halsall's more recent work acknowledges Williams' criticisms of his approach.<sup>10</sup> While generally approving of Halsall's approach to interpretation, Williams points out that a focus on grave-goods produces a lack of nuance in handling memory, and discusses how the use of both transient and permanent memorial might produce different types of memory. Halsall accepts this, and points to a number of ways in which this might be developed,<sup>11</sup> while pointing out in turn that Williams's approach to transience and permanence would benefit from grounding in context to enable analysis of why certain types of rites are chosen. The importance of different types of memory is crucial to modes theory, and has been discussed in some depth in this study in terms of burial rites and the cult of saints, as are many of the other ideas raised in the discussion.

Zoe Devlin's work seeks to develop an 'archaeological theory of memory'<sup>12</sup> which can be applied to early medieval history, in particular archaeology.<sup>13</sup> In order to formulate her own theory, Devlin summarises the development and use of memory theory. Devlin rightly points out that there has been a multiplicity of varying approaches in this area, that memory is often vaguely defined in historical and archaeological studies, and that the relationship between

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<sup>9</sup>Yitzhak Hen, 'Review: Bonnie Effros. Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and Afterlife in the Merovingian World', *The American Historical Review*, 108 (2003), 1200-1201; Andrew Gillett, 'Review: Bonnie Effros: Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World', *Journal of Religious History*, 30 (2006), 231-233 <doi:10.1111/j.1467-9809.2006.00455.x>.

<sup>10</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. pp. 246-7.

<sup>12</sup>Zoe Devlin, *Remembering the Dead in Anglo-Saxon England: Memory Theory in Archaeology and History*, BAR British Series, 446 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

individual and collective memory is a contentious issue which has elicited a wide range of responses. In the context of archaeological uses of memory, Devlin criticises<sup>14</sup> Williams' failure to adequately define social memory,<sup>15</sup> and questions whether the discussions on the issue make any real contribution to understanding.<sup>16</sup> Her own work focuses on how different 'technologies' of remembrance (technologies here as material culture) were employed at different stages in burial rites, and how these technologies alter with changing contexts.

These are the main ideas currently holding sway in studies on Merovingian burial rites. Issues of memory and identity are to the forefront, as are the ideas that both of these phenomena are malleable and fluid, able to be put to use by many different groups. These ideas will be kept in mind throughout the following discussion on cemeteries.

### Database Project

The initial aim behind this sub-project was to compile a standardised database of all cemeteries in the region, as well as individual databases for each cemetery. It was hoped that presenting this information in a database format (which allows the user to carry out specific searches) might reveal some patterns in types of burial, specifically, whether 'atypical' burials increased in frequency in more rural areas that might receive less parish care and, therefore, be assumed to be less Christianised. However, it quickly became apparent that this would be far too time-consuming and unwieldy a project to attempt at this stage within the confines of the thesis, and that it would also rather considerably distort the original focus of the thesis. I decided, therefore, to attempt to database the archaeological reports of three of the cemeteries in the region. This was a sufficient sample to gain an idea of the complexities surrounding analysis of burial archaeology, and to possibly reveal some patterns in types of burial. It

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Williams, *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies* (New York; London: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, 2003).

<sup>16</sup>This viewpoint is echoed by Halsall in, Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*.

was hoped that it might also raise some further questions regarding the digitisation of such work, and offer an overview of what online resources are currently available for the time period.

Attempting to build a coherent idea of burial practice in the province of Trier was, from the outset, deeply problematic. The archaeological reports available for cemeteries in the region vary widely in quality, when they are available at all, and it is difficult to form any clear ideas of common practice when dealing with such widely disparate sources. I was reasonably fortunate in that two of the cemeteries I decided to examine had been analysed by the same modern archaeologist, Alain Simmer. Even here, however, there were problems, as Simmer himself is often working from a variety of nineteenth century archaeological records. The classification methods in these early reports were frequently inconsistent,<sup>17</sup> and the methodology employed far from ideal.

Problems also arose when trying to obtain the archaeological report for one of the chosen cemeteries. I had originally sought to utilise the report for the cemetery of Bouzonville. This would have allowed me to examine three cemeteries, Audun-le-Tiche, Ennery and Bouzonville, which are all arranged in increasing distance from the city of Metz. It was hoped that this might shed some small light on comparative pastoral provision in urban and rural areas. Unfortunately, the report on Bouzonville turned out to be unobtainable. This report formed part of an unpublished PhD thesis, which the holding library in France repeatedly refused to release. As an alternative, I decided to use a report for the cemetery of Metzervisse, published in 2007 in the *Revue Archéologique de l'est* by Renee Lansival.<sup>18</sup> This cemetery is roughly equidistant to Ennery and Audun-le-Tiche in terms of distance from Metz, so still served the original idea of gradually increasing distance from the city.

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<sup>17</sup>For example: child, youth and adolescent seemed to be used interchangeably when classifying remains, with no initial explanatory criteria.

