

GREGORY OF TOURS

History of the Franks

GREGORY OF TOURS (CA. 540-594) WAS A MEMBER OF AN ILLUSTRIOUS Gallo-Roman family that had dominated the episcopal see of Tours for centuries. His *History of the Franks* is the most important source for early Frankish history. Gregory was primarily concerned in his history with Orthodox Christianity, with his community of Tours, and with his Gallo-Roman aristocratic colleagues. He worked closely with the Frankish kings, whom he saw as instruments of divine providence. These concerns are evident in the following passages. The first is his account of Clovis. Written almost a century after the events it describes, it is largely unreliable for a detailed account of Clovis but essential for understanding the meaning of Clovis to later Frankish history. The other selections show Gregory's activities as peacemaker in Tours and his involvement with his contemporary kings of the Franks.

Source: Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

Excerpts from Book II

12. Childeric, King of the Franks, whose private life was one long debauch, began to seduce the daughters of his subjects. They were so incensed about this that they forced him to give up his throne. He discovered that they intended to assassinate him and he fled to Thuringia. He left behind a close friend of his who was able to soothe the minds of his angry subjects with his honeyed words. Childeric entrusted to him a token which should indicate when he might return to his homeland. They broke a gold coin into two equal halves. Childeric took one half with him and the friend kept the other half. "When I send my half to you," said his friend, "and the two halves placed together make a complete coin, you will know that you may return home safe and sound." Childeric then set out for Thuringia and took refuge with King Bisinus and his wife Basina. As soon as Childeric had gone, the Franks unanimously chose as their king that same Aegidius who, as I have already said, had been sent out of Rome as commander of the

armies. When Aegidius had reigned over the Franks for eight years, Childeric's faithful friend succeeded in pacifying them secretly and he sent messengers to the exile with the half of the broken coin which he had in his possession. By this token Childeric knew for sure that the Franks wanted him back, indeed that they were clamoring for him to return, and he left Thuringia and was restored to his throne. Now that Bisinus and Childeric were both kings, Queen Basina, about whom I have told you, deserted her husband and joined Childeric. He questioned her closely as to why she had come from far away to be with him, and she is said to have answered: "I know that you are a strong man and I recognize ability when I see it. I have therefore come to live with you. You can be sure that if I knew anyone else, even far across the sea, who was more capable than you, I should have sought him out and gone to live with him instead." This pleased Childeric very much and he married her. She became pregnant and bore a son whom she named Clovis. He was a great man and became a famous soldier.

13. After the death of Saint Arthemius, Venerandus, a man of senatorial rank, was consecrated as Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand. Paulinus gives us information as to what sort of man this Bishop was:

Today when you see Bishops as worthy of the Lord as Emperius of Toulouse, Simplicius of Vienne, Armandus of Bordeaux, Diogenianus of Albi, Venerandus of Clermont, Alithius of Cahors and now Pegasus of Périgueux, you will see that we have excellent guardians of all our faith and religion, however great may be the evils of our age.

Venerandus is said to have died on Christmas Eve. The next morning the Christmas procession was also his funeral cortège. After his death the most shameful argument arose among the local inhabitants concerning the election of a bishop to replace him. Different factions were formed some of which wanted this man and others that, and there was great dissension among the people. One Sunday when the electing bishops were sitting in conclave, a woman wearing a veil over her head to mark the fact that she was a true servant of God came boldly in and said: "Listen to me, priests of the Lord! You must realize that it is true that not one of those whom they have put forward for the bishopric finds favour in the sight of God. This very day the Lord in person will choose Himself a bishop. Do not inflame the people or allow any more argument among them, but be patient for a little while, for the Lord will now send to us the man who is to rule over our church." As they sat wondering at her words, there came in a man called Rusticus, who was himself a priest of the diocese of this city of Clermont-Ferrand. He was the very man who had been pointed out to the woman in a vision. As soon as she set eyes on him she cried: "That is the man whom the Lord elects! That is the man whom He has chosen to be your bishop! That is the man whom you must consecrate!" As she spoke the entire population forgot all its previous disagreement and shouted that this was the correct and proper choice. To the great joy

of the populace Rusticus was set on the episcopal throne and inducted as Bishop. He was the seventh to be made Bishop in Clermont-Ferrand.

14. In the city of Tours Bishop Eustochius died in the seventeenth year of his episcopate. Perpetuus was consecrated in his place, being the fifth bishop after Saint Martin. When Perpetuus saw how frequently miracles were being performed at Saint Martin's tomb and when he observed how small was the chapel erected over the Saint's body, he decided that it was unworthy of these wonders. He had the chapel removed and he built in its place the great church which is still there some five hundred and fifty yards outside the city. It is one hundred and sixty feet long by sixty feet broad; and its height up to the beginning of the vaulting is forty-five feet. It has thirty-two windows in the sanctuary and twenty in the nave, with forty-one columns. In the whole building there are fifty-two windows, one hundred and twenty columns and eight doorways, three in the sanctuary and five in the nave. The great festival of the church has a threefold significance: it marks the dedication of the building, the translation of the Saint's body and his ordination as a bishop. You should observe this feast-day on 4 July; and you should remember that Saint Martin died on 11 November. If you celebrate this faithfully you will gain the protection of the saintly Bishop in this world and the next. The vault of the tiny chapel which stood there before was most elegantly designed, and so Bishop Perpetuus thought it wrong to destroy it. He built another church in honor of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and he fitted this vault over it. He built many other churches which still stand firm today in the name of Christ.

15. At this time the church of the blessed martyr Symphorian of Autun was built by the priest Eufronius, and later on Eufronius was elected as Bishop of that city. It was he who, in great devotion, sent the marble lid which covers the tomb of Saint Martin.

16. After the death of Bishop Rusticus, Saint Namatius became the eighth Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand. It was he who built by his effort the church which still stands and which is considered to be the oldest within the city walls. 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. The whole building is constructed in the shape of a cross. 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, and those at prayer are often aware of a most sweet and aromatic odour which is being wafted towards them. Round the sanctuary it has walls which are decorated with mosaic work made of many varieties of marble. When the building had been finished for a dozen years, the saintly Bishop sent priests to Bologna, the city in Italy, to procure for him the relics of Saint Agricola and Saint Vitalis, who, as I have shown, were assuredly crucified in the name of Christ our Lord.

