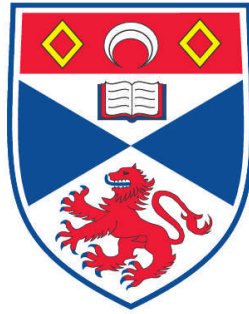


**TEXTS AND CONTEXTS : WOMEN'S DEDICATED LIFE FROM
CAESARIUS TO BENEDICT**

Lindsay Rudge

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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28th July 2006

ABSTRACT

The history of western monasticism in the early middle ages has traditionally been viewed as a continuous process of development. Women religious have been excluded from this discourse, although early work which ‘rediscovered’ female communities has been built on to place them in the mainstream of thinking about monasticism. However, one way of approaching religious women has been largely overlooked. The production and circulation of normative works by and for female communities is of prime importance for evidence of interaction between male and female traditions of dedicated life.

This thesis examines these issues through the works of Caesarius of Arles (470-542). Although his rule’s importance as the first western *regula* written specifically for women has long been recognised, the subsequent use of his monastic writings has never been adequately explored. In addition to being the inspiration for a number of later rules, his work was given a new purpose as part of the reforming activities of Benedict of Aniane in the opening decades of the ninth century. It is between these two vitally important figures that my thesis is framed.

For the first time, this study shows that a core selection of Caesarian writings circulated between their composition in the early sixth century and the dates of the earliest existing manuscripts in the early ninth. This has unexplored implications for the understanding of the literary basis of dedicated life for both sexes.

The thesis has significance for the study of female religious communities in two areas. Firstly, the relative popularity of Caesarius’ texts over time is of great interest as an indicator of values placed on different aspects of his work. The second area of investigation is the apparent fluidity of the texts’ gender, and how, in brief, texts written for women could be used equally effectively for men. This research opens up a new way of thinking about the relationship between female and male dedicated life. It is no longer possible to conceive of religious dedication along strictly gendered lines.

DECLARATIONS

I, Lindsay Rudge, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 96,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date

Signature of Candidate

I was admitted as a research student in September 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in September 2006; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2002 and 2006.

Date

Signature of Candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date

Signature of Supervisor

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur</i> , ed. J. Bollandus et. al. (Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, 1643-1940)
Beaunier-Besse	J-M. Besse <i>et al</i> , <i>Abbayes et prieurés de l'ancienne France: recueil historique des archevêchés, évêchés, abbayes et prieurés de France</i> (Paris, 1905-1943)
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis</i> (Turnhout, 1971-)
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout, 1955-)
CGM	<i>Catalogue Général des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques Publiques de France</i> (Paris, 1886-1989)
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1893-)
Cottineau	L. Cottineau, <i>Répertoire topobibliographique des abbayes et prieurés</i> 2 vols. (Mâcon, 1935-9)
CSCO	<i>Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium</i> (Louvain, 1955-)
CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum</i> (Vienna, 1866-)
CLA	E.A. Lowe (ed.) <i>Codices Latini Antiquiores. A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts prior to the Ninth Century</i> 11 vols. + supplement (Oxford, 1935-71)
DACL	F. Cabrol et. al. (eds.) <i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> (Paris, 1907-53)
DHGE	A. Baudrillart et. al. (eds.) <i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i> (Paris, 1912-)
EETS	Early English Text Society (Oxford, 1864-)
GC	J.-H. Albanès (ed.) <i>Gallia Christiana Novissima: Histoire des Archevêchés, évêchés & abbayes de France, accompagnée des documents authentiques recueillis dans les registres du Vatican et les Archives locales</i> (Valence, 1889-1920)
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society (London, 1890-)

<i>ILCV</i>	E. Diehl (ed.) <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres</i> 3 vols. (Berlin, 1925-31)
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
Klingshirn, <i>Caesarius</i>	W.E. Klingshirn, <i>Caesarius of Arles. The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Arles</i> (Cambridge, 1994)
Klingshirn, <i>Life, Testament, Letters</i>	W.E. Klingshirn, <i>Caesarius of Arles : Life, Testament, Letters</i> (Liverpool, 1994)
Le Blant, <i>NR</i>	E. Le Blant, <i>Nouveau Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes des Gaules antérieures au VIIIe siècle</i> (Paris, 1892)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
AA	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
Capit.	<i>Capitularia</i>
Conc.	<i>Concilia</i>
Epp.	<i>Epistolae</i>
SSRM	<i>Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</i>
SS Rer. Germ.	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i>
SS	<i>Scriptores</i>
<i>MIÖG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichte</i>
Morin I/II	G. Morin (ed.) <i>Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia</i> 2 vols. (Maredsous, 1937-42)
NPNF	P. Schaff (ed.) <i>A Select Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Church</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857-66)
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-65)
<i>PLRE</i>	A.H.M. Jones et. al. (eds.) <i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1971-92)
<i>RBen</i>	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
<i>RED</i>	<i>Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, series major</i> (Rome, 1956-)
<i>RHEF</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France</i>

<i>Reg. Mon.</i>	Caesarius of Arles, <i>Regula monachorum</i>
<i>RV</i>	Caesarius of Arles, <i>Regula virginum</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris, 1942-)
<i>SCH</i>	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
<i>SWDA</i>	J.A. McNamara and J.E. Halborg with E.G. Whatley (eds.) <i>Sainted Women of the Dark Ages</i> (Duke University Press, 1992)
De Vogüé, <i>Oeuvres pour les moniales</i>	A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau (eds.) <i>Césaire d'Arles. Oeuvres monastiques. I, Oeuvres pour les moniales</i> SC 345 (Paris, 1988).

INTRODUCTION

In 1942, Dom Philibert Schmitz published his comprehensive history of the Benedictine order.¹ Volumes I to VI covered men; volume I discussed the Benedictine order prior to 1200. The last volume, VII, was devoted to the study of female Benedictines. Such a ‘lop-sided history’ has since been balanced by many articles and monographs on the contributions of women to the monastic achievements of the middle ages; indeed, a thesis written perhaps only thirty years ago would not have needed to discuss these works at any length, as this one is fortunately in a position to.²

However, to a great extent the writing of the history of dedicated women religious (and here, the use of the word ‘monastic’ is deliberately not used) remains largely as an offshoot of that of male religious. A full-scale synthesis of both male and female religious experience in the early middle ages, privileging neither one nor the other, remains to be written. The aim of this study is to signal the direction that such a study might take. Using four key approaches, the historiographical norms of female dedicated life are overturned, to be replaced by a more nuanced reading of the subject.

The first of these is to interrogate what is meant by ‘monasticism’, or ‘monastic life’, or quite simply by the word ‘monastery’. How, exactly, should this institution be defined? It is the contention of this study that the term ‘monasticism’ cannot be used as a catch-all term, or as a synonym for ‘dedicated life’ in the early middle ages. The variety of dedicated experience was simply too wide. A very loose definition of a monastery might be as follows: a group – large or small, and in the case of women’s communities in the early middle ages, it was unlikely to be the former – of women or men (or in the case of double monasteries, groups of both), living together over a period of some years, if not decades or generations, whose intention in so doing was to live a life dedicated to the service of God. Such a group would inhabit a fixed property, with the economic and legal

¹ P. Schmitz, *Histoire de l’Ordre de Saint Benoît* 7 vols. (Maredsous, 1942)

² The phrase ‘lop-sided history’ is misquoted from its original context: D. Thom, ‘A Lop-Sided View: Feminist History or the History of Women?’, in K. Campbell (ed.) *Critical Feminism* (Buckingham, 1992), 25-51.

arrangements necessary to keep such an establishment (including its landed estates) functioning; there would be some means of differentiating the buildings from ‘outside’, or otherwise demarcating members of the community from others. Often (but not always) this would take the form of enclosure, whether strictly applied or not. It could also involve particular styles of dress. Members of the community would be governed by norms of conduct, whether informally accepted among the community or written down in a manuscript to be read and reviewed often. Such norms would be overseen by a head of the community, an abbess or abbot, often with the assistance of an outside authority such as the local bishop.

These definitions are worth setting down at some length. They lead directly to the crucial point that relatively few early medieval women who were engaged upon a life dedicated to God could be said to have adhered to them. Most dedicated women did not live in such communities. Some women moved between what would now be categorized as different styles of dedicated living; such typological descriptions would no doubt have been puzzling to them. Of course, our knowledge of dedicated women’s lives is often mediated through the descriptions of outside eyewitnesses and normative sources. We see a bishop’s-eye-view of dedicated women; or more precisely, often what the bishop thought he ought to be seeing. Instead of holding this template up to the sources and taking note only of those institutions that fit, this study will examine, as far as possible, the practical arrangements of dedicated life actually being experienced by such women, with the fundamental premise that no ‘norm’ existed firmly in view.

The second, major, new approach of this study is its use of codicological evidence. The thesis is framed by the production and use of the writings for dedicated women of Caesarius, bishop of Arles (502-542), between their production in the early sixth century and their use in the reforming documents of Benedict of Aniane in the early ninth. Caesarius’ *Regula virginum* (512) is well-known as the first western rule to be composed specifically for women; he also composed a letter of guidance, *Vereor*, for the women of his religious community in its early stages. While Caesarius’ writings have long been a subject of study, the implications of the manuscripts of his work for the study

of women's dedicated life have never been grasped. For the first time, this thesis has compared the circulation of the Caesarian manuscripts, and demonstrates that a fixed and stable collection of his writings for dedicated women, including three letters (of which two were in fact erroneously attributed to Caesarius) and two sermons, was circulating in a number of copies prior to the ninth century. This collection circulated separately from Caesarius' rule, and in a larger number of manuscripts. From this, it is evident that there was strong demand for Caesarius' writings for dedicated women that were of an ideological rather than a prescriptive nature. By the eighth century, women devoting their lives to God had more need of ideological works which left them free to find their own practical paths to holiness, than of rules which governed the *minutiae* of their existences. The existence and circulation of these texts indicate that female religious life remained in a strong state, throughout the early middle ages, and that such a life could be lived beyond the bounds of the monastery wall. No previous study has brought together codicological evidence with that of other sources to discuss the nature of early medieval dedicated life for women.

The third new approach of this study is to highlight the fluidity of the gender of the texts under discussion. While previous work on gender has been concerned with its social or rhetorical construction, this study returns to re-examine the original grammatical meaning of the term by focusing on the gendering of the text itself. The same collection of letters and sermons circulated for men: that is to say, the same collection circulated, with largely just the essential grammatical changes made to make them suitable for men. This is a simple but fundamental point: the circulation of Caesarius' writings indicates that the same texts were considered suitable for both genders. This study refines the historiographical norm of discussing the ideologies of male and female dedicated life as two separate and fixed entities. The focus of this study is on women's religious life, but the textual basis of that life was often not so rigidly gendered.

A fourth approach is just as fundamental. This study, framed through the use and re-use of Caesarius' writings, has deliberately taken a non-Benedictine perspective. That is to say, rather than adhering to the teleological but oft-made assumption that the

introduction of the rule of Benedict of Nursia was the inevitable culmination of early medieval monastic history, this study takes a deliberately broad view that discusses monastic rules from an unbiased starting point. It has been all too easy to see the eventual dominance of Benedictinism as a natural progression. In part, this is due not to the teleological assumptions of modern historians but to the conception of the monastic past as viewed by Carolingian reformers such as Benedict of Aniane. Indeed, as will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, the carefully-judged language of *renovatio* constructed a view of the monastic past which obscured, rather than clarified what had gone before. This was the past made new, rather than rediscovered.

The central theme of this thesis is the textual and codicological *Nachleben* of Caesarius of Arles. Caesarius, born in 470, was the son of a senatorial family from Chalons-sur-Saône, and became a monk on the Mediterranean island of Lérins at the age of eighteen. Relatively quickly, his health broke down due to an excess of asceticism, and in *circa* 495 he moved to the city of Arles, where his kinsman Aeonius was bishop.³ In around 498/9, Aeonius appointed Caesarius as the abbot of the men's monastery in Arles. Three years later, the dying bishop did his best to ensure that the thirty-two year old Caesarius would be his successor. He 'addressed the clergy and citizens, and through messengers asked the [Visigothic] masters of the city that after he had, God willing, departed to Christ, they choose none other than holy Caesarius to succeed him'.⁴

During his forty-year episcopate, Caesarius was active in a number of areas. His first and lasting priority was to instigate efforts to christianize the people of Arles itself and of the surrounding countryside. To this end, he became a preacher *par excellence*, and over two hundred of his sermons are still extant.⁵ They remained extremely popular texts and held in high esteem particularly among Carolingian writers, who re-used and re-framed them to suit their own needs. Caesarius' other priorities were linked to this, as part of a wider programme of promoting church reform. Through the synods of Agde

³ Cyprianus of Toulon *et al.*, *vita Caesarii* [V.Caes] I.10. Ed. Morin II, 293-349. Eng. trans. W.E. Klingshirn (ed.) *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, 1994) 9-65.

⁴ V. Caes. I. 13, tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters* 15. See also Klingshirn, *op. cit.*, 15, for the identification of the 'masters of the city' as Visigothic.

⁵ G. Morin (ed.) *Caesarius Arelantensis. Sermones* 2 vols. CCSL 103, 104 (Turnhout, 1953).

(506), Arles (524), Carpentras (527), Orange and Vaison (both 529), Caesarius set down regulations for the local clergy and for the ownership of church property, and standardized the liturgy according to Roman norms.⁶ He also organised the cathedral clergy of Arles into an ascetic community, modelled on that of Augustine at Hippo.⁷

Modern studies of Caesarius of Arles have generally fallen into two types. The first are straightforward biographies.⁸ Critical attention to Caesarius' long career dates back to the late nineteenth century. Two biographies were published in the same year, 1894: in France, Arthur Malnory's *Saint Césaire, évêque d'Arles* (Paris, 1894); in Germany, Carl Franklin Arnold's *Caesarius von Arelate und die gallische Kirche seiner Zeit* (Leipzig, 1894). No subsequent biography was published until exactly a century later, when *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994) was written by William Klingshirn. While immensely valuable studies, these biographies discuss the foundation of the monastery of St John and the writing of the *Regula virginum* merely as aspects of Caesarius' episcopal responsibilities, and pay little attention to the contexts of contemporary female dedicated life.

The second type of study of Caesarius of Arles has focused on his writings and sermons, alongside other sources for his life. In 1896 Bruno Krusch edited the *Vita Caesarii* for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, providing the impetus for further critical editions of the sources.⁹ In 1937, Dom Germain Morin began to publish the fruits of a lifetime's endeavour, with a new edition of Caesarius' sermons.¹⁰ Five years later, Morin published a second volume of *Caesariana*, containing his *vita*, monastic rules, testament, letters, councils and treatises.¹¹ Since then, the most significant work on

⁶ See Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 97-104 (Agde); 137-145 (Agde, Arles, Carpentras, Orange and Vaison).

⁷ *V. Caes.* I.62; II.6

⁸ For an excellent summary of previous works on Caesarius, see Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 3-5.

⁹ B. Krusch ed. *Vitae Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis Libri Duo* MGH SSRM III 433-501.

¹⁰ G. Morin *Sancti Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis Opera Omnia*. I *Sermones* (Maredsous, 1937), reprinted and now most easily accessible as CCSL 103-4 (Turnhout, 1953). Dom Morin's career is described in G. Ghysens and P.-P. Verbraken, *La Carrière scientifique de Dom Germain Morin (1861-1946)* (Steenbrugge, 1986), cited in Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 4, n.8. See also two essays by Morin himself: 'Mes principes et ma méthode pour la future édition de saint Césaire', *RBen* 10 (1893) 62-78, and 'Comment j'ai fait mon édition des oeuvres de saint Césaire d'Arles', *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie* 58 (1938) 225-32.

¹¹ G. Morin *Sancti Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis Opera Omnia*. II *Opera Varia* (Maredsous, 1942).

Caesarius has been made available in the *Sources chrétiennes* series. New editions and French translations of the sermons were produced by Marie-José Delage, *Césaire d'Arles. Sermons au peuple* 3 vols. (Paris, 1975-86) and of the monastic writings by Adalbert de Vogüé and Joël Courreau as *Césaire d'Arles. Oeuvres monastiques, I, Oeuvres pour les moniales* (Paris, 1998) and *II, Oeuvres pour les moines* (Paris, 1994). Clearly the existence of critical editions of the full corpus is of immense benefit to any study of the writings of Caesarius. However, such editions also serve to dislocate the texts from their manuscript contexts and imply a textual fixity that is not always justified.

The current study has relied most heavily on the two most recent works in each of these categories, Klingshirn's *Caesarius of Arles* and de Vogüé and Courreau's *Oeuvres monastiques*, with considerable reference to Morin's magisterial work. However, in scope and focus it significantly differs from both. Forming the basis for examining the transmission of the Caesarian texts, its starting points are the production of the *Regula virginum* and the monastery of St John in Arles. The thesis examines the spiritual and practical contexts for making such a foundation, and thereby shows the composition of the *Regula* in a new light. Caesarius' renown has to a large extent obscured the importance of the members of his family in the production and circulation of texts which are credited only to him. Of primary importance amongst them is Caesaria (I), Caesarius' sister. While admittedly listed by a modern historian among the 'founding mothers' of Gallic monasticism, Caesaria's role in both the foundation of the monastery of St John and the production of the *Regula virginum* has never been fully explored or understood.¹² This study demonstrates that Caesaria's own experience of living as a *Deo devota* informed and contributed to the writing of the rule.

The focus of this study is squarely on the writings for dedicated women by Caesarius of Arles and members of his immediate family. Other sources have been discussed because of their use of one or more of the Caesarian texts: several *vitae*, for instance, make reference to the *Regula virginum* itself or to the *vita Caesarii*. This study

¹² J.T. Schulenberg, 'Women's monastic communities, 500-1100: Patterns of expansion and decline' *Signs* 14:2 (1989) 261-92, at 261.

does not attempt to discuss the entire body of hagiography associated with early medieval religious women, since much of this has received a considerable amount of attention. However, the benefits and pitfalls of using hagiography as a source have in no sense been ignored. The aim of this approach is to bring into conjunction different types of sources. By placing the manuscript transmission of monastic rules against the practical contexts of their use, as adduced from *vitae*, charters, historical narratives, inscriptions, archaeological evidence and other sources, new insights can be found into the ways in which early medieval religious women negotiated their realities. In particular, a very clear sense is maintained throughout of the normative and prescriptive nature of much of the source material under discussion. There is often a considerable distance between what was directed in a rule and what appears actually to have occurred.

In terms of chronological span, this study opens with the foundation of Caesarius' monastery for women, St John, in Arles, with its accompanying rule, and closes with the use of Caesarius and his family's works by Benedict of Aniane, at the beginning of the ninth century. This was by no means the end of the citation and adaptation of the Caesarian canon. As we shall see, all but one of the extant manuscripts of the *Regula virginum* date from after the period covered by this thesis. Caesarius' works, in particular his sermons, continued to be used in both continental Europe and in England long after this period. The significance of taking Benedict of Aniane's reforms as an end-date is two-fold. Firstly, the fact that manuscripts of Caesarius' *Regula virginum* begin to survive from this period raises interesting questions about how the rule had been disseminated prior to that point. Secondly, the reforms of Benedict of Aniane were intended to be the point at which adherence to rules such as Caesarius' was replaced by the uniform adoption of the rule of Benedict of Nursia. The extent to which Benedict of Aniane succeeded in this aim has now become the subject of some debate, for which an examination of the experiences of dedicated women in the first part of the ninth century is of strong interest.

The geographical scope of the study is dictated by the immediate environment in which Caesarius made his foundation, the south of Gaul, and by the wider circulation of

his writings in the rest of Gaul and subsequently in Francia as a whole. This offers a unique perspective on female dedicated life, as this study looks from communities outwards, instead of from a normative regulatory court- or church council-centred perspective. As the ripples of Caesarius' influence spread outwards, it is only in the latter stages of our period, and of this study, that we can consider the effects of court-based (and hence northern) outlooks.

Maintaining a clear geographical boundary has also had the effect of bringing some issues into sharp relief. In particular, the focus only on Gaul has necessitated re-assessing the oft-cited split between the relatively numerous new foundations in the north of Gaul and their apparent lack in the south from the early seventh century onwards. However, such a tight focus also benefits from external illumination. To this end, some attention will be paid to the extensive correspondence between Boniface and religious women in Anglo-Saxon England and in his missionary outposts in Bavaria. While clearly coming from a separate spiritual background, the sentiments expressed by Boniface's correspondents and the circumstances in which they had to operate bear enough similarities to offer some instructive insights into early medieval female dedication in general. Sadly, the restrictions of space and time upon such a study have necessitated leaving to one side other fruitful areas for research. In particular, comparisons with dedicated life in Spain, and of Caesarius' *Regula* with that of Leander of Seville's Rule for his sister Florentina of the later sixth century would have been of particular interest for a study focused on southern Gaul.¹³

The political backdrop to the issues discussed in the thesis is one of shifting parameters. At the most basic level, the geographical boundaries of Gaul, and under its later appellation, Francia, were fluid. For much of the period, the territory was divided into separate kingdoms: in the sixth century, divisions were made between the sons of Clovis in 511 and again in 561 after the death of Clothar I. Yet at the same time, expansion was under way. In the seventh century, the Merovingian king Pippin II claimed the lands of Austrasia and Neustria to the north and east of Gaul, following his

¹³ Leander of Seville, *De institutione virginum et contemptu mundi* PL 72 869-893.

victory at the battle of Tertry in 687. However, the process of aligning these lands with those of the existing kingdoms of Gaul continued well into the eighth century, and the northern areas were the heartlands of the court even before the change of ruler to an Austrasian dynasty, the Pippinids or Carolingians, in 751. Royal interest in the northern lands meant that much of Gaul – Aquitaine, Provence and Burgundy – was ruled by effectively independent dynasties of dukes. At a more local level, bishops, based in the old Roman *civitates*, wielded a great deal of authority. Accusations of treason against bishops appear commonplace in the *Libri historiarum* of Gregory of Tours: their local power, and the friction this could cause with secular rulers, cannot help but be underlined by these stories. While much of the present study is deeply informed by the configurations of both secular and episcopal power, it must at the same time cut across such structures.

Historiography

There is already a vast literature on early medieval dedicated women, largely the result of the increasing interest in ‘women’s history’ since the 1960s. It is still true to say, as did Deborah Thom in 1992, that ‘[t]he history the historian writes is the history of her own times’.¹⁴ One of the earliest works on the subject, Lina Eckenstein’s *Women under Monasticism*, was written by one of the earliest female scholars at Cambridge, and published in 1896. Eckenstein based her work upon the principle that ‘a clearer insight into the social standards and habits of life prevalent in past ages will aid us in a better estimation of the relative importance of those factors of change we find around us to-day.’¹⁵ For Eckenstein, one of the most important lessons of the past was that ‘[t]he right to self-development and social responsibility which the woman of to-day so persistently asks for, is in many ways analogous to the right which the convent secured for

¹⁴ Thom, ‘A lop-sided view’, 28.

¹⁵ L. Eckenstein, *Woman under Monasticism: chapters on saint-love and convent life between AD 500 and AD 1500* (Cambridge, 1896), vii. For more on Eckenstein, and other women medievalists, see now J. Chance (ed.) *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (Wisconsin, 2005).

womankind a thousand years ago.’¹⁶ While such a view seems naïve for its implication of an early medieval golden age, it remains the case that Eckenstein demonstrated the interest and viability of the study of religious women within the academy.

In the 1960s, political activism led to new enthusiasms in research. Female historians in particular began to focus more on the history of women as a way of righting perceived historiographical sexism. By 1975, one historian had already been able to discern two stages in the evolution of writing about women: ‘compensatory’ history, in which ‘women worthies’ were dusted off and discussed, and stemming from that, ‘contribution’ history, in which the lives and actions of such history were shown to be as interesting and important as those of men.¹⁷ Lerner’s essay of the following year, ‘The Majority Finds its Past’, set forth a manifesto for the writing of women’s history. ‘The most advanced conceptual level by which women’s history can now be defined must include the development of feminist consciousness as an essential aspect of women’s historical past’.¹⁸ Women in the twentieth century fought to overcome oppression; they looked for examples of women doing the same in the past. Religious women were one of perhaps only two categories of women (the other being queens) who were seen as able to direct their own destinies. The first major modern study of early medieval women which encompassed both lay and ecclesiastical activities reflects these attitudes. Suzanne Wemple’s 1985 monograph *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* was in all senses a path-breaking study.¹⁹ Combining a vast range of sources to cover a subject huge in scope, Wemple demonstrated that early medieval women were a viable subject for research. Wemple’s concerns are clear: ‘throughout the Middle Ages women exercised power and applied their talents outside the domestic sphere... But by no means did women reach legal and social equality with men.’ She continues: ‘was there any discrimination against women in the dependent classes?’²⁰ The words ‘equality’ and ‘discrimination’ now appear anachronistic, but reflect the concerns of women writing

¹⁶ L. Eckenstein, *Woman under Monasticism*, viii.

¹⁷ G. Lerner, ‘Placing women in history: definitions and challenges’, in *eadem* (ed.) *The Majority Finds its Past: Placing Women in History* (Oxford, 1976) 145-159.

¹⁸ G. Lerner, ‘The Majority Finds its Past’, in *op.cit.*, 161.

¹⁹ S.F. Wemple *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1985)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

history at that time. However, Wemple's preoccupation with these issues led her, when it came to discussing religious women, to a focus on their roles, rights and abilities. Towards the end of her period, the voluminous amount of conciliar decrees and the pronouncements of reformers such as Benedict of Aniane lead her to a very pessimistic view: her first chapter on religious women is entitled 'The Waning Influence of Women in the Frankish Church'. In a similar vein, her concentration on the *vitae* of nuns in the early part of her period which used the standard tropes of rebellion against parental authority and courageous struggles to retain virginity leads to a chapter on 'The Heroic Age of Female Asceticism'. Wemple's narrative of achievement followed by women suffering oppression has not yet been superseded, and remains influential.

At around the same time as Wemple published her monograph, several articles appeared on similar themes, taking as their focus one or more aspects of dedicated life or, as readily, one of more of the queens and abbesses for whom evidence exists.²¹ Noteworthy as a further example of Wemple's discourse of gradual repression is Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg's study of enclosure, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience'.²² More recently, two monographs including considerable material on early medieval religious women have been published. The first, JoAnn McNamara's *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (1996) evidently devotes only a small proportion of its text to religious women pre-1000. Its focus on the ways in which religious women fitted into the wider institutional structures of the Church, and its attempts to provide a continuous narrative for these structures, make it a not entirely satisfactory study.²³ The second, Lisa Bitel's *Women in Early Medieval*

²¹ See in particular S.F. Wemple, 'Female spirituality and mysticism in Frankish monasteries: Radegund, Balthild and Aldegund', in J.A. Nicholls and L.T. Shanks (eds.) *Medieval Religious Women II: Peaceweavers* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1987) 39-53; J.A. McNamara, 'A legacy of miracles: hagiography and nunneries in Merovingian Gaul', in J. Kirschner and S. Wemple (eds.), *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John F. Mundy* (London, 1985) 36-52; J.T. Schulenberg, 'Female sanctity: public and private roles, 500-1100', in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA, 1988) 102-125.

²² J.T. Schulenberg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience', in J.A. Nichols and L.T. Shanks (eds.), *Medieval Religious Women. I: Distant Echoes* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1984) 51-86. A further study of early medieval women's monasticism, not mentioned elsewhere, is *eadem*, 'The Heroics of Virginity: brides of Christ and sacrificial mutilation' in M.B. Rose (ed.), *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Syracuse, NY, 1986) 29-72.

²³ J.A. McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).

Europe, 400-1100 (2002) again focuses only partially on dedicated women, and perhaps suffers from attempting to over-synthesise different types of source from multiple geographical and cultural contexts.²⁴

As politics changed, so did the writing of histories about women. Discussions of ‘powerful women’, and analyses of the oppression of women in the past, were too easily seen as irrelevant to the grand narratives of the middle ages. Replacing these ideas, ‘gender history’ – the history of the construction of gender roles, and the relationships between the sexes – has offered a means of synthesizing individual case studies and making it impossible to discuss the past of one gender without contextualizing it with the other.²⁵

At the same time, techniques borrowed from other disciplines have enriched the study of history in general, and in particular the study of gender in the past. Most notably, poststructuralist approaches in literary studies have encouraged the deconstruction of medieval texts, most fruitfully, perhaps, in the genre of hagiography. Turning away from over-reliance on written texts as a guide to the events and perceptions of the past, poststructuralist historians analysed historical documents as literary artefacts.²⁶ The awareness of the need to take apart the written text to fully grasp layers of meaning and image has revolutionized the study of medieval texts over the past three decades.²⁷ In terms of gender studies, historians could identify the construction of gender identities and roles. The *vitae* of early medieval women, of whom the majority had a significant degree

²⁴ L.M. Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100* (Cambridge, 2002).

²⁵ From a large and expanding bibliography on gender studies and gender histories, see the influential essay by Joan Scott, ‘Gender: a useful category of historical analysis’, first published in *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 1053-75, repr. most recently in *eadem* ed., *Feminism and History* (Oxford, 1996), 152-80. Two accessible surveys of the field are J.L. Nelson, ‘Family, gender and sexuality in the Middle Ages’ in M. Bentley (ed.) *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), 153-76, and most recently J.M.H. Smith, ‘Introduction’, in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds.) *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004), 1-19.

²⁶ N. Partner *Writing Gender History* (London, 2004), cap. 7, esp. 90-2.

²⁷ On these developments, see most usefully E.A. Clark, ‘The lady vanishes: dilemmas of a feminist historian after the “linguistic turn”’, *Church History* 67 (1998) 1-31.

of involvement in religious life, have proved a fruitful area of research.²⁸ The publication in 1992 of a collection of Frankish women's *vitae* in translation – *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* – typifies the fascination of this material, and has made it accessible to a far wider readership.²⁹

However, the study of both early medieval *regulae* and early medieval women has suffered from one major deficiency: an over-reliance on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century printed editions of texts, and a lack of engagement with the manuscripts that transmit the texts. Such editions succeeded in their aim of ironing out all the discrepancies between different recensions, and arriving at an 'authoritative' version, but it has become increasingly apparent that such editions obscure, for instance, variations between manuscripts from different geographical, chronological and gendered backgrounds, all of which may vitally enhance understanding of their contents and the way in which they were perceived at the time. Over the last two decades, several works have begun to reject the comfortable tyranny of the printed edition, in favour of returning to the evidence of the manuscripts themselves. This has been especially the case among discussions of medieval chronicles and annals. In Anglo-Saxon studies, the importance of the different manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is now reflected by a seventeen-volume edition of its constituent manuscripts.³⁰ Frankish histories are represented by Rosamond McKitterick's work on the Royal Frankish Annals.³¹ In other spheres, Martin Heinzelmann and Joseph-Claude Poulin's study on the *Vita Genovefae* has set new standards for the analysis of the manuscripts of a saint's life.³² This type of study has not yet made a sizeable impression upon monastic studies, and the present study demonstrates how valuable such an approach may be.

²⁸ J.T. Schulenburg, 'Sexism and the celestial gynaeceum – from 500 to 1200', *Journal of Medieval History* 4 (1978) 117-133. For a useful example of such a study of late antique women, see K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass: 1996).

²⁹ J.A. McNamara and J.E. Halborg with E.G. Whatley, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Duke: Durham and London, 1992).

³⁰ D. Dumville and S. Keynes (general eds.) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* (Cambridge, 1983-).

³¹ R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004).

³² M. Heinzelmann and J.-C. Poulin, *Les vies anciennes de sainte Geneviève de Paris* (Paris, 1986).

The other strand of historiography upon which this study draws is that of monastic rules. For most twentieth-century scholars, the study of monastic rules has taken the form of the attempted reconstruction of an unbroken chain of texts, one writer drawing inspiration and language from the previous, in a genealogical table of dissemination.³³ This has been supported by scholarly journals dedicated to each religious order and its rule: the *Revue Bénédictine* is but the most obvious example. At times the main (not to say only) subject of real debate has been the place of the rule of Benedict of Nursia in this extended family: was it, too, part of this chain, or a new, fresh, perspective of dedicated life, an injection of new blood which contrasted with what was all too often seen as the sprawling mess of minor, almost indistinguishable rules which proliferated before the advent of Benedictine supremacy?

The study of the monastic rules of the early middle ages has also suffered, however, from the converse tendency: to see them as little more than adjustments, elaborations, complications, of the earliest rules of the desert fathers, which in turn are cast as monasticism at its 'purest'. Sixth- and seventh-century monastic rules were, in a sense, 'polluted' by their associations with particular individuals or communities. For previous generations of scholars, then, constructing long chains of texts, linked by their intellectual content, has been a way of lifting the rules from the morass of practical, day to day usage that simultaneously drew away from the intentions of the earliest monks and also formed the context for eighth- and ninth-century calls for reform.

Of course, this historiographical process was made easier by being largely untouched by questions of gender. To be sure, some of the monastic rules were written for women, those of Caesarius, Aurelian, Ferreolus and Donatus included. But the women for whom they were written were often themselves excluded from the narrative. For indeed, why consider female religious communities in the context of their normative texts, since what had women to do with the writing of them? As Janet Nelson has pointed

³³ For some examples of this approach, see C. Lambot, 'La règle de S. Augustin et S. Césaire' *RBen* 41 (1929) 333-341, A. de Vogüé, 'La Règle de Césaire d'Arles pour les moines: un résumé de sa Règle pour les moniales' *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité* 47 (1971) 369-406.

out, the history of monasticism has been least susceptible to revisionist re-working because of the seductive power of the accounts of founders and institution-builders³⁴.