<sup>18</sup>Renée Lansival, 'La Nécropole Mérovingienne De Metzervisse (Moselle)', 2008 <<http://rae.revues.org/index5022.html>> [accessed 11 May 2009].

Once the necessary archaeological reports had finally been obtained there were some other practical preliminary issues which had to be addressed. Firstly, it had to be decided which database software ought to be used for this project. After deliberation, Microsoft Access 2010 was chosen for simple ease of use and availability. I had used MS Access 2000 before for a Masters assignment which involved constructing a database of Cistercian houses. Furthermore, it can be easily linked to Microsoft Excel to produce numerical data and analysis, if required. It is worth mentioning that MS Access (as it is a Microsoft product) has continuing support, the ability to be updated regularly, and can be shared with a limited number of other computer users. MS Access 2010 is the latest version of the software, and so is likely to be supported well into the future. If these databases were to become part of a wider online database, however, with a view to being updated by multiple users, then another type of database software (such as MySQL) would be a better option. The most recent version of MS Access has improved function in this respect. While MS Access can be shared between limited numbers of users (not without difficulty), a large user base, all attempting to constantly update the database, would present severe difficulties.

As I had decided to construct databases, I felt it appropriate to look at the use of databases in early medieval history and online resources in general. Sophisticated online historical databases are growing in number as part of a general growth in the digitisation of resources in medieval studies. Aside from the obvious observation that having disparate data collected and stored in one location is marvellously useful for any type of research, databases can often reveal (sometimes as a by-product of other research) patterns which are not immediately apparent to the researcher. On-going problems exist in terms of the accessibility of the databases, whether collaborative efforts are possible, the duration of funding for such projects, whether the database might be updated, etc. There are many useful online projects which sadly fall into disrepair once funding is ceased and the resource is no longer maintained. Such resources run the risk of becoming obsolete. These issues are on-going in the area of online resources and the digitisation of existing archives.

The above concerns are just those which are relevant in the context of databases produced in an academic context. Projects undertaken outwith the auspices of a university come with other provisos. Undergraduate students are frequently cautioned against the use of unreliable online resources without a suitable peer review system, which means that such resources, no matter how high the quality, may easily be overlooked or disregarded by both undergraduate and postgraduate students. As mentioned before, funded research projects often fall into disrepair when that funding money runs out. Non-funded projects run exactly the same risk as regards failure to maintain the resource. There is also the fact that the rather ephemeral nature of online resources means that there is no real guarantee the resource will remain available, whereas funded projects might reasonably be relied upon for the duration of the funding period, with the hosting university offering some degree of accountability if the resource were to become unavailable.

An example of a project originally outwith the umbrella of a hosting university or funding body is the laudable *Regnum Francorum Online Historical GIS*, which aims to document the period from 614 to 840 in as much detail as possible, utilising a variety of different formats.<sup>19</sup> Any one event links to maps, GIS data, coinage, documents, art and more. Large databases of digitised documents such as the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*<sup>20</sup> are linked to within the site, directing users towards source materials pertaining to particular people or places. Collaboration is both encouraged and invited on the website. The website owner also had the aim of using URIs (unique resource identifiers, which would allow disparate online resources to become instantly linked), having the general hope that the use of these would become more widespread with the growth of digitised resources, and allow for a greater sharing of resources.

As a resource, the *Regnum Francorum* is exceptional. The scope and depth of the project is impressive, as is its attempt to utilise the semantic web in order to bring together historical resources. Key, though, is the way in which the

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<sup>19</sup>Ahfeldt, 'Interactive Maps – Regnum Francorum Online', <<http://www.francia.ahfeldt.se/index.php>>

<sup>20</sup><http://www.dmgh.de/>

resource thoroughly embeds textual evidence in the physical world. Through the marriage of GIS and digitised textual resources, the researcher is forced to engage with material in a way which is deeply grounded in a sense of place. The opportunities that this might offer in terms of interdisciplinary work between archaeology and history are obvious. Such an approach is also highly beneficial studies such as this one, which seeks to maintain a tight geographical focus. Since first contacting the site owner, Johan Ahlfeldt, the project has since formed co-operative links with the DARMC project at Harvard University, which allows the user to track changes from Roman to Merovingian Gaul. It has also become a partner on the PELAGIOS network, which aims to use Linked Open Data in online resources on the ancient world.<sup>21</sup>

Another pair of online projects, again ones which are directly related to the Merovingian period, is the *Anastasis Merovingian Cemetery* and *Dorestad Vicus Famosus* projects. These projects utilise both ArcGIS and especially tailored Access databases. These databases are divided into four sections, dealing with the following areas:

1. Cemeteries

General information about the cemeteries and their relation to various aspects of the surrounding landscape.

2. Grave constructions

Data on the construction of individual grave contexts within a cemetery, consisting of observations on the various archaeological units that form a grave, such as the grave pit, wooden containers and shrouds wrapped around the body. This part of the data forms the focus of the PhD research of Dieuwertje Smal.