17. The wife of Namatius built the church of Saint Stephen in the suburb outside the walls of Clermont-Ferrand. She wanted it to be decorated with colored frescoes. She used to hold in her lap a book from which she would read stories of events which happened long ago, and tell the workmen what she wanted painted on the walls. One day as she was sitting in the church and reading these stories, there came a poor man to pray. He saw her in her black dress, a woman already far advanced in age. He thought that she was one of the needy, so he produced a piece of bread, put it in her lap and went on his way. She did not scorn the gift of this poor man, who had not understood who she was. She took it, and thanked him, and put it on one side. She ate it instead of her other food and each day she received a blessing from it until it was all eaten up.

18. Childeric fought a battle at Orleans. Odovacar with his Saxons penetrated as far as Angers. A great pestilence caused the death of many people. Aegidius died and left a son

called Syagrius. After the death of Aegidius, Odovacar took hostages from Angers and other places. The Bretons were expelled from Bourges by the Goths and many were killed at Bourg-de-Déois. Count Paul, who had Roman and Frankish troops under his command, attacked the Goths and seized booty from them. Odovacar reached Angers, but King Childeric arrived there on the following day: Count Paul was killed and Childeric occupied the city. On that day the church-house was burnt down in a great fire.

19. While these things were happening a great war was waged between the Saxons and the Romans. The Saxons fled and many of their men were cut down by the Romans who pursued them. Their islands¹ were captured and laid waste by the Franks, and many people were killed. In the ninth month of that year there was an earthquake. Odovacar made a treaty with Childeric and together they subdued the Alamanni, who had invaded a part of Italy.

20. During the fourteenth year of his reign, Euric, King of the Goths, put Duke Victorius in charge of the seven cities. Victorius went straight to Clermont-Ferrand and made certain additions to the city. The underground chapels which he constructed are still there today. It was he who had erected in the church of Saint Julian the columns which are still part of the building. He also built the church of Saint Lawrence and the church of Saint Germanus in Saint-Germain-Lanbron. Victorius was nine years in Clermont. He spread a number of scandalous rumors about the Senator Eucherius. Eucherius was thrown into prison. In the middle of the night Victorius had him brought out, he was attached to an old wall and then Victorius had the wall knocked down on top of him. Victorius was far too much given to irregular affairs with women. He was afraid of being assassinated by the men of Clermont and he fled to Rome. There he began to live the same loose life and he was stoned to death. Euric reigned for another four years after the death of Victorius. He died in the

twenty-seventh year of his reign. There again occurred a big earthquake.

21. When Bishop Namatius died in Clermont-Ferrand, Eparchius succeeded him. He was a most saintly and devout man. At that time the church had very little property inside the city walls. The Bishop had his lodging in what is now called the sacristy. He was in the habit of getting up in the middle of the night to give thanks to God before the high altar in his cathedral. One night it happened that as he went into the church he found it full of devils and Satan himself sitting on his own episcopal throne made up to look like a painted woman. "You hideous prostitute," said the Bishop, "is it not enough that you infect other places with every imaginable sort of foulness, without your defiling the throne consecrated to the Lord by sitting your revolting body down on it? Leave the house of God this instant and stop polluting it with your presence!" "Since you give me the title of prostitute," said Satan, "I will see that you yourself are constantly harassed with sexual desire." As he said this he disappeared into thin air. It is true that the Bishop was tempted by lusts of the flesh, but he was protected by the sign of the Cross and the Devil was unable to harm him.

According to all accounts it was Eparchius who built the monastery on top of Mont Chantoin, where the oratory now is, and there he would go into retreat during the holy days of Lent. On the day of the Lord's Supper he would process down to his cathedral, escorted by his clergy and the townsfolk, and accompanied by a great singing of psalms.

When Eparchius died he was succeeded by Sidonius Apollinaris, one-time Prefect of the City, a man of most noble birth as honors are counted in this world, and one of the leading Senators of Gaul, so noble indeed that he married the daughter of the Emperor Avitus. In his time, while Victorius, about whom I have already told you, was still in Clermont, there lived in the monastery of Saint-Cyr in the same city an abbot called Abraham, who, thanks to his predecessor and namesake, was greatly distinguished by his faith and good works, as

I have told you in my other book where his life is recorded.

22. The saintly Sidonius was so eloquent that he would often speak extempore in public without hesitating in the slightest and express whatever he had to say with the greatest clarity. One day it happened that he went to the monastery church of which I have told you, for he had been invited there for a festival. Some malicious person removed the book with which it was his habit to conduct the church service. Sidonius was so well versed in the ritual that he took them through the whole service of the festival without pausing for a moment. This was a source of wonder to everyone present and they had the impression that it must be an angel speaking rather than a man. I have described this in more detail in the preface of the book which I wrote about the Masses composed by Sidonius. He was a very saintly man and, as I have said, a member of one of the foremost senatorial families. Without saying anything to his wife he would remove silver vessels from his home and give them away to the poor. When she found out what he had done, she used to grumble at him; then he would buy the silver vessels back from the poor folk and bring them home again.

23. At the time when Sidonius was living a saintly life here on earth and was completely devoted to the service of the Lord, two priests rebelled against him. They removed from him all control over the property of his church, reduced him to a very straitened way of life and submitted him to every kind of contumely. God in His clemency did not permit this insult to go long unpunished. One of these two insidious men, who was unworthy to be called by the name of priest, had threatened the night before to drag Sidonius out of his own church. When he got up the next morning on hearing the bell which called to matins, this man was full of spite against the holy man of God, and was busy turning over in his mind how he could best carry out a plan which he had formed the previous evening. He went off to the lavatory and while he was occupied in

emptying his bowels he lost his soul instead. A boy was waiting outside with a candle, expecting his master to emerge at any moment. Day dawned. His accomplice, the other priest, sent someone to see what had happened. "Come quickly," said the messenger, "don't hang about in there any longer, we must do together what we planned yesterday." The dead man gave no answer. The boy lifted up the curtain of the lavatory and found his master dead on the seat. From this we may deduce that this man was guilty of a crime no less serious than that of Arius, who in the same way emptied out his entrails through his back passage in the lavatory. This, too, smacks of heresy, that one of God's bishops should not be obeyed in his own church, the man to whom had been entrusted the task of feeding God's flock, and that someone else to whom nothing at all had been entrusted, either by God or by man, should have dared to usurp his authority.