In their efforts to describe the lineage of medieval *regulae*, many historians have overlooked a rich seam of evidence for the guidance of religious women that does not conform to categorizations of normative texts. One element of this is the guidance offered by letters, to and from individuals and groups of dedicated women. This was not a new feature of religious life in the period covered by this thesis: letters had long been the means by which holy men (of which Jerome is perhaps the best-known example) directed the ascetic spirituality of their followers.³⁵ In fifth-century Gaul, writers such as Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricius of Limoges advised their friends and acquaintances on appropriate ways of living a life centred on religion.³⁶ Of fundamental importance to this study is *Vereor*, Caesarius' letter to his sister Caesaria. The letter, composed prior to the *Regula virginum* and the foundation of the monastery of St John, offers Caesaria guidance on how best to live a dedicated life, both practically and spiritually. A second letter, which complements Caesarius' *Regula* rather than being such a free-standing text, is Caesaria II's letter to Radegund at her monastery of Holy Cross in Poitiers. This letter glosses the *Regula virginum*, which Caesaria had also sent to Radegund, and pulls to the surface the most important points of the ethos of Caesarius' rule.

The second element of this evidence is hagiography. Staying in Poitiers, the second of Radegund's two *vitae* is a case in point. Written following a revolt of the community after Radegund's death, the nun Baudonivia's *vita Radegundis* can be read as a rallying-cry to her sisters to return to the days of Radegund's own adherence to the *Rule* of Caesarius; the text is laced with references to the *Rule*.³⁷ One of the central concerns of

³⁴ J. Nelson, 'Medieval Monasticism' in P. Linehan and J.L. Nelson (eds.) *The Medieval World* (London, 2001) 576-604, at 583.

³⁵ For Jerome's letters, see I. Hilberg (ed.), *CSEL* 54-6 (Vienna, Leipzig, 1910-18). C. Rapp, "'For next to God, you are my salvation': Reflections on the rise of the holy man in Late Antiquity", J. Howard-Johnston and P.A. Hayward (eds.) *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1991) 63-81.

³⁶ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Letters*, tr. W.B. Anderson, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1965). Ruricius of Limoges, *Epistolae*. MGH AA 8. Eng. trans. R.W. Mathisen *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends* (Liverpool, 1999).

³⁷ For more on this text see Chapter 2, 91ff.

this thesis is to make use of these texts alongside *regulae*. It does not seem a coincidence that it is in these apparently less authoritative styles of composition that women's voices are heard directly.

The thesis is arranged in chronological order. The first chapter lays the groundwork. It puts novel emphasis on the importance of Caesarius' sister Caesaria, the first abbess of the monastery, as a collaborator in the composition of the works, thus opening one of the major themes of the thesis, that of the active role religious women had in the direction and control of their own lives. Taking a wider view, the chapter compares the foundation of St John with other monastic and religious institutions in sixth-century Gaul. The second chapter progresses from the first, both thematically and chronologically. It explores the earliest moves towards circulating Caesarius' texts to a wider audience. This was achieved in two directions. Caesarius himself produced a *Rule for Monks* which was drawn explicitly, and, in places, verbatim, from his *Rule for Virgins*. This introduces the theme of the malleability of the 'gender' of texts which will recur throughout the thesis. Secondly, copies of the *Rule for Virgins* were also obtained by other monastic founders. Of particular importance is the best-documented case of circulation: the dispatch of the *Regula* by the second abbess Caesaria to the ex-queen Radegund, who by c.561 AD had settled in her own foundation of Holy Cross, in Poitiers. The letter which Caesaria wrote to accompany the rule is an extremely rare survival of an early medieval woman's own insight into her spirituality. The third chapter sets out the results of the most detailed study of the transmission of Caesarian manuscripts yet to have been made, demonstrating the existence of a 'booklet' of shorter texts, including *Vereor*, which were circulated independently from the rule. The fourth chapter moves on to consider the eighth century, traditionally perceived to be something of a 'dark age' for female religious life, and suggests the contexts in which this 'booklet' must have circulated. Forming the backdrop to the study of individual houses is an examination of (unsuccessful) moves toward the imposition of the Benedictine rule. The fifth and final chapter unites all of the strands of the thesis in an examination of the use of the Caesarian texts in the Carolingian reform movements. The main focus of this part of the thesis, however, is on the use of the two major texts under consideration, the *Regula*

virginum and *Vereor*, in the collections of monastic rules put together by Benedict of Aniane; the point that the written text and the ideology that inspired it were often two distinct entities in the early middle ages is reiterated.

CHAPTER 1

Caesarius of Arles: Texts and Context

The writings of Caesarius of Arles (502-542) possess a unique interest for the historian of early medieval religious life. The *Regula virginum* is justly well known as the first western rule to be specifically written for women; it is also recognised as the first rule to insist on lifelong unbroken claustration.¹ Often studied in isolation, it also forms part of one of the richest seams of evidence available for the study of early medieval religious women. As the foregoing Introduction has outlined, the documentary evidence extant from Caesarian Arles includes the rule itself; *Vereor*, Caesarius' letter to his sister Caesaria, the first abbess, and the nuns; the letter *O Profundum* from Caesarius' nephew Teridius to the second abbess Caesaria; Caesaria II's own writings, which are a rare example of an early medieval woman's own interpretation of the spiritual beliefs underpinning a life dedicated to God; a letter from pope Hormisdas, guaranteeing the monastery's independence after Caesarius' death; and Caesarius' testament, almost entirely concerned with the well-being of the monastery of St John.² The last two documents are indicative of the reason that so much material has survived. Caesarius was concerned about his monastery's future; indeed, after his death in 542, his successor Aurelian founded his own monasteries for men and women, which appear to have superseded St John in patronage and royal favour.³ In turn, Caesarius' niece Caesaria II played her own part in the preservation of the memory and spiritual authority of

¹ The standard edition of the *Regula virginum* [RV] remains G. Morin (ed.) *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia* II (Maredsous, 1942) 100-127. For further discussion of the significance of the rule, see also A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau (eds.) *Césaire d'Arles. Oeuvres monastiques. I, Oeuvres pour les moniales* SC 345 (Paris, 1988) 35-237. For Caesarius in general, see W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles. The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Arles* (Cambridge, 1994). On claustration, see 31ff for the possibility that the Jura monasteries also had permanent enclosure at this time.

² Morin II, 125-7 (Hormisdas); 134-144 (*Vereor*); 144-148 (*O Profundum*); 283-9 (Testament). For the *Dicta Caesariae*, see de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales* 440-499.

³ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 262-4; *idem*, 'Caesarius' monastery for women in Arles and the composition and function of the *Vita Caesarii* *Revue Bénédictine* 100 (1990) 441-81; C. Leyser *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000) 89-90.

Caesarius by commissioning his *vita*.⁴ Documentary evidence was an essential tool, both in ensuring the practical future of the monastery, and as a reminder of Caesarius' protection and leadership from beyond the grave. Yet outwith the politics of sixth-century Arles, later generations also found much of use in Caesarius' sermons and rules. Elements of the latter were reused in the rules of Aurelian himself, Ferreolus of Uzès, and Donatus of Besançon.⁵ At the beginning of the ninth century, as the latter part of this study will draw out, Benedict of Aniane included several of the Caesarian monastic texts in his *Codex* and *Concordia regularum*;⁶ in the tenth century, the nuns of Niedermünster in Regensburg used the Caesarian and Benedictine rules in parallel.⁷

In the centuries after Caesarius' death, two texts, the *Regula virginum* itself and the letter *Vereor*, found particular popularity, and this chapter will focus on their production.⁸ However, before the works can be considered meaningfully, their contexts, the factors which informed and shaped them, bear examination. Building on previous work which has focused either on Caesarius' episcopal activities or on the nuns of St John as part of a wider tradition of female monastic life, this study will show both Caesarius and the community of St John in a fresh light. It emphasizes both the active role played by the nuns and their abbesses, particularly the shadowy figure of Caesaria, Caesarius' sister, in constructing their own patterns of dedication, and sets this self-direction against the wider aims and objectives of Caesarius in making the foundation. How did the monastery of St John, the intentions of Caesarius, or the experiences of the nuns, compare with the broader religious world of the sixth century? The contexts of this world will be considered in turn.

⁴ Cyprianus of Toulon *et al.*, *Vita Caesarii*. [V.Caes] Ed. G. Morin *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia* II, 293-349. Eng. trans. W.E. Klingshirn (ed.) *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, 1994) pp. 9-65. See also W.E. Klingshirn 'Caesarius' monastery for women'.

⁵ *Regulae Aureliani*: PL 68: 385-98 (monks), 399-406 (nuns); *Regula Ferreoli*: PL 66, 959-976; *Regula Donati*: PL 87: 273-298.

⁶ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999).

⁷ Bamberg ms. Lit. 142, ff. 62r – 83v. For further discussion see de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales* 129-134, and Chapter 3, below.

⁸ A second Caesarian letter for nuns, *Coegisti me*, was demonstrated in the 1970s to be a seventh century forgery. See R. Étaix, 'Trois notes sur saint Césaire d'Arles', in *Corona Gratiarum: Miscellanea patristica, historica et liturgica Eligio Dekkers O.S.B. XII lustra complenti oblata* I (Bruges, 1975) 211-227. The continuing attribution of work to Caesarius has its own interest, and this letter will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

Historians have taken a variety of approaches to religious dedication in the sixth century.⁹ The study of dedicated women in the earliest stages of the phenomenon in Gaul has often followed the path of broad-brush statistical analysis. This type of methodology is not without its problems. Two noteworthy examples are Jean-Marie Guillaume's 1980 study of women's abbeys to the end of the seventh century, and Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg's essay on female communities from 500-1100, which was first published in 1989.¹⁰ These proceed by counting up foundations mentioned in various sources and plotting the resulting figures against those of later centuries, or by region. They use the same sources of information, Dom Cottineau's *Répertoire topobibliographique des abbayes et prieurés*, and de Moreau's *Histoire de l'Eglise en Belgique*,¹¹ and indeed emerge with roughly the same results: Guillaume has thirty-two women's houses in existence by 590, and Schulenburg, counting actual acts of foundation, twenty-seven by 599. However, as Guillaume underlines, this type of study is valuable only if its parameters and criteria for inclusion are clearly set out. For him, a particular group of people living a dedicated life together can only be described as a monastery, and therefore be included in the count, if it adheres to three criteria: a written rule, an abbess and the existence of cloister or enclosure. As Guillaume points out, very few female communities met these standards in the sixth century.¹² The weakness of an entirely statistical approach is therefore apparent, in that a way of life whose manifestations varied enormously can never be assessed by one rigid set of criteria. Named individuals or communities which did not conform to ecclesiastical norms or later historiographical standards are bound to be passed over.

⁹ In addition to the articles and monographs discussed in the Introduction, a general survey of the period for both men and women is F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich: Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna, 1965).

¹⁰ J-M. Guillaume, 'Les abbayes de femmes en pays franc, des origines à la fin du VIIe siècle' in M. Parisse (ed.) *Remiremont: l'abbaye et la ville* (Nancy, 1980), 29-46; J.T. Schulenburg, 'Women's monastic communities, 500-1100: Patterns of expansion and decline' *Signs* 14:2 (1989) 261-92.

¹¹ Dom L. Cottineau *Répertoire topobibliographique des abbayes et prieurés* 2 vols. (Mâcon, 1935-9); E. de Moreau *Histoire de l'Eglise en Belgique* (Brussels, 1948).

¹² Guillaume, 'Les abbayes de femmes', 32.

These problems of interpretation are compounded in Schulenburg's study, which attempts to compare foundations of female and male houses in fifty-year tranches. Between 500 and 549, for instance, she finds that there were eight foundations for women against one hundred for men, with the seemingly straightforward conclusion that, for various reasons, female religious life was less popular, or was perceived to be of lesser benefit to society than was that of men. Again, however, different styles of dedicated life are being compared. As will be discussed below, women tended to live less formal and certainly less visible lives of dedication to God; fewer formal foundations should not be taken to mean a lack of enthusiasm for religious life on the part of either the women concerned or their families and communities.

The inevitable consequence of the lack of visibility of these women within their own society is a lack of evidence for their lives. Where such evidence does exist, it is tempting either to generalise from this too far, or to treat women as such individual cases that no insights can be gained. With these caveats in mind, then, how can we outline the monastic milieu in which Caesarius made his foundation of St John? Firstly, some general remarks concerning female religious life in the sixth century can be made. Secondly, the lives and mental world of the nuns in Arles can be compared with those of their contemporaries. In particular, an extended case study of the dedicated life of Fuscina, sister of Avitus, bishop of Vienne, will throw considerable light on the activities of Caesarius, Caesaria and the foundation of St John. A comparison of two relatively well-documented individuals will extend the range of conclusions that can be drawn from their careers.

An assessment of the religious climate in sixth-century Gaul will form the basis for an extended consideration of the production of Caesarius' works for dedicated women, the letter *Vereor* and the *Regula virginum*. In particular, reading the texts through the prisms of both literary borrowing and practical agency and experience will permit fresh understanding to be gained of the vital role of the nuns themselves in the creation of normative works produced for them.

Sixth century female monasticism and its antecedents in Gaul

In fact, of course, the general ‘monastic milieu’ of religious women in the sixth century was not, according to Guillaume’s definition, particularly monastic. Alongside a handful of other foundations about which little is known, two foundations, corresponding with Guillaume’s triple criteria of cloister, rule and abbess, certainly existed prior to the foundation of St John.¹³ In Marseille, St Sauveur was founded by John Cassian (360-435), alongside the house of St Victor for monks, and it was here that Caesaria of Arles came with her companions after the destruction of the first monastery in the Alysamps.¹⁴ In the Jura, Romanus and Lupicinus founded the monastery of La Balme (*Balma*) for their unnamed sister probably during the 440s, which was built a short distance from their house for monks at Condat.¹⁵ This foundation has particular interest for the study of Caesarius’ monastic guidelines, as Adalbert de Vogüé has suggested the possibility that Caesarius modelled aspects of the *Regula virginum* on the description of La Balme in the *Vitae patrum Jurensium*.¹⁶ In particular, a passage discussing the enclosure of the *Balma* nuns bears striking similarities to the *Regula*: ‘So severe was the strictness observed in that monastery at this time that none of the virgins who had entered it for the purpose of renouncing the world were seen again outside its doors unless they were being carried on their final journey to the cemetery.’¹⁷ In Caesarius’ terms, a nun ‘must never, up to the time of her death, go out of the monastery’.¹⁸ De Vogüé’s assessment of the direction of the influence between the two foundations is probably correct, although the dating of the two works may leave the question rather more open than he allows. Although the final

¹³ One example of such shadowy foundations is that of St Michel in Lyon, apparently founded by Caretena, the wife of Chilperic II of Burgundy, in around 500. See Beaunier-Besse, vol. X, 91.

¹⁴ *V. Caes* I.35. For speculation on whether in fact this was Cassian’s original community, see Leyser, *Authority*, 42 n.34.

¹⁵ *Vitae patrum Jurensium*. Ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 3 (1896) 135-6, 143, 153; ed. and trans. F. Martine, *Vie des Pères du Jura*, SC 142 (Paris, 1968). See also the English translation by T. Vivian, K. Vivian and J. Burton Russell, *The Lives of the Jura Fathers* (Kalamazoo, 1999).

¹⁶ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales* 79-81.

¹⁷ *Vita Romani* 26; trans. Vivian *et al.*, 114. For further discussion of Caesarius’ requirement for enclosure, see D. Hochstetler, ‘The meaning of monastic cloister for women according to Caesarius of Arles’ in T.F.X. Noble and J.J. Contreni eds. *Religion, Culture and Society in the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1987), 27-40.

¹⁸ RV 2. Eng tr. M.C. McCarthy *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles* (Washington DC, 1960) 171.

text of the *Regula virginum* was composed in stages between 512 and 534, the chapter dealing with enclosure was in the first recension; indeed, it is among the very first stipulations. This anticipates the probable date of composition of the *Vitae patrum Jurensium*, which has been put at c.520.¹⁹ Caesarius could have known of the Jura monastery from other, informal, sources: the *Vitae patrum Jurensium* itself records contact with the abbot of Lérins around 515, and it seems probable that Caesarius had kept in touch with his old monastery.²⁰ It is therefore just conceivable that the anonymous author of the *Vitae patrum Jurensium* might have chosen to describe longstanding practices at La Balme in the language of the Arles rule, rather than the admittedly more likely possibility that Caesarius had based his requirement for permanent enclosure on a monastic practice in the Jura, or even that both founders had come to the same decision independently of each other. This situation contrasts with Guillaume's assessment of foundations which were made later in the sixth century. None of these three foundations, Arles, Marseille and La Balme, fit into the schema he proposes for later sixth-century houses. Guillaume has noted three main characteristics. Firstly, and of particular interest when considering Caesarius in this regard, foundations tended to be made by an individual woman or one or more members of her family. Bishops were not the initiators of the earliest monasteries; they responded to demand. Secondly, such houses were urban; again, there is a notable exception, in this case La Balme. Lastly, houses for women were almost always founded in close proximity to those of men.²¹ While admittedly a small sample, these earlier monastic establishments had a somewhat different character.

It is perhaps a testimony to the scanty existence of monastic foundations for women that the ties between them are so easy to draw out. However, in searching for the

¹⁹ Martine, *Vie des Pères de Jura*, 53-7.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 433. See also A. de Vogüé (ed. and trans.) *Les Règles des Saints Pères* 2 vols., SC 297-8 (Paris, 1982). For further comments on the impact of the monastery on Lérins, see C. Leyser, *Authority, passim*.

²¹ Guillaume, 'Les abbayes de femmes', 34. Caesarius' foundations are used as an example of the last point, although de Vogüé's analysis of his *Rules* had established the primacy of the *Rule for Virgins*: see A. de Vogüé, 'La Règle de Césaire d'Arles pour les moines: un résumé de sa Règle pour les moniales' *Revue d'Histoire de la Spiritualité* (1971) 369-406. Caesarius had been abbot of a male monastery in Arles before making the foundation of St John, but they were some distance apart and there are no references in the *Rule* or the *Vita Caesarii* to contact between them. It is unclear for which (or indeed, if any) community Caesarius wrote his *Rule for Monks*.

contemporary forms of dedicated life within which Caesarius made his foundation, non-coenobitic lifestyles appear much better documented. There are more references to individuals or small groups of women living dedicated lives outside of formal foundations, even if they are often anonymous.²² René Metz has inventoried those existing in the fourth century ('un sujet aussi délicat et difficile'), noting that the earliest mention of such *Deo devotae* in Gaul is not found until the last third of the fourth century, while their existence is recognised by the third century in north Africa, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt.²³ As Metz underlines, however, it is probable that such women had lived among the large Christian communities of Lyon or Vienne.²⁴ The first attestation takes the form of a constitution of the emperors Valentinian and Valens of 368 or 370, exempting those *in virginitate perpetua viventes* (living in perpetual virginity) from paying the tax of *capitatio plebeia*.²⁵ In 374, the council of Valence concerned itself with those virgins who later married; cases of such women were evidently numerous enough, and had been found for a sufficient length of time, for this to have become an issue for the council.²⁶ Its opening phrase, *De puellis... quae se Deo voverunt, si ad terrenas nuptias sponte transierint...* ('concerning girls who vow themselves to God, who voluntarily pass on to earthly marriage'), would become the formula to be used by councils for centuries to come.²⁷ Also well-used was a decretal of either pope Damasus (366-384) or Siricius (384-399). Again, it refers to virgins who have failed in their ideal; this time, it distinguishes those who had been veiled and consecrated from those who had merely made a vow, or *propositum*.²⁸ As a response to the enquiries of Gallic bishops on the subject, it reflects the situation in Gaul.

²² It is difficult to provide a complete list of such women for a number of reasons: contemporary descriptions are often unclear; later accounts may seek to describe women as 'monastic' when they did not live in such a community; secondary sources often overlook brief references to dedicated lives beyond the community. A fairly detailed description of a woman living a dedicated life at home, not otherwise touched on by this study, is Gregory of Tours' account of Monegund (d. 570), in his *De vita Patrum*: MGH SSRM I:2, 736-741.

²³ R. Metz, 'Les vierges chrétiennes en Gaule au IV^e siècle', *Saint Martin et son Temps. Studia Anselmiana* 46 (Rome, 1961) 109-132; quotation from 113.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 113-4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁷ See also Arles II (442 x 506), can. LII; Macon (583), can. XII.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 117-9.

Dedicated virgins also appear in non-normative writings, particularly those of Sulpicius Severus (c.363-402). Sulpicius, describing Martin of Tours' funeral to his mother-in-law, noted the presence of a *chorus virginum* among the monks;²⁹ he also accompanied the bishop on a pastoral visit to a virgin who refused to see him because he was a man.³⁰ Sulpicius was approving; other virgins spent too much time associating with each other and with monks and clerics.³¹ Clearly this woman was not an isolated phenomenon. The most well-known writing of Sulpicius, the *Vita Martini*, also includes a mention of a dedicated virgin. In perhaps the earliest reference to a consecration, a man named Magnus Arborius brought his daughter to be consecrated by Martin after the bishop had miraculously cured her of an illness.³²

Sulpicius' writings refer to the region around Tours, but dedicated virgins were also found in other parts of Gaul. In Rouen, bishop Victricius noted the *devotarum inlibatarumque virginum chorus* ('the chorus of devoted and unimpaired virgins',³³) who formed part of the crowd awaiting the entry of relics;³⁴ Victricius also wrote to pope Innocent I for advice on various matters, one of which being the subject of *virgines lapsae*, and received a detailed reply, dated February 15, 404, which found its way into at least one later church councils.³⁵

Archaeological evidence also suggests contexts for imagining the earliest forms of dedicated life. In his work on Gallo-Roman villas, John Percival makes the important point that what such evidence suggests is 'a pattern of experiment and compromise' in religious life, and that few of those attempting to dedicate their lives to God would have had much idea of what style of physical surroundings might be suitable for an ascetic life.³⁶ In this way, existing or partially ruined Roman villas could metamorphose into

²⁹ Epistula 3a, ed. C. Halm *Sulpicii Severi libri qui supersunt* CSEL I (Vienna, 1866) 150.

³⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues* II, 12, ed. Halm, CSEL I, 194.

³¹ Metz, 'Les vierges chrétiennes', 121-2.

³² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini* ed. Halm, CSEL I, 128.

³³ It seems probable that '*devotarum... virginum*' also refers to the status of the virgins as dedicated to God, as in the common description *Deo devota*.

³⁴ Victricius of Rouen, *De laude sanctorum* 3, ed. R. Demeulenaere, *CCSL* 64, 53-93, at 73.

³⁵ *PL* 20: 469-481. It was subsequently used by the Council of Tours (567), can. XX.

³⁶ J. Percival, 'Villas and Monasteries in Late Roman Gaul', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48:1 (1997) 1-21, at 4.

religious communities. It may be possible to identify a similar pattern in the Iberian peninsula, where some rural villas appear to have undergone a transformation into cultic sites complete with small cemeteries.³⁷ As Percival himself admits, the archaeological evidence for this theory is open to question, but it complements what is known or supposed of situations in which women transformed their family homes into religious retreats, the model of so-called ‘house monasticism’.

Physical evidence such as this can serve to expand the picture drawn of the manifold forms of sixth century dedicated life by the normative evidence of church councils. While fifth-century Gallic synods had largely confined their interest in religious women to reiterating the penalties for unchaste dedicated virgins, Caesarius’ involvement in monastic life ensured a broader view would be taken in his episcopate. While clearly more interested in monastic communities, probably as a result of his background as a monk on Lérins, Caesarius’ own legislation continues to suggest a broad acceptance of the different forms that dedicated life might take. At the council of Agde in 506, at which he presided, several canons deal with religious life. Crucially, they speak to Caesarius’ conception of a Christian society. This, rather than precise lifestyles, was Caesarius’ overarching concern. The requirement that nuns (*sanctimoniales*) should not be veiled until the age of forty, *quamlibet vita earum et mores probasti sint* (‘when their lives and morals shall have been proved’), echoes the prohibition on the ordination of priests and bishops before the age of thirty; as the canon puts it, *id est, antequam ad viri perfecti aetatem veniant* (‘that is, before the men have come to the perfect age’).³⁸ Caesarius was creating a group of religious ‘professionals’ whose credentials would be unimpeachable. The canon concerning *sanctimoniales* does not specify the living arrangements of such women; it was clearly intended to apply to all, whether living communally or individually. This very uncertainty underlines the futility of attempting to categorise religious women by the type of institution to which they belonged. Comparisons with canons dealing with male communities reveal a similarly diffuse range of dedicated

³⁷ A.C. Arnau ‘Interpreting the Transformation of Late Roman Villas’, in N. Christie (ed.) *Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2004) 67-102, at 83-5.

³⁸ Council of Agde (506), can. XVII (priests); can. XIX (nuns). C. de Clercq (ed.) *Concilia Galliae A.314 – A.506*. CCSL 148 (Turnhout, 1963) 200-2.

lifestyles. Canon XXVII, which prohibits the unlicensed movement of monks between communities (*monasteria*), hints at well-defined institutions with authority clearly held by the abbot. Its intention, echoed for instance by a synod held at Orléans in 511, was to prevent monks leaving communities in order to establish themselves as hermits in solitary cells.³⁹ In the same vein, canon LVIII prohibits the foundation of new cells (*cellulas*) or small monasteries (*congregatiunculas monachorum*) without episcopal permission.⁴⁰ In the light of this, another canon, dealing with *monasteria puellarum*, is hard to interpret.⁴¹ Its requirement, that such *monasteria* should be some distance away from male houses, may similarly suggest institutions which were clearly defined as communal houses for dedicated women. Did the requirement also apply to women who lived a dedicated life alone or in much smaller, informal groups? Given that the reason put forward, ‘because of the cunning of Satan or because of the evil report of men’, again suggests Caesarius’ desire to ensure the separation and purity of his religious personnel, one might consider that women living a more informal life would be more likely to be the subject of gossip than their peers who resided in clearly separate communities. It would appear that in this instance, the precise living arrangements of the women concerned mattered less than the recognition of their probity by the rest of Caesarius’ nascent Christian society.

Parallel forms of dedication: Fuscina of Vienne

Caesarius’ foundation for women in Arles, and its associated texts, can therefore be placed in a broad context of physical and normative evidence for different means of living a dedicated life at this time. Yet one further comparison remains to be explored. At the same time as the relationship between Caesarius and Caesaria was developing into that of bishop and abbess, another set of siblings, Avitus, bishop of Vienne and his sister Fuscina, were engaged in a similar spiritual dialogue.⁴² Avitus’ episcopate (c.494 –

³⁹ Synod of Orléans (511), can. XXII. C. de Clercq (ed.) *Concilia Galliae A.511 – A.695. CCSL 148A* (Turnhout, 1963) 11.

⁴⁰ Agde (506), can. LVIII. *Concilia Galliae A.314 – A.506*, 226.

⁴¹ Agde (506), can. XXVIII. *Concilia Galliae A.314 – A.506*, 205.

⁴² On Avitus, see D. Shanzer and I. Wood (eds.) *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool, 2002), G.W. Shea *The Poems of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus* (Tempe, AZ, 1997), D.R. Shanzer, ‘Review of

c.518) overlapped with that of Caesarius; one letter from Avitus survives, requesting that Caesarius look after bishop Maximianus of Trier while the latter consulted eye-doctors in Arles.⁴³ Tension relating to which of the two sees held primacy in southern Gaul perhaps meant that relations between the two men could never be cordial; the question was settled in Arles' favour when Pope Symmachus reconfirmed Caesarius' metropolitan rights and sent him the pallium as papal vicar of Gaul in 514.⁴⁴ Set against this context, the parallels between the two bishops in terms of their family relationships and the milieu of family piety in which they lived are even more striking. In literary terms, an examination of Avitus' writing for Fuscina is therefore of great interest as an indicator of the similarities and differences between the monastic environment which the Caesarii created and the ways in which Avitus conceived of his sister's spiritual life.

Like Caesaria, Avitus' sister Fuscina was a dedicated virgin; however, unlike her southern contemporary, a relatively large amount of information on Fuscina's early life and the process by which she became a *Deo devota* can be deduced. This is due to the existence of Avitus' poem in praise of Fuscina, described in a prefatory letter as *versus de consolatoria castitatis laude* and by later manuscripts under the catch-all heading of *De virginitate*.⁴⁵ The subject matter of the poem, literally 'verses about the praise of virginity intended to console' may suggest that Fuscina had been experiencing doubts about the

G.W. Shea, *The Poems of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus* *The Classical Review* 49:2 (1999) 404-6. For general insights into the aristocracy in Gaul in this period, see K.F. Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (Darmstadt, 1970); I. Wood 'Family and Friendship in the West', A. Cameron *et al* (eds.) *Cambridge Ancient History XIV* (Cambridge, 2000) 416-436; R.W. Mathisen, 'Epistolography, Literary Circles and Family Ties in Late Roman Gaul' *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 111 (1981) 95-109; I. Wood, 'Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul' in R. McKitterick (ed.) *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990) 63-82; *idem*, 'Letters and Letter-Collections from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: the Prose Works of Avitus of Vienne', in M.A. Mayer (ed.) *The Culture of Christendom* (London, 1993) 29-43. Useful comparative insights can be gained from the letters and preoccupations of Sidonius Apollinaris (c.431-89), to whom Avitus was related, and Ruricius of Limoges (b. c. 430): on Sidonius, *Letters*, tr. W.B. Anderson, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1965); see also J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome AD 407-485* (Oxford, 1994), and its wide bibliography; and on Sidonius' relationship to the family of Avitus, see Mathisen, 'Epistolography', 100. Ruricius' letters are in MGH SS VIII, 299-350, and now in an excellent translation: R.W. Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends* (Liverpool, 1999).

⁴³ Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus*, 357-9.

⁴⁴ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 129-32.

⁴⁵ Avitus of Vienne, *Consolatoria de castitatis laude*; R. Peiper (ed.) MGH AA 7 275-294 [hereafter: CCL]. Eng. trans. G.W. Shea *The Poems of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus* (Tempe, AZ, 1997) pp. 133-49. For discussion of the nature of the work, see Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus*, 262.

way of life she had chosen, or may simply draw upon earlier models of writing for dedicated virgins.⁴⁶ To encourage her, Avitus lists firstly the religious achievements of the women of their family, and secondly uses scriptural *exempla* to demonstrate the courage and steadfastness of earlier virgins. Drawing on the rhetoric of virginity presented to earlier dedicated women by writers such as Jerome, the poem also presents the disadvantages of marriage, particularly in terms of the dangers of childbirth.⁴⁷

Avitus' poem is a celebration of family piety; as Ian Wood points out, virginity, not fecundity, was now the saviour of the Roman family.⁴⁸ Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood have underlined the fact that this work provides clear evidence of late Roman interest in family piety, and that *Adelsheilige* were far from being a new Germanic preoccupation.⁴⁹ Caesarius' general tone in his writings for nuns offers some contrast here, as he is less inclined to suggest previous women as patterns of holiness, but to offer direction for the future. As a result of Avitus' interest in traditions of holiness, however, the nature of Fuscina's home life can be surmised.⁵⁰ He reminds Fuscina that their mother, Audentia, promised to live 'a life of self-denial' after Fuscina's birth.⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, their father, Hesychius, bishop of Vienne, seems to have played little part in the children's upbringing or religious formation as he is not mentioned at this point in the poem.⁵² It seems likely that Hesychius and Audentia were living apart by this stage. It is Audentia's parents who

⁴⁶ For this translation, Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus*, 262.

⁴⁷ CCL vv. 156-95. From a vast literature on the subject of virginity in the late antique Church, such traditions are most easily explored in the seminal work of Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1998). See also A. Cameron, 'Virginity as Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Early Christianity' in *eadem* (ed.) *History as Text: the Writing of Ancient History*, 181-206 (London, 1989), and J. Bugge *Virginitas: an Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal* (The Hague, 1975).

⁴⁸ I. Wood 'Family and Friendship in the West', 424.

⁴⁹ Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus*, 4; see also Shanzer, 'Review of G.W. Shea', 405.

⁵⁰ For late antique families, see G. Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: the Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition* (London, 2000).

⁵¹ CCL vv. 21-2. English translations are taken from Shea, *The Poems of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus*, 134-49. For Avitus, Fuscina and their family, see J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire [PLRE] II* (Cambridge, 1980), supplemented by R.W. Mathisen, 'PLRE II: Suggested Addenda and Corrigenda' *Historia* 31 (1982) 364-386.

⁵² Although the propriety of clerical marriage had been an issue from the early Church, councils in the sixth century were still attempting to enforce the separation of bishops from their wives. The Council of Tours in 567 ruled that bishops were to maintain separate residences for their wives (can. 13, CCSL 148A 180-1). See also Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 129-136.

elect to dedicate themselves to chastity ‘with similar vows’.⁵³ Hesychius died in c.494, when Avitus himself became bishop.⁵⁴ Fuscina, herself ‘offered to Christ’ at birth, therefore grew up in one or perhaps two closely linked households where two generations of her family were living a religious life. Their influence was profound: ‘they set no necklaces on a neck bejewelled, nor did you wear a robe shining with woven gold’.⁵⁵ When Fuscina was ten, ‘the white stole [of dedicated virginity] graced you with its simple elegance, as did a virgin’s face’.⁵⁶ In summary, Avitus underlines the context of familial holiness in which Fuscina was raised: ‘your own happy home prepared you for the holy altars and taught you to grow up worthy of the temple it knew so well’.⁵⁷

In terms of the practicalities of dedicated life, Avitus’ phrasing suggests that Fuscina’s family do not seem to have dedicated her forever to a life of chastity, and it would be reading too much into the text to see here an early example of oblation, the ceremonial gift of a child to a monastery.⁵⁸ Although Fuscina’s *vita* claims that she entered a monastery dedicated to Gervasius and Protasius, founded by her father Hesychius, the lateness of the *vita* renders this fact somewhat suspect.⁵⁹ Recalling Fuscina’s dedication, Audentia notes ‘that vow of virginity you received originally from me, but now you will begin to exercise your own power over everything since everything is yours to will’.⁶⁰ She (in Avitus’ words) sets out a list of examples within the family: ‘models abound in your family... our line, which blossoms with virgins’, including Fuscina’s deceased elder sister Aspidia, who ‘joyfully veiled her blessed head’ and ‘our greatest glory in whose name, you, Fuscina, recall... that Fuscina of old’.⁶¹ A mention of Severiana, daughter of Sidonius Apollonaris and probable cousin to Fuscina, in the same

⁵³ *CCL* v. 23.