3. Human remains

Osteological data on the skeletal remains from the cemetery. These include observations on the position of bodies in the grave and the deceased's sex, age, metric and non-metric variation, dental status

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<sup>21</sup>'About PELAGIOS' <<http://pelagios-project.blogspot.co.uk/p/about.html>>.

and pathological conditions. These data will be combined with the other parts of the database to address questions on gender, age and health in Merovingian and Carolingian society.

#### 4. Finds

This part of the database facilitates a detailed systematic description of finds, for the most part the wide variety of grave goods. This method of describing the finds will facilitate the construction of a new typology of grave goods. It will also allow us to study patterns in the distribution of various artefact types in the graves and find correlations between artefact characteristics and other aspects of the burial ritual, including age and gender, grave construction and location in the cemetery.<sup>22</sup>

As can be seen, these databases are detailed and sophisticated, aiming to provide deep and wide-ranging analyses of Merovingian cemeteries. As has been mentioned before, written archaeological record of such cemeteries are often flawed and uneven in quality and quantity of information provided. Again, as with the *Regnum Francorum* project, collaboration is invited and encouraged:

The projects' end goal is to make both the data, including the GIS environment, and the database with its manual available on a community site. This will allow medieval cemetery researchers from all over the world to use the projects' data in their research and add their own data to the database, contributing to a constantly enlarging dataset.<sup>23</sup> Encouraging on-going collaboration with other researchers seems to be a viable method of ensuring that such resources do not simply stagnate once complete and instead continue to expand and remain active. It also ensures that the project itself is of the highest possible quality, benefiting from the input of many researchers.

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<sup>22</sup>'Databases and Spatial Analyses in the Anastasis and Dorestad Projects'  
<<http://www.hum.uva.nl/archeologie/technology-projects.cfm/E3C844C2-9D4C-4806-B0C0FC5F904D6675>> [accessed 1 May 2011].

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

Mahoney recently discussed the type of opportunities offered by web 2.0 to the digital humanities in an article in the *Digital Medievalist*.<sup>24</sup> He uses the Digital Classicist wikipedia project as a case study. Mahoney notes that such projects tend to encourage the type of collaborative research which is more often found in the sciences.<sup>25</sup> Certainly the type of collaborative opportunities it presents, together with the new GIS applications which are available, would seem to offer unique opportunities for interdisciplinary work between historians and archaeologists, an area which Halsall identifies as currently problematic in Merovingian studies.

### The Cemeteries

The cemeteries selected were Audun-le-Tiche, Metzervisse, and Ennery, all located within the ecclesiastical province of Trier. The initial aim behind the choice of cemeteries was to assess possible changes in burial practice in increased distance from the city of Metz, but it is accepted that the number of cemeteries under examination is too small to anything other than make observations, rather than definitive statements regarding patterns of ritual and deposition.<sup>26</sup>

Metzervisse was excavated in 1995, and was a rescue excavation. It contained fifty-nine inhumations, mostly ranging throughout theseventh century, with four dating to the ninth century. It is located to the north of Metz, just under 5 miles south-east of Thionville, not far from Ennery. The graves are laid out in a linear fashion, in roughly six rows.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Simon Mahony, 'Research communities and open collaboration: the example of the Digital Classicist wiki', *Digital Medievalist*, 6 (2011)  
<<http://www.digitalmedievalist.org/journal/6/mahony/>> [accessed 1 May 2011].

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. (2011)

<sup>26</sup>See Bachrach's harsh criticisms of Guy Halsall's conclusions given the relatively small number of cemeteries analysed. Bernard S. Bachrach, 'Review: Guy Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992-2009*,', *H-France Review*, 11 (2011), 1-3.

<sup>27</sup>Lansival, 'La Nécropole Mérovingienne de Metzervisse (Moselle)'.

Audun-le-Tiche is well known and under the process of excavation from 1970 - 1984. The full 200 graves have been catalogued in this database, although it should be noted that only 54 can be said to be intact.<sup>28</sup>

Although Ennery was originally excavated in 1941, this study has used the later report produced by Simmer for construction of its database. The site can be dated from 525-600,<sup>29</sup> and is located about 7 and a half miles north of Metz. Eighty-two graves have been catalogued in the database.

### Discussion

We can see a considerable degree of variation between these three cemeteries. The differences between Audun-le-Tiche and Ennery, for example, have been noted by Halsall in his study on the region.<sup>30</sup> However, there are features which are common to them all, even though they might be uncommon in each individual cemetery. Some graves contain charcoal, some contain multiple occupants, some show evidence of reutilisation, and some show evidence of missing skulls. While Halsall's theory is largely predicated on the presence and nature of grave goods, these other features are not subjected to the same level of analysis. What, then, can be observed of these finds and their distribution, bearing in mind that any hypotheses must remain tentative?