After that the saintly Bishop, to whom, mark you, there still remained one of his two enemies, was restored to his authority. Some time later Sidonius fell ill with a very high temperature. He ordered his attendants to carry him into the church. He was borne inside and a great crowd of men and women, and of little children, too, gathered round him, weeping and saying: "Good shepherd, why are you deserting us? To whom will you abandon us, your orphan children? If you die, what sort of life can we expect? Will there be anyone left to season our lives with the salt of wisdom and to inspire in us the fear of the Lord's name with the same insight which you have shown?" The citizens of Clermont wept as they said these things and others like them. Finally Bishop Sidonius answered them, for the Holy Spirit moved him to do so. "Do not be afraid, my people," said he. "My brother Aprunculus is still alive and he will be your Bishop." Those who were present did not understand him, and they thought that he was wandering in his mind.

After the death of Sidonius, the evil priest, the second of the two, the one who was still alive, blinded with greed, immediately laid hands on the property of the church, as if he

were already bishop. "God has at last taken notice of me," said he, "for He knows that I am more just than Sidonius and He has granted me this power." He rode proudly through the whole city. On the Sunday following the death of the holy Bishop, this priest prepared a feast in the church-house and ordered all the townspeople to be invited. He showed no respect for the senior among them, but took his place at the table first. The cup-bearer passed him a goblet of wine and said: "My lord, I have just seen a vision and this I will describe to you, if you permit. I saw it this very Sunday evening. I perceived a great hall, and in this hall there was placed a throne, and on this throne there sat a man, a sort of judge who seemed to have authority over everyone else present. A great throng of priests in white garments stood round him, and there were immense crowds of people of all sorts, so many that I could not count them. While I watched, and trembled as I watched, I saw the blessed Sidonius standing far off as if on a dais, and he was rebuking that dear friend of yours, the priest who died some years ago. The priest was worsted in this argument, and the King had him shut up in the deepest and smallest dungeon. When he had been put away, Sidonius turned on you, saying that you had been implicated in the crime for which the other had just been condemned. Then the judge began to make urgent inquiries to find someone whom he could send to you. I hid myself in the crowd and stood well back, holding my own counsel, for fear that I myself should be sent, for after all I know you very well. While I stood silent and lost in thought everyone else disappeared and I was left all alone in this public place. The judge called me forward and I went up to him. At the sight of him in all his dignity and splendour I lost control of myself and began to sway on my feet from sheer panic. 'Do not be afraid, my boy,' said he. 'Go and tell that priest: 'Be present to answer the charge, for Sidonius has stipulated that you be summoned.' " You must go quickly, for the King commanded me to say what I have said, and he made this dire threat to me: "If you do not speak you will die a frightful death." As his servant said this the priest fell

down dead on the spot and the goblet slid out of his hand. He was picked up dead from the couch on which he was reclining, and they buried him and so despatched him to join his accomplice in hell. The Lord passed this earthly judgement on those two unruly priests: one suffered the fate of Arius, and the other was dashed headlong from the very summit of his pride, like Simon Magus at the behest of the holy Apostle. No one can doubt that these two who plotted together against their holy Bishop now have their place side by side in nethermost hell.

Meanwhile rumors of the approach of the Franks were being repeated on all sides in these regions and everyone looked forward with great excitement to the moment when they would take over the government. Saint Aprunculus, the Bishop of the city of Langres, had fallen into ill-favour with the Burgundes. The hatred which they bore him became daily more bitter and an order went out that he should be executed in secret. This came to his ears and one night he was lowered down from the walls of Dijon. He escaped to Clermont-Ferrand and in accordance with the word of God, placed in the mouth of Sidonius, he became the eleventh bishop of that city.

24. In the days of Bishop Sidonius there was a great famine in Burgundy. The inhabitants were widely scattered over the countryside and there was nobody to distribute food to the poor. Then Ecdicius, one of the Senators and a close relative of Sidonius, with the help of God found a wonderful solution. He sent his servants and horses and carts through the neighboring cities and brought in those who were suffering from starvation. They went out and collected all the poor and needy they could find and brought them in to where Ecdicius lived. Throughout the long period of famine he provided them with food and so saved them from dying of hunger. There were, so they say, more than four thousand of them, both men and women. When the time of plenty returned, he arranged transport home again for them and took each man and woman back to where he or she lived. After they had gone a

voice was heard from Heaven, saying to him: "Ecdicius, Ecdicius, because you have done this thing you and your descendants will never lack food; for you have obeyed my word and by feeding the poor you have stayed my hunger, too." Many witnesses have reported how swift this Ecdicius was to take action. There is a story that he once repelled a strong force of Goths with only ten men to help him. Saint Patiens, Bishop of Lyons, is said to have succored his people in just the same way during the famine. There is still in existence a letter written by Saint Sidonius in which he praises Patiens very highly for this.

25. At the same time Euric, King of the Goths, crossed the Spanish frontier and began a terrible persecution of the Christians in Gaul. Without ado he cut off the heads of all who would not subscribe to his heretical opinions, he imprisoned the priests, and the bishops he either drove into exile or had executed. He ordered the doorways of the churches to be blocked with briers so that the very difficulty of finding one's way in might encourage men to forget their Christian faith. It was mainly the district between the River Garonne and the Pyrenees and the towns of the two Aquitaines which suffered from this violent attack.² We still possess a letter by the noble Sidonius written to Bishop Basilus about this, in which he gives full details. Soon afterwards the persecutor died, struck down by the vengeance of God.