⁵⁴ *PLRE* II 554-5.

⁵⁵ *CCL* vv. 35-6.

⁵⁶ *CCL* vv. 55-6.

⁵⁷ *CCL* vv. 63-4.

⁵⁸ The classic study of oblation is M. de Jong, *In Samuel’s Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996).

⁵⁹ *Vita Fuscinae* 6; see also Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus*, 12.

⁶⁰ *CCL* vv. 78-81.

⁶¹ *CCL* vv. 87-8; 94.

context, suggests the closeness between the families.⁶² Avitus' view of what happened is clear: 'With these words she kindled a girl's love of virginity and stirred her tender sensibilities with her holy encouragement'.⁶³ Although not explicit here, the connections being drawn out here also suggest a context in which small networks of religious women, related by blood or marriage, could develop. This is a situation in which a way of living is promoted by other women without recourse to texts beyond those an aristocratic Gallo-Roman family might ordinarily have access to.⁶⁴ It is the transmission of family memory from one woman to another, in a pattern from which men are largely absent. It may be possible to overstate the importance of bishops, as preserved sources privilege their involvement in the religious currents of the day. In a similar way, for instance, the availability of Jerome's letters to the circle of female ascetics in Rome obscures less formal contacts between the women, of inspiration and advice, often in a familial context, as in the case of Marcella and Blesilla.⁶⁵ Beneath the religious imagery Avitus' poem reveals a more subtle, yet equally strong, source of knowledge and support for Fuscina: her family. The *Consolatoria de castitatis laude* is a paean of praise to the writer's family; if anything, the role of the siblings' ancestors may be overstated in order to glorify the present subject, Fuscina. But this detailed inventory of family piety sets a very clear context, in Avitus' mind at least, for Fuscina's life.

Taking a closer look at the themes of the poem, Avitus suggests – or constructs – a relationship with his sister which rests on a point of spiritual balance. A major theme of the work is Fuscina's further ennoblement through holiness, which sets her apart (physically and spiritually) from the rest of their family. In the imagery of the *sponsa Christi*, Fuscina has achieved a relationship with Christ from which Avitus is excluded: 'You are enrolled as consort, are wedded to a mighty King, and Christ wants to join

⁶² On the possible connections with the family of Sidonius Apollinaris, see *PLRE* II, 195-6; Mathisen, 'Epistolography', 100.

⁶³ *CCL* vv. 102-3.

⁶⁴ For the reading material available to such families, see in particular I. Wood, 'Family and Friendship in the West', *passim*.

⁶⁵ Jerome, Letter XXXVIII to Marcella. Ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54-6 (Vienna, Leipzig, 1910-18). Trans. F. Wright *Select Letters of St Jerome* (London, 1933) 159-167.

Himself to your beautiful form'.⁶⁶ In physical terms, 'You have chosen to spurn the torches of marriage but to glow with a holy love'.⁶⁷ Yet this separateness leads to a holiness which still belongs to their family, and is eagerly seized by Avitus. He reminds Fuscina 'you who, though younger in years, dedicated yourself to the discipline of the religious life first... the change in your brothers' lives is due to your own holy example'.⁶⁸ As will be seen below, this may offer yet another parallel with Caesaria and Caesarius. At the end of the poem, Fuscina's position is described in the classical terminology of patronage; as *patrona*, she is responsible for the family's spiritual advancement and power: 'All of your family have earned the right to claim you as their leading patron. We follow you now as our standard bearer, and the descendants of your parents are happy to attend you as you carry the banner of Christ'.⁶⁹ Her specific duties are to 'never tire of giving unending thanks to Christ or of pouring forth tears, so that none of your brothers will be missing from your family's number when you receive rewards worthy of your deeds'.⁷⁰ Avitus urges Fuscina to recall 'all your grandparents and great grandparents whose celebrated lives made them worthy priests. Look at your father who was selected to be a bishop'.⁷¹ In this position, however, their roles are not important to Fuscina's religious life – quite the contrary in fact, as it is Fuscina's role to 'lift up those humble brothers'.⁷² Avitus sees her role as supporting them.

This mix of imagery, the masculine, martial 'patron' and 'standard bearer', alongside the feminine lachrymose intercessor, is continued in the second half of the poem. Most obvious are the stories of the women waiting at the tomb of Christ; Deborah, who 'taking up her standard, marched before the enemy',⁷³ Eugenia, who became an

⁶⁶ CCL vv. 65-7. The uses of the imagery of the *sponsa Christi* over time have yet to be studied in detail, but would repay further consideration.

⁶⁷ CCL vv. 158-9.

⁶⁸ CCL vv. 149-50.

⁶⁹ CCL vv. 648-50.

⁷⁰ CCL vv. 662-4. For general surveys of patronage, see A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.) *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London, 1989). None of the essays in this volume contain references to a female *patrona*: further investigation may be needed into the link between the use of an increasingly Christian vocabulary and the roles women could play in patronage.

⁷¹ CCL vv. 655-7.

⁷² CCL vv. 660-1.

⁷³ CCL vv. 343-4.

abbot, ‘filling the role of spiritual father while concealing her maternal nature’,⁷⁴ and Susanna, whose virtue overcame the desires of two old men.⁷⁵ These are images of women who defeated or rose above their feminine (and, therefore, carnal) natures. Avitus’ theme is, as he says, ‘how Heaven’s aspect, which the chosen man within grasps intellectually, is without sex’.⁷⁶ Only women were brave enough to wait at the tomb of Christ, and in Avitus’ description of the scene were rewarded by the angelic exhortation ‘In your woman’s sex excel even a man’s mind and do not allow yourselves, brave hearts, to be seized by a new panic’.⁷⁷ The women’s role was not over – ‘they ran eagerly to the disciples and gave those learned men instruction. And they in turn, after having been taught by women’s words... recognized that mind and not gender carried off the palm of victory’.⁷⁸ The denigrations of marriage and reminders of the grief caused by the death of children upon which Avitus had dwelt earlier in the poem laid the groundwork for demonstrating through this imagery that the way for Fuscina to achieve true holiness was to rise above the constraints of the body by remaining a virgin, and thereby to enable her to seek God by means of her intellect.

There are a number of points of comparison between the *Consolatoria* and Caesarius’ work. Fuscina was probably still alive in 506-7, when Avitus wrote the prefatory letter to their brother Apollinaris, and so to draw yet another parallel between the two authors, the *Consolatoria* and Caesarius’ letter *Vereor* were probably written within a few years of each other.⁷⁹ However, the two pieces seem to inhabit different intellectual worlds. By writing to his sister in hexameters, Avitus seems to consider Fuscina as belonging to the world of late Roman refinement, where to be educated and to take pride in producing consciously literary works was highly important for both men and women.⁸⁰ Fuscina, in essence, would know how to appreciate a well-crafted verse.

⁷⁴ CCL vv. 506-7.

⁷⁵ CCL vv. 550-1.

⁷⁶ CCL vv. 221-2.

⁷⁷ CCL vv. 257-8.

⁷⁸ CCL vv. 280-1.

⁷⁹ This rests on Klingshirn’s dating of *Vereor* to c.508; see *idem*, *Life, Testament, Letters* 127-8. Fuscina’s continued existence is suggested by references to her in the prefatory letter, as *venerabilem Fuscinae nostram* and *germanae sanctimoniali*; see Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus*, 262.

⁸⁰ For further comment on the literary interests and circles of southern Gaul, see I. Wood, ‘Administration’; *idem*, ‘Family and Friendship in the West’.

Moreover, her religious dedication was in some respects itself an intellectual pursuit, as Avitus exhorts her, ‘Use the good sense your education has given you and with a manly zeal turn what you know or what you have merely skimmed in your reading into a work of virtue’.⁸¹ By using her education to further her knowledge of holiness, Fuscina followed in the footsteps of an earlier female author, the poet Faltonia Betitia Proba.⁸² Proba composed her *Cento Virgilianus de laudibus Christi* in c.360. It is an epic poem of 694 hexameters, retelling episodes from the Bible in lines and half-lines taken solely from Virgil and largely from his *Aeneid*. Proba was of a senatorial background and married Clodius Celsinus Adelphius, Prefect of Rome in 351. Both husband and wife converted to Christianity as adults. Proba’s position had enabled her to be well-educated, and following her conversion she put this entirely at the service of her faith. As with Fuscina, Proba’s intellect was the cornerstone on which she was able to build a relationship with God. While, as Gillian Clark has suggested, Christian girls increasingly tended to receive an education based mainly on Scripture and its commentators, the intellectual requirements which it made of them were no less demanding.⁸³

Indeed, such pride in literary activity and the accompanying value placed on learning are demonstrated in an anonymous sixth-century letter, which may have connections to the monastery of Holy Cross in Poitiers.⁸⁴ The letter is addressed to one woman from another, in response to some spiritual guidance sent by the former, who appears to have been of higher rank than the writer of this letter.⁸⁵ The letter, constructed from a series of Biblical metaphors, waxes lyrical on the values of spiritual learning for dedicated women. In one striking image, the author acknowledges ‘I know that virginity

⁸¹ CCL vv. 412-4.

⁸² On Proba, see B.M. Kaczynski, ‘Faltonia Betitia Proba: A Virgilian Cento in Praise of Christ’, in L.J. Churchill, P.R. Brown and J.E. Jeffrey (eds.) *Women Writing Latin: From Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe* (3 vols.) I (New York, 2002) 131-149; See however D. Shanzer, ‘The Date and Identity of the Centonist Proba’ *Recherches Augustiniennes* 27 (1994) 75-96 for the argument that the cento was in fact composed by Faltonia Betitia’s granddaughter Anicia Faltonia. For an overview of women’s intellectual activities in late antiquity, see G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford, 1993) 130-8.

⁸³ Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 136-7.

⁸⁴ MGH Epp. III 716-18; an English translation is available in M. Thiebaux (ed.) *The Writings of Medieval Women: an Anthology* (2nd ed.) (New York, 1994) 127-130, from which quotations are taken.

⁸⁵ ‘...you who are of so lofty a lineage’, Thiebaux, *Writings*, at 127.

without learning walks in the shadow and knows not the light.’⁸⁶ The letter further indicates the source whence such knowledge should come: ‘Until now, the treasure chest of the Testament has remained hidden from me, that is, the bookbinding clasps of your heart, in which a library of all the books is gathered.’⁸⁷ Learning came not simply from the Bible, but from reading the Bible. The writer closes the letter with an appropriate if earthy image: ‘I beg that you will frequently sprinkle the dry roots of my understanding with a basketful of fertilizing dung – that is, the fecundity of your words [Luke 13:8] – so that when you come to visit me in the customary manner, you will find in me some of the fruits of your good work.’⁸⁸ Fuscina is clearly part of the same tradition of intertwined spiritual and intellectual understanding. Women, even those dedicated to God, took pride in their learning and literary ability.

By contrast, Caesarius, the product of a similar background to that of Avitus, had taken a different, monastic, path, and the form in which he wrote to Caesaria was also different. His approach, in *Vereor*, allows for no intellectual pride. However, both writers focus on encouragement by *exempla* rather than feeling the need to provide strict rules for living. For Avitus and Fuscina, these might have been taken for granted. The mention of ‘modesty’ in the poem might have encompassed a set of behaviour patterns deemed suitable for the gently-bred pagan or Christian Roman girl.⁸⁹ Taking the issue of enclosure or limitation of movement, so important to Caesarius in the *Regula*, as one example, Fuscina may not have expected to move in society to a large extent in any case. Even in terms of Fuscina’s religious activities, Avitus restricts himself to a mention of ‘a round of holy duties’ upon which he has no advice to give.⁹⁰ Of fundamental importance, however, is the point that both writers are concerned with interior spirituality, and do not offer a set of prescriptive guidelines for living. Both stand in a tradition of writing about virginity, of which figures such as Jerome, Cyprian, Tertullian and Athanasius had also been a part.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁸⁹ For a general introduction to Roman women, see E. Fentham *et al.*, *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text* (Oxford, 1994); S. Dixon, *Reading Roman women : sources, genres and real life* (London, 2001); A. Fraschetti (ed.) *Roman Women* (Chicago, 2001).

⁹⁰ *CCL* v. 5.

Further scope for comparison exists in the circulation and impact of the two works. Avitus intended the *Consolatoria* to be read by his sister only, but later gave it to his brother Apollinaris, bishop of Valence. The letter he wrote to accompany the work reveals his reluctance that it should be read by strangers, and indirectly, his awareness that such works of spiritual encouragement were routinely circulated: ‘May Your Piety please remember that this very ‘little book’ as you call it, since it offers a rather personal treatment both of the religious practices of our common relatives and the virgins of our family, must only be given to read to people who are relatives or lead the religious life [*propositum religionis*]... I have difficulty in entrusting even to you (and only after being ordered to frequently) a work written in private for our sister the nun [*germanae sanctimoniali*].’⁹¹ The earliest manuscript containing the work dates from the eighth century, with another three from the ninth, and several extant from later periods.⁹² However, these codices reflect the circulation of Avitus’ ‘collected works’ rather than the dissemination or popularity of the *Consolatoria* itself. Indirectly, the absence of the *Consolatoria* from manuscripts associated with either Holy Cross in Poitiers or St John in Arles indicates the very limited circulation of texts such as this. The only subsequent use of the *Consolatoria* as a source appears to be in Aldhelm of Malmesbury’s *Carmen de virginitate*.⁹³ While Aldhelm used only two brief citations, the presence of the text in Anglo-Saxon England admittedly shows some awareness of Avitus’ work over a wide-ranging geographical area. Branching out from the *Consolatoria* itself, the existence of a minor cult of Fuscina herself is attested to by a twelfth-century manuscript from Saint-Germain-des-Près, containing a short life to be read on her feast day.⁹⁴ Unlike the texts emanating from St John, the subsequent history of this work seems to have adhered to Avitus’ plan and did not have as large an impact on later writers and religious women.

⁹¹ Peiper (ed.) MGH AA VI:2, 274-5. Eng. tr. Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 263-4.

⁹² Peiper (ed.) MGH AA VI:2, 200.

⁹³ The text is edited by S. Gwara, *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de virginitate, cum glosa latina atque anglosaxonica* 2 vols. CCSL 124 and 124A (Turnhout, 2001). For a guide to earlier texts used by Anglo-Saxon authors, see now the online *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* project at <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk>.

⁹⁴ Paris BN ms. Lat. 12601; see *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum in bibliotheca nationali parisiensi* 3 (Brussels, 1893) 563-5.

The abbess Caesaria and the foundation of St John

It is clear, then, that although *coenobia* for women did exist when Caesarius made his foundation, the most immediate context for female dedicated life in sixth century Gaul was that of privately maintained and family-supported dedication. What were Caesarius' intentions with regard to the monastery of St John, and how did these interact with the religious dedication of his sister Caesaria? Caesarius' motivations have been widely explored. He had been a monk on the island of Lérins before moving to Arles, and William Klingshirn's study of the bishop emphasises his aim of bringing monastic standards of asceticism and devotion into the wider community, as part of an effort to Christianize both urban and country dwellers in his diocese.⁹⁵ To this end, as Conrad Leyser has since argued, the nuns of St John 'were to serve as the most potent emblem of the moral purity evoked so fervently by the bishop in his homilies to the people': Caesarius' ascetic projects – St John, his foundation for men and his own household – and his preaching were but two props of the same mission.⁹⁶ Given Caesarius' background, it may seem surprising that he did not found a monastery for men first. Indeed, one of the assumptions underlying much early work on Caesarius was that he wrote his rule for monks first, simply because he had been a monk before he became a bishop.⁹⁷ It was only in 1971 that Adalbert de Vogüé laid out by careful textual analysis the proof of the *Regula virginum*'s much closer links to its Augustinian sources than that of the rule for monks, indicating that it had been written first.⁹⁸

Clearly, the community of nuns was profoundly important to Caesarius, and fulfilled a range of needs in his agenda of conversion. However, as has been seen, the somewhat teleological assumption that the monastery fitted in to a pre-existing pattern of cenobitic religious life needs to be sidestepped. Although his own background was 'monastic', Caesarius' creation of St John in the form it took was original. The

⁹⁵ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 199-200; 242-3. For more on Caesarius' efforts towards the christianisation of the people of Arles, see R.A. Markus 'From Caesarius to Boniface: Christianity and Paganism in Gaul' J. Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth (eds.) *The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity* (London, 1992) 154-172.

⁹⁶ Leyser, *Authority*, 89.

⁹⁷ See, for example, the introduction to McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns*, 88-92.

⁹⁸ De Vogüé 'La Règle de Césaire d'Arles pour les moines' 369-406.

achievement of Caesarius was to reformulate the dedication of his sister Caesaria as the paradoxically public yet ostentatiously private display of asceticism of the monastery in Arles. The building of the monastery and the composition of the works intended to guide the nuns proceeded together.

The process of foundation as described in the *vita Caesarii* is at once clear and suggestive of many of elements of female dedicated life at the time. It is worth quoting at some length:

Meanwhile, Caesarius [rebuilt] in particular the monastery that he had begun to prepare for his sister, according to its original rule and with a cloister for [the protection of] virginity... He built it for the companions and sisters on the side of the church. He recalled from a monastery in Marseille his venerable sister Caesaria whom he had sent there to learn what she would teach, and to be a pupil before becoming a teacher. He then set her up with two or three companions in the dwellings that he had prepared. Great numbers of virgins arrived there in throngs. By renouncing their property and parents they spurned the frail and deceptive blossoms of mortal existence and sought the lap of Caesarius, their father, and Caesaria, their mother.⁹⁹

This passage opens up a number of issues surrounding female religious life in the sixth century. The role of bishops as founders is certainly one; the small size of the initial foundation another. Perhaps the most intriguing by virtue of its sheer unknowability, however, is the relationship between Caesarius and Caesaria herself. How much impact did Caesaria's own aspirations have on Caesarius' actions? Before moving on to consider the broader topics of dedicated life suggested by this passage, it is important to explore the apparently passive Caesaria's life, taking into account some of the evidence for sixth-century religious women already discussed, as a context for these concerns.¹⁰⁰ It will be evident that, far from being the passive recipient of Caesarius' schemes for both a new

⁹⁹ *V. Caes.* I.35. Tr. Klingshirn *Life, Testament, Letters* 26-7.

¹⁰⁰ Discussions of Caesaria and her influence on the *Regula virginum* draw on those in the current author's M.Litt thesis, *The Abbess of Arles: a Reconsideration of the Regula virginum* (St Andrews, 2002).

form of monastic life for women and for the christianisation of his city, Caesaria was equally active in designing a way of life to suit her own needs.

When considering the possible sources for Caesaria's life, the hints from which an idea of her activities and importance could be gleaned, the passage above suggests a conundrum. Caesarius' *vita* was written by five clerics of his acquaintance. The first book, from which this extract is taken, was chiefly the work of Cyprianus, bishop of Toulon (c.517-c.545), assisted by Firminus of Uzès (c.534-c.552) and Viventius, of an uncertain see. However, the composition of the *vita* was initiated by the monastery of St John, under the leadership of Caesaria II, and this background coloured the work throughout.¹⁰¹ As the Prologue puts it, 'You, Caesaria, whom we honour as a virgin, together with the choir of fellow nuns entrusted to you, have been asking that we fulfill our obligation to recall and to write an account from the very beginning of the life and way of life of your founder, saint Caesarius of blessed memory... this work can stand in place of his presence for your – and even more his – monastery.'¹⁰² To a large degree, the work was written to accord with the nuns' perspective and to serve their needs. The community's view of the first Caesaria is, therefore, likely to be well reflected by the *vita*, and the association of Caesaria in the early stages of development of the monastery, evoked by the preceding extract, must be what the nuns remembered. And yet, the *vita* is about Caesarius; formally, he is celebrated as the founder of the monastery; Caesaria is a supporting player, who appears and disappears as the trajectory of Caesarius' story demands. The existence of a seventeenth-century *vita* of Caesaria merely perpetuates her liminality; as will be seen below, it is largely derived from the *vita Caesarii*.¹⁰³ The needs of the community suggest why Caesaria has no story – no history – of her own. Immediately after Caesarius' death, they were faced with the problem of losing their main source of financial support. Caesarius had cut himself off from his family when he moved to Lérins; the only resources he himself possessed were those of his see. His concerns for the future of the monastery are attested to by his correspondence with pope

¹⁰¹ See in particular Klingshirn, 'Caesarius' monastery for women'.

¹⁰² *V.Caes* 1.1, tr. Klingshirn *Life, Testament, Letters* 9.

¹⁰³ *Soixante homélies de Saint Caesaire, archevêque d'Arles, traduites en français, suivies de la Vie de sainte Cesarée et de celle de sainte Rusticule, abbesses du monastère fondé par ce St. archevêque*. Published in Arles by François Mesnier, 1648.

Hormisdas and by his Testament, both aiming to make his alienation of Church lands in favour of the monastery irreversible.¹⁰⁴ Hormisdas' reply guarantees immunity for the monastery from Caesarius successors as bishop, and agrees that the monastery might keep the proceeds of the sale of church property. The Testament, far from disposing of Caesarius' personal property, takes the opportunity to confirm these arrangements. The community's own concern with this can perhaps be seen by the fact that these documents were so carefully preserved. The commissioning of a *vita* of Caesarius was one further guarantee of the monastery's future well-being. Acknowledgement of his sanctity would lead to veneration of his tomb; his choice of burial site, among the nuns in their basilica, would ensure the monastery's association with any future cult.

In this regard, Caesaria - however respected and venerated within the monastery - could not be as useful to the nuns after her death as was her brother. This would explain the lack of any post-mortem cult of Caesaria, which appears to compare her unfavourably with the seventh-century abbess Rusticula, whose cult was well established in Arles; her relics were kept in the cathedral of St Trophime where they are still venerated.¹⁰⁵ Revealingly, however, contemporaries knew of her existence and celebrated her role in instituting customs and practices at Arles.

Venantius Fortunatus, writing for the occasion of Agnes of Poitiers' consecration as abbess in around 576, remembered Caesaria with other holy women:

Hic Paulina, Agnes, Basilissa, Eugenia regnant,
 Et quascumque sacer vexit ad astra pudor.
 Felices quarum Christi contingit amore
 Viuere perpetuo nomina fixa libro!
 Has inter comites coniuncta Casaria fulget,
 Temporibus nostris Arelatense decus;

¹⁰⁴ Hormisdas' letter is in Morin II, 125-7, and tr. Klingshirn *Life, Testament, Letters*, 120-2. The *Testamentum* is in Morin II, 281-9, and tr. Klingshirn *Life, Testament, Letters*, 71-6.

¹⁰⁵ Rusticula's cult was actively celebrated until at least the fourteenth century: see V. Le Roquais, *Les Breviaires manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France* II (Paris, 1934) 431-4. For more on Rusticula, see Chapter Two, 93 ff.

Cæsarii monitis luci sociata perenni,
Si non martyrii, virginitatis ope.

(Here Paulina, Agnes, Basilissa and Eugenia reign, and all those whom a holy modesty has raised to the stars. Happy are those women whose names by the love of Christ will be made to live on, written in the eternal book! Caesaria shines in the midst of these her companions, she who is the glory of Arles in our times; due to the teachings of Caesarius she shares the eternal light, if not by martyrdom by the riches of virginity.)

And later:

Sit tibi dulce decus veneranda Casaria præsens,
Præsule Cæsario non caritura tuo.
Illos corde sequens, mandataque corpore complens,
Vt teneas flores, has imiteris apes.¹⁰⁶

(May Caesaria, worthy to be venerated, sweet and luminous, be with you, with your protector Caesarius she will not let you down. Follow them in heart, apply their teachings in body, imitate these bees to obtain flowers.)¹⁰⁷

In less florid terms, Radegund of Poitiers, foundress of the monastery of Holy Cross, also recorded the collaboration of Caesaria and Caesarius. In her letter to the bishops of the time, she recalled how ‘I accepted the rule in accordance with which saint Caesaria had lived, and which in his loving care saint Caesarius had drawn up from the writings of the holy fathers to suit her very needs’.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps building on this description of events, Gregory of Tours recorded how Radegund and her abbess Agnes, receiving no help in making her foundation from her own bishop Maroveus, turned to Arles: ‘There

¹⁰⁶ Venantius Fortunatus *Lib. 8 carm.* 4. M. Reydellet (ed. and tr.) *Venance Fortunat. Poèmes II* (Paris, 1998) 131-2.

¹⁰⁷ Author’s translation.

¹⁰⁸ Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, IX.42, B. Krusch ed. MGH SSRM 1.1; ed. and tr. L. Thorpe (Penguin, 1974) 535. For a fuller discussion of the transmission of the *Regula virginum* to Holy Cross, see Chapter Two, 85-93.

they received the rule of saint Caesarius and blessed Caesaria'.¹⁰⁹ The *Regula virginum* was perceived as the work of both siblings.

In both of these examples, the focus is on the formative role and example of Caesaria. Caesarius' status as the writer of the rule is important, but he only functions as an adjunct to Caesaria's dedicated life, which is the feature of central importance. How, then, can the details of Caesaria's life be teased out from those of Caesarius?

According to tradition, Caesaria was born in 465, with her birth date recorded as 12 January, still her feast day.¹¹⁰ She was therefore older than Caesarius, whose accepted year of birth is 470. The children were brought up in an atmosphere of devout Christianity. At the age of seven, according to his *vita*, Caesarius donated his clothes to the poor but kept it secret from his parents.¹¹¹ The holy child with uncomprehending parents may be a hagiographical motif, but the subsequent lives of Caesaria and Caesarius suggest that they had received a thorough grounding in familial piety.¹¹²

The next point at which Caesaria enters record is in 506, when, aged forty-one, she and a few other women were preparing to live in a monastery Caesarius was building for them outside the walls of Arles. This lacuna of nearly thirty years can only be filled by informed speculation. Although a very late *vita* of Caesaria exists, it is clearly drawn from the *Vita Caesarii* and conveys a picture of Caesaria as a seventeenth-century gentlewoman: 'La devote & jeune Cesarée passoit doucement les jours à la maison de ses parents... pour assister par ses tendres soins, sa bonne Mere'.¹¹³ The historical interest this account possesses lies in the fact that it was published in Arles, and therefore presumably drew on traditions about Caesaria which were still current in the monastery, by then

¹⁰⁹ Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, IX.40, tr. Thorpe, 530.

¹¹⁰ AASS Jan. 12, at 11. The Bollandists took their information from martyrologies.

¹¹¹ *V. Caes.*, I, 3.

¹¹² Other examples of holy children in hagiography are Sulpicius Severus' Martin, who wanted to be a hermit at the age of twelve (*Vita Martini* 2:4, in J. Fontaine (ed.) *Vie de Saint Martin*, I SC 133 (Paris, 1967); and Radegund, who polished the floor of her oratory with her dress (Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis* 2, MGH SSRM II: 358-377 at 365).

¹¹³ 'The young and devoted Caesaria quietly spent her days at her parents' home, in order to assist her mother by her tender care'. *Vie de Sainte Cesarée*, 314.

known as St Césaire. This suggested context throws an interesting sidelight on the apparently very limited cult enjoyed by Caesaria, particularly as the *Vie* describes her as ‘une des plus celebre Heroïnes de Christianisme’.¹¹⁴ It contains no dates for Caesaria’s life; her actions are merely echoes of those of Caesarius. At the age of seventeen, in 486 or 487, Caesarius had been tonsured by Bishop Silvester of Châlon, and it may have been around the same time that the twenty-two-year-old Caesaria committed herself to the religious life.¹¹⁵ However, Caesaria’s age suggests an alternative interpretation. The age at which Christian girls tended to marry was usually between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, so twenty-two would seem a fairly advanced age for a decision of that kind.¹¹⁶ If there ever was a moment of choice, for Caesaria or her parents, between marriage and perpetual virginity, it had probably been made considerably earlier than that, notwithstanding her biographer’s claim that her first introduction to dedicated religious life came when Caesarius summoned her to Arles to be abbess of the monastery, ‘pour cultiver cette jeune plante dans le terroir de la vertu, & pour avoir soin de cette ame innocente’.¹¹⁷ The cases of Fuscina and Avitus may be instructive in this instance. As in their family, Caesaria’s vocation may have been the first formal expression of her family’s piety, and Caesarius’ own subsequent decision to be a monk merely the more visible sign of this.

It seems highly possible, then, that Caesaria had been living as a dedicated religious for the better part of three decades. The financial and legal circumstances of a Gallo-Roman woman of Caesaria’s social status would almost certainly suggest a strongly familial context for such a dedication, with strong links being maintained to family members. Seen within such a setting, her presence in Arles and acceptance of her brother’s cenobitic impulses becomes clearer. Her own vocation was also the expression of her family’s faith. If, as may be likely, she moved to Arles to be under Caesarius’ protection once he became bishop, the latter’s religious formation on the monastic island of Lérins made him keen to reproduce this style of religious life for his sister and other

¹¹⁴ *Vie de Sainte Cesarée*, 313.

¹¹⁵ *V.Caes*, I, 4.

¹¹⁶ A. Arjava *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996) 32-3.

¹¹⁷ ‘... to cultivate that young plant in the land of virtue, and to have care of that innocent soul’. *Vie de Sainte Cesarée*, 314-5.

women. Further impetus may have come from the Council of Agde's ruling that nuns could not receive the veil before they were forty years old.¹¹⁸ Caesaria at forty-one may therefore have seen monastic life as the final and ultimate step she could now take in her vocation. Canon twenty-seven of the same Council stated that new convents could only be founded with the permission of the bishop, so it was natural for Caesaria's new home to be in Arles.¹¹⁹

The needs of both siblings therefore drove the monastery's construction forward. This was not altogether straightforward. Sometime after the second council of Agde, which concluded on Sunday 10th September 506, Caesarius began building a monastery probably in the area of the medieval Alyscamps, the space on either side of the road leading out of the city to Marseille which had been used as the cemetery for Arles' dead for centuries.¹²⁰ The twelfth-century church of Saint-Césaire-le-Vieux may stand on the site of the monastery. This site fulfilled several requirements, in that it satisfied the conditions laid down by the council of Agde that women's monasteries should lie some distance from those of men,¹²¹ and was in close proximity to the grave of St Genesius, one of the holiest sites in the city.¹²²

However, the disadvantages of such a site also became clear. During the winter of 506/7, the city was besieged by an alliance of Franks and Burgundians fighting for Clovis against the Visigothic king Alaric, who had just been defeated at Vouillé. The growing monastery proved an easy target; indeed, as the *vita Caesarii* suggests, the component parts of the building may have been of use in constructing siege engines: 'During this siege the monastery that Caesarius was beginning to have built for his sister and the other virgins was almost completely destroyed; its beams and upper rooms were ripped apart

¹¹⁸ Agde (506), can. XIX. *Concilia Galliae A.314 – A.506*, 202.

¹¹⁹ Agde (506), can. XXVII. *Concilia Galliae A.314 – A.506*, 205.

¹²⁰ F. Benoît *Les cimetières suburbains d'Arles dans l'Antiquité chrétienne et au Moyen Age* (Rome, 1935), 53.

¹²¹ Agde (506), can. XXVIII. *Concilia Galliae A.314 – A.506*, 205. For further discussion of the religious topography of sixth-century Arles, see M. Heijmans, 'La topographie de la ville d'Arles durant l'Antiquité tardive', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 12 (1999) 143-167. Dr Heijmans (personal communication) is clear that this remains conjectural.

¹²² Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 105.

and overturned by savage barbarians'.¹²³ Part of Caesarius' desolation at seeing his monastery destroyed may have stemmed from the knowledge that those same beams were part of the engines attacking his city. However, it does not seem that Caesaria or the other nuns were living on site at this stage. The absence of outraged descriptions of attacks on the nuns themselves, or of miracles associated with potentially violent assault, suggests that they were not physically affected.

For his second attempt, Caesarius chose a new site immediately inside the south-east corner of the city walls, adjacent to the former cathedral and thus itself a holy site of long standing. The monastery of St John was complete by 512, the date of the presentation of his rule to the community. The community of nuns left behind extremely valuable physical testimony of their lives, for what can seem otherwise to be an almost entirely textual existence. Marc Heijmans has hypothesised that the funerary church of the monastery, St Mary, may have been located on the site of the twelfth-century ruins of St-Césaire-le-Vieux in the present day Alyscamps cemetery.¹²⁴ An undateable lapidary inscription found on this site may commemorate one of the nuns: HIC IN PACE [reque]ESCIT D[eu?]M TH[eodora?] SACRA D[e]O PV[ella] VIXIT ANNOS¹²⁵ There are at least fourteen similar inscriptions from the same site, although none makes mention of any religious dedication.¹²⁶ In any case, however, this was clearly a large and significant community.

Focusing on both Caesaria and her more famous brother opens the way to important conclusions, despite the lack of hard evidence for the life of the abbess. And yet, considering the process of monastic foundation from a bottom-up rather than a top-down perspective helps to provide a stimulating context for the works written for the community of St John in this period, particularly the letter *Vereor* and the *Regula virginum* itself. As the following section will argue, far from being the passive recipients

¹²³ *V. Caes* 1, 28, tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 23.

¹²⁴ M. Heijmans, 'La topographie de la ville d'Arles' 163-4; see also M. Heijmans and C. Sintès, 'L'évolution de la topographie de l'Arles antique. Un état de la question', *Gallia* 51 (1994) 135-170.

¹²⁵ CIL XII, no. 963. My thanks are due to Marc Heijmans, CNRS, for further discussion of this inscription and its relationship to the site. The more tentative elements of his transcription are shown by question marks.