### Feasting

The practice of funerary feasting has already been extensively discussed in an earlier chapter, but it should also be noted here that there is often ambiguity in the reports as to what was actually taking place when pot shards, charcoal and animal bones are found in graves. While some of the reports do seem confident in making the assessment that feasting might have taken place, others are

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<sup>28</sup>Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 152.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.* p. 232.

significantly less so, and the possibility cannot always be discounted that simple debris from refuse pits has found its way into the fill of the grave. It can be noted here that Metzervisse, the latest of the cemeteries, has virtually no ceramic objects found in the graves, which is in contrast with both Ennery and Audun-le-Tiche and in accordance with the general decline in funerary feasting which can be seen throughout the period.<sup>31</sup> Ennery also contains a pit containing pottery, bones, and ashes, which would suggest that feasting had taken place there. Around 35% of the tombs at Audun contained traces of carbon.

### Missing Skulls

The issue of missing skulls is a difficult issue on which to hypothesise, as it is often difficult to tell whether this was a deliberate practice, or simply the result of general violation of the tomb. Dunn suggests that an answer might be found in anxieties created around the newly dead by the outbreak of plague, and cites the many deviant burials at Audun as possible evidence for this.<sup>32</sup> Audun does have many particularly striking examples of this: grave 10, for example, has eight skulls distributed around the tomb, and twelve tombs (which had not been reutilised) had skulls missing. Certainly, the arrival of Justinianic plague is noted by Gregory in 588, where he comments that it seems to have arrived in Marseilles by boat. It is not implausible to think that this plague could have spread to more northerly regions, especially given as travel via waterways seems to have been common. Van Haperen postulates that the removal of bones and other items (possibly kept by family members, or more likely deposited in other graves) had to do with the maintenance of bonds and was simply one of many possible 'consecutive mortuary practices'.<sup>33</sup> She further suggests that such practices might be profitably considered alongside the use of relics in the cult of saints.<sup>34</sup> As noted, though, the ambiguity of our evidence makes it difficult to reach any firm conclusions. Audun-le-Tiche is the cemetery at which this is most frequent, but it is also the cemetery with greatest amount of violation and theft.

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<sup>31</sup>Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup>Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons C. 597-C. 700*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>33</sup>van Haperen, 1-36 (pp. 24-7).

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

### Disturbance, Reutilisation, and Multiple Burials

While the report on Metzervisse is careful to distinguish between simultaneous multiple burials and reutilisations, those for Ennery and Audun-le-Tiche are not. It is difficult to talk with certainty then, about reutilisation vs. multiple burials in our particular sample. We can say that it seems to have been an on-going practice throughout the period of interest, although Metzervisse does exhibit markedly less reutilisations than Audun-le-Tiche (9% versus 45%). The diocesan synod of Auxerre does prohibit the practice of multiple, but it should be noted that this canon appears alongside others requesting that clergymen ought not to be buried with their pall or the Eucharist, which suggests that this refers to burials at churches amongst the clergy, not the type of rural cemeteries under discussion. It is interesting to note, however, that the clergy also seem to have been engaging in this practice.

Disturbance of the tomb recurs in all three cemeteries. Again, the level of detail in the reporting of this varies. Audun-le-Tiche shows the greatest amount of disturbed tombs, Metzervisse the least (which, given its relative lack of grave goods, makes sense). Van Haperen<sup>35</sup> offers a range of alternative interpretations for the disturbance of graves, pointing out that there are many types of disturbance, as well as a variety of possible explanations. Her suggestion that grave reopening ought not to be considered deviant behaviour, but was instead a reasonably common practice that might have served a number of purposes in terms of maintaining a relationship between the living and the dead offers a welcome opportunity for a general reassessment of the practice. Given our limited data, the only general observation that can be offered here is that the practice seems to decline as grave goods become less common. In those earlier cemeteries, however, such as Ennery and Audun-le-Tiche, there would seem to be a variety of reopening practices utilised. A larger-scale study of cemeteries from these earlier date parameters would offer greater scope for a testing of van Haperen's theories.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

Although the sample used here, and arguably, in Halsall's study, is too small to make any definitive statements, some general observations can be made with the data available. The fact that Metzervisse contains markedly less unusual burials and a much smaller range and number of grave goods and pottery (ceramics are only present in grave 35) ties in with Halsall's observations regarding the decrease of variety of grave goods and pottery and moves towards standardization in the seventh century.<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that the Church was attempting to address burial practices, in fact, the Church seems only to have been concerned about graveside activities which resulted in drunken and riotous behaviour. There is an incident in Sulpicius Severus' *Life of St Martin*<sup>37</sup> which points to how much interest the clergy paid to the burial customs of the laity. Martin encounters some sort of burial procession passing through the fields with the corpse wrapped in white sheets. Martin suspects at first that this is some sort of pagan ritual, and causes them to become frozen in place. However, when he realises that it is merely peasants carrying out a burial rite he lets them go on their way with no admonishment. Dunn discusses the seeming unwillingness of the early medieval Church to address burial rites at all, pointing out that the variety of practices for which we have archaeological evidence reflect popular beliefs regarding the dead and the afterlife, with which the Church simply does not engage.<sup>38</sup>

#### The Church Response

What the Church did or not do regarding belief on death and burial is important to take into consideration here. Dunn points out that official Church doctrine on death did not leave any emphasising the idea of separation and removal in funerary ritual and notes Augustine's definitive statements on the topic in *On the Care to Be Had For the Dead*, which suggest that the body is not even of any importance once the soul has departed.<sup>39</sup> This is contrary to the widespread

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<sup>36</sup>Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization*, p. 264.