26. Not long afterwards Saint Perpetuus, Bishop of the city of Tours, reached the end of his life, having been bishop for thirty years. Volusianus, a man of senatorial rank, was appointed in his place. He was regarded with suspicion by the Goths. In the seventh year of his episcopate he was dragged off as a captive to Spain and there he soon died. Verus succeeded him and was ordained as the seventh Bishop after Saint Martin.

27. The next thing which happened was that Childeric died. His son Clovis replaced him on the throne. In the fifth year of his reign, Sya-

grius, the King of the Romans and the son of Aegidius, was living in the city of Soissons, where Aegidius himself used to have his residence. Clovis marched against him with his blood-relation Ragnachar, who also had high authority, and challenged him to come out to fight. Syagrius did not hesitate to do so, for he was not afraid of Clovis. They fought each other and the army of Syagrius was annihilated. He fled and made his way as quickly as he could to King Alaric II in Toulouse. Clovis summoned Alaric to surrender the fugitive, informing him that he would attack him in his turn for having given Syagrius refuge. Alaric was afraid to incur the wrath of the Franks for the sake of Syagrius and handed him over bound to the envoys, for the Goths are a timorous race. When Clovis had Syagrius in his power he ordered him to be imprisoned. As soon as he had seized the kingdom of Syagrius he had him killed in secret. ... Clovis waged many wars and won many victories. In the tenth year of his reign he invaded the Thuringians and subjected them to his rule.

28. The King of the Burgundes was called Gundioc; he was of the family of that King Athanaric who persecuted the Christians and about whom I have told you. He had four sons: Gundobad, Godigisel, Chilperic and Gundomar. Gundobad killed his brother Chilperic and drowned Chilperic's wife after tying a stone round her neck. He drove Chilperic's two daughters into exile: the elder, whose name was Chroma, became a religious, and the younger was called Clotild. Clovis often sent envoys to Burgundy and they saw the girl Clotild. They observed that she was an elegant young woman and clever for her years, and they discovered that she was of the blood royal! They reported all this to Clovis and he immediately sent more messengers to Gundobad to ask for her hand in marriage. Gundobad was afraid to refuse and he handed Clotild over to them. They took her back with them, and presented her to their King. Clovis already had a son called Theuderic by one of his mistresses, but he was delighted when he saw Clotild and made her his wife.

29. The first child which Clotild bore for Clovis was a son. She wanted to have her baby baptized, and she kept on urging her husband to agree to this. "The gods whom you worship are no good," she would say. "They haven't even been able to help themselves, let alone others. They are carved out of stone or wood or some old piece of metal. The very names which you have given them were the names of men, not of gods. Take your Saturn, for example, who ran away from his own son to avoid being exiled from his kingdom, or so they say; and Jupiter, that obscene perpetrator of all sorts of mucky deeds, who couldn't keep his hands off other men, who had his fun with all his female relatives and couldn't even refrain from intercourse with his own sister,

'... Jovisque

Et soror et coniunx,

to quote her own words. What have Mars and Mercury ever done for anyone? They may have been endowed with magic arts, but they were certainly not worthy of being called divine. You ought instead to worship Him who created at a word and out of nothing heaven, and earth, the sea and all that therein is, who made the sun to shine, who lit the sky with stars, who peopled the water with fish, the earth with beasts, the sky with flying creatures, at whose nod the fields became fair with fruits, the trees with apples, the vines with grapes, by whose hand the race of man was made, by whose gift all creation is constrained to serve in deference and devotion the man He made." However often the Queen said this, the King came no nearer to belief. "All these things have been created and produced at the command of *our* gods," he would answer. "It is obvious that *your* God can do nothing, and there is no proof that he is a God at all."

The Queen, who was true to her faith, brought her son to be baptized. She ordered the church to be decorated with hangings and curtains, in the hope that the King, who remained stubborn in the face of argument, might be brought to the faith by ceremony. The child was baptized; he was given the name Ingomer; but no sooner had he received baptism than he died in his white robes. Clovis

was extremely angry. He began immediately to reproach his Queen. "If he had been dedicated in the name of my gods," he said, "he would have lived without question; but now that he has been baptized in the name of your God he has not been able to live a single day!" "I give thanks to Almighty God," replied Clotild, "the Creator of all things, who has not found me completely unworthy, for He has deigned to welcome into His kingdom a child conceived in my womb. I am not at all cast down in my mind because of what has happened, for I know that my child, who was called away from this world in his white baptismal robes, will be nurtured in the sight of God."

Some time later Clotild bore a second son. He was baptized Chlodomer. He began to ail and Clovis said: "What else do you expect? It will happen to him as it happened to his brother: no sooner is he baptized in the name of your Christ than he will die!" Clotild prayed to the Lord and at His command the baby recovered.

30. Queen Clotild continued to pray that her husband might recognize the true God and give up his idol-worship. Nothing could persuade him to accept Christianity. Finally war broke out against the Alamanni and in this conflict he was forced by necessity to accept what he had refused of his own free will. It so turned out that when the two armies met on the battlefield there was a great slaughter and the troops of Clovis were rapidly being annihilated. He raised his eyes to heaven when he saw this, felt compunction in his heart and was moved to tears. "Jesus Christ," he said, "you who Clotild maintains to be the Son of the living God, you who deign to give help to those in travail and victory to those who trust in you, in faith I beg the glory of your help. If you will give me victory over my enemies, and if I may have evidence of that miraculous power which the people dedicated to your name say that they have experienced, then I will believe in you and I will be baptized in your name. I have called upon my own gods, but, as I see only too clearly, they have no intention of

helping me. I therefore cannot believe that they possess any power, for they do not come to the assistance of those who trust them. I now call upon you. I want to believe in you, but I must first be saved from my enemies." Even as he said this the Alamanni turned their backs and began to run away. As soon as they saw that their King was killed, they submitted to Clovis. "We beg you," they said, "to put an end to this slaughter. We are prepared to obey you." Clovis stopped the war. He made a speech in which he called for peace. Then he went home. He told the Queen how he had won a victory by calling on the name of Christ. This happened in the fifteenth year of his reign.