¹²⁶ CIL XII, nos. 834; 941; 948; 950; 951; 952; 954; 955; 957; 961; 962; 963; 970; Le Blant, *NR* 162.

of texts composed by a charismatic bishop with knowledge of earlier monastic writings and practices, Caesaria and her nuns were themselves engaged on a process of finding, and helping to describe, the best way to live.

The Caesarian texts

i) *Vereor*

The first text which Caesarius produced for the nascent community was the letter *Vereor*, addressed to his ‘holy sister abbess Caesaria’ [*Caesariae sanctae sorori abbatissae*] and her community.¹²⁷ The dating of the letter, and its relationship to the *Regula*, are uncertain. De Vogüé and Courreau, who have made the most thorough analysis of the text, suggest that the lack of references to cloister, together with a particular emphasis on the need for changing dress and surrendering possessions on entry, indicate a religious community in its early stages, for which formal boundaries had not yet been established.¹²⁸ They tentatively suggest that the letter was composed at some date before the formal foundation of St John in 512, and before the writing of the *Regula virginum*. However, they also allow for the possibility that the letter was intended to have a wider circulation than simply the nuns of the community in Arles. The relative lack of specific instructions in the letter would have broadened its applicability. If this were the case, a date of composition later than 512 could not be excluded.¹²⁹ However, Klingshirn posits a narrowing of this range of dates. He suggests that Caesarius would not have used the integrity of the church plate as a metaphor (in chapter 5 of the letter) after he himself had removed some of it for the redemption of captives in 508, as described by his *vita* [I.32].¹³⁰ Klingshirn suggests that *Vereor*, predating the rule, should therefore be seen as part of the long tradition of writing letters of guidance to women living relatively informal ascetic lives, such as those of Jerome. It is therefore most likely that Caesarius

¹²⁷ Morin II, 134-44; de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales* 294-337. Eng. tr Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters* 127-139.

¹²⁸ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 283.

¹²⁹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 283.

¹³⁰ Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 128.

would not have contemplated writing about a non-enclosed lifestyle for religious women after the promulgation of the *Regula virginum*, and thus an early date for the letter is indicated.

At whatever point the letter was written, it seems highly probable that it began to be circulated to other communities soon after it was composed, in a similar manner to Avitus of Vienne's *Consolatoria de castitatis laude*. Caesarius' apparent plea for discretion to Caesaria, 'Out of consideration for my rusticity and modesty reread my exhortation (such as it is) secretly, and do not give it to anyone else, so that the ears of cultivated persons might not be struck by the harshness of my most uncultivated speech', is very similar to that of Avitus, albeit for different reasons.¹³¹ Although there are no copies of the letter extant from this early stage, the manuscript tradition of *Vereor* is the most diverse of all of the Caesarian texts. Briefly, it is transmitted in both genders; unlike the *Regula*, the masculine variant, known to later copyists as the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos*, is the same as the feminine, with only the necessary grammatical alterations made. However, like the rule, portions of the text of *Vereor* found their way into a variety of later works, culminating in the reforming documents of Benedict of Aniane.

Morin used three manuscripts to establish the text, ignoring the 'masculine' text as he did so. Tours, ms. Bibl. Munic. 617, which also contained the *Regula*, was lost during the Second World War. The two remaining versions, redactions of the women's text, bear striking similarities in terms of content, and will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. The earliest extant complete text of *Vereor* is found in Vatican, ms. Reg. Lat. 140, a compendium of texts relevant to monastic life produced at the beginning of the ninth century at the monastery of St Benedict of Fleury-sur-Loire.¹³² It is also contained in Toulouse, Bibl. Munic. 162, a manuscript which dates from the twelfth century. This latter manuscript is an extraordinarily varied collection of texts, ranging from Jerome's letters to a recipe for bitumen for the purposes of lining a well.¹³³ The provenance of the manuscript is largely unknown, although a later hand notes that it

¹³¹ *Vereor* 1, tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 129.

¹³² M. Mostert, *The Library of Fleury: a provisional list of manuscripts* (Hilversum, 1989) 258.

¹³³ *CGM* VII in 4-o, 93-5.

belonged to the Augustinians in Toulouse. Morin, but not de Vogüé, also makes reference to the severely damaged Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. Mp.th.o.1. Although only the second half of the letter survives, this version has particular interest as studies have demonstrated that it was produced in the middle of the eighth century by scribes associated with the ‘school of Chelles’ and the female community of Karlburg, east of the middle Rhine.¹³⁴

Three copies of the masculine text also survive. One, Paris, B.N., ms. Lat. 12238, dates from the ninth century, and a marginal note in a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century hand notes its ownership by the monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris. The two remaining manuscripts, Milan, Bibl. Ambros., ms. C 79 Sup., a florilegium of patristic, theological and legal excerpts, and Grenoble, Bibl. Munic., ms. 306, a collection of sermons, date from the twelfth century.¹³⁵ Despite the relatively late date of these manuscripts, the complete text existed in a masculine variant at least as early as the end of the seventh century, when Defensor of Ligugé used five extracts from it in his *Liber scintillarum*.¹³⁶ More importantly, Caesarius’ own view that guidance written for women was equally applicable to men is shown by his re-use of the second section of the letter as the culmination of the rule for monks he composed in the latter stages of his career.¹³⁷ The issues of gender and transmission will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

Although the precise dating of the letter is insecure, *Vereor* constitutes a verbal reflection of the evolution in Caesaria’s dedicated life, from a relatively informal and largely self-directed existence to formal enclosure in an institution regimented by Caesarius. It appears to be a halfway-house between the two, reflecting back to Caesaria

¹³⁴ F. Lifshitz, ‘Demonstrating Gun(t)za: women, manuscripts, and the question of historical ‘proof’’, in W. Pohl and P. Herold (eds.) *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens: Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz im Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2002) 67-96, at 78-81.

¹³⁵ L. Jordan and S. Wool (eds.) *Inventory of Western manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana* (Notre Dame, 1986), 111-113; P. Fournier, E. Maignien and A. Prudhomme (eds.) *CGM VII: Grenoble* (Paris, 1889), 122.

¹³⁶ Defensor of Ligugé, *Liber scintillarum*, in H-M. Rochais (ed.) *Livre d’Étincelles* (2 vols.) SC 77 and 86 (Paris, 1961-2).

¹³⁷ A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau (eds.) *Césaire d’Arles. Oeuvres monastiques, II, Oeuvres pour les moines* SC 398 (Paris, 1994), 178-9; 180-1.

the life she probably already led.¹³⁸ As de Vogüé suggests, the letter occupies an intermediate stage between the letters of Jerome and Pelagius to their female followers, and the *Regula virginum* itself.¹³⁹ It makes no radical suggestions. While advocating claustration, Caesarius does not deem it essential; the nuns ‘should either never go out in public or only because of great and unavoidable need’ and ‘neither laymen nor other religious men should be admitted into incessant familiarity’.¹⁴⁰ Caesarius comments on the dangers of over-familiarity with men (‘she will ... see something that can be harmful to chastity’);¹⁴¹ on the disposal of wealth, although with only an encouragement rather than an instruction to dispose of it as quickly as possible (‘you can acquire spiritual wings from it by giving it away well and quickly’);¹⁴² on the avoidance of luxury, and an encouragement to reading and prayer.¹⁴³ Other than an injunction to avoid envy and anger, there is little interest in the internal life of the community or in relations between the nuns, reflecting their continuing ability to decide on an appropriate way of life for themselves.¹⁴⁴

In the letter’s *praefatio*, Caesarius acknowledges that ‘we, by the grace of God, perceive nothing wrong with your most sacred way of life’, but sees his role as providing ‘spiritual arms ... against the fiery arrows of the devil’.¹⁴⁵ However, this help was unnecessary. Devoted women such as Caesaria must have possessed immense strength of character to remain committed to a religious life, to some extent a life of deprivation, particularly as the bishop or clergy were only there to observe them on occasional visits. Most revealing is Caesarius’ admission that ‘in observance of your holy wishes, I am not able to visit you more frequently’.¹⁴⁶ To all intents and purposes Caesaria had probably been directing her own religious life for thirty years, and it is tempting to suggest that submitting herself to her younger brother’s guidance was perhaps the greatest act of

¹³⁸ Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 127-8.

¹³⁹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 282.

¹⁴⁰ Vereor, 3 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 131.

¹⁴¹ Vereor, 5 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 134.

¹⁴² Vereor, 6 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 134.

¹⁴³ Vereor, 7 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 135-6.

¹⁴⁴ Vereor, 6 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 134.

¹⁴⁵ Vereor, 1 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 129.

¹⁴⁶ Vereor, 1 tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 129.

humility that she had yet endured. More importantly, Caesarius' comment reveals that while he was welcome to offer advice, Caesaria was the driving force behind this community both practically and spiritually, and had the authority to ask her bishop to stay away, an authority which he in turn acknowledged. *Vereor* reflects a fascinating point of balance between brother and sister, bishop and nun. Caesaria's spiritual and practical authority, acknowledged here by Caesarius, would form part of the bedrock on which the *Regula virginum* would be built.

ii) *Regula virginum*

The textual history and transmission of the *Regula virginum* is more complex than perceptions of it as a single monolithic work would suggest, and inseparable from the physical foundation of the monastery. Moreover, this section will also suggest that the abbesses and nuns of the opening decades of the monastery's existence were of vital importance in establishing a final, stable version of the Rule, insofar as this could ever be possible for a document in continual use. Far from being the work of a bishop writing in isolation, the collaborative process of uniting written monastic tradition with contemporary experience will be emphasised.

The *Vita Caesarii* provides the information that Caesaria and the first nuns entered the monastery of St John according to 'its original rule'.¹⁴⁷ The *Regula* itself speaks of the newness of the enterprise in its *praefatio*: 'we have set down spiritual and holy counsels for you as to how you shall live in the monastery... as you know I have laboured in the constructing of a monastery for you'.¹⁴⁸ Clearly, Caesarius perceived the foundation of the monastery, the composition and delivery of the rule, and the entry of the nuns as elements of the same process.

The editors of the *Regula*, Dom Morin in the 1930s and Adalbert de Vogüé in the 1980s, have established that the rule consisted of three parts: the 'original' rule, chapters

¹⁴⁷ *V. Caes* I, 35.

¹⁴⁸ *RV Praefatio*. Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are taken from McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns*, 170-204.

1-47; the *Recapitulatio*, chapters 48-65 and 72-73, Caesarius' final, definitive version of the rule; and an *ordo psallendi* and *ordo ieunium*, chapters 66-71.¹⁴⁹ The *Regula* is extant in a near-complete form in only three manuscripts, which contain varying portions of the text established by Morin and de Vogüé. These will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but should be listed briefly at this point. The oldest, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm 28118, is the so-called *Codex Regularum* of Benedict of Aniane, and dates from the beginning of the ninth century.¹⁵⁰

Bamberg, Königliche Bibliothek, ms. Lit. 142, copied at the end of the tenth century at Niedermünster in Regensburg, contains only two works, the rule of Benedict (in a feminine version) and that of Caesarius. The third extant manuscript, Berlin Phillipps 1696, dates only from the thirteenth century. The manuscript is made up of five separate sections, of which the '*regula sanctimonialium*' of Caesarius is the fourth.¹⁵¹ A fourth, partial, manuscript, Tours, Bibl. Munic., ms. 617, was used by Morin but lost during the Second World War. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Martène discovered it at St Martin in Autun, and noted that it contained not only the *Regula* (including the subscriptions of the bishops at the end of the text), but also the letter *Vereor*, and part of Caesaria II's *Constitutum*.¹⁵²

De Vogüé and Courreau's work on the text has highlighted the strong possibility that even chapters 1-47 were produced on a slow, piecemeal basis.¹⁵³ This first section can itself be divided into three parts. The first sixteen chapters demonstrably derive from older texts, which Caesarius would have known: the *Precepts* of Pachomius; rules from Lérins, Caesarius' former monastery home; and the *Institutes* of John Cassian.¹⁵⁴ It is

¹⁴⁹ Morin II 100-127; de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 35-274.

¹⁵⁰ The production of this text will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁵¹ The other sections contain the sermons of Hugh of St Sauveur, various writings of Bernard of Clairvaux and Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*, and miracles from the monastery of Sainte-Trinité of Fécamp.

¹⁵² De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 139.

¹⁵³ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 95-98.

¹⁵⁴ For Pachomius, see PL 23, 65-90; the rules used at Lérins were those of the *Regula quattuor patrum* (PL 103, 435-442) and the *Regula patrum secunda* (PL 103, 442-444). For more on these rules, see A. de Vogüé, *Les Règles des Saints Pères* (SC 297, 298) (Paris, 1982), and the same author's invaluable guide,

therefore likely that this was the ‘original rule’ given to Caesaria in 512, at the beginning of the nuns’ life in St John. The second section, chapters 17-35 and chapter 43, is drawn, often verbatim, from the *Ordo monasterii* and *Praeceptum* of Augustine.¹⁵⁵ De Vogüé and Courreau’s argument hinges on the thesis that Caesarius did not have access to these texts until the 520s, when it would have been possible for him to gain copies either directly from Africa or via Italy.¹⁵⁶ Chapters 36-47 are original Caesarian legislation and could therefore have been written at any time, although references in chapter 45 to the basilica of St Mary, which was built in 524, would indicate that this element of the rule was written after that date. The next and last fixed date in the life of the *Regula* is 22nd June 534, when the *Recapitulatio* was promulgated by Caesarius.¹⁵⁷ The final section, the *ordines*, must actually have been written prior to 534, as Caesarius notes that ‘We have decided to insert in this book the *ordo* according to which you should chant the psalms’, and later, ‘It has seemed necessary to us to include even the procedure for meals in this rule’.¹⁵⁸ De Vogüé and Courreau reinforce their theory of a production in stages with an analysis of the language used in the different stages of the rule. For instance, they note that the word ‘*abbatissa*’ is used once in the first section alongside the terms ‘*prior*’, ‘*senior*’ and ‘*mater*’, five times in the second, eleven times in the third, and it is the only term used for the abbess in the *Recapitulatio*. A mixture of terms is used in the *ordines*, showing that they were composed before the *Recapitulatio*.¹⁵⁹

However, the influences that lay behind the construction of the *Regula virginum* are not only detectable through Caesarius’ vocabulary or textual borrowings. Caesarius’ conceptions of monastic life were strongly moulded by his experience as a monk on the

Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes (400-700) Typologie des Sources 46 (Turnhout, 1985). For Cassian’s *Institutiones*, see J.-C. Guy (ed.) *Jean Cassien: Institutions Cénobitiques* SC 109 (Paris, 2001).

¹⁵⁵ The *Ordo monasterii* is in PL 66, 995-8; the *Praeceptum* is in PL 32, 1377-84. The standard edition of both texts is L. Verheijen, *La Règle de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1967). Caesarius also drew heavily on Augustine’s works when preaching; for further comment on this, see Leyser, *Authority*, 82-3. For a detailed textual comparison of Caesarius’ use of Augustine, see also A. de Vogüé ‘La Règle de Césaire d’Arles pour les moines: un résumé de sa Règle pour les moniales’ *Revue d’Histoire de la Spiritualité* (1971) 369-406.

¹⁵⁶ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 97.

¹⁵⁷ RV 73; Morin II, 26.

¹⁵⁸ RV 66, 71.

¹⁵⁹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 88-89.

island of Lérins. On leaving home he had entered the community there, in 488/9.¹⁶⁰ The monks at Lérins clearly used written rules but their authorship and background remain uncertain. De Vogüé has suggested that at least two rules may have been used there: the *regula sanctorum patrum* was the original rule composed by Honoratus, founder of the monastery and subsequently bishop of Arles, and the *regula Macarii* was in use while Caesarius in residence.¹⁶¹ Both are echoed by elements in the *Regula virginum*. As Klingshirn notes, their importance for Caesarius' own writings lies in the fact that they shift emphasis from the 'eastern' model of monasticism's ideal, later articulated by Cassian, of the individual monk's pursuit of perfection, to what would become the prevailing 'western' ideal of the perfection of the common life. Instead of a personal retreat, Klingshirn suggests, the monastery became a model for the world.¹⁶²

Caesarius lived the monastic life with enthusiasm. He was elected cellarer, but was deposed when the other monks complained that he was withholding too much food and drink from them, forcing them to live a harder life than was necessary.¹⁶³ In self-imposed penance, he redoubled his own asceticism, and 'so afflicted himself by his constant desire for reading, singing psalms, praying, and keeping vigils that finally, by an excess of asceticism, he brought it about that his feeble young body, which should properly have been coddled rather than weakened, was bent and broken'.¹⁶⁴ Caesarius' consequent need to recuperate saw him travel to the nearby city of Arles, where he was ordained as a priest by the then bishop, Aeonius, probably a distant relative.¹⁶⁵ As the authors of his *vita* state, however, 'he remained a monk in humility, charity, obedience and asceticism'.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 11.

¹⁶¹ A. de Vogüé (ed. and trans.) *Les Règles des Saints Pères* 2 vols., SC 297, 298 (Paris, 1982); discussion in Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 24-26.

¹⁶² Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 26.

¹⁶³ *V.Caes* I, 6.

¹⁶⁴ *V.Caes*. I, 6.

¹⁶⁵ *V.Caes*. I, 10. Caesarius' departure for Arles can only be dated to between 495 and 499: Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 31.

¹⁶⁶ *V. Caes*. I, 11.

Once bishop of Arles, Caesarius reconfigured his own experiences and filtered the normative texts he knew in order to establish his own form of dedicated life for women. This would be at once complementary to the spiritual work of preaching in the bishopric and based on his perceptions of the capabilities of religious women.¹⁶⁷ Caesarius made it plain at the beginning of the *Regula* that he had undertaken research and adapted elements for his nuns: ‘And, because many things in monasteries of women seem to differ from the customs of monks, we have chosen a few things from among many, according to which the elder religious can live under the rule with the younger, and strive to carry out spiritually what they see to be especially adapted for their sex’.¹⁶⁸

The most notable feature of the rule is its insistence on claustration, of which Caesarius was an early advocate. Although Caesarius had already expressed his desire that nuns should not leave their homes in *Vereor*, in the *Regula* the provision for cloister moved from being one among many considerations (only appearing in the third chapter of the letter) to being the primary one, so important that it was included in the two chapters of the *praefatio*. Cloister became an absolute requirement: ‘she must never, up to the time of her death, go out of the monastery, nor into the basilica, where there is a door’.¹⁶⁹ The aim was total separation from the world: ‘to renounce the world and enter the holy fold to escape the jaws of the spiritual wolves’.¹⁷⁰ The ‘spiritual wolves’ represented a number of threats, not least the physical surroundings of the monastery, which was now inside the walls. Arles was a wealthy city, with commercial and cultural distractions for those open to them, even if they were of an increasingly Christian character.¹⁷¹ Gregory of Tours relates the story of the ‘great weight of people’ attending

¹⁶⁷ For Caesarius’ episcopal career and pastoral work, see the essential study by Klingshirn, *Caesarius*.

¹⁶⁸ *RV* 2.

¹⁶⁹ *RV* 2.

¹⁷⁰ *RV* 2.

¹⁷¹ For a superb summary of all aspects of late antique Arles, see J. Guyon and M. Heijmans (eds.), *D’un monde à l’autre: Naissance d’une Chrétienté en Provence, IVe – VIe siècle* (Arles, 2002). For more detailed studies of particular issues, see F. Benoît *Les cimetières suburbains d’Arles*; M. Heijmans and C. Sintès, ‘L’évolution de la topographie de l’Arles antique’; M. Heijmans, ‘La topographie de la ville d’Arles’; S.T. Loseby, ‘Arles in Late Antiquity: Gallula Roma Arelas and Urbs Genesii’ in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby (eds.) *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996), 45-69.

the festival of St Genesius of Arles;¹⁷² this is an abridgement of an earlier sermon, which further describes slaves laden with their mistresses' drinking cups, and beautifully dressed girls wearing jewellery.¹⁷³

Although Dom Cyrille Lambot considered Caesarius' use of complete enclosure to be an innovation, failing to find precedents in any previous Rule, other examples did exist.¹⁷⁴ The parallels between himself and Caesaria, and Pachomius and his sister, had probably already struck Caesarius. Pachomius had founded a monastery in the Egyptian desert and eventually had to create a monastery for women to house those who followed him, over which he set his sister. The *vitae* of Pachomius reveal the claustration of women, illustrated by the description of their funerals: the second Greek *vita* describes how the sisters had to leave the body of their dead sister outside their monastery for the monks to collect and carry to the burial site.¹⁷⁵ The *Regula virginum* may not even be the first example of complete claustration for women in the west. As discussed previously, the *vita patrum Jurensium* describes the monastery of La Balme, again built for the sister of the founders, Romanus and Lupicinus, where observance of claustration was so stringent that once inside the nuns were never seen again until their coffins were taken for burial.¹⁷⁶ While the relative dating of these two texts may be problematic, practices at *Balma* may show that the idea of the necessity of cloistering nuns was developing elsewhere in Gaul concurrently.

Caesarius' rule was a conscious effort to separate the dedicated women of St John from the secular world. Women entered the community to become part of a powerhouse of prayer, centred on the *ordo* Caesarius also provided, in which interference from the

¹⁷² Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs* MGH SSRM 1.1 484-561; trans. R. Van Dam (Liverpool, 1988) cap. 68, 91.

¹⁷³ *Sermo seu narratio de miraculo s. Genesii*, PL 50: 1273-76, cited in Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 60.

¹⁷⁴ C. Lambot, 'Le prototype des monastères cloîtrés des femmes: l'Abbaye Saint-Jean d'Arles (VI^e siècle)' *Revue Liturgique et Monastique* 23 (1938) 169-174, discussed in de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 71.

¹⁷⁵ The main source of information on Pachomius is his 'Bohairic life': see L.-T. Lefort *S. Pachomii vita bohairice scripta* CSCO 89 (Louvain, 1925, rpt. 1953). See also A. Veilleux (ed.) *Pachomian koinonia. Vol. 1, The life of Saint Pachomius and his disciples* (Kalamazoo, 1980). Discussed at greater length in de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 71-2.

¹⁷⁶ 'quaecumque uirginum illic causa abrenuntiationis intrasset, foris non uideretur ulterius, nisi extrema transitus causa deportaretur ad cimiterium' in *Vita S. Romani*, ed. Martine, *Vie des Pères du Jura*, 266-8.

outside merely interrupted the ‘workings’. As Marilyn Dunn has pointed out, the female community of St John was eminently suitable to undertake liturgical intercession as Caesarius had based it on psalmody and prayer rather than private or public masses, actions open only to men.¹⁷⁷ Even when working, the sisters were enjoined to ‘let not meditation on the word of God and the prayer of the heart cease’.¹⁷⁸ As noted above, Caesarius’ vision for the community of St John made it just one part of his overarching plans for the Christian city of Arles. In practical terms, the city had already come under attack once in Caesarius’ episcopate, in 507; it had been ruled by both Visigoths and Ostrogoths.¹⁷⁹ Even more pressing was the prospect of judgement and condemnation in the afterlife, a topic which lies at the heart of his sermons.¹⁸⁰ The constant stream of prayer rising from the heart of the city to God would counterbalance the sins of its people at the same time as offering a measure of protection for them.¹⁸¹ This interpretation of St John’s function in the city of Arles suggests a slight modification of Klingshirn’s view that early western monasteries were seen as models for their wider communities. Rather than acting as a model for the behaviour of the citizens of Arles, the monastery acted as a symbol of Caesarius’ hopes for the salvation of the city’s inhabitants. As founder of the community, Caesarius could plausibly make himself one of the objects of this intercession: ‘[I] beg by your holy prayers to have me made a companion of your journey; so that when you happily enter the kingdom with the holy and wise virgins, you may, by your suffrages, obtain for me that I remain not outside with the foolish’.¹⁸²

Against this background of a rethinking of female dedicated life driven by Caesarius’ hopes for his city, and based on his knowledge of earlier texts, where lies the scope for viewing the creation of the *Regula virginum* as a collaborative exercise in which the nuns of St John were fully involved? The mark of experience is a difficult one to detect, and even harder to ascribe to one sibling rather than the other. If experience,

¹⁷⁷ M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism* (Blackwell, 2000), 99.

¹⁷⁸ RV 20.

¹⁷⁹ See Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 69-71; 104-113.

¹⁸⁰ See in particular sermons V, XIV, XVIII, XXXI and CXXXVII.

¹⁸¹ Dunn, *Monasticism*, 98-107.

¹⁸² RV, *praefatio*. The theme of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 12:1-13) was one that Caesarius used on numerous occasions, and he composed two sermons of the subject: nos. CLV and CLVI. For their manuscript circulation, see Chapter 3.

consideration, and aspiration can be said to represent the difference between Caesarius' sources and his own rule, can a reading of the text reveal whose experiences or aspirations made the difference? The foregoing discussion of Caesarius' intentions and career as a monastic author needs to be balanced by a consideration of those of the first two abbesses, Caesaria I and II. Although, as Klingshirn points out, it remains impossible to date the sections of the rule with any degree of certainty, it is evident that the development of the *Regula* spans their abbacies.¹⁸³ Caesaria the Elder died after 524 but before 528, so she was abbess during the early stages of the *Regula*, the sub-sections inspired by older texts and, possibly, by Augustine.¹⁸⁴ The final part of the 'original' rule, chapters 36-47, and the *Recapitulatio* must therefore be considered in the light of the abbacy of Caesaria the Younger. Caesaria II's entry to St John as a child meant that she was exposed to the formative influence of a respected and perhaps loved aunt, who was also her spiritual leader and her *matertera*, or surrogate mother.¹⁸⁵ In a very real sense, therefore, the younger Caesaria's view of what being an abbess entailed and of the monastic life in a broader sense were a continuation of the elder's.

Many of the precepts in the rule are derived from Cassian, and Caesaria I's influence may be felt here. One of Cassian's 'signs' of humility is 'if [the monk] governs his tongue, and is not over talkative'.¹⁸⁶ In the *Regula virginum*, this is simplified to 'They should never speak in a loud voice',¹⁸⁷ with the addition of the Scriptural citation 'Let ... all clamour be removed from you' [Eph. 4:31]. This speaks of a combination of knowledge of Cassian, and of community life, particularly when, as in the *Regula*, it is placed in conjunction with the requirement that the nuns sleep in a communal dormitory. Caesaria, as the recipient of Cassianic tradition during her temporary sojourn at the monastery of St Sauveur in Marseille, was doubtless aware of the virtues of silence when a large number of women were in close proximity to each other. Her influence probably lay at the root of Caesarius' union of these two ideas.

¹⁸³ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 119.

¹⁸⁴ *V. Caes* I, 58.

¹⁸⁵ See J.T. Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex: female sanctity and society, 500-1100* (Chicago, 1998), cap. 6 for other examples of monastic aunts and nieces as surrogate mothers and daughters.

¹⁸⁶ *Inst*, IV, 39.

¹⁸⁷ *RV* 9.

Caesaria's experience can also be detected in Caesarius' discussion of the separation of work and prayer. The monastery at Marseille was governed by a simple injunction against talking or working during prayer, repeated by Caesarius, 'while the psalms are being chanted, it is not permissible to do any talking or to work'.¹⁸⁸ It may be that the sort of 'work' nuns might have done - embroidery, mending, and so on - was sometimes performed during prayer. For Caesarius, such tasks would constitute a disruption to the nuns' main task of intercession. It is in the requirement for a daily period of woolworking, however, that Caesaria's previous life experience can be seen. Such activity was most useful to a group of women who were expected to make their own clothes.¹⁸⁹ It also reflected the most praised occupation of the Roman matron; here the nuns' gender brought with it stereotypes of activity that survived the formation of a new religious environment.¹⁹⁰ This is one instance of an activity which Caesaria and her companions had always undertaken in whatever form their existing community had taken; here Caesarius constructed his written text around his sister's life, and not the other way round. Overall, Caesaria's experiences and needs shaped both the physical construction of the monastery of St John and the writing of the rule for the community of nuns that grew within it. The importance that near-contemporary sources attributed to her serves only to underline further the collaboration between brother and sister in the foundation of St John. This process of co-production would be furthered and strengthened by Caesaria II, whose career is examined next.

Early adaptations: the *Recapitulatio*

As noted previously, Doms de Vogüé and Courreau have suggested that the *Regula virginum* was composed in stages over an extended period of time, a process

¹⁸⁸ RV 10.

¹⁸⁹ RV 16.

¹⁹⁰ One early example of praise for Roman women who stayed at home weaving is the funeral eulogy for a certain 'Furia', dating to the first century BC: 'Why should I mention your domestic virtues: your loyalty, obedience, affability, reasonableness, industry in working in wool, religion without superstition, sobriety of attire, modesty of appearance?' Cited in E. Amt (ed.) *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe* (New York, 1993), at 29.

which, as we have seen, allowed for the experience and knowledge of Caesaria to play a large role in the formation of its tenets. Yet even after the death of Caesaria, around 525, the rule continued to evolve.¹⁹¹ The fact that, for a period of some decades, the *Regula* was not a stable or fixed text should not surprise us. Caesarius was conscious of the newness of what he was trying to write; without being able to see the effects of any set of guidelines on the community he wished to create, he would be unable to assess the parts of his rule that were most important, those that were sound, and those which were simply unworkable. This was crucial, whether or not the rule was intended solely for the nuns of St John, or whether Caesarius' ultimate aim was the wider dissemination of his material, a question which will be returned to throughout this study. Caesarius wanted to get coenobitic life for women 'right', because only then would the community function as he needed it to from the wider perspective of symbolising the Christian life of the city of Arles.

At the beginning of the 530s, therefore, some twenty years after he had first given a rule to Caesaria I, the sexagenarian Caesarius composed the final, tried-and-tested version of the rule, which he described as its *Recapitulatio*. In his introduction to the new guidelines, Caesarius acknowledged that the role of experience had been paramount:

Although, with God's favour, at the beginning of the foundation of the monastery we framed a rule for you, nevertheless afterwards through many changes in it we added and deleted things. After examining and testing what you can carry out, we have now settled upon what is in harmony with reason and possibility and sanctity. In so far as we have been able to determine by diligent experiment, the rule has been so moderated under God's inspiration that with the help of God you can keep it in entirety... For this reason we wish that whatever we wrote previously be void.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ The dates of death of Caesaria I and beginning of the abbacy of Caesaria II are tentative; see de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 440-1.

¹⁹² RV 48-49.

Caesarius' words imply a close and ongoing relationship with the nuns of the community, overseeing, questioning, making changes and learning from the women's reports of their experiences. Undoubtedly this connection was emotional as well as practical: when close to death, at the age of seventy-three, Caesarius had himself moved into the monastery, 'to console the anxious women who were not sleeping because of their suspicion that he was about to pass away'.¹⁹³ His niece, the second Caesaria, was singled out for special attention: 'in his usual charming way he addressed the venerable Caesaria, mother of over two hundred girls, and he consoled her and urged her to strive for the reward of her celestial vocation'.¹⁹⁴

Yet clearly, Caesarius' awareness of what living under the rule really meant and involved could not be of the same order as that of the women living under it. On the one hand, Caesarius had a number of responsibilities, however close to his heart the monastery was. He undertook an extended visit to Rome in 513 and made tours of parishes in his diocese. Even the time taken to prepare his preaching would have limited the time he had available for the monastery.¹⁹⁵ On the other, the elder Caesaria had herself asked her brother to stay away from the community even before the *Regula virginum* had been drafted.¹⁹⁶ Again, the experience of the abbess and the nuns was vital in shaping the final draft of the *Regula*. Caesaria II was steeped in coenobitic life in a way her aunt had probably not been. She had probably been one of the earliest entrants to the monastery; her cousin Teridius, writing some years later, recalled how she had entered '*in diebus adolescentiae tuae*'.¹⁹⁷ Caesaria *secunda*'s destiny was probably always that of abbess. The monastery's origins were firmly rooted in Caesarius' own family; the natural choice to succeed the first Caesaria was the second. Contrary to the *Regula virginum* itself, Teridius' letter to his cousin and abbess makes no mention of an election; clearly such a democratic process was only intended to apply once all of the Caesarii were gone.

¹⁹³ *V.Caes*, II, 47.

¹⁹⁴ *V.Caes*, II, 47.

¹⁹⁵ For Rome, *V.Caes* I, 36-42; parish tours, I, 47; preaching, I, 54-55, 59.

¹⁹⁶ *Vereor* 1.

¹⁹⁷ In the letter *O Profundum*, ed. and tr. de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 418.

Aspects of the *Recapitulatio* emphasize the importance of the abbess in shaping the nature of communal life more clearly than anywhere else in the rule. Caesarius' statement that the pre-existing rule should be void is somewhat puzzling. Since the *Recapitulatio* does not mention many requirements of the previous rule, was it now to be the case, for instance, that the nuns no longer needed to be literate, were permitted maids, and could curse their sisters in religion at will? Obviously not, but the importance Caesarius gave to the statutes in the *Recapitulatio* meant that judgement and interpretation were everything; interpretation that would be the role of the abbess, mediating between the demands of two sets of requirements and the everyday life of the nuns.

Some chapters of the existing rule are repeated, such as the prohibitions on secret letters and parcels, individual cells and private meetings.¹⁹⁸ These injunctions are condensed into one chapter in the *Recapitulatio*, suggesting that Caesarius also saw it as a chance to organise more effectively the items he had taken from earlier rules. Other chapters are modified, perhaps suggesting ongoing lapses. All work was now to be done for the good of the community; nuns could no longer undertake work for themselves even if the abbess might have granted permission.¹⁹⁹ Rather than diminishing her authority, it is likely that Caesaria herself may have suggested this measure to help her monitor an increasingly large number of daughters.²⁰⁰ In practical terms, an expanding monastery would quickly require the physical activity of all of the nuns to keep it functioning. Similarly, in a monastery which still had no defined habit, it was Caesaria's vigilance which kept control over the garments that the nuns wore. Caesarius' tasks elsewhere must suggest that Caesaria had passed on to him the need to legislate against such garments. Caesarius therefore repeated his injunction against black, white or ornamented clothes, and added at this stage a prohibition on crimson clothes and beaver skins.²⁰¹ This is a valuable reminder of the probable background of most of the nuns, for whom the renunciation of such items was not only a personal deprivation but also a symbol of

¹⁹⁸ RV 61, echoing RV 27 (the abbess); RV 51, echoing RV 9 (cells), 38 and 40 (private conversations for abbess and nuns), 25, 30 and 43 (secret parcels). RV 54 concerns secret letters, repeating RV 25.