<sup>37</sup>Sulpicius Severus, *Vie De Saint Martin*, Sources Chrétiennes, No. 133-135 (Paris: Le Cerf, 1967).

<sup>38</sup>Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons C. 597-C. 700*, pp. 160-86.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.* p. 13.

concept of liminality. The notion of funerary customs as a rite of passage, which would have involved a liminal stage (where the body was no longer living, but not 'safely' dead) was first hypothesised by Van Gennep.<sup>40</sup> Hertz's study of secondary burial and what purposes it might have served complements the idea of liminality: that death and subsequent rites were part of a longer process whereby the living and dead renegotiated their roles and relationships.<sup>41</sup> What can we say about these contrasting ideas in this discussion?

Augustine can be seen as espousing the 'correct' Church view on death and his views were influential in the Merovingian period. It is debatable to what extent these ideas were transmitted to the general population. As noted previously, the Church seems to have been generally uninterested in the burial practices of the laity. However, there are many incidents in sources written by churchmen that suggest that the notion of liminality was in some ways confusingly prevalent in a Christian context, which is in opposition to Augustine's ideas. Dead saints require visits to their tomb and other attentions to dispense favours. Forgotten martyrs and angry bishops will visit churchmen in dreams to reveal the location of their bodies or to ask for proper recognition to be paid to their tomb. Three of the scant references to ghosts from the early medieval period emphasise these ideas. In the *Life of Germanus of Auxerre*, Germanus is visited by a ghost who reveals that the reason for continuing to haunt his old house is that he and his friend were not properly buried (the haunting ceases after Germanus located the bodies and gives them a proper burial).<sup>42</sup> In *The Whitby Life of Gregory the Great*, four warriors who fought and died at Hatfield Chase enjoy making occasional visits to the site of their burial.<sup>43</sup> In a more complex example, Martin of Tours expresses doubts over a site deemed sacred by local people. By praying at the place, Martin causes a ghost to appear, who confirms Martin's doubts by

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<sup>40</sup>Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 146-65.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Hertz, *Death, and, The Right Hand*, trans. by Claudia Needham and Rodney Needham, (Aberdeen: Cohen and West, 2008), pp. 29-76.

<sup>42</sup>Constantius of Lyons, *The Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, trans by F.R. Hoare, in Thomas F. X. Noble, *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1995), chap. 10, pp. 84-5.

<sup>43</sup>*The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Lawrence, Kan: University of Kansas Press, 1968), chap. 19.

telling him that he is a criminal mistaken for a martyr by the locals.<sup>44</sup> While ‘official’ doctrine might have emphasised separation and removal, many other sources suggest that the Church may well have inadvertently reinforced ideas on liminality and an on-going relationship with the dead.

The prevalence, then, of some of the more unusual funerary rites can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the Church does not seem to have tried to address either belief regarding death or burial rites. Secondly, there is the probable persistence of common beliefs regarding liminality. Thirdly, ideas regarding the on-going engagement of the living and the dead and the importance of ‘proper’ burial can often be found in Church writings, which mean that the laity might have received somewhat mixed signals regarding the dead and funerary customs.

### Cognitive Approaches

#### Modes of Religiosity

Whitehouse’s views on burial rites are somewhat limiting. He suggests that the use of such rites primarily has to do with fulfilling political and social roles, and that there is little likelihood of a meaningful religious experience at the graveside.<sup>45</sup> While it is undeniable that burial rites could and often do fulfil social and political needs, the deep and complex involvement of memory with burial rites would seem to suggest that modes theory ought to be of much use here. For example, Mithen, who examines changing burial rites during the early prehistory of Western Asia (20,000 BCE - 7000 BCE),<sup>46</sup> suggests that activities such as re-utilisation of graves, are likely to have been ‘highly emotive’.<sup>47</sup> Such an event, he suggests, seems to have taken place relatively rarely and would

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<sup>44</sup>Sulpicius Severus, *Vie De Saint Martin*, Sources Chrétiennes, no.133-135 (Paris: Le Cerf, 1967), chap. 11.