31. The Queen then ordered Saint Remigius, Bishop of the town of Rheims, to be summoned in secret. She begged him to impart the word of salvation to the King. The Bishop asked Clovis to meet him in private and began to urge him to believe in the true God, Maker of heaven and earth, and to forsake his idols, which were powerless to help him or anyone else. The King replied: "I have listened to you willingly, holy father. There remains one obstacle. The people under my command will not agree to forsake their gods. I will go and put to them what you have just said to me." He arranged a meeting with his people, but God in his power had preceded him, and before he could say a word all those present shouted in unison: "We will give up worshipping our mortal gods, pious King, and we are prepared to follow the immortal God about whom Remigius preaches." This news was reported to the Bishop. He was greatly pleased and he ordered the baptismal pool to be made ready. The public squares were draped with colored cloths, the churches were adorned with white hangings, the baptistry was prepared, sticks of incense gave off clouds of perfume, sweet-smelling candles gleamed bright and the holy place of baptism was filled with divine fragrance. God filled the hearts of all present with such grace that they imagined themselves to have been transported to some perfumed paradise. King Clovis asked that he might be bap-

tized first by the Bishop. Like some new Constantine he stepped forward to the baptismal pool, ready to wash away the sores of his old leprosy and to be cleansed in flowing water from the sordid stains which he had borne so long. As he advanced for his baptism, the holy man of God addressed him in these pregnant words: "Bow your head in meekness, Sicamber.³ Worship what you have burnt, burn what you have been wont to worship."

Saint Remigius was a bishop of immense learning and a great scholar more than anything else, but he was also famous for his holiness and he was the equal of Saint Silvester for the miracles which he performed. We still have an account of his life, which tells how he raised a man from the dead. King Clovis confessed his belief in God Almighty, three in one. He was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and marked in holy chrism with the sign of the Cross of Christ. More than three thousand of his army were baptized at the same time. His sister Albofléd was baptized, but she soon after died and was gathered to the Lord. The King grieved over her death, but Saint Remigius sent him a consoling letter which began with these words:

I am greatly distressed and I share your grief at the loss of your sister of pious memory. We can take consolation in this, that she has met her death in such a way that we can look up to her instead of mourning for her.

Another sister of Clovis, called Lanthchild, was converted at the same time. She had accepted the Arian heresy, but she confessed the triune majesty of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and received the holy chrism.

32. At this time the two brothers Gundobad and Godigisel ruled over the territory round the Rhône and the Saône and the province of Marseilles. Like their subjects they belonged to the Arian sect. They were enemies, and when Godigisel heard of the victories won by King Clovis he sent envoys to him in secret. "If you help me to attack my brother," he said, "so that I can kill him in battle or drive him out of his

territory, I will pay you any annual tribute which you may care to exact." Clovis gladly accepted the offer and in his turn promised to help Godigisel wherever occasion should arise. They chose a suitable moment and Clovis marched his army against Gundobad. As soon as he heard of this, Gundobad, who knew nothing of his brother's treachery, sent a message to Godigisel. "Come to my assistance," he said, "for the Franks are marching against us and are invading our territory which they plan to capture. Let us make a common front against this people which hates us, for if we are not united we shall suffer the same fate which others have met before us." Godigisel answered: "I am coming with my army and I will support you." The three kings each put his army in the field, Clovis marching against Gundobad and Godigisel. They arrived with all their military equipment at a fortified place called Dijon. When battle was joined on the River Ouche Godigisel went over to Clovis and their united forces crushed the army of Gundobad. Gundobad turned his back and fled when he saw the treachery of his brother, about whom he had no suspicion. He made his way along the banks of the Rhône and took refuge in the city of Avignon. As for Godigisel, once the victory was won, he promised to hand over part of his kingdom to Clovis and then went home in peace and entered Vienne in triumph, as if he were still master of his own territory. Clovis called up more troops and set out in pursuit of Gundobad, planning to extract him from Avignon and kill him. When Gundobad learned this he was panic-stricken, for he was afraid of being killed at any moment. He had with him a man of some distinction called Aridius. Aridius was astute and full of energy. Gundobad summoned this man to him and said: "I am surrounded by pitfalls and what to do I cannot tell. These barbarians have launched this attack against me. If they kill us two they will ravage the whole neighborhood." "You must do all you can to propitiate this savage creature," answered Aridius, "or else you are done for. If you agree, I will run away from you and pretend to go over to his side. When I have joined him I will see to it

that no harm is done to you or to this region. If you will only carry out my plan in all its details, the Lord God in his compassion will assure you a happy outcome." "I will do whatever you say," replied Gundobad. Having received his answer, Aridius bade him goodbye and left him. He made his way to Clovis. "I am your humble slave, most pious King," said he. "I have deserted the wretched Gundobad and come to join your forces. If you are prepared to accept me kindly, then you and your descendants will find in me a faithful and trustworthy retainer." Clovis accepted this offer without hesitating for a moment and kept Aridius by his side. He was a wonderful raconteur, full of good advice, sound in judgement and apparently trustworthy. Clovis remained encamped with his entire army round the city walls. "If you who are a king with absolute power would deign to accept a little advice from me who am no one," said Aridius to him, "this is the loyal proposition which I should like to put to you. What I am going to say will be to your advantage and at the same time to the advantage of the cities through which you propose to pass. What is the point of keeping all these troops under arms when your enemy is safe in a stronghold which is too well fortified for you to capture? You are destroying the fields, spoiling the meadows, cutting up the vineyards, ruining the olive-groves and ravaging the whole countryside, which is a very fruitful one. In doing this you are causing no harm whatsoever to Gundobad. Why don't you send an ultimatum to him to say that he must pay whatever annual tribute you care to exact? In that way the region will be saved and he will have to submit to you and pay tribute to you for ever. If he doesn't accept this, you can do whatever you wish." Clovis accepted the advice of Aridius and sent his army home. Then he dispatched envoys to Gundobad and ordered him to pay yearly tribute. Gundobad paid up for the year in question and promised that he would do the same from then onwards.