¹⁹⁹ RV 57, repeating RV 29.

²⁰⁰ V.Caes II, 47: there were over two hundred nuns at Caesarius' death.

²⁰¹ RV 55.

rejection of their familial status. Perhaps more importantly, the *Recapitulatio* also replaced the previous blanket rule of one year as a postulant with an indeterminate period to be spent in the *salutatorium*.²⁰² This clearly passes the responsibility of determining when or if each new entrant could enter the monastery formally to the abbess. It is in effect an admission that the abbess' judgement could be more important than a written rule in deciding what was best for the community.

The power of the abbess within the monastery is perhaps best attested to by one of the last chapters of the *Recapitulatio*:

... if at any time any abbess should try to change or to relax something of the essence of this rule, and , either because of kinship, or for any kind of circumstance, should desire to be subject to and to be within the household of the bishop of this city, under the inspiration of God, and with our permission, resist on this occasion with reverence and with dignity... Any abbess and prioress who might try to do anything contrary to the spirit of the rule should know that they will have to plead their guilt in my presence before the tribunal of Christ.²⁰³

Caesarius' emphasis on the 'essence' or 'spirit' of the rule, perhaps encompassing the ideas of claustration, common life and the lack of secrecy, is pivotal. This passage contains a tacit acknowledgement that the abbess would have to make minor changes to the rule as circumstances within the monastery changed; that the abbess, more importantly, was the only person in a position to do so. It also acknowledges that future abbesses might not share the same allegiance to the monastery's founder as did the first two. The two Caesarias were unique in that their relationship with Caesarius and their abbacies during the writing of the rule enabled them to influence it in a major way.

²⁰² RV 58.

²⁰³ RV 64.

Conclusion

This chapter has located the composition of Caesarius of Arles' two major texts for dedicated women, the *Regula virginum* and the letter *Vereor*, in the context of the foundation of the monastery of St John. Yet it has also highlighted a further context: the different forms of religious life available in the period in which Caesarius and his sister made their foundation. Against this backdrop of forms of religious life which shifted, varied and blended, the decision of the Caesarii to create a coenobitic establishment in southern Gaul can be seen as the radical move it was. Far from fitting into a pre-existing tradition of *coenobia*, Caesarius and Caesaria were free to compose their own norms and practices, amalgamating Eastern written traditions with the practices of women living out a dedicated existence within their own homes.

The next chapter will build on the examination of these texts to look at the ways in which they were subsequently adapted and disseminated by Caesarius himself, building on his first efforts in the *Recapitulatio*. Secondly, it will examine the ways in which other writers began to use the writings of Caesarius for dedicated religious women in their own works.

CHAPTER 2

‘Transmisi exemplar de regula’:

The early circulation of Caesarius’ monastic writing in changing landscapes of dedication

Caesarius of Arles’ earnest hope, when he composed the *Recapitulatio* to the *Regula virginum*, was that nothing in the rule would be changed: ‘I beseech you before God and his angels that nothing in it be subjected to further change nor be taken away.’¹ After an extended period of trial and error, he considered the rule to be a perfect fit for the community at St John, and the community, guided by the rule, to be the ideal symbol of the Christian city of Arles. However, the elements of the rule were themselves not set in stone. From Caesarius himself onwards, monastic authors drew on the *Regula* as a source of guidelines for later foundations, for both men and women. In these later rules, Caesarius’ rule for nuns was usually only one element among several. Each author put together a ‘new’ rule, albeit largely a patchwork of extracts from previous normative texts, to suit each new monastic house. Rules were transmitted to different locations without necessarily leading to a wholesale adoption of the practices maintained at the monasteries where they originated. This was a monastic landscape of individual houses making selections from older rules. In the case of the *Regula virginum* specifically, it did not imply a spreading movement of Arlesian practice.

In this way, knowledge of Caesarius’ writings for dedicated women – and men, as we shall see – spread to other monastic houses in Provence and further afield, most notably to the former queen Radegund’s foundation of Holy Cross in Poitiers. Yet Caesarius was far from being the only influence on monastic life in Gaul in the sixth and early seventh centuries. The Irish monk Columbanus arrived in Gaul in around 590, and he and his followers founded several monasteries in north-eastern Gaul. A third influence on Gallic monasticism in this period was that of the *Rule* of Benedict of Nursia, which was composed in Italy in c.540. For the founders of monasteries in the later sixth and

¹ *Regula virginum* [RV] 48: ‘*Et ideo coram deo et angelis eius contestamur, ut nihil ibi ultra mutetur aut minuatur*’. Morin II, 115.

seventh centuries, there was therefore a wealth of normative material from which to choose the most suitable set of guidelines. Often such a selection took the form of a combination of two or more of these rules in combination. A prime example of this, and in fact the final monastic rule to make explicit use of the *Regula virginum*, was that of Donatus of Besançon (d.624), for his mother's foundation of Jussamoutier. The second half of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh was therefore a vibrant period for the composition of new monastic rules and the adaptation of pre-existing ones. The aim of this chapter is to plot the spread of Caesarian monastic ideology as ripples spreading from the centre of Arles, with two contexts in view. The first is to consider the other currents present in female monasticism in this period, and to achieve this, an extended case study of the women attracted to the monastic ideals of Columbanus will be presented. The second and overarching theme of this chapter is to place the normative basis of dedicated life in the late sixth and early seventh centuries – rules, letters and, to some extent, hagiography - against what is known about women's involvement in monastic life from a wider range of source material.

Contemporary circulation: Sermons

Far from being the initiative of later generations, the circulation of Caesarius' works was instigated and controlled by Caesarius himself from the beginning of his episcopate. This is particularly evident from the circulation of his sermons. Klingshirn underlines the fact that so many of Caesarius' sermons survive because the bishop believed so strongly in the necessity for preaching, for anyone with pastoral responsibility.² In 529, Caesarius' arguments convinced the bishops of the province, meeting at Vaison, to allow priests, and if necessary deacons, to preach in urban and rural parishes.³ To ensure that sufficient preaching actually took place, and to guarantee the suitability of the material being presented, Caesarius intended priests to have a body of sermons ready to deliver (*serm.* 1.15, *V. Caes* I.54). He therefore assembled his own

² Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 9.

³ Vaison (529) can. 2. MGH Conc. I, 56.

collections of sermons in Arles, and included instructions with each package to disseminate them further: ‘To clerics located far away in the Frankish lands, Gaul, Italy, Spain, and other provinces, he sent through their bishops sermons they could preach in their own churches.... In this way he diffused the fragrance of Christ far and wide’.⁴ One such collection existing in a manuscript from the eleventh century, Zwifalt. ms. 49, contains twenty-seven sermons, with a preface stating that ‘By our paternal piety and pastoral care, we have collected in this little book simple admonitions necessary in parishes, which holy priests and deacons ought to recite on the greater feasts of the church’.⁵ Further, he requires that ‘if it does not displease you, you can and should make copies, according to your means, in a fair hand and on parchment, and give [the sermons] to be copied in other parishes’.⁶ Using scribes to take down his sermons as he delivered them, Caesarius then reworked these to produce generic sermons which would have wider applicability than solely to the citizens of Arles.⁷ The production of copies of Caesarius’ sermons appears to have been something of a cottage industry for the nuns of St John, to whom was given the task of making multiple copies of the sermons in their scriptorium. As one might expect from such a new community, the nuns were initially inexperienced at the work; indeed, Caesarius asked the recipients of his collections to pardon any errors the nuns might have made.⁸ The *vita* of Caesarius, commissioned by Caesaria II, takes a more positive view: ‘[Caesaria II]’s work with her companions is so outstanding that in the midst of psalms and fasts, vigils and readings, the virgins of Christ beautifully copy out the holy books, with their mother herself as teacher.’⁹ Such tasks provide a further context for the requirement of the *Regula virginum* that all of the nuns should learn to read;¹⁰ clearly, for some, this would also include learning to write.¹¹

⁴ V. *Caes.* I.55. Tr. W.E. Klingshirn (ed.) *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, 1994), 37.

⁵ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 231-2.

⁶ Sermon 2 (preface), ed. Morin, CCSL 103, 18; present author’s translation.

⁷ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 9-10.

⁸ Sermon 2, preface. See also Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 232.

⁹ V. *Caes.* I.58. Tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 39.

¹⁰ RV 18.

¹¹ On nuns’ scriptoria, see R. McKitterick, ‘Nuns’ scriptoria in England and Francia in the eighth century’, *Francia* 19/1 (Sigmarigen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1989) 1-35; *eadem*, ‘Women and literacy in the early middle ages’, *eadem*, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th – 9th Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994) 1-43.

Of particular interest to the present study is the fact that one of the Arles *scriptoria*, either that of the cathedral or of St John itself, copied and circulated at least one collection of Caesarius' sermons to monks, in which were included some by the anonymous fifth-century author(s) known as Eusebius Gallicanus.¹² This collection, Morin's *M* group, enjoyed an immense circulation: Morin notes that its manuscripts are innumerable, held by almost every library in Europe, and that he has therefore based his edition on merely the best thirty-six examples.¹³ These manuscripts contain other, differing, works beside the Caesarian sermons. The common element, the sermons to monks, was therefore probably circulating as a *libellus*. The earliest extant copy of the collection is now Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 1221, dating from the end of the seventh century, and originally the possession of the monastery of St Médard of Soissons. The Caesarian sermons now form only the last third of the manuscript, the majority of which comprises of a book of sermons on monastic life. It also contains fragments of a psalter, from an Irish or Saxon sacramentary.¹⁴ Monasteries to which the *libellus* circulated evidently used it to build up their own collections of works of guidance for monks. Clearly, normative texts for monks no more consisted solely of *regulae* than did such writings for dedicated women.

Contemporary adaptation: the rule for monks

The first ripple of influence spreading outwards from the *Regula virginum* emanated from Caesarius himself. He clearly felt the responsibility to circulate his own

¹² See A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau (eds.) *Césaire d'Arles. Oeuvres monastiques. II, Oeuvres pour les moines* SC 398 (Paris, 1994) 19-57. For its contemporary collation and circulation, see Morin I, xxxii. I have been unable to see the unpublished PhD thesis of Lisa Bailey, 'Preaching and pastoral care in late antique Gaul: The Eusebius Gallicanus sermon collection' (Princeton, 1994).

¹³ Morin I, xxxiii – xxxvi.

¹⁴ J. van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* II (Brussels, 1902) 224-5. According to van den Gheyn, the following inscription in the manuscript dates to the seventh century: *Hic liber vita[s] patru[m] [s]eu vel humilias s[an]c[t]i Caesarii ep[iscop]i quod venerabilis vir Nomedi[us] abba scribere rog[?] et ipsu[m] basil[?] s[an]c[t]i Medardi contulit devotus in honore si quis illu[m] exinde auferre temptaverit iudiciu[m] cum Deo et s[an]c[t]o Medardo sibi habere [noverit]*. ['This book of the lives of the fathers and of the sermons of St Caesarius the bishop which the venerable man, abbot Numidius, asked to be written and collected for the basilica devoted in honour to St Medard: if anyone shall be tempted to steal it from there, he shall have [and learn] the judgement of God and St Medard'.]

sermons and writings within the diocese of Arles, for the benefit of priests, and through them the people, and also to monks. In addition to the sermons aimed at monastic communities, Caesarius also prepared a *Regula monachorum* for the male communities he oversaw.¹⁵ This *regula monachorum* was a summary of the final version of the women's rule produced in the 530s, although it has some substantial differences from its inspiration.¹⁶

Partly these differences stem from the destinations of the two rules. While the *Regula virginum* was intended for a particular community, the *regula monachorum* contains no references to an individual monastery. Caesarius describes it merely as 'a rule that one should have in a monastery where there is an abbot'.¹⁷ The *Regula virginum* contains several references to particular locations within the complex of St John, but the *regula monachorum* is composed in much more neutral terms for wider usage.¹⁸ In contrast to the rule for nuns, which Caesarius himself named a *regula sanctarum virginum*, the manuscript tradition of the rule for monks shows that it had no such title or description: indeed, as de Vogüé has pointed out, the word *monachus* appears nowhere in the rule.¹⁹ As in the case of the *Regula virginum*, Caesarius' rule for monks, which seems to have been intended for all the monks of his diocese, reflects his own feeling of urgency to build the best possible dedicated life in general to act as a standard for the Christian population of the diocese of Arles as a whole.

Only two *Regula monachorum* manuscripts survive. The text was not included in Benedict of Aniane's *Codex regularum*, although Holste inserted it into his edition of 1661.²⁰ De Vogüé suggests that this implies a lack of circulation of the rule when

¹⁵ The *Regula monachorum* [Reg. Mon.] is in Morin II, 149-155. A newer edition and further commentary is available in de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*.

¹⁶ The *Regula virginum* was established as the earlier text by A. de Vogüé, 'La Règle de Césaire d'Arles pour les moines: un résumé de sa Règle pour les moniales' *Revue d'Histoire de la Spiritualité* (1971) 369-406, which also discusses the relationship between the two rules.

¹⁷ Reg. Mon. 1: *In Christi nomine regula qualem debeant habere in monasterio ubi abba est quicumque fuerit*. De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 204.

¹⁸ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 43.

¹⁹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 165.

²⁰ M-E. Bouillet 'Le vrai 'Codex Regularum' de saint Benoît d'Aniane' *Revue Bénédictine* 75 (1965) 345-50, at 345-9.

Benedict was making his collection, but equally Benedict may not have seen a real need to record a rule which was based so clearly on another, the *Regula virginum*. However, the small number of extant copies is surprising given that the rule was sent ‘to diverse monasteries’.²¹ The first, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 8780-8793 (2493), dates from the eighth century.²² The second, Paris, BN ms. Lat. 1564, dates to the late eighth or early ninth century, and Lowe suggested that the manuscript was copied in northern France, probably in the same scriptorium in a female house that produced numerous codices for archbishop Hildebald of Cologne (785-819).²³ This manuscript includes a prologue describing how the rule came to be circulated: ‘Here begins the rule sent by saint Teridius, priest and abbot, nephew of saint Caesarius the bishop of Arles, of blessed memory, requested by my humble self. He said that this was dictated to him by Caesarius, his master. He himself [Caesarius] sent this to diverse monasteries while he was bishop. All those who seek God here will learn to follow the royal road by the rule, not turning aside to the left or the right. Nor shall each do what he wants, but what he is ordered.’²⁴ De Vogüé makes the plausible case that this anonymous voice belongs to Aunacharius, bishop of Auxerre (561-605).²⁵ Although the first nine folios of the manuscript (items 1-29) are missing, the remainder appears to form a collection of Gallic pieces, those most likely to be of interest to a bishop at that time. Paris BN Lat. 1564 contains nothing more recent than a letter from pope Pelagius II to Aunacharius, dated 5 October 580.²⁶ A second letter from Pelagius, dated 31 October 586, is not included, so Aunacharius probably made his collection between 583 and 586.²⁷ The reason for Aunacharius’ interest in monasticism in his diocese is shown by the presence of seven abbot signatories at the synod of Auxerre (585/588).²⁸ While giving a rule to the

²¹ *Reg. Mon. praef.*, de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 204.

²² Van den Gheyn *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* IV, 1-2.

²³ *CLA* vol. 5; no.529. *CGM* II 68-9. The catalogue entry notes that the manuscript may have come from a church in Le Mans.

²⁴ *Reg. Mon. praef. Incipit regula a sancto Teridio presbytero, nepote beatae memoriae sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatinsis, abbate, mea persona parva rogante transmissa. Quam a suo supra memorato domino Caesario dixit ipse dictatam. Quam dum est sacerdos ipse per diversa monasteria trans mittebat. Quicumque deum expeterent, discerent regulariter viam tenere regiam, non declinantes ad dexteram neque ad sinistram. Nec unusquisque quod vult sed iubetur faciat.* De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 204-5.

²⁵ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 192-199.

²⁶ Pelagius II, *Ep.* 2, PL 72:705.

²⁷ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 193; see also n.5.

²⁸ Auxerre (585/588) CCSL 148A, 271-2.

dedicated women of his diocese does not appear to have been Aunacharius' immediate intention, the availability of Caesarian norms in Auxerre might well have meant that knowledge of them was also disseminated amongst such women as well. Even if Aunacharius asked for the rule solely for his male religious, he must have been aware of the existence of a female recension and its similarity to the rule he obtained. Although the copy he obtained was aimed at monks, many of its provisions could equally have been applied to the religious women of his diocese. This is particularly plausible given that he received his religious training in Autun, the same city to which Teridius, Caesarius' nephew, would send a copy of the *Regula virginum*.

Written soon after Caesarius composed the *Recapitulatio* of the rule for nuns, the *regula monachorum* is almost a second summary of the *Regula virginum*. It abridges the rule and largely retains the same order of points, but edits them to bring together injunctions on similar subjects which are scattered throughout the rule for nuns.²⁹ It introduces little new material, aside from additional scriptural citations.³⁰ Drawing on another of his writings, Caesarius took the final chapter of the *Regula monachorum*, cap. 26, enjoining the monks to always be vigilant, from the letter *Vereor*. This is the first instance of the identification of one of the major themes of this study: the fluidity of gender of such writings and their ease of use by both men and women.

However, this cannot be taken too far. In terms of requirements, there are some differences between the rules for nuns and for monks. One immediately noticeable difference is in the required *ordines*. Caesarius provides far fewer strictures for monks; whereas the *Regula virginum* sets out a complete schedule for the nuns' cycle of prayers, the *regula monachorum* gives instructions only for winter and Sunday vigils, and matins and terce on special occasions.³¹ Where the rule for nuns sets out particular hymns and prayers, the monks' equivalent is silent. However, where the two rules do contain instructions on the same subjects, those given to the monks are more demanding. The nuns were expected to fast according to the abbess' judgment from Pentecost until the

²⁹ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 170.

³⁰ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 173.

³¹ *Reg. Mon.* 20, 21. De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 218-220.

first of September; on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from September to November; every day apart from Saturday and feast days from then until Christmas; for the seven days before Epiphany; and finally on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from Epiphany to Lent.³² The monks were to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays from Easter to September; every day from September to Christmas, and the two weeks before Lent, aside from Sundays; from Christmas until this two-week period, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; during Lent itself, every day apart from Sunday.³³ The monks were clearly expected to spend longer periods fasting.³⁴ The authority over fasting – a facet of monastic life of vital importance – given to the abess may reflect Caesarius' respect for the wisdom and piety of Caesaria. An alternative interpretation, suggested by Bonnie Effros in her study of the relationship between communities and food, is that Caesarius discouraged excessive fasting among the nuns of St John to ensure that they had no opportunity to indulge in 'heroic feats' of asceticism which might gain them a following within the community.³⁵ A certain measure of both impulses probably governed Caesarius' directives.

The second major difference between the two rules lies in the area of claustration. In the *Regula virginum*, Caesarius stipulates that each nun 'must never, up to the time of her death, go out of the monastery'.³⁶ Certain groups of people were permitted to enter, subject to strict conditions: priests, the bishop and the *provisor*; workmen; close family and visiting dedicated women.³⁷ These requirements differed for monks. Echoing Cassian's reminder of the Egyptian monks who 'persevere in the monastery until bent with age',³⁸ monks were to be received on condition that they persevered until death: there is no mention of never setting foot outside the monastery.³⁹ The only prohibited

³² RV 67.

³³ *Reg. Mon.* 22.

³⁴ 'Fasting', in this context, meant only three dishes at each meal (*Reg. Mon.* 22).

³⁵ B. Effros *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul* (Palgrave: New York, 2002), at 45.

³⁶ RV 2, tr. M.C. McCarthy (ed.) *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: A Translation with a Critical Introduction* (Washington, 1960), at 171.

³⁷ RV 36 (priests and workmen); 39 (religious women); 40 (relatives).

³⁸ '...ad incuruam senectam in coenobio perseuerent', Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, IV, 2. Eng. trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.) *NPNF* (2nd series) XI (Edinburgh, repr. 1998), 201-290.

³⁹ *Reg. Mon.* 1: 'ea condicione excipiat, ut usque mortem suam ibi perseueret.'

visitors were women, who ‘... shall never enter the monastery, for it is a reserved place’.⁴⁰ These gender-specific regulations reveal a much more active concern over the contact of female religious with the outside world. In part, this no doubt reflects patristic attitudes towards the sexual fallibility of women; as Jerome gleefully pointed out, ‘Diana went out and was ravished... unless you avoid the eyes of young men, you shall depart from my [i.e., Jesus’] bridal chamber and shall feed the goats which shall be placed on the left hand’.⁴¹ In Caesarius’ case, however, it also stemmed from his particular need for the community of St John to be a source of spiritual power within and for the city of Arles, a need which did not apply to the foundations living according to his rule for monks. While gendered double standards did apply, in this case they were also linked to a practical (if otherworldly) need. Caesarius’ use of his writings for women to compose the *Regula monachorum* was his last major writing effort. Yet their use and circulation did not end with his death in 542. In particular, the next generation of the Caesarii wrote their own texts for dedicated women that drew upon the *Regula virginum* and *Vereor*. It is to them that we now turn.

Early adaptation: Teridius, agent and author

The figure of Teridius, described as the distributor of the rule for monks in the Paris manuscript, is clearly of central importance, and his activities in circulation form the next ripple outwards of Caesarius’ writings for dedicated women. He was Caesarius’ nephew and *provisor* or steward of the monastery of St John. A stone tablet, discovered in 1868 in the Alyscamps cemetery, near the church of St-Pierre-de-Mouleyrès in Arles, appears to be the epitaph of Teridius.⁴² The inscription now reads

⁴⁰ *Reg. Mon.* 11: ‘*Mulieres in monasterio numquam ingrediantur, quia in remoto loco est.*’

⁴¹ Jerome, *Epist.* 22 (‘Ad Eustochium’) cited by J.T. Schulenburg, ‘Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500-1100): Patterns of expansion and decline’ *Signs* 14:2 (1989) 261-92, at 273.

⁴² *CIL* XII:969. For further details, see J. Guyon and M. Heijmans (eds.), *D’un monde à l’autre: Naissance d’une Chrétienté en Provence, IVe – VIe siècle* (Arles, 2002), 211.

IN PACE REQVI
T . BONAE . M
DIVS N SCI.⁴³ CAESARII
QVI VIXIT ANN PLM⁴⁴

Although incomplete, enough remains to suggest the contents: '[hic] IN PACE REQVI // [esci]T BONAE M[emoriae] // [Teri]DIUS N[epos] S[an]C[t]I CAESARII // QVI VIXIT ANN[i] PL[uri]M[i]'. The first two lines are a common way of opening such a memorial *tabula* and may be expanded without difficulty. Evidently the third line is crucial: although an early suggestion was made that this was '[---]dius, n(otarius) s(an)c(t)i Caesarii', referring to a notary of the monastery, the fact that the monastery was not called 'St Caesarius'/'St-Césaire' until much later suggests that this is a memorial of a connection of Caesarius himself.⁴⁵ The 'DIVS N' belongs to Saint Caesarius the bishop, not the monastery. As Morin notes, Capelli identifies 'n' as a possible abbreviation of '*nepos*'.⁴⁶ The most likely candidate to be commemorated in this way is therefore Teridius. Given that Caesarius' sister and niece had central roles in the monastery, it is likely that the bishop would have placed his nephew in a similar role.

Teridius played a vital role in the circulation of Caesarius' writings. One of the manuscripts of the *Regula virginum* available to Morin in the 1930s, Tours, Bibl. Munic. ms. 617, was lost in the Second World War, but his notes on the text remain.⁴⁷ This manuscript, discovered by Martène in 1709 at the abbey of St Martin in Autun, contained a copy of the *Regula virginum* which included the list of subscriptions of Caesarius' fellow bishops.⁴⁸ The manuscript Morin saw contained the *Regula* from chapter 43 to the end, an almost complete copy of the letter *Vereor*, and a fragment of the *Constitutum*,

⁴³ 'SCI', 'ANN' and 'PLM' each have horizontal superscript lines above the letters to indicate a contraction.

⁴⁴ The lower half of this line of text has broken off, but enough remains of the letters to identify them.

⁴⁵ For the 'notarius' theory, see E. Le Blant, *Nouveau Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule* (Paris, 1892) no. 190.

⁴⁶ G. Morin, 'Le prêtre arlésien Teridius: Propagateur des règles de S. Césaire d'Arles', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 28 (1938) 257-263, at 258-9. A. Capelli, *Dizionario di Abbreviature latine ed italiane* (Milan, 1912, repr.1990).

⁴⁷ G. Morin, 'Problèmes relatifs à la Règle de saint Césaire d'Arles pour les moniales' *Revue Bénédictine* 44 (1932) 5-20, at 9; id, 'Le prêtre arlésien Teridius', 260.

⁴⁸ E. Martène and U. Durand, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, vol. I (Paris 1717) cols. 3-4, note b, cited by de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 139. For the nature and significance of these subscriptions, see Chapter Three, 131-2.

composed by the second Caesaria on the burial place of the nuns in the basilica of St Mary.⁴⁹ In successive studies, Morin dated the manuscript to the end of the tenth and then to the eleventh century.⁵⁰ Teridius' role in the circulation of these texts to the nuns of St Martin is revealed by his monogram, at the end of the *Regula* itself and again at the end of the *Recapitulatio*.⁵¹ Although the extant manuscript dates only to the tenth century at the earliest, it is possible that this was a copy of the original manuscript sent by Teridius to Autun. De Vogüé dates the sending of the rule to Autun to 561-2, when bishop Syagrius of Autun was in contact with Liliola, third abbess of the monastery of St John in Arles.⁵² Teridius, then, was active in circulating Caesarius' rules to both Autun and Auxerre. Remarking on the northern spread of Caesarius' writings, de Vogüé notes that 'Entre Poitiers et Besançon, Autun et Auxerre constituent des points d'arrivée assez naturels pour la vague de législations issues du grand évêque d'Arles.'⁵³

Teridius did not simply act as the circulating agent of Caesarius' works. Following in his uncle's footsteps, he composed a letter of guidance (known by its opening phrase '*O Profundum*', to his cousin, the second abbess Caesaria, who became abbess on the death of her aunt, Caesaria *prima*, in about 525. Two manuscripts of the letter are extant: Vatican Reg. Lat. 140, dating from the ninth century, and Toulouse Bibl. Mun. 140, dating from the twelfth. Extracts from the letter would also be used by the council of Aachen in 813 and, in a masculine form, by Benedict of Aniane in his *Institutio sanctimonialium* of 816.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Morin II, 100-1; de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 139-141. See also the catalogue produced in 1900: M. Collon (ed.) *CGM XXXVII: Tours I* (Paris, 1900) 495-6.

⁵⁰ G. Morin, 'Problèmes', 9; *id.*, 'Le prêtre arlésien Teridius', 260; *id.*, *Opera omnia* II, 100.

⁵¹ For a reproduction of the monogram, see Morin, 'Le prêtre arlésien Teridius', 260; see his earlier articles, 'Problèmes', 9, for his initial belief that the monogram was Caesarius' own, and *id.*, 'Le monogramme d'un Deuterius au bas de la Règle de Saint Césaire' *Revue Bénédictine* 46 (1934) 410-413, for his subsequent theory that it belonged to a bishop Deuterius.

⁵² De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moines*, 196. The *vita Rusticulae* notes the intervention of Syagrius with king Guntram to 'liberate' Rusticula so that she could enter the monastery: Florentinus, *Vita Rusticulae*, 4, ed. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4: 337-51. See below, 94.

⁵³ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 197.

⁵⁴ The manuscripts are Orléans, Bibl. Munic., ms. 233, ff. 50-1 (ninth century) and Vendôme, Bibl. Munic., ms. 60, f. 16 (eleventh century). See P. Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999), 163-168.

The early part of Teridius' letter reminds Caesaria of their long relationship, begun when Caesaria entered '*in diebus adolescentiae tuae*', and Teridius, a young man still too interested in earthly pleasures, '*qui per abrupta voluptatem lasciviamque vagabatur*', knew only her name and not her face.⁵⁵ The purpose of the letter was to advise the new abbess on spiritual and practical matters.

This letter, from a deacon to an abbess, raises questions of hierarchy and gender. With what authority did Teridius, a lowly member of the bishop's household, write to the admittedly younger but perhaps the most spiritually authoritative woman in Arles? This issue seems to have occurred to Teridius as well. At the start of the letter, he sets out his position *vis-à-vis* Caesaria, to whom he refers as 'oh lady whom I venerate for your virginity and merits, but who is my daughter in Christ due to my ordination and my rank'.⁵⁶ Was Teridius modelling himself on his more famous uncle, and his letter *Vereor*, perhaps in a hope of following in his episcopal footsteps? *O Profundum* throws into relief the questions brought up concerning the relationship between Caesarius and Caesaria, the binary pairing of the previous generation. De Vogüé, in his study of Teridius' letter, suggests that it may be the earliest surviving example of advice given to a woman on ascetic government.⁵⁷ It was addressed to Caesaria II on her assumption of abbatial authority, and yet the ways and means of governing a community cannot have been foreign to one of the Caesarii. The new abbess had grown up in the community; her aunt was the abbess; her uncle the revered bishop and founder. The younger Caesaria could never have been just another nun in St John. And yet, when she became abbess, the deacon Teridius wrote to her in a way that asserted his authority over her by advising her on matters in which she must have been well versed. The writing of the letter appears even more superfluous when its production is set against the composition of the *Regula virginum*. The references to Augustinian practices, together with the absence of references to Caesarian innovations such as the *salutatorium*, put the writing of the letter

⁵⁵ *O Profundum* 1, de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 418-20.

⁵⁶ *O Profundum*, *praef.* Own trans., from de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 418-9: *o venerabilis mihi integritate quidem et meritis domina, sed ordine ac gradibus in Christo filia.*

⁵⁷ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 401.

at around 525, while Caesarius himself was still alive and active.⁵⁸ The *regula* was still in its preliminary stages, and Teridius' references to 'the rule' would seem to confirm the supposition made in the previous chapter that a version of the *Regula* was already circulating in St John. De Vogüé sums up his analysis of the letter with the comment 'Comme la Règle de Césaire, cette lettre transfère aux moniales les principes de la vie religieuse masculine'.⁵⁹ Crucially, and as discussed in the previous chapter, de Vogüé underestimates the degree to which the religious practice of the nuns of St John were influencing the very documents which appear to be educating them in this so-called 'male religious life'. This, even more than Caesarius' to Caesaria I, was a fairly superfluous letter of advice for the individuals concerned. It may, however, have been written with a view to preserving recommendations that both Teridius and Caesaria II felt would be useful for future abbesses to have access to. This type of letter therefore adheres to the late antique conventions of a bishop, monk or ascetic writing to a holy woman – a recognizable and acceptable form of composition – which elides the fact that the woman to whom the letter is nominally addressed was herself its co-creator.

Early transmission: Caesaria II and Radegund

The recipient of this letter, Caesaria II, was also the author of her own document of spiritual advice, and the second of the Caesarii to build on their exalted relative's writings. Caesaria's understanding of dedicated life is demonstrated by the best-documented case of transmission of any of Caesarius' works, the adoption of the rule of Caesarius by the former queen Radegund (c.525 – 587), for her foundation of Holy Cross in Poitiers.⁶⁰ Needless to say, 'best documented' does not necessarily imply that the

⁵⁸ See de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 406-7.

⁵⁹ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 409.

⁶⁰ There is currently no full-length biography of Radegund, but see in particular B. Brennan, 'St. Radegund and the early development of her cult at Poitiers' *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1985) 340-354; S. Coates, 'Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the problem of female sanctity in Merovingian Gaul' *SCH* 34 (1998) 37-50; J.A. McNamara, 'A legacy of miracles: hagiography and nunneries in Merovingian Gaul', in J. Kirschner and S.F. Wemple (eds.) *Women of the Medieval World* (Oxford, 1985) 36-52; I. Moreira, 'Provisatrix optima: St. Radegund of Poitiers' relic petitions to the East' *JMH* 19 (1993) 285-305; S.F. Wemple *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900*

transmission of the rule from one monastic house to the other is entirely clear. There are two main pieces of evidence for the acquisition of the Caesarian rule by Radegund. The first of these is the letter from Caesaria II, the second abbess of St John, to Radegund and Richilda/Agnes, the abbess of Holy Cross.⁶¹ It was written to Radegund in the early stages of her life at Holy Cross, sometime between 552 and 557.⁶² This letter survives in one manuscript, Troyes, Bibl. Munic., ms. 1248, which dates from the ninth or tenth century.⁶³ Although it has not been possible to study the actual manuscript, the catalogue entry suggests that the letter forms part of a collection of works from the monastery of Holy Cross.⁶⁴ These items - Venantius Fortunatus' *vita* of Radegund, the story of the nun Disciola's death, the tale of another nun, and Caesaria's letter - are all together near the end of the manuscript. The story of Disciola's death shares its *incipit* with the same account in Gregory of Tours' *Histories* (at VI:29), and may therefore be an extract from Gregory's account.⁶⁵ The same collection of texts is found in Poitiers, Bibl. Munic., ms. 250, dating to c. 1100, which suggests that a dossier of texts about Radegund was indeed circulating in the Poitiers area.⁶⁶

The contents of the letter provide an unrivalled insight into the spiritual education of a sixth-century abbess. As considered in the previous chapter, Caesaria II's experience of Caesarian monasticism enabled her to exert a profound influence on the latter stages of the writing of the *Regula virginum*. It is in her own words, however, that Caesaria's combination of deep scriptural knowledge and understanding, and practical experience and wisdom in the monastic life, are most apparent. Most importantly, Caesaria uses, and

(Philadelphia, 1985). It has not been possible to consult the doctoral thesis of M.G. Jenks, 'From Queen to Bishop: A Political Biography of Radegund of Poitiers' (University of California, Berkeley, 1999).