<sup>45</sup>Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons*, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup>Steven Mithen, ‘From Ohalo to Catalhöyük: The Development of Religiosity during the Early Prehistory of Western Asia, 20,000 BCE - 7000 BCE’ Martin and Whitehouse, pp. 17-44.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.* p. 22.

have involved uncovering the corpse of previous occupants, both factors which he feels that would have been likely to have involved episodic memory, thus moving the phenomena towards the imagistic end of the spectrum. He further suggests that ideas offered by modes theory ought to perhaps be 'comforting' for archaeologists. Instead of attempting to ascribe meaning to an endless variety of enigmatic grave goods and rites, the imagistic mode would suggest that such rites were likely to have been highly personal, 'loosely allied to a set of shared beliefs that remained largely undiscussed', and designed to be both emotive and prompt reflection. So, while Whitehouse might not see burial rites as an area where modes might be especially useful, other researchers have identified how it might be used as a tool.

The phenomena discussed by Mithen, reutilisation, is one which can be found in all of the cemetery databases, and indeed across the region. While some cemeteries feature more reutilisations than others, they are still the exception rather than the norm in most cases. Could it be argued, then, that this activity might have prompted a different type of remembrance and experience, one which might have had more imagistic features than the others? It is hard to make too confident a prediction due to uncertainty regarding the nature of reutilisations. We do not know who observed, if there were any observers at all. There must have been a degree of time and effort expended, as previous occupants are often found neatly bundled at the foot of the grave, and the 'new' occupant laid out carefully, often with grave goods.

How, then, might this reutilisation have been experienced? As noted, it is impossible to know how exactly reutilisation was carried out. Any other aspects of the process: singing, feasting, smells, prayer, etc., can remain a possibility, but also an unknown. It might be imagined that seeing the prior occupant, possibly a family member or at least a 'known' member of the community, would have elicited an emotional response. A reminder of mortality would seem self-evident. Whether this would prompt personal reflection, as Mithen suggests, is difficult to assess, but it is a factor that should be borne in consideration when considering this particular practice. Van Gennep's theory that burial rites act as

rites of transition is helpful here.<sup>48</sup> Uncovering a previous occupant, perhaps now completely decomposed, could feasibly have performed some sort of function regarding transition to an afterlife, and reassured any spectators that a potentially dangerous liminal phase was complete.<sup>49</sup>

Other possible reasoning behind reutilisation would also have to be considered. The synod of Auxerre states clearly that multiple burials are prohibited. It can probably be assumed in this instance that this practice has come to the church's attentions due to the desire to be buried near the saint, and use of multiple burials in the same tomb to facilitate the same. This is further supported by the fact that Auxerre seems to have had a particularly rich sanctoral cycle, and burial next to the saints is likely to have been popular. However, it must equally be considered that this was potentially seen as a way to maintain links between family members. In either case, the continuation of the relationship between the living and the dead is to the fore. Ensuring that a dead member of the community/family joined other dead community members (saints or otherwise), retaining the link between the living and dead, could imply that reutilisation was an important event, which might well have prompted imagistic memory.

#### Intuitions of the Dead

If Whitehouse is of limited use in an examination of burial rites, then other proponents of cognitive science of religion can offer insights. Boyer states that 'the souls of the dead, or their "shadows" or "presence", are the most widespread kind of supernatural agent the world over'.<sup>50</sup> He suggests that rituals surrounding death are to do with two factors. Firstly, there is the fear of contamination due to the impurity of a rotting body. Secondly, while our knowledge of the rules regarding inanimate objects recognises that a corpse has no agency, ongoing emotions and ideas regarding the dead continue. Boyer suggests that this is why the recently deceased are so frequently perceived as

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<sup>48</sup>Van Gennep.

<sup>49</sup>Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons C. 597-C. 700*, p. 11; Hertz.

<sup>50</sup>Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Human Instincts That Fashion Gods, Spirits and Ancestors* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 260.

possessing supernatural agency.<sup>51</sup> If, as Boyer suggests, these beliefs are supported and encouraged by certain cognitive processes, then it seems likely that they would have continued amongst the population given the Church's lack of interest in death and burial rites. It further follows that some of the rites we can see traces of in the archaeological record may well have been ways of dealing with the anxieties surrounding this liminal stage.<sup>52</sup>

This also offers an alternative way to perceive Christianization via the grave. Halsall and Effros prefer to see burial rites as having entirely to do with transmitting ideas about social status (or desired social status), rejecting the notion that Christianization can be reflected in burial rites. However, Dunn utilises the insights offered by Boyer to point out that, due to the tenacious nature of beliefs surrounding the dead, the eventual acceptance of Christian ideas about death and burial must have represented an important milestone in Christianization. We saw, in those cemeteries under discussion, that there is a noticeable decrease in the variety and amount of grave goods, and other unusual rites, into the seventh and eighth centuries.<sup>53</sup> Effros argues that the decrease in grave goods had to do with an increased church involvement in burial rites, which offered wealthy/powerful families to express their status through new means.<sup>54</sup> However, Dunn's utilisation of Boyer's ideas in and Anglo-Saxon context allows us to see that Christianization also played a prominent role in this process.