33. Later on Gundobad recovered his strength and scorned to pay King Clovis the

tribute which he had been promised. He marched his army against his brother Godigisel and besieged him inside his city of Vienne. Once provisions began to run short among the common people, Godigisel was afraid that the lack of food might extend to him also, and he ordered them to be driven out of the town. This was done, but along with them was expelled the engineer who was in charge of the aqueduct. He was very indignant at having been ejected with the others. He went in a rage to Gundobad and revealed to him how he might break into the city and take vengeance on his brother. With this engineer to show them the way, Gundobad's army was led along the aqueduct. At their head marched a number of sappers with iron crowbars. There was a water-gate blocked by a great stone. Under the direction of the engineer they heaved this stone on one side with their crowbars, made their way into the city and attacked from the rear the defenders, who were still busy shooting their arrows from the wall. A trumpet-call was sounded from the centre of the city, the besiegers attacked the gateways, burst them open and rushed in. The townsfolk were caught between two fires and cut to pieces by two forces. Godigisel took refuge in one of the heretic churches, but he was killed there and his Arian bishop with him. The Franks who had been with Godigisel banded together in one of the towers. Gundobad gave orders that none of them should be maltreated. When he had disarmed them he sent them in exile to King Alaric in Toulouse. All the Gallo-Roman senators and the Burgundes who had sided with Godigisel were killed out of hand. This whole region, which is now called Burgundy, Gundobad took under his own rule. He instituted milder laws among the Burgundes, to stop them treating the Romans unjustly.

34. Gundobad came to realize that the religious tenets of the heretics were of no avail. He accepted that Christ, the Son of God, and the Holy Ghost are equal with the Father, and he asked the saintly Bishop of Vienne to arrange for him to be anointed with the chrism in secret. "If you really believe what the Lord

has Himself taught us," said the Bishop, "then you should carry it out. Christ said: 'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him I will confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.' In the same way He gave advice to the holy and blessed Apostles, whom He loved so much, saying: 'But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.' You are a king and you need not fear to be taken in charge by anyone: yet you are afraid of your subjects and you do not dare to confess in public your belief in the Creator of all things. Stop being so foolish and confess in front of them all what you say you believe in your heart. The blessed Apostle said: 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Similarly the prophet said: 'I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.' And again: 'I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.' You are afraid of your people. Do you not realize that it is better that the people should accept your belief, rather than that you, a king, should pander to their every whim? You are the leader of your people; your people is not there to lord it over you. When you go to war, you yourself march at the head of the squadrons of your army and they follow where you lead. It is therefore preferable that they should learn the truth under your direction, rather than that at your death they should continue in their errors. For 'God is not mocked,' nor can He love the man who for an earthly kingdom refuses to confess Him before all the world." Gundobad was worsted in this argument, but to his life's end he persisted in his obstinacy, refusing to confess in public that the three persons of the Trinity are equal.

At this time Saint Avitus was at the height of his eloquence. Certain heresies began to be current in the town of Constantinople, first

that of Eutyches and then that of Sabellius, who maintained that our Lord Jesus Christ had nothing about Him which was divine. At the request of King Gundobad Avitus wrote polemics against these heresies. We still possess these admirable letters, which at once denounced the heresy and supported the Church of God. He wrote a book of *Homilies*, six books in verse on the creation of the world and other cognate subjects, and nine books of *Letters*, among which are included the ones already mentioned. In the homily which he composed on the Rogations he says that these ceremonies, which we celebrate before the triumph of our Lord's Ascension, were instituted by Mamertus, Bishop of that same town of Vienne of which Avitus held the episcopate when he was writing, at a time when the townsfolk were terrified by a series of portents. Vienne was shaken by frequent earthquakes, and savage packs of wolves and stags came in through the gates and ranged through the entire city, fearing nothing and nobody, or so he writes. These portents continued throughout the whole year. As the season of the feast of Easter approached, the common people in their devotion expected God's compassion on them, hoping that this day of great solemnity might see an end of their terror. However, on the very vigil of the holy night, when the rite of Mass was being celebrated, the King's palace inside the city walls was set ablaze by fire sent by God. The congregation was panic-stricken. They rushed out of the church, for they thought that the whole town would be destroyed by this fire, or else that the earth would open and swallow it up. The holy Bishop was prostrate before the altar, imploring God's mercy with tears and lamentations. What more should I say? The prayers of this famous Bishop rose to heaven above and, so to speak, his floods of tears put out the fire in the palace. While this was going on, the feast of the Ascension of our Lord was coming nearer, as I have told you. Mamertus told the people to fast, he instituted a special form of prayer, a religious service and a grant of alms to the poor in thanksgiving. All the horrors came to an end. The story of what had happened

spread through all the provinces and led all the bishops to copy what this particular prelate had done in faith. Down to our own times these rites are celebrated with a contrite spirit and a grateful heart in all our churches to the glory of God.

35. When Alaric II, the King of the Goths, observed that King Clovis was beating one race of people after another, he sent envoys to him. "If you agree," said he, "it seems to me that it would be a good thing, my dear brother, if, with God's approval, we two were to meet." Clovis did agree. He travelled to meet Alaric and the two of them came together near the village of Amboise, on an island in the Loire, in territory belonging to Tours. They conferred with each other, sat side by side at the meal table, swore eternal friendship and went home again in peace. At that time a great many people in Gaul were very keen on having the Franks as their rulers.

36. It was as a direct result of this that Quintianus, the Bishop of Rodez, fell into disfavour and was driven out of his city. The townsfolk started saying to him: "If you had your way, the Franks would take over our territory." Not long after this an open quarrel started between him and his flock. The Goths who were resident in Rodez suspected him, and the Rhuténois themselves went so far as to accuse him of wishing to accept the rule of the Franks. They plotted together and planned to assassinate him. When Quintianus came to hear of this, he fled one night and left the city with the more trustworthy among his attendants. He reached Clermont-Ferrand and there he was kindly received by Saint Eufrasius, who had succeeded to Aprunculus, himself a native of Dijon. Eufrasius gave him accommodation, with fields around and vineyards, for, as he said: "The resources of this diocese are sufficient to support us both: that charity which the blessed Apostle preached must continue between God's ministers." The Bishop of Lyons also made over to Quintianus certain church property which he administered in Clermont. Other details concerning Saint

Quintianus, the wrongs which were done to him and the miracles which the Lord deigned to perform through his agency, are described in my *Vitae Patrum*, in the chapter devoted to him.