⁶¹ MGH Epp. III (1892) 450-3; de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 476-494. Eng. tr. SWDA, 112-8.

Although the letter is addressed to Radegund and the abbess Richild, de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, at 451-4, puts forward a convincing case for the latter being another name for the well-known abbess Agnes, appointed by Radegund.

⁶² De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 444-5.

⁶³ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 443. There has been some debate over the authenticity of the letter, linked to arguments that Radegund actually travelled to Arles to obtain her copy of the *Regula virginum*, making such a letter redundant. This journey seems unlikely; for further discussion, see below, 89-90.

⁶⁴ CGM II In 4-o, 511-2.

⁶⁵ MGH SSRM 1.1, 295-7.

⁶⁶ CGM XXV, 74-5. My thanks are due to Julia Smith for drawing this manuscript to my attention.

cites, Caesarius' writing, in a more subtle but equally effective example of transmitting his ideas than simply sending a copy of the works in question.

Many of the recommendations in Caesaria's letter are those one would expect to find in a text which summarises the fundamental points of Caesarian monasticism. At times Caesaria displays the craft of an editor. Discussing the correct way to pray, she brings together chapters twenty-two and sixty-six of the *Regula virginum* which both underline the importance of understanding what was being said: 'Stand to attention when you say the psalm, for it is there that He speaks and instructs you: "Sing ye praises with understanding"''.⁶⁷ The first part of this is new, and forms a gloss on Caesarius' 'When you are praying to God in psalms and hymns, let that be meditated upon in the heart which is uttered by the voice', which is itself taken from Augustine's *Praeceptum*, II, 3.⁶⁸ The second phrase, *psallite sapienter*, is used by Caesarius in chapter sixty-six, but originates in Psalms 46:8.⁶⁹ Among exhortations to crucify themselves with the work of God (from *RV* caps. 12; 15), and to think of, speak of, or do nothing else (*Regula* cap. 10), the education of the community takes a prominent place. Caesaria repeats her uncle's requirement that all entrants should learn to read. In her wording, 'Let none enter who have not learnt letters.'⁷⁰ This expands slightly on, and modifies Caesarius' 'All should learn letters.'⁷¹ Caesaria's own monastic environment is clearly one of an educated, comprehending spirituality. The nuns living according to the bishop's rule in Arles were expected to devote their time to prayer, with nothing hindering that *opus Dei*, but were required too to grasp fully the language, implications, and meanings of their activities. They were expected to have the skills to read and learn scriptural and other texts by themselves. While superficially a life at some remove from the world of a Fuscina of Vienne, Caesaria's letter evokes the same literary understanding, and a spirituality both curious and comprehending.

⁶⁷ Eng. tr. *SWDA*, 116.

⁶⁸ *RV* 22; McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*, 176-7; 'Cum vero psalmis et hymnis oratis deum, id versetur in corde, quod profertur in voce'. For more on Caesarius' use of Augustine, see de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 47-55.

⁶⁹ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 252.

⁷⁰ *Nulla sit de intransibilibus, quae non litteras discat*. De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 484.

⁷¹ *Omnes litteras discant*. *RV* 18.

This is apparent, not only in Caesaria's vocabulary, but in the range of texts upon which she draws. Her main source is of course the *Regula virginum*, but the whole gamut of Caesarian writing is referred to at some point. The letter is punctuated with references to Caesarius' sermons, and repetition of the same scriptural citations as Caesarius used. Caesaria also alludes to the *vita Caesarii*, suggesting not only that she herself was familiar with the text but that she expected Radegund and Agnes to have some knowledge of it too. Early in the letter, she repeats the same citation that the authors of the *vita* put into Caesarius' mouth in Book I, chapter 46: "'The meditation of my heart is always in your sight'" [Ps. 19:14].⁷² Perhaps more tellingly, she later describes the nuns of Holy Cross by the same word, *benedictas*, 'blessed women', that the *vita Caesarii* uses for the women of St John, again in the 'speech' of Caesarius himself.⁷³ Although these may be only slight indications of such knowledge of the *vita*, it remains highly likely that the *Life* of Caesarius, the originator of their rule, would have been accessible to the nuns at Holy Cross, and even more so that Baudonivia had read it. Moreover, a likely candidate for sending it to them was Caesaria II herself.

The most revealing of the additional texts of which Caesaria makes use, however, is the letter *Vereor*. The abbess quotes from it on two occasions at the end of her letter. The first of these, concerning entry to the monastery, Dom de Vogüé ascribes to a 'masculine version'; as discussed previously, Caesarius' *regula monachorum* is concluded by an extended extract from *Vereor*.⁷⁴ This similarity in structure between the rule for monks and Caesaria's letter to Radegund are evident. This suggests that Caesaria had access to a copy of the *regula monachorum* which she used alongside a copy of the original *Vereor*, the *Regula virginum* and the *Vita Caesarii*. This in itself is not surprising, as the nuns of St John doubtless had copies of everything Caesarius wrote or preached. Again, however, it reiterates the fluidity of the gender of texts within the community at Arles.

⁷² Noted by de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 478. V.Caes I.46, tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 32-33.

⁷³ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 488; V.Caes, II.26.

⁷⁴ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moines*, 178-9.

As discussed above, the letter to Radegund possesses a unique value as the expression of an early medieval nun's own view of her spiritual life and beliefs.⁷⁵ From a practical point of view, however, it also mentions in passing the way in which a normative text passed between two communities. Caesaria opens her letter, 'Having received your message and read it more than once'.⁷⁶ The female religious community as a potential centre of epistolary activity had been foreseen by Caesarius himself, in legislating against sending or receiving secret letters and gifts.⁷⁷ Knowledge of other communities and their inhabitants could be widespread. Although the ex-queen Radegund remained more of a public figure than the average nun, Caesaria's admonition, 'I have heard that you fast too much', reveals the circulation of news (and, perhaps, gossip) between religious houses.⁷⁸ Against this backdrop, then, Caesaria's letter reveals ongoing communication between the two houses, as she can confirm to Radegund that 'I have done what you requested: I am sending you a copy of the rule which our blessed father lord Caesarius of happy memory made, so that you may see how you can keep it'.⁷⁹ Caesaria's easy access to copies of the *Regula virginum* is evident, and may be a further indication that the nuns of St John were undertaking such scribal work. Equally clear is Radegund's deliberate choice of the Caesarian rule as her preferred option for Holy Cross.

However, based on an ambiguous statement made by Gregory of Tours, some scholars have posited a voyage by Radegund and Agnes to Arles, to obtain a copy of the rule in person. When Maroveus, the bishop of Poitiers, proved less than helpful, Gregory

⁷⁵ Hagiography written by women, such as Baudonivia's *vita* of Radegund, offers its own insights, but there are very few confirmed examples. See S. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 181-187; for an overview of early medieval female literary activity and involvement, see also J. Nelson, 'Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages' in J.-P. Genet (ed.) *L'historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1991), 149-63; the article also appears in J. Nelson, *The Frankish World, 750-900* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996) 183-197. An important article by Rosamond McKitterick, 'Women and Literacy in the Early Middle Ages' in *eadem*, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th – 9th Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994) 1-43, esp. at 22-36, argues that anonymous *vitae* of women may well have had female authors who were not credited.

⁷⁶ Eng. tr. *SWDA*, 114.

⁷⁷ *RV* 25.

⁷⁸ '*Pervenit ad me, quod nimis abstineas*', de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 486. The use of '*tu*' rather than '*vos*' in the following sentence, *Totum rationabiliter fac, si tu mihi vivas et semper possis*, further suggests the personal message to Radegund here: my thanks to Julia Smith for this insight.

⁷⁹ '*Ego feci quod praecepistis: transmisi exemplar de regula, quam nobis beatae et sanctae recordationis domnus papa Caesarius fecit*', de Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 486.

records that ‘she [Radegund] and the mother superior whom she had appointed were forced to turn instead to Arles. There they received the rule of saint Caesarius and the blessed Caesaria.’⁸⁰ The suggestion that Gregory meant to record an actual visit for the purposes of ‘taking’ the rule was first articulated by René Aigrain in 1926.⁸¹ One problem with this theory may lie in Gregory’s own description. His use of the verb *expetere* suggests less a physical journey than a desire or intention or requirement. Further, as de Vogüé points out, while such a visit was possible, given Radegund’s desire to place her foundation under the protection of the deceased bishop, it was highly unlikely it would have been undertaken for the purposes of obtaining the rule.⁸² As de Vogüé notes, other dateable events in Gregory’s narrative suggest that this visit could not have taken place before about 570.⁸³ The late date of a putative visit, several years after the foundation of Holy Cross, must suggest that the monastery had already been living according to a rule. If a visit was undertaken, it would imply that Radegund and Agnes were aware of the contents of the rule, in order for the lengthy voyage to be deemed useful. It is far more probable that the connection between Caesaria and Radegund was one of correspondence.

A variety of evidence exists for Radegund’s life as for few other early medieval figures, and many of the narrative sources describing her activities also refer to her adoption of Caesarius’ *Regula virginum*. Gregory of Tours’ *Libri Historiarum* provide valuable information on the use of the rule, particularly due to his citation of the foundation letters of Holy Cross.⁸⁴ In the previous chapter, Radegund’s reference to ‘the Rule in accordance with which Saint Caesaria had lived, and which in his loving care Saint Caesarius had drawn up... to suit her very needs’ was noted.⁸⁵ In the letter to Radegund from the bishops, reference is made to the fact that a woman who has entered

⁸⁰ Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks* IX:40, tr. L. Thorpe, 530. ‘Post haec, cum ponteficis sui saepius gratiam quaereret nec possit adipisci, necessitate commota, cum abbatissa sua, quam instituerat, Arelatensem urbem expetunt.’ MGH SRM 1.1, 464.

⁸¹ R. Aigrain, ‘Le voyage de Sainte Radegonde à Arles’, *Bulletin philologique et historique* (1926-7), 119-27.

⁸² De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 448-9.

⁸³ De Vogüé, *Œuvres pour les moniales*, 446.

⁸⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* IX:39-42. Ed. Krusch, MGH SSRM 1, 460-6.

⁸⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* IX.42, tr. Thorpe, 535.

the monastery, ‘according to the Rule of Caesarius, Bishop of Arles, of blessed memory, ... shall never have the right to leave it’.⁸⁶ The significance of this letter is that the bishops concerned (Eufronius of Tours, Praetextatus of Rouen, Germanus of Paris, Felix of Nantes, Domitianus of Angers, Victorius of Rennes, and Domnolus of Le Mans) were clearly aware of the requirements of the rule; by the 550s, knowledge of the rule had spread over a wide geographical area.

The *Vitae* composed by both Venantius Fortunatus and the nun Baudonivia refer to Radegund’s adoption of the Caesarian rule.⁸⁷ Praising Radegund’s zeal for undertaking the menial tasks of the monastery, Fortunatus exclaims ‘How can anyone describe her excited fervour as she ran into the kitchen, doing her week of chores?’⁸⁸ Subsequently, Fortunatus also notes that ‘Further she never flagged in supporting the sick and even before she took up the Rule of Arles did her weekly tour of service preparing plenty of warm water for them all.’⁸⁹ Radegund’s practice is clearly taken directly from the *Regula virginum*: ‘As in the kitchen, so in every ministration to bodily needs, in whatever the daily need requires, they shall take turns with one another, except the mother and the prioress’.⁹⁰

Fortunatus evidently had a good understanding of the requirements of the *Regula virginum*, but this was surpassed by Radegund’s second biographer, the nun Baudonivia.⁹¹ Brought up in Holy Cross from an early age – ‘I am the smallest of the small ones she nourished familiarly from the cradle as her own child at her feet!’⁹² – Baudonivia’s understanding and conceptions of monastery life were shaped by the Arles rule. On occasion, she makes direct reference to the rule. Even for Radegund’s funeral, the nuns did not leave Holy Cross: ‘Since it was ordained that no living person should issue out of the gates of the monastery, the whole flock stood on the walls while they

⁸⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* IX.39, tr. Thorpe, 528.

⁸⁷ For further examples of this, see S. Coates, ‘Regendering Radegund?’, 48-9.

⁸⁸ *Vita sanctae Radegundis* 24, Krusch (ed.) MGH SSRM 2 358-76, ed. and tr. SWDA 80.

⁸⁹ *Vita Radegundis* I, 24, tr. SWDA, 81.

⁹⁰ RV 14.

⁹¹ Krusch (ed.) MGH SSRM II 377-95; tr. SWDA, 86-105.

⁹² *Vita Radegundis* II, *praefatio*, tr. SWDA, 86.

bore the holy body with psalms beneath the walls'.⁹³ This echoes Caesarius' 'she must never, up to the time of her death, go out of the monastery'.⁹⁴ There are many more instances where Baudonivia's knowledge of the rule informs the way in which she describes Radegund's activities. One section in particular, first highlighted by McNamara and Halborg, seems to describe Radegund's activities in terms of their relationship to the *Regula virginum*.⁹⁵ Radegund 'would not allow her maid to minister to her';⁹⁶ this suggests, but does not follow slavishly, Caesarius' requirement that 'No one, not even the abbess, may be permitted to have her own maid for her service'.⁹⁷ Radegund's reluctance to use her maid is perhaps intended to indicate the ex-queen's strength of will even more than the complete absence of such assistance would have done. A subsequent passage would have pleased Caesarius immensely. One of Radegund's virtues is the 'incessant meditating on the law of God by day and by night'⁹⁸: this is reminiscent not only of the *Regula*, which makes mention several times of the need for constant meditation, '...when the reading has ceased, holy meditation of the heart shall not cease' (cap. 18), which demands of the nuns 'Whatever work you may be doing at a time when there is no reading, always ruminate on something from divine Scriptures' (cap.22), but also of the *Vita Caesarii*, which records that 'No hour of the day passed him by without meditation on the divine word, not even when he was sleeping'.⁹⁹ The fact that Holy Cross possessed a copy of the *Vita Caesarii* to accompany their copy of the rule appears even more probable from a later passage of Baudonivia's *Life*, which is taken almost verbatim from Book II of the *Vita Caesarii*. Baudonivia asks 'Oh God, oh goodly sculptor, who now can even recapture her look, her form, her being? Indeed it is painful to remember what she was like. For we humbled ones long for her teaching, the form and face, person, knowledge, piety, goodness and sweetness that she had in herself from the Lord that made her special among other people.'¹⁰⁰ The derivation from the *Vita Caesarii* is clear:

⁹³ *Vita Radegundis* II 24, tr. SWDA, 103.

⁹⁴ RV 2; tr. McCarthy, 171.

⁹⁵ SWDA, 90, n.94

⁹⁶ *Vita Radegundis* II 8, tr. SWDA, 91.

⁹⁷ RV 7; McCarthy, 173.

⁹⁸ *Vita Radegundis* II 8, tr. SWDA, 91.

⁹⁹ V. Caes I.46, tr. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 32-33.

¹⁰⁰ *Vita Radegundis* II 19, tr. SWDA, 101: *Nam qualem vultum, Deus, plasmator bone, qualem faciam, qualem personam habuit, quis potest unquam exponere? Sed et hoc reminisci supplitium est. Nos vero humiles desideramus in ea doctrinam, formam, vultum, personam, scientiam, pietatem, bonitatem,*

‘Who can ever describe, good God, holy creator, what sort of expression, what sort of appearance, what sort of character [he had]? Holy father, we miss your instruction, your beauty, your expression, your character, your knowledge, and the charm you (among others) had as a special gift from the Lord.’¹⁰¹ Not only had Radegund brought the rule of Caesarius to Holy Cross, her community constructed her sanctity on the pattern of his. Baudonivia could describe the female founder of Holy Cross in exactly the same language in which the male founder of St John had been described. Clearly both Baudonivia and Fortunatus used and adapted the models of sanctity that were available to them, of whom perhaps the most obvious is Martin of Tours. However, Baudonivia’s particular use of the *Vita Caesarii* shows a desire to align Holy Cross even more strongly with Arles and Caesarian monasticism, and to distance her monastery from the episcopal power politics of Poitiers.¹⁰² The defensive use of the *RV* at Holy Cross brings to the fore issues that female communities could face, even those founded by queens, and suggests possible reasons for selecting a particular rule.

Arles in successive generations: the *vita Rusticulae*

With the death of Caesaria II in the 550s, the leadership of the monastery of St John ceased to be the exclusive preserve of the family of the Caesarii. However, before moving away from the current focus on St John, there remains one last source which can shed light on practices at the monastery in the generations after Caesarius’ death.¹⁰³ A *vita* of the fourth abbess, Rusticula, was written soon after her death in 632, at the

dulcedinem, quam specialem a domino inter ceteros homines habuit. Krusch (ed.) MGH SRM 2:391.

Krusch notes several instances where Baudonivia’s text is taken from the *Vita Caesarii*; these were augmented by W.E. Klingshirn, ‘Caesarius’ monastery for women in Arles and the composition and function of the *Vita Caesarii*’ *Revue Bénédictine* 100 (1990) 441-81, at 476-80. Fortunatus does not cite from the *vita Caesarii* at all.

¹⁰¹ *V. Caes II.35: Nam qualem vultum, deus bone, plasmator sancte, qualem faciem, qualem personam, quis potest unquam exponere? Nos vero desideramus in te, sancte pater, doctrinam, formam, vultum, personam, scientiam, dulcedinem, quam specialem a domino inter ceteros homines habuisti.* Morin II, 339.

¹⁰² See also S. Coates, ‘Regendering Radegund?’, 45-6.

¹⁰³ Indeed, a historian of the monastery writing for one of its seventeenth-century abbesses claims that the early nuns at St John were far more interested in deeds than in words: ‘Je pourrais bien dire au sujet de sainte Liliola, sans offenser la vérité, que les premières Religieuses du celebre monastère de Saint Césaire ont pris un plus grand soin de se faire elles-mêmes des saintes, que non pas d’écrire les actions des autres’ (f.14). This fascinating document, now Arles, Bibl. Munic. ms. 168, is unedited.

instigation of her successor Celsa.¹⁰⁴ It offers a snapshot of the monastery and its rule almost a hundred and fifty years after the foundation of the monastery and the writing of the rule. It also provides a far greater chance than does the *Regula virginum* itself to assess the way in which the use of a normative text played out against the external events that could affect a monastery. In that sense, it contributes immensely to any consideration of the divergences between directive and practice. As a young girl, Rusticula seems to have been something of a prize, perhaps because the early deaths of her *clarissimus* father and brother had left her a considerable heiress. At the age of only five, she was abducted by a nobleman named Ceraonius, who took her to his home to be raised by his mother. Liliola, the third abbess of St John, intervened, asking Syagrius of Autun to help her approach king Guntram. Guntram duly ruled that the girl should be sent to St John: the pleas of Rusticula's mother were ignored. The entry of such a wealthy child would, of course, boost the fortunes of the monastery. It may be that Liliola was in a position to request such a favour from the king, as she had agreed to house the former queen Theudechild, Charibert's widow.¹⁰⁵ A monastery vowed to perpetual enclosure could have a useful dual function as an aristocratic prison.¹⁰⁶

The entry of Rusticula at the age of five or six (she is described as *in rudimentis infantiae*, which would suggest an age still below the age of reason of seven) contravenes Caesarius' regulations.¹⁰⁷ These prohibit the entry of children below the age of seven, on the grounds that they are too young to learn either behaviour or letters.¹⁰⁸ At the age of only eighteen, Rusticula was chosen as abbess on the death of Liliola. The *vita* suggests

¹⁰⁴ *Vitae Rusticulae*, Krusch ed. MGH SSRM 4:337-51. Krusch believed the text to be a Carolingian forgery, modelled on an incident from the *vita Caesarii*, based on his opinion that the style is too good for the seventh century. Pierre Riché has refuted this on the grounds that the region's literary heritage would in fact make a seventh-century text more plausible than a ninth-century one, given the Viking and Saracen raids of the period: P. Riché, 'La Vita S. Rusticulae: Note d'hagiographie mérovingienne', *Analecta Bollandiana* 72 (1954) 369-77. The earliest surviving copy of the *vita* dates only from the fourteenth century, although thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Provençal missals list Rusticula's feast day; Riché, 'La Vita S. Rusticulae', 370. See also V. Le Roquais, *Les Breviaires manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France* (Paris, 1934), *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV:26. Liliola is mentioned in Venantius Fortunatus' *de Virginitate: Carmina* VIII, 3, vv. 33-4 (MGH AA IV:1, 182. This implies ongoing contacts between Arles and Poitiers, even after Caesaria II had died.

¹⁰⁶ See also R. Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence, and Competition for Power in Seventh-Century Francia' in F. Theuvs and M. de Jong (eds.) *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001) 243-269.

¹⁰⁷ For Rusticula's age, *Vita Rusticulae* 4.

¹⁰⁸ Caesarius' stipulations on the age on entry to the monastery are in *RV* 7.

that, as Caesarius had expected, the nuns themselves chose her successor on the basis of her spiritual qualities.¹⁰⁹ However, the Rule also makes plain the more worldly qualities the new abbess should be expected to possess: ‘elect a holy and spiritual nun, who can effectively guard the rule of the monastery, and who shall be able to converse wisely with those who come to her, and with edification and humility and with holy affection’.¹¹⁰ The monastery needed an abbess who was endowed with not only spiritual but also worldly authority and practical wisdom. The community may have considered the aristocratic Rusticula to be a good candidate despite her youth.

Following Rusticula’s election as abbess, three major themes or events are depicted in her *vita*: her activities as abbess, including major building projects; an accusation of treason against king Clothar II; and an extended description of her death. Each of these illuminate aspects of the life of the community and the relationship between the community and Caesarius’ *regula*.

Rusticula’s building work seems to have spanned a long period of her abbacy. It included ‘temples’ [*templa*] in honour of unspecified saints, a church initially dedicated to the Holy Cross and subsequently to the Archangel Michael, and ultimately a ‘temple of sparkling beauty’, which had seven altars dedicated to the Holy Cross, Gabriel, Raphael, Thomas, Maurice, Sebastian and Pontius.¹¹¹ Rusticula’s dedication to the Holy Cross is noteworthy, and may stem from the connection between Arles and Radegund’s community of Holy Cross in Poitiers.¹¹² As will be discussed below, several of Rusticula’s miracles were performed with the aid of an actual relic of the Holy Cross, which similarly may have come from Poitiers. This would imply a continuing close relationship between the two communities, in which valuable objects were circulated.¹¹³ It seems equally probable that if the nuns at Holy Cross sent the community in Arles a piece of their most precious relic, the nuns of St John may in turn have parted with a relic

¹⁰⁹ RV 61.

¹¹⁰ RV 61, tr. McCarthy, 190.

¹¹¹ *Vita Rusticulae* 8.

¹¹² Riché believes that this interest resulted from Radegund’s putative visit to Arles in c.570, see ‘La Vita S. Rusticulae’, 372. Whether this visit ever indeed took place, it would appear likely that ongoing connections and communication between the two communities suggested the dedication to Rusticula.

¹¹³ See *SWDA*, 127, n.27.

of Caesarius, although there is no extant evidence for this. A further facet of Rusticula's building activity is her interest in other saints. Caesarius had made no provision for the celebration of the holy dead through either the possession of physical relics or liturgical commemoration; indeed, the absence of relics may have been a way of avoiding the need for public entry into the monastery.¹¹⁴ It may be significant in this context that Rusticula only added altars to the four named saints 'after some years', as enough time had elapsed for memories of Caesarius' tradition to have faded. Rusticula's saints are a mixture of the universal and the local. The apostle Thomas and Sebastian are of course Biblical and patristic; Maurice is probably the leader of the Theban Legion of the same name, whose relics were held at the monastery of Agaune in Burgundy; and Pontius, a third-century martyr of Cimiez near Nice.¹¹⁵ In and of itself, the amount of building work carried out under Rusticula suggests a sizeable, healthy community with funds to spare for such a large project.

The very size, importance, relative wealth and visibility of the community, however, made its abbess a noteworthy figure in the political sphere. Rusticula's biographer Florentius makes no reference to any participation in matters outside the monastery, with the result that her arrest comes as even more of an apparent outrage.¹¹⁶ In fact, Rusticula's role in political events may have been bequeathed to her by her predecessor Liliola. Riché points out that Liliola's agreement to imprison Theudechild on behalf of Guntram established links between the kings of Burgundy and the monastery. In 613, king Clothar defeated the army of Sigebert II of Austrasia and Burgundy at Châlons-sur-Marne, and pursued the royal family. The young Childebert, Sigebert's brother, escaped, and Riché suggests that he either fled to Arles or was believed by Clothar to have done so.¹¹⁷ In any case, efforts were made to extract Rusticula from the

¹¹⁴ The burial of the holy dead within monastery precincts was a practice only developing in the sixth century: see J.M.H. Smith, 'Women at the tomb: Access to relic shrines in the early middle ages' in Mitchell, K. and Wood, I. (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002) 163-180, at 171.

¹¹⁵ D.H. Farmer *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1992).

¹¹⁶ The *vita*'s author, Florentius, only identifies himself in the preface as a priest of *Tricastina*, now Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, about thirty kilometres from Vaison. Riché, 'La Vita S. Rusticulae', 375-6, speculates that he may have fulfilled some function in the monastery, perhaps as almoner, or had been brought up there.

¹¹⁷ Riché, 'La Vita S. Rusticulae', 373-4. For more on royal dynastic relations, see I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London, 1994), at 140-4.

monastery to face examination on charges of sheltering the royal fugitive. In addition to creating one of the most dramatic moments in the narrative, this highlights attitudes to the permanent enclosure so strongly enforced by Caesarius. On the one hand, it is evident that neither the king nor local officials saw the monastery's rule as a particular bar to gaining access to Rusticula. One such, Audoald, a follower of the local governor Ricomer, tried to strike Rusticula with a sword.¹¹⁸ Clearly, Caesarius' prohibitions on entry to the community were not a sufficient deterrent. On the other hand, both Rusticula and her nuns clung to the requirements of enclosure as a defence against the summons to answer the charges against her. The governor of the city, Nymfidius, had to be persuaded to go to the monastery and ask her to come out voluntarily, suggesting that lay optimates had no authority to remove her by force, even if they themselves felt able to go in. After seven days' imprisonment at an unnamed monastery in Arles, for which an obvious possible location must be Aurelian's foundation of St Mary, Rusticula was taken to Clothar. In the meantime, bishop Domnolus of Vienne interceded for her, possibly at the synod of Paris in 614.¹¹⁹ As Riché notes, the theme of this synod was the defence of the rights of the Church against abuses of royal power.¹²⁰ This episode is a sharp reminder of the place of abbesses and their monasteries within the wider church. It is easy to perceive female communities as being on the fringes of the church, concerned only with their own activities: indeed, the surviving rules, typically written by a bishop for a named individual woman, can foster that impression.¹²¹ Domnolus' intervention underlines both a general awareness of female communities and the fact that they were perceived to be an integral part of the body of the Church.

The long description of Rusticula's death provides a strong insight into the expected role of the abbess in the monastery. At seventy-seven, Rusticula had been abbess for fifty-nine years; in that time, it is likely that most nuns would have known no

¹¹⁸ For Ricomer's status, see *SWDA*, 127, n. 30.

¹¹⁹ Riché, 'La Vita S. Rusticulae', 374. See also O. Pontal, *Die Synoden im Merowingerreich* (Paderborn, 1986), at 183, for Domnolus' presence at the council.

¹²⁰ Riché, 'La Vita S. Rusticulae', 374.

¹²¹ The obvious examples are Caesarius himself, Leander of Seville, and Donatus of Besançon.

other abbess.¹²² Florentius, writing about the dead abbess, seems to reflect the views of the community at this point more than any other. Rusticula is cast as a wise and loving mother: ‘This was her constant effort, her constant intent, that none of her flock should be afflicted with needless sadness or burdened with excessive labours or grow weary, but she, with a fervent spirit, would still herd them all to rest... They had all come to know her compassion for them, for she would count their sorrows as her own, suffering with their afflictions and reviving as they recovered.’ Rusticula also fulfilled her spiritual and educational responsibilities: ‘I cannot express how she corrected them with such sweet words and pious charity that she did not punish them like a mistress but with a mother’s loving kindness instructed them with beneficial advice.’¹²³ Ultimately, Florentius acknowledges that the *vita* forms part of a grieving process for the nuns: ‘But why prolong this? For the more you count up all you have lost, virgins of Christ, though we speak to commemorate such a handmaid of God with praising lips, the more your sorrow overcomes you.’¹²⁴

Beyond this valuable insight into the emotional life of the monastery, the description of Rusticula’s death and funeral also furnishes concrete information on procedures at St John. The body of the abbess was taken from the monastery to be buried in the basilica of St Mary, as discussed in the Rule and also in the *Constitutum* of Caesaria II.¹²⁵ Yet again, however, the eventual fate of Rusticula’s remains would not have found any basis in the texts composed by Caesarius. Her body was ultimately moved to the cathedral of St Trophime (where some relics may still be seen), and her head was retained by the monastery.¹²⁶ Neither does the *Regula* make mention of the male ‘servants of the monastery’ who were present at the obsequies. In one case, ‘one of the monastery’s elderly servants loudly bewailed the loss of his eyesight’, a second

¹²² Krusch suggests that the dating of the *vita* is inconsistent, which is one of the reasons for his belief that the text is a later forgery. Riché argues that the text concurs with other known events, ‘La Vita S. Rusticulae’, 375.

¹²³ *Vita Rusticulae* 22, trans. SWDA 133.

¹²⁴ *Vita Rusticulae* 24, trans. SWDA 135.

¹²⁵ RV 70.

¹²⁶ J-M. Besse et al, *Abbayes et prieurés de l'ancienne France: recueil historique des archevêchés, évêchés, abbayes et prieurés de France* (Paris, 1905-1943) II, 77.

‘sorely lamented that he had lost the ability to walk because of an illness’.¹²⁷ The continuing presence of these men despite their disabilities suggests a monastic community which extended beyond the nuns themselves, in which servants who could no longer work were still resident or at least associated with St John. Of course, it is probable that such people were employed by and resident at the monastery from its foundation. The specific prohibition against personal maids or slaves (*Regula virginum* cap. 7) may have been intended to differentiate such women from general servants employed by the monastery as a whole – and this is a salutary reminder that even in Caesarius’ day the community at St John was composed of more people than simply nuns.

In sum, the *Vita Rusticulae* provides several valuable insights into the monastery of St John in the years after not only Caesarius’ death, but also those of Caesaria I and II. Insofar as issues such as the employment of servants are concerned, this relatively late source may in fact illuminate practices that had always been part of the living arrangements at the monastery, but that Caesarius had never needed or wanted to mention. As a closer reflection of its own time, it shows the nuns – and in particular their abbesses – taking action to find a safe place for themselves and their monastery in the ebb and flow of political life. In this, the provisions of the *Regula virginum* proved to be immensely useful.

Early transmission: Use in later sixth-century rules

The *Regula virginum* of Caesarius was not only sent to Poitiers. It was also used as a model for three Provençal rules composed in the later sixth century: Aurelian of Arles’ *Regula monachorum* and *Regula virginum*; Ferreolus of Uzès’ rule for monks; and the anonymous *Regula Tarnantensis*. In the cases of the latter two rules, the means by which their authors obtained copies of the *Regula virginum* is unknown. All three of

¹²⁷ *Vita Rusticulae* 25, 26; trans. SWDA 135.

these rules survive only through the collection of Benedict of Aniane; this in itself cannot be an indication that these were the only texts composed around this time.

a) Aurelian of Arles, *Regula monachorum, regula virginum*

It is not necessary to go far to find the first monastic rule to use Caesarius' as a source: one of his immediate successors took up the rule designed for St John. Aurelian became Bishop of Arles in 546, the second successor to Caesarius.¹²⁸ Selected by the king, Childebert, he was the son of Sacerdos, bishop of Lyon, and aged twenty-three when chosen. Very quickly, Aurelian founded a monastery for men, Holy Apostles, which was dedicated on November 17, 547.¹²⁹ Its first abbot was Florentinus, who may have been related to Aurelian, installed on October 12 of that year, and who died in 553.¹³⁰ One of the Arlesian documents preserved by Benedict of Aniane in his *Codex Regularum* was a seventh-century diptych of the monastery of Holy Apostles.¹³¹ This is a fascinating document and starkly underlines the differences between this monastery and that of St John. Firstly, the king and queen are commemorated as important figures in the history of the monastery alongside previous abbots: '*Simulque precantes oramus etiam, Domine, pro animabus famulorum tuorum patrum atque institutorum quondam nostrorum, Aureliani, Petri, Florentini, Redempti, Constantini, Himiteri, Hilarini, Januarini, Reparati, Childebert, Ultragothae vel omnium fratrum*'.¹³² Childebert I (coincidentally Radegund's brother-in-law during her marriage) and his wife, Ultragotha, were keenly interested in founding religious houses; Provence had only been ceded to the Franks by the Visigoth Vitiges in 537. Until that date, Arles had been part of the Ostrogothic kingdom, which was Arian in belief. As bishop, Caesarius had to some extent benefited from Arian Gothic rule, in that he had had no other Catholic authorities – aside from the Pope – to rival him. In matters such as the foundation of St John, therefore, he had been able to do largely as he pleased. When Provence was ceded to the

¹²⁸ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 262.

¹²⁹ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 263.