## Conclusions

This section has offered new approaches to the subject of burial rites. It has been shown that theories of cognitive science of religion, Boyer's work in particular, can both challenge and supplement current approaches. Whitehouse's modes theory has been shown to be of limited usefulness for analysis of this particular topic. Alternatively, the model presented by Boyer's

<sup>51</sup>Pascal Boyer, 'Religious Thought and Behaviour as By-products of Brain Function', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7 (2003), pp. 123-4.

<sup>52</sup>See Dunn for an examination of this in the context of the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons, Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons C. 597-C. 700*.

<sup>53</sup>And on a more general level across Gaul: Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul*, p. 205.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. p. 206.

theories and Dunn's application of the same to Anglo-Saxon Christianization offer inroads for us to productively reconsider the possible roles played by religion in burial, which have too long been ignored in favour of approaches which stressed that rites served to transmit ideas regarding status. If we instead accept Boyer's assertion that certain beliefs regarding the dead are the result of cognitive processes and, as such, difficult to eradicate, then the gradual changes in practices such as feasting and deposition of grave goods in the Merovingian period become more readily explicable.

The usefulness of databases in this area should be considered. Sets of databases of all excavated cemeteries, while they must be handled with caveats in mind, as discussed earlier, offer a great opportunity for trends in burial not only to be considered and analysed over the long term, but also to be perceived on a comparative regional basis. This would allow for the geographical diversity in such customs to be taken into account.<sup>55</sup> A somewhat more ambitious model would be for such databases to be available online (as MySQL) and open to editing by a number of users, allowing for a greater quantity of work to be readily available and presenting opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

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<sup>55</sup>Martine van Haperen points out that there is 'considerable regional variability' in the distribution and concentration of grave re-opening, van Haperen, 1-36 (p. 3).

## Conclusions

Although each section of this study draws its own individual conclusions, bringing together these various ideas allows for an overall assessment of the productivity of the application of the modes model. Each of the areas under examination: the cult of saints, funerary feasting, parish care, church councils, monasticism and burial rites, have offered up new ideas when analysed using modes theory as a heuristic tool. Some of the ideas raised have verified the validity of current approaches, while others have opened up new avenues for research.

Given the spate of studies on memory in medieval history, modes theory, which holds types of memory as central to the transmission of religious belief, would seem to be a natural tool to employ for further investigation. The notion of using a dichotomous model initially caused some concern at the outset of the study. Such models are already prevalent in the study of Christianization<sup>1</sup> and can often be as limiting as they are enlightening, setting up oppositional models which are not always helpful. However, while modes theory does have its two poles, there is a spectrum in between which allows for the complexity of Christianization to be seen, and an unhelpful pagan/Christian model avoided. This enables syncretism to be fully explored.

The initial idea behind this study was to apply every aspect of modes theory to each thematic area. This did not prove possible in practice. Some areas simply lent themselves more to interrogation via modes theory than others. The centrality of the cult of saints in the transmission of Christianity, and the varying ways in which it was perceived by both clergy and laity, means that modes theory is uniquely suited for the purposes of analysis. The examination of burial rites presented a greater challenge, one which might be more fruitfully examined at greater length utilising Boyer's work.

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<sup>1</sup>For example, A. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); G. Mensching, *Structures and Patterns of Religion*, trans. by Hans F Klemkeit and V Srinivasa Sarma (Delhi: Orient Book Distributors, 1976).

Equally, attempting to focus on a specific geographical area presented some difficulties. While a tight geographical focus was central in revealing the diversity of Christian culture in Merovingian Gaul, attempting to gather sufficient information for a thorough examination of the province of Trier often presented significant challenges. While an approach which aimed for specific geographical focus, then, would be seen to be suitable for studies of Merovingian Gaul, it is recognised that there is a disparity in terms of distribution of source materials which would enable some studies to be more detailed than others. Comparative studies might prove uneven.

Equally, the time parameters chosen had their limitations. 570-630 was initially chosen due to the changes wrought at the time due to the advent of Columbanian monasticism. However, as the study progressed, closer examination revealed that the sudden flowering of aristocratic monasteries associated with Columbanus was, in fact, rather delayed in the province of Trier. As such, some changes simply could not be discussed within the confines of the study.

It is perhaps in the area of monasticism where modes theory and cognitive science of religion has the most to offer, particularly to Merovingian monasticism. Discussion has traditionally focused on the impact of the arrival of Columbanus on Merovingian monasticism and the subsequent enthusiastic adoption of his particular brand of monasticism by the Frankish aristocracy. However, this discussion has shown that an alternative approach can enable us to move away from this traditional area of focus. The idea of the doctrinal and imagistic allow for a re-examination of the experience of communal monasticism versus that of the recluse, as well as the 'type' of Christianity they might have fostered in their interactions with the laity. Not only this, but the complexity presented by all facets of Merovingian monasticism challenges Whitehouse's modes theory, especially in regards to his characterisation of the 'medieval church' in terms of the doctrinal.