37. "I find it hard to go on seeing these Arians occupy a part of Gaul," said Clovis to his ministers. "With God's help let us invade them. When we have beaten them, we will take over their territory." They all agreed to this proposal. An army was assembled and Clovis marched on Poitiers. Some of his troops passed through land belonging to Tours. In respect for Saint Martin Clovis ordered that they should requisition nothing in this neighborhood except fodder and water. One of the soldiers found some hay belonging to a poor man. "The King commanded that nothing should be requisitioned except fodder, didn't he?" said this man. "Well, this is fodder. We shan't be disobeying his orders if we take it." He laid hands on the poor man and took his hay by main force. This was reported to Clovis. He drew his sword and killed the soldier on the spot. "It is no good expecting to win this fight if we offend Saint Martin," said he. This was enough to ensure that the army took nothing else from this region. The King sent messengers to the church of Saint Martin. "Off with you," he said, "and see if you can bring me some good tidings from God's house." He loaded them with gifts which they were to offer to the church. "Lord God," said he, "if You are on my side and if You have decreed that this people of unbelievers, who have always been hostile to You, are to be delivered into my hands, deign to show me a propitious sign as these men enter Saint Martin's church, so that I may know that You will support your servant Clovis." The messengers set out on their journey and came to Tours as Clovis had commanded. As they entered the church, it happened that the precentor was just beginning to intone this antiphon: "For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies: that I might destroy them

that hate me." When the messengers heard this psalm, they gave thanks to God. They made their vows to the Saint and went happily back to report to the King. When Clovis reached the Vienne with his army, he was at a loss to know where to cross, for the river was swollen with heavy rains. That night he prayed that God might deign to indicate a ford by which he might make the crossing. As day dawned an enormous doe entered the water, as if to lead them at God's command. The soldiers knew that where the doe had crossed they could follow. The King marched towards Poitiers, and while he and his army were encamped there a pillar of fire rose from the church of Saint Hilary. It seemed to move towards Clovis as a sign that with the support of the blessed Saint he might the more easily overcome the heretic host, against which Hilary himself had so often done battle for the faith. Clovis forbade his troops to take any booty as they marched in, or to rob any man of his possessions.

At that time on the outskirts of Poitiers there dwelt a saintly Abbot called Maxentius, who lived as a God-fearing recluse in his monastery. There is no point in my giving the name of the monastery, as it is now called the Cell of Saint Maxentius. When the monks saw a squadron of troops coming nearer and nearer to their monastery they begged their Abbot to come out of his cell to give his blessing to the soldiers. He was a long time coming, and they were so frightened that they burst the door open and pushed him out of his cell. He showed no fear. He walked towards the troops, as if to ask them not to molest him. One of the soldiers drew his sword to strike Maxentius over the head. His arm went stiff on a level with the Saint's feet and asked his forgiveness. When his companions saw what had happened, they rushed back to the army in great consternation, for they were afraid that they might all pay for it with their lives. The blessed Saint rubbed the man's arm with holy oil, made the sign of the Cross over him, and he immediately recovered. As a result of what Maxentius had done the monastery remained unharmed. He performed many other mira-

cles, as the diligent reader will discover if he peruses the Abbot's *Vita*. This happened in the fifteenth year of the reign of Clovis.

Meanwhile King Clovis met Alaric II, King of the Goths, on the battlefield of Vouillé, near the tenth milestone outside Poitiers. Some of the soldiers engaged hurled their javelins from a distance, others fought hand to hand. The Goths fled, as they were prone to do, and Clovis was the victor, for God was on his side. As one of his allies he had the son of Sigibert the Lame,⁴ called Chloderic. Sigibert had been lame since he was wounded in the knee when fighting against the Alamanni at the fortress of Zülpich. Clovis killed Alaric, but, as the Goths fled, two of them suddenly rushed up in the scrum, one on this side and one on that, and struck at the Frankish King with their spears. It was his leather corselet which saved him and the sheer speed of his horse, but he was very near to death. A large force of Auvergnats took part in the battle, for they had come under the command of Apollinaris; their leaders, who were of senatorial rank, were killed. Amalaric, the son of Alaric, escaped from the conflict and fled to Spain, where he later ruled his father's kingdom wisely. Clovis sent his own son Theuderic through Albi and the town of Rodez to Clermont-Ferrand. As he moved forward Theuderic subjected to his father's rule all the towns which lay between the two frontiers of the Goths and the Burgundes. Alaric II had reigned for twelve years. Clovis wintered in the town of Bordeaux. He removed all Alaric's treasure from Toulouse and went to Angoulême. There the Lord showed him such favour that the city walls collapsed of their own weight as he looked at them. Clovis drove the Goths out of Angoulême and took command of the city. With his victory consolidated he then returned to Tours. There he gave many gifts to the church of Saint Martin.

38. Letters reached Clovis from the Emperor Anastasius to confer the consulate on him. In Saint Martin's church he stood clad in a purple tunic and the military mantle, and he crowned himself with a diadem. He then rode out on his horse and with his own hand showered

gold and silver coins among the people present all the way from the doorway of Saint Martin's church to Tours cathedral. From that day on he was called Consul or Augustus. He left Tours and travelled to Paris, where he established the seat of his government. Theuderic came to join him in Paris.

39. When Eustochius, Bishop of Tours, died, Licinius was ordained Bishop in his place. He was the eighth after Saint Martin. The war which I have just described was waged during the episcopate of Licinius, and it was in his time that King Clovis came to Tours. Licinius is said to have been in the East and to have visited the holy places. They even say that he went to Jerusalem and saw on a number of occasions the site of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection, about which we read in the Gospels.