¹³⁰ *CIL* XII:944. The sarcophagus still survives: the verses on the side form an acrostic: *Florentinus abbas hic in pace quiescit. Amen.*

¹³¹ P. Bernard, 'Les diptyques du monastère des Saints-Apôtres d'Arles au VIIe siècle', *RHEF* 89 (2003) 5-21.

¹³² *GC* I: 600.

Franks, Caesarius found himself part of a Catholic kingdom, in which there were not only other metropolitan bishops but also royal and aristocratic wielders of power who had interests in the Christian government of cities, monasteries and the people therein. This was the situation Aurelian inherited – indeed, his selection as bishop was the result of Childebert’s involvement.

As Klingshirn suggests, ‘these displays of patronage furnished opportunities for forging good relations with the Gallo-Roman cities under their control.’¹³³ For his part of this new episcopal-royal alliance in making foundations such as these, Aurelian did not allow the community to forget whence its resources had come. The prologue to the rule opens with the salutation ‘*Sanctis et in Christo venerandis fratribus in monasterio, quod deo miserante ac iubente rege Hildeberto fecimus*’.¹³⁴ Outside endowment was crucial to its foundation, and this was echoed by a reminder close to the end of the rule for monks: ‘...by the favour of God worthy and sufficient resources have been collected for you’.¹³⁵

The second point of importance stems from a list of relics, attached to this liturgical document, that Aurelian gave to his monastery.¹³⁶ Among the three confessors listed is Caesarius. Unfortunately the list does not specify the nature of the relics, but the degree of recognition accorded to the former bishop is immediately noticeable. It is also a point of interest that relics of Caesarius had been distributed within five years of his death. The possession of relics differentiated it from Caesarius’ own foundations, which had none in his own lifetime.¹³⁷

The material situation of this foundation also differed from that of Caesarius. Indeed, it was probably in part a response to the advent of royally sponsored monasteries

¹³³ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 262-3. Childebert and Ultragotha also founded a *xenodochium* in Lyon.

¹³⁴ ‘To the holy and honoured in Christ brothers in the monastery, that we founded by the mercy of God and the order of king Childebert’. The text of the rule is available in PL 68: 385-398. See also A. Schmidt, ‘Zur Komposition der Mönchsregel des Heiligen Aurelian von Arles’, I (critical edition), *Studia Monastica* 17 (1975) 237-256; II (commentary), *Studia Monastica* 18 (1976) 17-54; for a French translation, V. Desprez (ed.) *Règles Monastiques d’Occident IVe – VIe siècle* (Bagnolles-en-Mauge, 1980) 223-251.

¹³⁵ ‘*Et ... deo propitio digna et sufficiens vobis facultas conlata est*’. *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 54.

¹³⁶ Edited in P. Bernard, ‘Les diptyques du monastère’, 13-14.

¹³⁷ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 263.

in Arles that abbess Caesaria commissioned the *Vita Caesarii*.¹³⁸ Less is known of the circumstances of Aurelian's new monastery for women, but it has been assigned to the same year,¹³⁹ and possibly was located on the site of the church of St Mary Major, very close to the monastery of St John.¹⁴⁰ It was also probably endowed by Childebert, given that chapter 39 of the female rule was the same as chapter 54 of the monks', mentioning the king.¹⁴¹

Aurelian's rule for virgins is heavily dependent on his rule for monks, repeating many of the same prescriptions. Removing obviously inappropriate elements (such as regulations for tonsure and ordination),¹⁴² it also reduces the number of psalms to be said by the nuns.¹⁴³ Whereas the monks' church of Holy Apostles was forbidden to the public, the nuns' basilica of St Mary could be entered by both men and lay women.¹⁴⁴ This would appear to signal a difference in Aurelian's priorities from those of Caesarius. The important work of prayer was being undertaken by his male community, whose focus for devotions could not be disturbed. By contrast, the nuns' basilica was one of only two places, alongside the *salutatorium* (parlour), where outsiders were welcome. The regulated entry of men (be they clerics or lay) into women's monasteries was taken up by the synod of Mâcon (583), which stated that such men would be permitted to enter, if of recognised virtue and a good age, as far as the *salutatorium*.¹⁴⁵ The presence of several Provençal bishops at the synod (Victor of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Ragnoald of Valence, Pappus of Apt, and Artemius of Vaison), mindful of the practices established at Arles, may have promoted this measure here.

However, by far the majority of the rules' chapters are the same, and in referring largely to the rule for monks, this study in fact considers both rules together, as far as is

¹³⁸ W.E. Klingshirn 'Caesarius' monastery for women'; C. Leyser *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), 90.

¹³⁹ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 263. Aurelian's rule for virgins is in *PL* 68:399.

¹⁴⁰ Desprez, *Règles Monastiques*, 224.

¹⁴¹ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 263.

¹⁴² *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 4; 46.

¹⁴³ *Reg. Aureliani virginum* 38.

¹⁴⁴ *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* and *virginum* 14.

¹⁴⁵ Mâcon (581) can. 2. MGH Conc. III, 155-162. Similar sentiments are also expressed by canon 38 of the synod of Epaon, albeit without reference to the use of the *salutatorium*. MGH Conc. III, 15-31.

appropriate. In writing his rules, however, this was not the methodology Aurelian chose. He clearly distinguished between Caesarius' rules for virgins and monks. One clear example of this is in the conditions for entry, where he states that 'Until his death, no-one shall presume or be permitted to leave the monastery...' ¹⁴⁶ This is drawn from Caesarius' rule for virgins ('none of you shall be permitted to leave the monastery until her death, or shall presume to leave on her own accord') ¹⁴⁷ and not from his rule for monks, which merely requires the monks to persevere until death. ¹⁴⁸ Aurelian chose the more stringent directive, which suited his purpose, even though it had originally been intended for a community of women. On the other hand, one somewhat unclear chapter of the rule for nuns may suggest that his nuns *were* permitted to leave the monastery of St Mary. Chapter twelve states that 'no nun will be allowed to leave for [the purposes of] greeting, unless with the abbess or prioress, or with another senior nun whom the abbess has delegated.' ¹⁴⁹ Does this describe a nun leaving the monastery, or simply her current task, or dormitory? Notwithstanding Caesarius' regulation, the Council of Orléans in 549 still made separate provision for dedicated women who were expected to remain permanently enclosed and those who were not. ¹⁵⁰ Aurelian also took some regulations from Caesarius' rule for monks, in preference to his *Regula virginum*. Chapters nine and ten, forbidding the taking of oaths and insulting others, are repetitions of chapters four and six from the Caesarian rule for monks. This is not hard to understand. As a 'second recapitulation' of the *Regula virginum*, Caesarius' rule for monks provides much shorter (and often much easier to grasp) statements than its feminine counterpart. While the ban on oaths is, for Caesarius' monks, a simple 'Do not swear, because the Lord said: Do not swear at all, but let your conversation be: yes, yes, no, no', ¹⁵¹ the prohibition given to nuns is the much more reasoned 'Exert [yourselves] to flee and avoid swearing and cursing, as if from the

¹⁴⁶ *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 2: *Exceptus vero usque ad mortem suam nec praesumat, nec permittatur de monasterio egredi, propter illud propheticum: Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitae meae* (Psal. XXVI) PL 68:389.

¹⁴⁷ RV 50: 'nulla ex vobis usque ad mortem suam de monasterio egredi... aut permittatur, aut per seipsam praesumat exire'.

¹⁴⁸ *Reg. Mon.* 1.

¹⁴⁹ 'Nulli liceat ad salutandum exire, nisi cum abbatisa aut praeposita, vel certe alia quacunque seniore cui abbatisa praeceperit.' PL 68: 401. Desprez translates '*ad salutandum*' as 'un entretien', 'a conversation', which also leaves Aurelian's intention unclear. V. Desprez (ed.) *Règles Monastiques*, 252.

¹⁵⁰ Orléans (549) can. 19. MGH Conc. I, 107.

¹⁵¹ *Reg. Mon.* 4: 'Non iurent, quia Dominus dixit: Nolite iurare omnino, sed sermo vester: est, est, non, non'.

poison of the devil'.¹⁵² Aurelian's version is even briefer: '*Non juretis: quia Dominus dixit: Nolite jurare*' ('Do not swear: because the Lord said: do not swear'), to which, admittedly, he does add another scriptural citation.¹⁵³ The respective chapters of these rules were gradually stripped back to their basic message.

As in the rule of Caesarius, Aurelian provides for the entertainment of visiting religious. Both forbid the provision of meals for relatives, bishops, lay people or local dignitaries. In a slight relaxation of this stricture, Aurelian also permits the entry of 'approved' lay men, whom the monks could meet in the presence of the abbot, the prior or another senior monk.¹⁵⁴ While Caesarius and Aurelian's rules for nuns permit the entry of dedicated women of unblemished character and travelling abbots and monks,¹⁵⁵ the latter's rule for monks forbids the entry of any women, whether a relative or not, and whether *religiosae* or *saeculares*.¹⁵⁶ This is in itself a useful reminder of the continued existence of such women who did not reside in formally defined and enclosed communities. It also begs the question of why such dedicated women might have wanted to enter a community of men. Clearly the widowed mothers or sisters of the inhabitants might have visited; a more intriguing possibility might be that of the nuns of St John making the pilgrimage to visit relics there. In any case, neither men nor relics were to be accessible to women.

In one difference with the monastery of St John, the provisor did not have to be a religious. Aurelian notes that 'even the *provisors* of the monastery, if they wear lay habit, will not be permitted to enter'.¹⁵⁷ This was repeated in his rule for nuns. This might reflect Aurelian's closer connections with his royal patrons: those acting as stewards for the abbey might be in some senses have been co-appointed by all those with an interest in the monasteries.

¹⁵² RV 3 : '*Iuramentum et maledictum velut venenum diaboli fugere et vitare contendunt*'.

¹⁵³ *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 16.

¹⁵⁵ RV 39; 40. *Reg. Aureliani virginum* 14.

¹⁵⁶ *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 15.

¹⁵⁷ *Reg. Aureliani monachorum* 19.

b) *Regula Tarnantensis*

The *Regula Tarnantensis* is the second of those dating from the sixth century to make use of the *Regula virginum*. It was composed for an unknown monastery and is only known from its inclusion in Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum*. As de Vogüé suggests, the monastery was probably in the south of Gaul, as it makes use of the rules of Caesarius (for virgins) and Aurelian (for monks), alongside those of Pachomius, Basil and Augustine.¹⁵⁸ The only piece of information with which to locate it is that it was next to a river wide enough to require a boat to cross it (*R. Tar* 4,5).¹⁵⁹ In terms of dating, it appears to predate the *regula Ferrioli*, since the latter uses elements of it, and de Vogüé therefore dates it to the third quarter of the sixth century.¹⁶⁰

Of the twenty-three chapters of the rule, the first thirteen are based on a variety of sources, and chapters fourteen onwards derive largely from Augustine's *Praeceptum*.¹⁶¹ The use of the *Regula virginum* is evident in a variety of areas. As with the *Regula Ferreoli* (see below, 106-9), the author of this rule re-used Caesarius' provision for the reading of the rule before allowing a postulant formal entry.¹⁶² The *regula Tarnantensis* also quotes extensively from Caesarius' prohibition on private living quarters and individual wardrobes (*RTar* 2; *RV* 9), and from his warning on coming late to work (*RTar* 5; *RV* 12). Interestingly it is possible to see that the author of the *regula Tarnantensis* tended to use Caesarius' *Regula virginum* in preference to the *Regula monachorum*, even though he himself was writing for monks. In his use of Caesarius' decree that no-one could choose their own work, for instance, he uses the version from the nuns' rule rather than that for monks (*RTar* 12; *RV* 8). The interest of the *Regula Tarnantensis* therefore lies mainly in the suggestion that the influence of the *Regula*

¹⁵⁸ A. de Vogüé, *Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes (400-700)* Typologie des Sources 46 (Turnhout, 1985), 59. The rule is available at *PL* 66: 977-986. See also F. Villegas, 'La *'Regula monasterii Tarnantensis'*. Texte, sources et datation', *Revue Bénédictine* 84 (1974) 7-65.

¹⁵⁹ Villegas, 'La *'Regula monasterii Tarnantensis'*', 7.

¹⁶⁰ De Vogüé, *Les Règles Monastiques Anciens*, 59.

¹⁶¹ Villegas, 'La *'Regula monasterii Tarnantensis'*', 8.

¹⁶² *RTar* 1; *RV* 58.

virginum had penetrated as far as the location of this monastery, and that Caesarius' *Regula monachorum* had not. This suggests that the circulation of the rule for nuns was much wider than Caesarius' own rule for monks.

c) Ferreolus of Uzès, *Regula*

Moving slightly north-west from Arles takes us to the location of the third sixth-century borrowing from the *Regula virginum*. Ferreolus, the bishop of Uzès from 553 to his death in 581, composed a rule for the monastery of Ferreolac, named for the third-century martyr of Vienne, which he founded in the diocese of Die.¹⁶³ As with the *reguli Aureliani* and *Tarnantensis*, it survives only in Benedict of Aniane's collection of monastic texts, now Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm 28118. Neither is knowledge of Ferreolus himself particularly wide. Gregory of Tours recalled a man 'given to intellectual pursuits... he had composed a number of volumes of letters, in the style of Sidonius, one might say.'¹⁶⁴ Ferreolus' literary activities, although not extant, suggest a bishop in the tradition of Caesarius and of Avitus of Vienne, making use of a formal late antique education in the service of his episcopal responsibilities. Indeed, there may have been a personal link, albeit somewhat tenuous, between Caesarius and Ferreolus. A seventh-century *vita* describes Ferreolus as disciple and successor to bishop Firminus, co-signatory of the *Regula virginum* and biographer of Caesarius.¹⁶⁵ In yet another parallel with the earlier bishop-authors, the sister of Ferreolus, Tarsicia, (whose *vita* is, unusually, far easier to find than her brother's) spent most of her life as a hermit in the Rouergue, near Rodez.¹⁶⁶ Ferreolus' main claim to fame was in the eyes of the Pippinid family, who wished to trace their ancestry to the Gallo-Roman senatorial class and therefore searched for a connection to Ferreolus. As Ian Wood has pointed out, the link by marriage to the family of Ferreolus, described in the early ninth-century

¹⁶³ A. de Vogüé, *Les Règles Monastiques Anciens*, 56. The rule is at *PL* 66:959-976. See also V. Desprez, 'La *'Regula Ferrioli'*. Texte critique', *Revue Mabillon* 60 (1982), 117-48; for a French translation, V. Desprez, *Règles Monastiques d'Occident*, 287-339.

¹⁶⁴ *Historiae* VI:7, MGH SSRM I,1 266-267 ; tr. Thorpe, 337.

¹⁶⁵ Desprez, *Règles Monastiques d'Occident*, 289. The present study has been unable to locate an edition of this *vita*.

¹⁶⁶ *Genealogia B. Arnulphi*. AASS Jan 15, 1068-9; BHL 696.

Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris, is almost certainly legendary.¹⁶⁷

The rule is dedicated to the bishop of Die, Lucrecius, from whom Ferreolus had gained permission to write the rule.¹⁶⁸ Ferreolus' comments to Lucrecius provide an insight into one way in which monastic texts could be altered over time. Deferring to Lucrecius' wider knowledge of monastic life, he gives the latter complete freedom to make such changes as he sees fit on receipt of the rule: 'If the judgement of your knowledge finds that there are things which are too hard and severe, or on the contrary too generous and too soft, the text should receive corrections by your hand, in order to suit those to whom it is destined.'¹⁶⁹ For Ferreolus, this was also a guarantee against blame for any errors in the work: it would be Lucrecius' fault as much as his own, if the *Rule* were subsequently found to be problematic in terms of content.¹⁷⁰ As importantly, however, this exquisitely formal recording of a permission granted also underlines the authority that each bishop was expected to have over monastic houses in their own diocese. Religious houses were organised according to their own written rule or rules, and supervised by their bishop, however loosely or stringently; other than those canons promulgated at regional synods or quasi-national church councils, there was no overarching supervision of individual monasteries' way of life. This state of affairs would have particular relevance when attempts at reform were essayed.

Among the most interesting elements of the *Regula virginum* which are used by Ferreolus are those on reading and entry to the monastery. As in the *Regula virginum*, the *Regula Ferreoli* provided for a year's postulancy before formal entry (*Regula virginum* 4, although in turn, Caesarius had himself based this on canon four of the *Institutes* of Cassian) and the reading of the rule to the new entrant to ensure a thorough

¹⁶⁷ I. Wood, 'Genealogy defined by women: the case of the Pippinids', in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds.) *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004) 234-256, at 242-3.

¹⁶⁸ *Reg. Ferreoli*, praefatio.

¹⁶⁹ *In qua si quid severitate durum, si quid remissione mollissimum iudicio scientiae adjudicaveritis, censuram manus vestrae pagina melius in quo diligetur placitura recipiet.* PL 66: 960.

¹⁷⁰ *Reg. Ferreoli*, praefatio: *Si vero, ut credo, iudicium amoris operam veram infligere dignetur correctione litterae, quidquid demum ineptum lectio incastigata protulerit, liberum a culpa erit erroris, cum libellum vestrae me constat subdidisse censurae.* PL 66: 960.

knowledge of its requirements (*Regula virginum* 58).¹⁷¹ Once in the community proper, Ferreolus required his monks to read until the third hour of the day, a provision taken from both the *Regula virginum* (cap. 19) and Caesarius' *Regula monachorum* (cap. 14).¹⁷² Although not a direct citation, Ferreolus' basic stipulation that the monks should learn to read also stems from Caesarius' rule for nuns (cap. 18).¹⁷³ It is an obvious but fundamental point that Caesarius' concept of monasticism itself provided the preconditions for transmitting the tenets of the rule from community to community.

Yet Ferreolus envisioned a life for the monks of Ferreolac which was clearly different in some respects from that of the nuns of St John. The rule contains one of the earliest prohibitions on hunting ('a useless and dangerous combat against wild beasts'), which suggests that this was a practice they might otherwise have undertaken.¹⁷⁴ More importantly, the mainstay of Caesarius' rule was set aside: perpetual enclosure was not an issue for this male community. Work in the fields was required, and this might include fishing, for those too tired for harder manual labour.¹⁷⁵ It also seems that personal vanity was a gendered issue; the form it took differed between men and women. While Caesarius was troubled by embroidered and brightly-coloured clothing (*Regula virginum* 22), Ferreolus was more concerned by his monks' use of perfumes on their garments.¹⁷⁶

How, then, do these three foundations for men compare to St John, or to Holy Cross in Poitiers? Did their respective founders have different purposes in mind? For Caesarius, St John represented a powerful element in his efforts to re-make Arles as a thoroughly Christian city, which coincided with his sister Caesaria's dedication to the religious life and the maintenance of her own pre-existing community. In Aurelian's case, the foundations in Arles were the symbol of his informal alliance with Childebert and Ultragotha; politics, patronage and piety united in the prayers of the communities. Following the template shaped by Caesarius, particularly in his own city of Arles, the

¹⁷¹ *Reg. Ferreoli* 5.

¹⁷² *Reg. Ferreoli* 26.

¹⁷³ *Reg. Ferreoli* 11.

¹⁷⁴ *Reg. Ferreoli* 34.

¹⁷⁵ *Reg. Ferreoli* 28.

¹⁷⁶ *Reg. Ferreoli* 32.

foundation of religious houses had become a commendable activity for a bishop. The silence of the circumstances of the writing of the *regula Tarnantensis* extends to its author and his motivations; regrettably the rule as preserved by Benedict of Aniane contains no explanatory preface. Ferreolus made his foundation on his own land, which happened to be in another bishop's diocese. Its accompanying rule carefully records some of the negotiations that occurred around the foundation. The fact that Ferreolus made the foundation on his own land, however, does suggest that a personal desire (and of course, the availability of the property itself) to do so, rather than episcopal strategy, lay behind it. In that sense Ferreolus' foundation has much in common with Radegund's monastery of Holy Cross, in that both were made in some regard according to the personal desires and for the personal benefit of their founder. However, this may be too simplistic an interpretation. It may also rely too much on traditionally gendered readings of the act of foundation. How far, for instance, was Radegund's foundation just as much a political act as Aurelian's, or as responsive to the perceived spiritual needs of her community as Caesarius'? Radegund had a personal involvement in Holy Cross in a way in which Caesarius and Aurelian were not involved in their foundations, but her personal desire for claustration should not, as is the case in so many historiographical narratives of foundations by and for women, be taken to imply the absence of other, wider motivations.¹⁷⁷

Seventh-century change? Donatus of Besançon, Columbanus, and Faremoutiers

The third ripple outwards from the writing of the *Regula virginum* did not occur until the middle of the seventh century, when Donatus, the bishop of Besançon (626-658), composed a monastic rule for his mother Flavia, and her community of Jussamoutier.¹⁷⁸ Donatus, however, did not solely look to the Arles rule when thinking

¹⁷⁷ An overtly political context for Radegund's foundation has been advanced, that Radegund's religious life was a lifelong act of expiation for Chlothar having murdered her brother at the same time as taking her prisoner, acts described in Radegund's poem on the Thuringian war: see Y. Labande-Mailfert, 'Les débuts de Sainte-Croix', in E.-R. Labande *et al.*, *Histoire de l'abbaye de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers. Quatorze siècles de vie monastique (Mémoires de la société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest 4e sér.*, 19 (1986-7), 21-60, at 32.

¹⁷⁸ Donatus of Besançon, *Regula virginum* PL 87: 273-298. See also A. de Vogüé, 'La Règle de Donat pour l'abbesse Gauthstrude. Texte critique et synopse des sources', *Benedictina* 25 (1978) 219-313. J.A.

about his mother's community. Another set of influences for monastic life had appeared in northern Gaul, slightly later than Caesarius, which fed Irish monastic traditions into the mix of influences already acting upon dedicated life in Gaul. To write this rule, Donatus borrowed from the rules of Caesarius, Benedict of Nursia and the Irish abbot Columbanus. The prologue, addressed to the abbess Gauthstrude, may be quoted at some length, as it describes the process by which one female community set out to find the best written guidance for their lives.

Though I am eminently aware, most precious vessel of Christ, that you live daily by the norms of the rule, nevertheless you have always wished to inquire with wise intention how you may excel yet more. For this reason, you have often urged me that, having explored the rule of holy Caesarius, bishop of Arles, which was especially devoted to Christ's virgins, along with those of the most blessed Benedict and the abbot Columbanus, I might cull the choice blooms, gathering them, as I might say, into a bouquet or an Enchiridion, collecting and promulgating all that is proper for the special observance of the female sex. For you say that since the rules of the aforesaid fathers were written for men and not for women, they are less suited to you. And though holy Caesarius dedicated his own rule to virgins of Christ, like yourselves, their enclosure of place is not in the least suitable to your circumstances. At last, after long and hard resistance, I am ready to do your will... I fear the judgement of many intelligent persons who may heedlessly blame me for daring to excerpt or change the institutes of so many fathers.¹⁷⁹

This preface is deeply reminiscent of Caesarius' letter *Vereor*, and of the *Regula virginum*. In Donatus' words, it is the abbess Gauthstrude and her community who have directed the composition of the text, based on their experience of extant rules. The authority with which the community directed their lives may have derived from the

McNamara and J. Halborg (eds. and tr.) *The Ordeal of Community: Two Early Monastic Rules for Women* (Toronto, 1993).

¹⁷⁹ McNamara and Halborg, *The Ordeal of Community*, 32.

presence within it of Donatus' mother, the foundress of the community. Married to Waldelen, the duke of Transjura, Flavia built the monastery after the death of her husband, and entered it with her daughter and Donatus' sister Siruda. Like Radegund, Flavia chose to appoint another woman as abbess, and to live quietly among the congregation; in time, she chose her daughter Siruda as the second abbess.¹⁸⁰

Donatus used Caesarian legislation in several areas, including those of new entrants, disputes, work and dress, external relations and the selection of a new abbess. His use of the *Regula virginum* is particularly interesting in terms of its circulation. He draws from the original *Regula virginum*, but not from its *Recapitulatio*, which would suggest either that the original text – longer and more detailed, even if somewhat less coherently organised than the *Recapitulatio* – was deemed to be superior, or that the 'original' Caesarian text was circulated without its package of amendments. It seems unlikely that the text would have been sent out from Arles without the *Recapitulatio*, given that Caesarius' intention was that the latter text should take precedence in regulating the nuns' lives at St John, so this may indicate that an early version of the *Regula virginum* was in circulation prior to the composition of the *Recapitulatio*.

The respect Donatus evidently has for the women of Jussamoutier may also be a recognition of Flavia's connections with the figure of Columbanus. In around 590, Columbanus had arrived in Gaul from Leinster and settled in Burgundy, where he founded a number of monastic houses. These were governed by two rules: the complementary *Regula monachorum*, intended to guide the spiritual formation of the individual monk, and the *Regula coenobialis*, directing the conduct of the community.¹⁸¹

Columbanus wrote two rules for the monasteries he founded: Annegray, Luxeuil, Fontaines, and Bobbio. Called the *Regula monachorum* and the *Regula coenobialis*, they were intended to govern two different but complementary aspects of monastic life: the

¹⁸⁰ Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani* 22, PL 87: 1025. See also McNamara and Halborg, *The Ordeal of Community*, 31.

¹⁸¹ Both rules are in G.S.M. Walker (ed.) *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin, 1957). See also J.B. Stevenson, 'The Monastic Rules of Columbanus' in M. Lapidge (ed.) *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings* (Woodbridge, 1997) 203-216.

monk's relationship with God, or his own internal spirituality, and the monk's relationship with others and behaviour in the community, respectively. The major influences on Columbanus' rules were two-fold. Firstly, Columbanus had been trained as a monk at Bangor in Ireland, but, as Jane Stevenson suggests, the variety of different practices in Ireland makes the task of discovering which rule was used at any given monastery a difficult one.¹⁸² Indeed, Columbanus' rules are the earliest evidence for practices in the monasteries of Ireland.¹⁸³ Columbanus shared his second major influence with Caesarius: the teachings of the Eastern monastic fathers, in particular as filtered through the *Conlationes* and *Institutiones* of Cassian.

The most notable aspect of the rules themselves must be their severity. Monks were expected to attend eight offices a day, one every three hours, and Stevenson surmises that in the winter the office of matins (performed at 3 a.m.) might have lasted as long as two and a half hours.¹⁸⁴ At mealtimes, monks who spilt their food or drink were to lie with arms outstretched during the singing of twelve psalms.¹⁸⁵ Gossiping might be punished with fifty blows or with the imposition of silence.¹⁸⁶ Disobedience would result on two days with only water and one loaf of bread to eat.¹⁸⁷ In addition, the monks were expected to confess their faults several times a day, 'before meals or entering bed or whenever it is possible'.¹⁸⁸ It was this austere but undoubtedly charismatic figure Flavia and Waldelen had visited to ask him to pray for a child. Columbanus agreed, on condition that their son should be consecrated to God.¹⁸⁹ 'Donatus', the child given by God, would not have existed, as family legend must continually have reminded him, without the combination of his mother's piety and the charisma of Columbanus.

There was yet a third strand to Donatus' monastic heritage, and that was the rule of Benedict of Nursia. De Vogüé has calculated the number of times each older rule has

¹⁸² Stevenson, 'The Monastic Rules of Columbanus', 205-6.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁸⁵ Columbanus, *Regula coenobialis*, cap. 3. Ed. and tr. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 146.

¹⁸⁶ *Reg. coen.* Cap. 4.

¹⁸⁷ *Reg. coen.* Cap. 10.

¹⁸⁸ '...ante mensam sive ante lectorum introitum aut quandocumque fuerit facile...' *Reg. coen.* Cap.1.

¹⁸⁹ Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani* 1.20. MGH *Script. rer. germ. in usu schol.* 197.

been used, and found that Benedict's makes three hundred and eighty-two appearances; Caesarius' one hundred and seventy-three; Columbanus' seventy-one; and there are one hundred and seventeen original statements.¹⁹⁰ Clearly, for Donatus, the Benedictine rule was of great importance. The Benedictine tradition has been explored in great depth, and so need only be briefly sketched in here.¹⁹¹ Benedict of Nursia, ascetic and abbot, composed his 'little rule for beginners' in Italy in c.540. Although tradition suggests Benedict's sister, Scholastica, established a community of nuns near to his foundation at Montecassino, the earliest recension produced especially for a female community did not appear until much later, and in an Old English version.¹⁹² Although it is now the best-known monastic rule, it was not until the reforms of the late eighth century that the *Regula Benedicti* began to achieve particular prominence as the standard of monastic life to which all monasteries should conform.¹⁹³ Donatus' use of the *Regula Benedicti* as just one exemplar among others shows that it was not considered to be pre-eminent in any way, albeit one which had a great deal of useful material upon which to draw.

Donatus' rule is therefore a significant text, as it stems from the combination of three monastic traditions. But what had those other traditions brought to Gallic monasticism? What were the monastic contexts for Gauthstrude's community, and for others founded in this period? The remainder of this chapter will examine dedicated life for women in the seventh century, before turning to consider an account of the foundation of the monastery of Eboriac (more commonly known as Faremoutiers) as a case-study.

¹⁹⁰ De Vogüé, 'La Règle de Donat', 200-1.

¹⁹¹ From a vast historiography, see in particular A. de Vogüé and J. Neufville (eds. and tr.) *Regula Benedicti* 6 vols., SC 181-6 (Paris, 1971-2); Dom P. Schmitz, *Histoire de l'Ordre de Saint Benoît* 7 vols. (Maredsous, 1942), the order's origins and early history are covered by vol. I; A. de Vogüé, *La communauté et l'abbé dans la règle de s. Benoît* (Paris/Brussels, 1961), tr. C. Philippi and E. Perkins, *Community and Abbot in the Rule of St Benedict*, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1979, 1988). See also now C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000) caps. 5-7. For the life of Benedict himself, Gregory the Great's *Dialogi* must be the starting point; ed. by A. de Vogüé, *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, 3 vols., SC 251, 260, 265 (1978-80).

¹⁹² J.A. Smith *Ordering Women's Lives: Penitentials and Nunnery Rules in the Early Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 7.

¹⁹³ See Chapters Four and Five.

Dedicated life in the seventh century

The main narrative source for the communities founded under the aegis of Columbanus is the *Vita Columbani discipulorumque eius* [hereafter abbreviated to *VCD*] composed by Jonas of Bobbio around 639-641, which includes the *Life* not only of Columbanus, forming Book I, but also of his followers Eustasius of Luxeuil, Athala and Bertulf of Bobbio.¹⁹⁴ The work also includes a collection of miracles and visions which took place at the monastery of Eboriac, which would later be known as Faremoutiers in honour of its founder and first abess, Burgundofara. These four texts comprise Book II. As a whole, the work is deeply revealing about the women involved with 'Columbanian monasticism'. The term 'movement' is misleading, and may suggest a more profound difference from previous types of monastic houses than actually existed. In part, Jonas' group biography was itself responsible for the collective descriptions and assessments of the houses associated with Columbanus; with the benefit of almost two generations' hindsight, Jonas could present an augmented picture of Columbanus' influence by also describing the holy lives of the men and women who lived according to his monastic rule.

In general, hagiographers such as Jonas tended not to be particularly interested in recording the inner workings of monastic communities.¹⁹⁵ Even in what is perhaps the most garrulous source of the sixth century, the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, little attention is paid to the daily lives and nature of religious communities aside from those in turmoil. Radegund's foundation in Poitiers and Ingtrude's monastery in Tours are the obvious examples. There are some further insights from other *vitae*. Although of Carolingian origin, the *Vita* of Clarus (d. c. 660), a monk of St Ferreol and then abbot of St Marcellus in Vienne, may be of some value in attempting to estimate levels of monastic activity in one city, Vienne.¹⁹⁶ The *vita* suggests a figure of about 1,525 monks and nuns, in twelve monasteries, while a further sixty men and women in the diocese as a

¹⁹⁴ B. Krusch (ed.) *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici ii*, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 61-152. A de Vogüé (ed.), *Vie de Saint Columban et de ses disciples* (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1988). Abbreviated hereafter to *VCD*.

¹⁹⁵ I. Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus: the Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories' in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981) 3-32, at 3.

¹⁹⁶ Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus', 9.

whole in the mid-seventh century may, Wood suggests, may be discernable from an inventory of monasteries copied for bishop Caldeoldus of Vienne.¹⁹⁷ Clarus himself placed his mother into the monastery of St Blandina, which according to the *vita* had twenty-five residents at the time. Certainly, the existence of dedicated women in the city from the early sixth century is attested by the presence of Fuscina; in turn, these figures would suggest a fairly long-standing tradition of communal life in the city, which suggests a further context for the apparently exclusively familial existence of the bishop's sister Fuscina. Communal and individual establishments for living out a dedicated life co-existed.

There is evidence of monastic life, for both men and women, in several cities prior to the arrival of Columbanus. The houses in Arles, the foundations of Romanus and Lupicinus in the Jura and the foundations in Vienne were joined by an early royal foundation for men, Sigismund of Burgundy's monastery at Agaune, which he made in 515 in honour of the Theban legion.¹⁹⁸ Syagrius, bishop of Autun (561-602) founded a monastery for women dedicated to St Mary and two for men.¹⁹⁹ At queen Brunhild's request, these were given papal privileges. However, for many medieval and modern writers, Columbanus' influence was all important; increasing the number of foundations, and transforming the declining religious life of the sixth century into the basis for the triumph of 'orthodox' Benedictine monasticism under the Carolingians.²⁰⁰ The existing and ongoing foundations in the areas in which Columbanus worked disprove this teleology, and as will be seen in Chapter 5, laid no such basis for a Benedictine reform, which was only intermittently successful.

¹⁹⁷ *Vita Clari*, AASS Jan I, 55-6; For bishop Caldeoldus, see AASS Jan I, 975. See also Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus', 8-10.

¹⁹⁸ *Vita sanctorum abbatum acaunensium* MGH SSRM VII 329-336. See also Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus', 14-16.