Further, the regional approach taken in this study is particularly revealing in the context of monastic activity. While the observation generally made regarding

Merovingian monasticism is that the arrival of Columbanus saw a great increase in the number of monasteries in the north-east, this study has shown that growth in the ecclesiastical province of Trier was much slower than this. If monasticism was as instrumental in the spread of Christianity as is often asserted, then comparative study of the state of monasticism across the regions of Gaul might reveal much about patterns of Christianization.

The analyses of church councils allowed modes theory to be applied in a doubly effective manner. Not only could it be used to analyse the contents of the councils themselves; those activities which were deemed deviant and unacceptable, but it could also be used to interrogate the institution of the councils themselves. Councils were a way for the church to police itself and ensure that consistent standards were maintained and the dangers of deviancy avoided. They were also a way for members of the church hierarchy to negotiate their roles within the church and between one another. While modes theory helps to uncover more of the nuance within these issues, church councils also pose a challenge to modes theory. While they might represent, superficially, a prime example of the doctrinal mode; religious specialists policing themselves and others, ensuring uniformity, they also demonstrate flexibility, adaptation and negotiation; a willingness to innovate. These are not factors which Whitehouse would typically ascribe to a doctrinal religion.

The advantages of a specific regional approach are evident in an examination of councils. Grounding councils in the context of place allows for a consideration of practical matters. The difficulties of travelling to councils, the matter of who exactly attended, the issues raised; these types of issue would have had an impact on the dissemination of canons and, subsequently, Christian life in the region. The diocesan synod of Auxerre offered a unique opportunity to root canons in a local setting, and to see if the nature of the concerns raised changed when the context was regional. The result was an insight into the scope and depth of the ambition of the clergy.

The linked topics of saints' cults and funerary feasting lent themselves particularly well to analysis via modes theory, due to their complex association with memory. The ways, both differing and similar, in which the cult of saints was experienced by the clergy and the laity can be understood in greater depth when considered using modes theory. Parallels can also be drawn with the activity of funerary feasting which allow us to make wider observations regarding memory and identity in Merovingian society. Further research in this area could look in more depth at the rituals involved in these activities and possibly employ more theories from cognitive science of religion to allow for alternative analyses of the role of memory.

Maintaining a focus on the province of Trier when discussing the cult of saints presented difficulties, yet also revealed much. The cult of saints is often spoken of in generalities in this period, as is monasticism. However, choosing to focus on the province of Trier revealed unevenness in the concentration of cults: Metz, for example, seemed sparsely served, while Trier was rich in saints. While the vitality and success of the cult of saints in this period is undeniable, comparative analysis of different cities/provinces would allow for a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the phenomenon.

The topic of parish care, examined via councils and sermon collections proved amenable to analysis via modes theory. The reasoning behind the production and circulation of sermon collections, ensuring that priests were delivering standard and correct doctrine, tied in well with Whitehouse's observations on the policing aspect of the doctrinal mode, and modes theory seems to be a productive means by which to analyse these texts. The *Life of Goar* initially seemed an attractive source, offering as it does a saint's Lifewhich contains both a priestly protagonist and a description of activities which might usually be construed as parish care. Unfortunately, the examination proved problematic. Despite its seeming advantages, the political motivations behind the writing of the *Life of Goar* means that its depictions of a recluse carrying out parish care must be regarded with caution, even though it does raise interesting questions regarding possible tensions produced by recluses.

Parish care was one of the most difficult areas to analyse, due mostly to a lack of sources, both generally and specifically in reference to Trier. However, attempting to link the sources available to the ecclesiastical province of Trier raised questions regarding the circulation of manuscripts and the spread of ideas in this period. A comparative study, looking in detail at parish care in neighbouring provinces, would perhaps be another avenue by which to analyse the topic.

The topic of burial rites forced a move away from modes theory, and the use instead of Pascal Boyer's work on intuitions on the dead. This proved highly fruitful, offering an alternative approach to dominant views on burial rites and offering a different way to read depictions of death and afterlife visitations in the sources. Further, the examination of the use of databases to analyse cemetery data, and discussion of the online resources available for study of the Merovingian period, suggests that the use of the semantic web could offer new avenues into interdisciplinary study of the period.

Focusing solely on cemeteries in the ecclesiastical province of Trier proved a sound approach here, demonstrating that great variation could be present in burial rites even when cemeteries were only a few miles apart. Effros mentions in her study on funerary feasting that regional variation was likely, and our findings do suggest that further comparative study would be a productive approach.

Both the traditional approach of focusing on the context of place and the newer approach of modes theory have offered fresh insights into the Christianization of the ecclesiastical province of Trier 570-630. The utilisation of these approaches in future studies of the Merovingian period would open up new avenues of enquiry and new perspectives.

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