40. While Clovis was resident in Paris he sent secretly to the son of Sigibert, saying: "Your father is old and he is lame in one leg. If he were to die, his kingdom would come to you of right, and my alliance would come with it." Chlodoric was led astray by his lust for power and began to plot his father's death. One day Sigibert went out of the city of Cologne and crossed the Rhine, for he wanted to walk in the forest of Buchau. At midday he took a siesta in his tent, and his son set assassins on him and had him murdered, so that he might gain possession of his kingdom. By the judgement of God Chlodoric fell into the pit which he had dug for his own father. He sent messengers to King Clovis to announce his father's death. "My father is dead," said he, "and I have taken over his kingdom and his treasure. Send me your envoys and I will gladly hand over to you anything which you may care to select from this treasure." "I thank you for your goodwill," answered Clovis. "I ask you to show all your treasure to my messengers, but you may keep it." The envoys came and Chlodoric showed his father's treasure to them. They inspected everything. "It was in this coffer that my father used to keep all his gold coins," said Chlodoric. "Plunge your hand right to the bot-

tom," they answered, "to see how much is there." As he leant forward to do this, one of the Franks raised his hand and split Chlodoric's skull with his double-headed axe. This unworthy son thus shared the fate of his father. When Clovis heard that both Sigibert and his son were dead, he came to Cologne himself and ordered the inhabitants to assemble. "While I was out sailing on the River Scheldt," said he, "Chlodoric, the son of your King, my brother, was busy plotting against his father and putting it out that I wanted him killed. As Sigibert fled through the forest of Buchau, Chlodoric set assassins on him and had him murdered. While Chlodoric was showing his father's treasure, he in his turn was killed by somebody or other. I take no responsibility for what has happened. It is not for me to shed the blood of one of my fellow kings, for that is a crime; but since things have turned out in this way, I will give you my advice and you must make of it what you will. It is that you should turn to me and put yourself under my protection." When they heard what he had to say, they clashed their shields and shouted their approval. Then they raised Clovis up on a shield and made him their ruler. In this way he took over both the kingship and the treasure of Sigibert and submitted Sigibert's people to his own rule. Day in day out God submitted the enemies of Clovis to his dominion and increased his power, for he walked before Him with an upright heart and did what was pleasing in His sight.

41. Clovis next marched against Chararic.⁵ When Clovis was fighting against Syagrius, this Chararic, who had been summoned to his aid, remained neutral, giving help to neither side and awaiting the issue of the conflict, so that he might offer the hand of friendship to whichever leader was victorious. This was the reason why Clovis now attacked him in his wrath. He hemmed Chararic in by some stratagem and made him prisoner. Chararic and his son were both bound and then Clovis had their hair cut short. He ordered Chararic to be ordained as a priest and he made his son a deacon. Chararic objected to this humiliation

and burst into tears. His son is said to have exclaimed: "These leaves have been cut from wood which is still green and not lacking in sap. They will soon grow again and be larger than ever; and may the man who has done this deed perish equally quickly." The statement came to the ears of Clovis. As they were threatening to let their hair grow again and then to kill him, he had their heads cut off. When they were dead he took possession of their kingdom, their treasure and their people.

42. There lived in Cambrai at this time a king called Ragnachar who was so sunk in debauchery that he could not even keep his hands off the women of his own family. He had an adviser named Farro who was given to the same filthy habits. It was said of Farro that when food, or a present, or indeed any gift was brought to the King, Ragnachar would say that it was good enough for him and his dear Farro. This situation roused their Frankish subjects to the utmost fury. Clovis gave a bribe, of golden arm-bands and sword-belts to the *leudes*⁶ of Ragnachar, to encourage them to call him in against their King. These ornaments looked like gold, but they were really of bronze very cleverly gilded. Clovis marched his army against Ragnachar. Ragnachar sent spies to discover the strength of the invaders. When the spies returned, he asked them just how strong the enemy was. "Strong enough for you and your dear Farro," they replied. Clovis arrived in person and drew up his line of battle. Ragnachar witnessed the defeat of his army and prepared to slip away in flight. He was arrested by his own troops and with his arms tied behind his back he was brought before Clovis. His brother Ricchar was dragged in with him. "Why have you disgraced our Frankish people by allowing yourself to be bound?" asked Clovis. "It would have been better for you had you died in battle." He raised his axe and split Ragnachar's skull. Then he turned to Ricchar and said: "If you had stood by your brother, he would not have been bound in this way." He killed Ricchar with a second blow of his axe. When these two were dead, those who had betrayed them

discovered that the gold which they had received from Clovis was counterfeit. When they complained to Clovis, he is said to have answered: "This is the sort of gold which a man can expect when he deliberately lures his lord to death." He added that they were lucky to have escaped with their lives, instead of paying for the betrayal of their rulers by being tortured to death. When they heard this, they chose to beg forgiveness, saying that it was enough for them if they were allowed to live. The two Kings of whom I have told you, Ragnachar and Ricchar, were relatives of Clovis. At his command their brother Rignomer was also put to death in Le Mans. As soon as all three were slain, Clovis took over their kingdom and their treasure. In the same way he encompassed the death of many other kings and blood-relations of his whom he suspected of conspiring against his kingdom. By doing this he spread his dominion over the whole of Gaul. One day when he had called a general assembly of his subjects, he is said to have made the following remark about the relatives whom he had destroyed: "How sad a thing it is that I live among strangers like some solitary pilgrim, and that I have none of my own relations left to help me when disaster threatens!" He said this not because he grieved for their deaths, but because in his cunning way he hoped to find some relative still in the land of the living whom he could kill.

43. At long last Clovis died in Paris. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles, which he and his Queen Clotild had built. He expired five years after the battle of Vouillé. He had reigned for thirty years and he was forty-five years old. From the passing of Saint Martin until the death of King Clovis, which happened in the eleventh year of the episcopate of Licinius, Bishop of Tours, there are counted one hundred and twelve years. After the death of her husband Queen Clotild came to live in Tours. She served as a religious in the church of Saint Martin. She lived all the rest of her days in this place, apart from an occasional visit to Paris. She was remarkable for her great modesty and her loving kindness.