¹⁹⁹ I. Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians, and Pope Honorius: *Diplomata* and the *Vita Columbani*', A.C. Murray (ed.) *After Rome's Fall: narrators and sources of early medieval history* (Toronto, 1998) 99-120, at 113.

²⁰⁰ See in particular P. Riché, 'Columbanus, his Followers and the Merovingian Church', in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), 59-72.

Although Jonas sought to present Columbanus' foundation of Luxeuil as being made in an untapped wilderness ('The place was only frequented by animals and wild beasts, a multitude of bears, buffalo and wolves'), it is likely that the site was in royal hands before this point.²⁰¹ Certainly the reworked seventh-century *vita* of Sadalberga, a later founder of a house following Columbanian practices, portrayed Luxeuil as being founded *ex munificentia Chilberti regis*.²⁰² Even if the evidence of this *vita* were unreliable, the monastery would later be used by the king as 'a high-status prison', as in the crisis of 675 when Leodegar of Autun and Ebroin were imprisoned there.²⁰³ As Wood further points out, Jonas himself suggests that the monastery was dependent on royal favour, in the dialogue he gives to Columbanus and the king Theudebert: 'To this the king said: "If you want the gifts of our generosity and the support of our supplies, you will allow everyone access everywhere." The man of God replied: "If you attempt to violate what has up to now been regulated by the reins of regular discipline, I will not be supported by your gifts and subsidies from now on... your kingdom will soon fall to its foundations and will be overwhelmed with the whole royal race".'²⁰⁴ The very fact of Jonas' belittling of royal involvement with the foundation only serves to underline its importance.²⁰⁵

Columbanus represented something of a departure for monasticism in Gaul, as he made royally sponsored foundations that were not tied into any episcopal network of christianisation or aristocratic family piety. Now, the essential landed property for the foundations was coming from royal and aristocratic rural holdings (Jonas' 'wilderness' may not have been near urban civilization, but was not without ownership) and not from

²⁰¹ VCD I, 10.

²⁰² *Vita Sadalbergae* 1 ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM V (Hanover, 1910). For discussion of the *vita*'s date, see C. Rohr, 'Hagiographie als historische Quelle: Ereignisgeschichte und Wunderberichte in der Vita Columbani des Ionas von Bobbio' *MIÖG* 103 (1995) 229-264, at 253. See also Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians', 6-110.

²⁰³ *Passio Leodegarii* I, 12-14, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM V (Hanover, 1910). See also Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians', 107.

²⁰⁴ VCD I 19: 'Ad haec rex: "Si," inquit, "largitatis nostrae munera et solaminis supplimentum capere cupis, omnibus in locis omnium patebit introitus." Vir Dei respondit: « Si, quod nunc usque sub regularis disciplinae abenis constrictum fuit violare conaris, nec tuis muneribus nec quibusque subsidiis me fore a te sustentaturum.... Cito tuum regnum funditus ruiturum et cum omni propagine regia dimersurum. »'

Translation from Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians', 107-8.

²⁰⁵ Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians', 110.

the properties held by bishops either in the right of their own families or those of their bishoprics.²⁰⁶ However, this sense of a new direction for Gallic monasticism can be exaggerated. Undoubtedly Columbanus provided a context and direction for the spiritual impulses of families such as Burgundofara's, but this may have found an outlet in any case. It is worth reiterating the paucity of source material for the north of Gaul in this period; the fact that fewer foundations were recorded in this area should not be taken as a certain indicator that a monastic desert existed there before the Irish monk's arrival.²⁰⁷ Against this background, too much reliance can be placed on Jonas' version of events, as one of the few sources that has survived. His portrayal of a number of northern Burgundian aristocratic families creating a monastic 'movement' solely under the auspices of Columbanus is evidently intended to demonstrate the spirituality and authority of Columbanus himself, rather than to record the pressures and impulses behind a few monastic foundations.

However, it is worth spending some time examining the strategic involvement of the king and his immediate family. Kings had been associated with new monasteries before – one need only think of Childebert's assistance with Aurelian's foundation in Arles, Clothar's support for Radegund's monastery of Holy Cross in the late 550s, or of Childebert's foundation of St Medard in Soissons, in 557. In the seventh century, kings granted land to individuals for the purpose of founding monasteries, but with different strategic ends in view. Political power was increasingly in the hands of those holding lands in the countryside rather than controlling interests in the cities. Royal methods of controlling those interests had themselves to be based around the control of landed estates. As Wood suggests, this had echoes of Anglo-Saxon rather than Gallo-Roman practice.²⁰⁸ Dagobert (612-639) gave lands at Solignac to Eligius, and the estate of Rebais to Dado.²⁰⁹ Childeric (king of Austrasia 657-675, and of Neustria-Burgundy 673-675) endowed Amandus with Nant, and with his wife Chimnechildis endowed him with

²⁰⁶ For this north-south divide in Burgundy, see Wood, 'A Prelude to Columbanus', 13. For a more general overview, F. Prinz, 'Columbanus, the Frankish Nobility and the Territories East of the Rhine', in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981), 73-87, at 75-6.

²⁰⁷ I. Wood *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (Longman: London, 1994), 185.

²⁰⁸ I. Wood, 'The *Vita Columbani* and Merovingian Hagiography', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 63-80, at 76-7.

²⁰⁹ *Vita Eligii* I.15, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM IV, 663-742.

Barisis.²¹⁰ Neither were kings the only grantors: queen Balthild (d.680) endowed Philibert with Jumièges.²¹¹ The extent of these grants implies broad support for the aims of Columbanus. Beyond the purely spiritual arena, however, it was also one way of ensuring bonds between the nobility and the crown by creating an atmosphere of material dependency on the king which spread wider than the individual grantees to their families. As Regine Le Jan has pointed out for early medieval monasticism in general, ‘...monasteries were key centres of political power, where networks of clientage and fidelity could be constructed and reinforced, and new bonds created.’²¹² Conversely, such ‘gifts’ were also of value to the aristocracy, as a mark of favour which could set them above their peers and more concretely, mark royal protection of their interests in the region of the monastery. For this reason, Dagobert’s death provoked a crisis for the monastery of Faremoutiers, as it enabled Ega, at the head of a rival grouping, to move against Burgundofara’s family.²¹³ There is a considerable difference here from the portrayal of Caesarius organizing his monastery largely in spite of shifting political currents, and on lands not of royal origin.

Alongside the oft-perceived shift in monastic dynamism from the south to the north of Gaul, the monasteries founded (according to Jonas) as a result of Columbanus’ influence are also often seen as being the first stage in a transition from urban to rural monastic life, a transition that would reach its apogee in the vast estate monasteries of the central middle ages.²¹⁴ It is important not to overstate this change; monasteries had been founded in rural surroundings before, from the late Roman villa conversions of men such as Sidonius Apollinaris to the splendid isolation in the Jura of Romanus and Lupicinus. Moreover, as noted above, monasteries for men and women continued to be founded in towns.

²¹⁰ Pardessus, *Diplomata*, CCLXXX; *Vita Amandi* 23 ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM V, 428-49.

²¹¹ *Vita Balthildis* 8 ed. B. Krusch MGH SSRM II, 482-508.

²¹² R. Le Jan ‘Convents, Violence, and Competition for Power in Seventh-Century Francia’ in F. Theuvs and M. de Jong (eds.) *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001) 243-269, at 244.

²¹³ Le Jan, ‘Convents, Violence, and Competition for Power’, 254.

²¹⁴ See in particular F. Prinz, ‘Columbanus, the Frankish Nobility and the Territories East of the Rhine’, 76-7.

Furthermore, ‘Columbanian’ monasteries were governed by the same alliance of interests that earlier foundations had been, even if these interests themselves differed slightly. The combination of family piety and episcopal need that drove the foundations of Caesaria and, probably, Tarsicia was now the combination of family piety melded with Columbanus’ perceived need for re-evangelising the region and for missionary work, providing a background for the *coenobium* of Burgundofara. It therefore seems something of an overstatement to suggest, as does Pierre Riché, that ‘Despite itself the Merovingian Church was saved by the presence of Columbanus and his monks. The Irish tonic spread and revived the sclerotic body.’²¹⁵ This may have been the impression Jonas wished to record for posterity, but it cannot be accepted unchallenged.

Burgundofara and the monastery of Eboriac

It is to the foundation of one particular monastery, that of Eboriac, that we now turn. From the beginning, it is useful to bear in mind the differences between this foundation and that of St John, particularly in terms of the people involved. The foundation of Eboriac is described in Jonas’ account of Columbanus and his followers. However, it appears not in the section dedicated to the miracles and visions experienced in the monastery, but in the portion of the work recounting the life of Eustasius, abbot of Luxeuil. This has implications for the way in which new foundations resulting from Columbanus’ presence were conceived; the issue, for Jonas and hence for his audience, seems to have been the tension between monastic and lay responsibility for new foundations. Evidently, the circumstances of the foundation are included for the glorification of Eustasius, rather than for that of Burgundofara or the wider circle of Faronids; the foundation is in his *vita*, not hers. Of course, one reservation may be expressed, in that the section on Eboriac is in the form of a *miracula*, rather than a *vita Burgundofarae*. Such a *vita Burgundofarae* could not be composed or included while the subject was yet living. The inclusion of the foundation in that section would therefore have interrupted the tightly planned and heavily didactic series of visions. The foundation

²¹⁵ P. Riché, ‘Columbanus, his Followers and the Merovingian Church’, 65.

of Eboriac in fact provides one of the clearest examples in the work of Jonas' conception of Eustasius and his contemporaries as *discipuli* of Columbanus: he completed the work his master started, by ensuring Burgundofara's eventual entry into Eboriac.

Eustasius' vital role in the foundation is carefully set out. Arriving at the home of Chagneric, *conviva* of the king, he received a warm welcome, not least because he was accompanied by Chagneric's son Chagnoald, who had entered Luxeuil and became Columbanus' assistant and later bishop of Meaux.²¹⁶ With her parents was Burgundofara, whom her father had now decided to marry off, and whom, Jonas is careful to imply, was blind and close to death as a consequence of this decision and her own unhappiness.²¹⁷ After confirming her wish to enter religious life, and gaining the agreement of Chagneric, Eustasius cured her, but the moment she was cured, and Eustasius had departed, Chagneric again decided that she should be married. This time Burgundofara had to take her fate into her own hands, and fled to the church of St Peter. Chagneric sent his servants after her with orders to kill her; fortunately, Eustasius returned and rescued her, taking her to Gundoald, the bishop of Meaux, to be consecrated with the religious habit.²¹⁸

Taking this episode in isolation, the participants appear to be playing out well-defined roles. Burgundofara is the virgin who wishes to remain so, prepared to die in preference to marriage; Chagneric is the cruel father with his mind fixed on worldly affairs; Eustasius, whose story this is, a figure of sufficient spiritual and temporal authority to be able to intervene in defence of the girl's longed-for union with Christ.²¹⁹ This is a dramatic piece of writing on Jonas' part, but it reads rather as the slightly desperate use of a stock motif which would enable him to present Eustasius as a figure of dynamism and courage. Nothing else suggests opposition to Burgundofara's vocation; indeed, Jonas himself states quite the opposite. In Book I, Jonas had described

²¹⁶ VCD I:27; I:15.

²¹⁷ VCD II:7.

²¹⁸ VCD II:7.

²¹⁹ Other examples of such intervention are in the *Vita Glodesindis* (AASS Jul. 25, 198-224, cap. 10), where a mysterious stranger veils the fugitive Glodesind; or in the *Vita Rictrudis* (AASS May 12, 78-98, cap. 14), when Amand helps Rictrude in her plan to avoid remarriage in favour of a life in religion.

Columbanus' visit to Chagneric, '*conviva*' of Theudebert II, 'possessing as much wisdom as nobility', who had offered to introduce Columbanus to the royal court, and pleaded with him to stay at his home as long as possible.²²⁰ It was on this occasion that Columbanus vowed Burgundofara to God. The family's commitment to the Columbanian venture had been made even plainer by the presence of Chagnoald during Eustasius' visit. Neither could Chagneric's opposition to Burgundofara's vocation be due to his fear of losing a marriageable daughter, who might otherwise be vital in making alliances with other families. He had another daughter, Agnetrada, mentioned only in Burgundofara's testament, who could have served this purpose.²²¹

Chagneric's support of Burgundofara's religious impulse was given its most concrete form by his provision of land on which to build the monastery in which she would live.²²² This territorial (and probably financial) provision provided the essential context for Eustasius' arrangements for the new house: he organised monks to come (probably from Luxeuil) to construct the new foundation, and two more, Waldebert and Burgundofara's brother, Chagnoald, to teach the rule to the new nuns.²²³ While Eustasius' role has echoes of Caesarius in making their respective foundations, then, the fact that wider family interests are involved in the provision of resources highlights the differences. In the context of views of 'Columbanian monasticism' as a new more regulated style of religious life, it is worth noting the suggestion that Burgundofara may have withdrawn to Champeaux, one of the *villae* later mentioned in her testament, and gathered a few women together there in an informal community before the monastery was ready.²²⁴ This seems highly likely. Where groups of women had begun to form a religious community, it seems evident that some sort of informal community must have existed in the interim, before the buildings of the actual monastery were ready. This must

²²⁰ VCD I:26.

²²¹ J. Guérout, 'Le Testament de sainte Fare', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 60 (1965) 761-821; idem, 'Fare', *DHGE* col.525.

²²² VCD II:7.

²²³ Ibid. There has been some suggestion that the rule taught was likely to have been that of Waldebert himself, the *Regula cuiusdam patris ad virgines*, rather than that of Columbanus, which by this time was likely to have been mixed with that of Benedict: C. Stancliffe, 'Jonas's *Life of Columbanus and his Disciples*', in M. Herbert, J. Carey and P. Ó Riain *Studies in Irish Hagiography* (Dublin, 2001) 214; Guérout, 'Fare', *DHGE* 520-1.

²²⁴ Guérout, 'Fare', *DHGE* 518-9.

indeed have been a fairly common situation when the construction of new buildings was involved. Indeed, Caesaria and her community had found themselves in a similar situation in Arles.

The conflict, evident in the writing of Jonas, between the necessity to underline Eustasius' importance and the perhaps more accurate context of certain families being extremely supportive of Columbanian monasticism may further suggest a tension within this 'new' monasticism itself. Putting aside Eustasius' personal role as the central figure of a *vita*, Jonas seems to be anxious to assert the role of the monastic personnel within the Columbanian movement - in this case, Eustasius and Columbanus himself - in the foundation of new houses, at the expense of the role of lay aristocrats, who provided the personnel, land, resources, and support at court. This may provide further insight into the presence-absence of Burgundofara within the Eboriac section. Her only role is spiritual: she is not a powerful figure, dealing with a local aristocrat or looking after the structure and resources of her foundation. Her existence, and importance, are tacitly acknowledged by the presence of the Eboriac miracles - but within the monastery Burgundofara the aristocrat's daughter has vanished forever.

In other respects, Jonas' work provides a valuable perspective on dedicated life in the seventh century. One insight is into the practicalities of monastic living. He spent some time at the monastery of Eboriac in 633 or 634, when he was present for the death of the nun Gibitrude.²²⁵ He tells us that it was built by monks sent by Eustasius from Luxeuil, Columbanus' largest foundation, so it probably bore some similarities to the larger institution, although, as little is known about Luxeuil itself, this is of limited usefulness.²²⁶ More concrete is Jonas' description of its location beside two rivers, the Morin and the Aubetin, on land belonging to Burgundofara's father.²²⁷ Some idea of the monastery's internal features can be seen in references to the nuns' individual cells with

²²⁵ VCD II:12; this event has been dated via the assumption that it was Burgundofara's own serious illness, leading miraculously to Gibitrude's, that provoked the writing of her testament: see Guérout, 'Fare', DHGE col. 524.

²²⁶ VCD II:7.

²²⁷ VCD II:7.

doors that could be closed.²²⁸ Miraculous light appeared one night in the *dortoir*, which may suggest that the common dormitory of sixth century Caesarian monasticism had mutated into the area of the monastery in which the cells were located or the corridor which linked them.²²⁹ Otherwise, the only information to be found on the monastery is that it possessed a basilica,²³⁰ and that it was of some size: it held ‘numerous virgins’, and Burgundofara had to be called and arrived in haste to attend the death of one of her daughters.²³¹ Outside, the monastery had a garden within the cloister, presumably for growing vegetables since it seems to have been the nun Williswinda’s task to work there,²³² and also a cemetery.²³³ Apart from the cells, the feature most commonly referred to by Jonas is the enclosure boundary, the *vallum*.²³⁴ This is mentioned both as a means of keeping the nuns in (recalcitrant sisters attempt to escape it using a ladder),²³⁵ and as a (less than successful) way of preventing incursions onto monastic land by the Neustrian mayor of the palace Ega. From descriptions of these raids, it is apparent that families lived around the edge of the enclosure, and perhaps acted as domestic staff.²³⁶ These details are, of course, only those necessary for Jonas’ explanation and contextualisation of the visions and miracles taking place in the monastery. If, as seems likely, this recitation of supernatural activity had at its core an attempt to educate the current nuns of Eboriac, no further descriptions were necessary, since they would know intimately the locations to which Jonas refers. Such descriptions would get in the way of the main thrust of his work, which was to focus on the visions themselves, and on the reactions of the nuns and of Burgundofara to them.

The miracles themselves shed light on the monastery, and also the purpose of the Eboriac section. The stories of all but one of the nuns are concerned with their deaths. There is a rough division in the stories between those that appear to be advocating a

²²⁸ VCD II.11; II:19 for the doors. Compare Caesarius of Arles, *Regula virginum*: all the nuns were to sleep in the same room, cap. 7.

²²⁹ VCD II:19.

²³⁰ VCD II:12.

²³¹ VCD II:11; II:15.

²³² VCD II:17.

²³³ VCD II:19.

²³⁴ VCD II:19.

²³⁵ VCD II:19.

²³⁶ VCD II:17.

particular virtue or practice of monastic life, which Jonas considers first, and those that are concerned with warning nuns about the sins which might befall them, which broadly occupy the second half of the collection. A good example of the former is that of Sisetrude, the first miracle in the collection.²³⁷ Given forty days' warning of her impending death, she spent the time in fasting, tearful prayer and vigils, and asked the 'mother' and the other nuns to pray with her: prayer was considered to be both an interior and a shared activity. She died to the accompaniment of an angelic choir. Jonas makes the moral of this particular tale quite clear: it was 'the first of the encouragements that it pleased the Lord to give to the servants in this monastery' in order that they should 'aspire with their entire soul to the perfection of the religious life'.²³⁸ Another story of a glorious death concerns Ercantrude, who was afflicted with physical suffering towards the end of her life.²³⁹ This she bore with patience, humility, piety, sweetness and charity.

The encouragement of these examples was, however, matched by the warnings given by other stories. Sometimes the two could be combined: in the case of Ercantrude, one of the sisters attending her deathbed was driven to confess to being too occupied with the world.²⁴⁰ The reluctance to break worldly bonds is also a theme in those stories whose moral is more specifically one of warning. Beratruda, for instance, died after confessing to eating secretly in her room, a sign of making insufficient effort to follow monastic precepts.²⁴¹ The clearest example of this is that of two separate groups of would-be escapees. Two recent entrants, tempted by the devil, failed to escape after becoming as heavy as lead once outside: confession to the abbess was the end of the matter. Not so fortunate were the second group, who left and decided to return but could not then find the way back. As the devil had denied them the ability to confess, they died in torment, and their tombs were later found to have been burnt out.²⁴² These tales suggest a monastery whose nuns were not all there of their own free will, which is unsurprising given the family context of monasticism explored above. Not every girl or woman had a

²³⁷ VCD II:11.

²³⁸ Ibid: '*Hanc primam huius coenobii exhortationem Dominus famulabus suis voluit demonstrare, ut caeterae quae superstites essent, omni intentione ad cultum religionis aspirarent*'.

²³⁹ VCD II:13.

²⁴⁰ VCD II:13.

²⁴¹ VCD II:22.

²⁴² VCD II:19.

vocation sufficient to uphold her during the intense experience of Columbanian monasticism, an idea further suggested by the story of Deurechild, upon whose death her mother, who had entered at the same time, could no longer bear to live in the monastery without her.²⁴³

The central tenets of the Columbanian rules are reinforced by several of the stories. Most important among these is the necessity of confession: according to the rule, the nuns were to confess three times a day.²⁴⁴ The problems of the escaping nuns are caused by their initial reluctance to confess. Another sister, Wilsinda, saw the pollution of those souls who were not confessing enough on her deathbed, at which several of the nuns there prostrated themselves and confessed to Burgundofara.²⁴⁵ Another sin was that of pride. Two young girls saw the mouth of Domma filled with gold when she sang in choir and told her of this phenomenon. When describing Domma's subsequent death Jonas states explicitly that she would have merited the glory of a good end if she had not forfeited it through the sins of pride and arrogance.²⁴⁶

The role of the abbess in these stories of miracles and visions is an ambiguous one, which may largely be explained by the fact that Burgundofara was still alive when Jonas was writing: he could not risk instilling the same vice of pride in her that he had just described in others.²⁴⁷ Burgundofara is a figure whose presence is always felt but who is never actually present: she is often described as hurrying to attend a death from elsewhere in the complex.²⁴⁸ She was the recipient of confessions but only once actively sought them.²⁴⁹ At the same time, two of the stories seek to bolster her position as head of the community. The nun Leudeberta was warned in a dream that she would soon die, and that she should therefore not dismiss or ignore the advice of Burgundofara, since she

²⁴³ VCD II:15.

²⁴⁴ However, see below regarding the rule likely to have been used at Eboriac; Stancliffe, 'Jonas's *Life of Columbanus*', 214. If it was the Waldebertian rule, cap. 6 expresses the need to confess thrice daily and prescribes the times to do so.

²⁴⁵ VCD II:17.

²⁴⁶ VCD II:16.

²⁴⁷ Wood, 'The *Vita Columbani* and Merovingian Hagiography', 67.

²⁴⁸ eg VCD II:11.

²⁴⁹ In the story of the escaping nuns: VCD II:19.

would soon be separated from the living.²⁵⁰ The abbess was the spiritual leader of the monastery, and it is noticeable that Jonas places her in this position of authority in the absence of references to the rule itself.²⁵¹ Far more potent even than this is the story of Gibitrude, a relation of Burgundofara, who asked to die in place of her abbess when the latter had a fever. Even in this powerful and moving story, Jonas seems unable to resist noting that Gibitrude was refused entry to heaven until she had forgiven her sisters for their minor transgressions against her.²⁵²

It is known that Jonas spent some time at Eboriac, and it is therefore tempting to wonder about the nature and extent of Burgundofara's influence on the content and style of the Eboriac section. There are clear encouragements and warnings scattered throughout the section, and one could easily envisage this part of the *Vita Columbani* being used regularly at Eboriac, perhaps being read at mealtimes, a different miracle or vision story every day. More than any other part of the overall work, this seems ideal for such a purpose. The Eboriac section seems designed for internal rather than external consumption; it is a guide for those living the life rather than aspiring to it.²⁵³

Conclusion

This examination of the early circulation of the *Regula virginum* and, to a lesser extent, the letter *Vereor*, has brought to the fore the range of writings that were directed at dedicated women to guide them. Caesarius' writings became a template of practices for subsequent authors of *regulae*; at the same time, his ideology of dedicated life formed the basis of letters of guidance which reinforced and enlarged upon aspects of the rule. From the beginning of these processes of re-use and elaboration, Caesarius' writings for the nuns of St John were deemed equally valid for male communities, albeit with some modifications. The individual nature of such rules, wherein founders could pick-and-

²⁵⁰ VCD II:18.

²⁵¹ There are only suggestions of what the rule might be, frequent confession being a notable example.

²⁵² VCD II:12.

²⁵³ Wood, 'The *Vita Columbani* and Merovingian Hagiography', 68.

choose from older texts to define the type of community they wanted, was linked to the individuality of the foundations themselves. With the possible exception of Holy Cross, the monastic houses that used the *Regula virginum* as a normative text did not replicate all of the practices of St John.

In this regard, there are perhaps less significant differences between such houses and those of the Columbanian ‘movement’ of the seventh century than previously thought, whose foundations are often perceived to be part of an overarching master plan. These foundations, such as that of Burgundofara, were still made within a matrix of external interests; the difference between these houses and those of the sixth century lies in the personnel involved. Where monasteries had previously served episcopal interests in conjunction with those of women who desired to live dedicated lives, wider family motivations and strategies were beginning to see the value of such institutions for themselves. It is within these shifting currents of dedicated life that we must locate the continuing use of the works of Caesarius, and such strands of transmission form the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

The Manuscript Caesarius: Transmission and Gender in the Early Middle Ages

Earlier chapters of this study have demonstrated the impossibility of separating the production of normative texts – in this case, Caesarius of Arles' *Regula virginum* – from the practical contexts in which they were produced. This approach has also shown that the 'normative texts' of the period were not only confined to *regulae*, but also included letters, such as *Vereor*, and hagiography, such as Baudonivia's *vita Radegundis*.

This chapter takes a fresh approach to studying the circulation and use of a text. By examining the manuscript transmission of Caesarius' writings, the *Regula virginum* and *Vereor*, it is possible to gain a new understanding about how and by whom Caesarius' writings for dedicated women were circulated. This in turn has considerable ramifications for women's dedicated life as a whole, as it indicates a landscape of dedication in which a far wider variety of normative texts than simply *regulae* was made use of.

The circulation of the *Regula virginum* after the sixth century

While the use of the *Regula virginum* in the sixth and seventh centuries is reasonably accessible to trace in terms of textual borrowing by other rules, attempting to follow the manuscript dissemination of the *Regula* before its ninth-century reappearance is a more difficult task. Only three manuscripts of the rule survive, although there is good knowledge of a fourth; of these, not one dates from before the ninth century. Yet consideration of these manuscripts is essential for providing some indication of the circulation of the text in the intervening period.

The earliest extant copy of the *Regula virginum* is found in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm 28118, a manuscript dating to the first quarter of the ninth

century that is the only surviving early medieval exemplar of Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum*.¹ Although the earliest, the manuscript was only discovered at the monastery of St Maximin in Trier at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The *Regula* is at ff. 184v-192r. From an editor's perspective, the Munich recension is by far the most complete. It contains the first 'draft' of the rule (caps. 1-47), the *Recapitulatio* (caps. 48-65), the *ordo* for prayer (caps. 66-70), the *ordo* for meals (cap. 71) and the summary and conclusion (caps. 72-3). The only element contained in any of the manuscripts that it does not also contain is the list of subscriptions of the other bishops at the very end of the rule, although it does include that of Caesarius himself.

The detailed study of the *Codex* and *Concordia regularum* made by Pierre Bonnerue in his edition of the latter has highlighted the strong possibility that Benedict of Aniane had used a pre-existing collection of Arlesian texts, 'un "Corpus arlésien"', comprising the rules for monks of Ferreolus and Aurelian, the rules for nuns of Caesarius and Aurelian, the foundation charter of St John, the letter from Hormisdas, a funerary *ordo*, and a letter from bishop John to the nuns of St Mary of Arles, to construct his *Codex regularum*.² The relative completeness of the text may also suggest that Benedict had had access to a copy of the rule preserved at, or close to, the monastery of St John itself. Further evidence of the manuscript sources of Benedict's collection of monastic rules is found in the description of a ninth-century library catalogue from the monastery of Fulda, which is itself no longer extant. This catalogue listed rules in the same order in which they appear in Benedict of Aniane's *Codex regularum*.³ Two possibilities exist:

¹ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM 168* (Turnhout, 1999), 179-192. Two fifteenth-century copies of the *Codex* also exist. The first, Cologne, Historisches Archiv, ms. WF 231, was made by a regular canon named Arnold Losen from Gaesdonck in 1466/7. He also made a series of corrections (now barely legible) to the ninth-century manuscript: Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum*, 180. The second manuscript, Utrecht, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, ms. 361, dates to 1471, and is now only partially complete.

² Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum*, 92-3.

³ This catalogue is reconstructed by A. Mundó, 'I "Corpora" e i "Codices regularum" nella tradizione codicologica delle regole monastiche' in *Atti del 7o Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1982) 477-520.

either the list from Fulda is evidence of a copy of Clm 28118, or vice versa, or both manuscripts derived from the same (lost) exemplar.⁴

In any case, the number of Arlesian texts used by Benedict suggests at the very least that they had been well-preserved. The inclusion in the *Codex* of non-normative documents such as the foundation charter and the letter from Hormisdas – essential to the monastery of St John’s independence – must suggest that Benedict (and/or the compiler at Fulda) had made wholesale use of a collection that had been maintained by the monastery of St John itself. However, this is a more complex proposition than it appears. In common with other monastic houses of the time, the community of St John in Arles was attacked by Arab raiders in 732, who appear to have had such an impact on the community that it was only in 883, under archbishop Rostagnus, that the relics of Caesarius himself could be rehoused and the community re-established.⁵ What happened to the community’s scriptorium and archives during the latter half of the eighth and early part of the ninth century? Although no evidence exists for this period of the community’s history, it is possible that the nuns moved inland to a different, safer monastery, almost certainly taking the precious records and guarantees of the monastery’s independence with them.⁶

The next oldest manuscript of the *Regula virginum* is Tours, Bibl. Munic., ms. 617, dating from the late tenth or eleventh century. Study of this manuscript is now reliant on the work of Dom Germain Morin, since it was lost during the Second World War. The earliest modern mention of the manuscript was in 1717, when Martène noted its existence in the library of the monastery of St Martin in Autun, after a visit there in 1709.⁷ The manuscript was subsequently moved to the Bibliothèque Municipale in Tours.

⁴ Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum*, 92-3.

⁵ For more on Rostagnus’ restoration of Caesarius’ tomb and its inscriptions, see J. Guyon and M. Heijmans (eds.), *D’un monde à l’autre: Naissance d’une Chrétienté en Provence, IVe – VIe siècle* (Arles, 2002), 221.

⁶ Although not a reliable guide to the monastery’s holdings in the seventh and eighth centuries, by the thirteenth century the monastery possessed many estates near Arles itself, in the area around Vaison, and near Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux: see J.-P. Poly, *La Provence et la Société Feodale* (Paris, 1976), at 82.

⁷ E. Martène and U. Durand, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, vol. I (Paris, 1717), col. 3-4, note B; cited in de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 139.

The most remarkable fact about this manuscript was the presence of a monogram in two places in the rule; at the end of the ‘original’ rule (chapter 47), and at the end of the *recapitulatio* (chapter 73).⁸ After an initial attribution to a certain ‘Deuterius’, Morin identified this as belonging to Teridius, nephew of Caesarius, and it seems likely that just as Teridius sent a copy of the rule for monks to Auxerre, so he sent a copy of the rule for nuns to Autun.⁹ The distribution of the text to Autun may well have occurred in around 561-2, when bishop Syagrius of Autun (530-602) was in contact with Teridius himself and abbess Liliola of St John.¹⁰ Although Syagrius’ sole recorded foundation of a monastery for women was not until c. 589, when he founded the female community of Notre-Dame with queen Brunhild, the responsibility of bishops to oversee the religious women of their diocese may have driven him to approach an established community to obtain a ready-written text.¹¹ If this is true, the manuscript extant until the 1940s would have been a faithful copy of this document.

However, even when Morin studied the manuscript in the early 1930s, it was mutilated and incomplete.¹² It was then composed of twenty-six folios, containing the end of the ‘original’ rule (the end of cap. 43 to cap 47), the main body of the *recapitulatio* (caps. 48-65), the *ordo* for meals (cap. 71) and the summary, conclusion and Episcopal subscriptions (caps. 72-3). Caesarius’ co-signatories were Simplicius, bishop of Senes; Cyprianus of Toulon and Firminus of Uzès (these two also wrote the *vita Caesarii*); Severus, Lupercianus, and Montanus, whose sees are unknown; lastly, Iohannes can be identified as the bishop of Fréjus from the subscriptions to the canons of the synod of Arles (524).¹³ There is no record of a council in 534 at which these bishops may have

⁸ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 140.

⁹ G. Morin, ‘Le monogramme d’un Deuterius au bas de la Règle de Saint Césaire’ *Revue Bénédictine* 46 (1934) 410-413; de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 140.

¹⁰ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 140.

¹¹ GC IV:479; see also I. Wood, ‘A Prelude to Columbanus: the Monastic Achievement in the Burgundian Territories’ in H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1981) 3-31, at 12. The general responsibility of bishops for monasteries in their dioceses is expressed by, for example, canons XXVII and LVIII of the councils of Agde (506) and canon X of the council of Epaon (517), which decree that bishops shall decide if new foundations may be made in the diocese (C. Munier (ed.) *Concilia Galliae* CCL 148 (Turnhout, 1963).

¹² G. Morin, ‘Problèmes relatifs à la Règle de saint Césaire d’Arles pour les moniales’ *Revue Bénédictine* 44 (1932) 5-20, at 9.

¹³ Arles, 524. MGH Conc. I, 38.

appended their signatures to the *Regula virginum*. Nonetheless, Caesarius must have desired their approval of the rule as a safeguard against it being disregarded by future bishops of Arles. A particular name of note in this list is that of Firminus of Uzès. This is the most obvious way in which knowledge of the *Regula virginum* spread to Uzès, in time for Ferreolus to make use of it in his rule. Firminus died in 563, Ferreolus in 581; awareness of Firminus' interests and literary activities would have still been strong in Ferreolus' day.¹⁴

In terms of the *Regula virginum*, then, the manuscript lacks chapters 1-43 of the rule itself and the *ordo psallendi* from the *recapitulatio*. While it may be tempting to see in this latter omission a deliberate decision not to use Caesarius' instructions for prayer, definitive conclusions are impossible to draw due to the generally incomplete state of the text. Where quiring and a study of the manuscript's *mise-en-page* might have been informative on the omission of this *ordo*, Morin makes no mention of these subjects and, regrettably, the manuscript is now lost. The manuscript also contained most of the letter *Vereor* (approximately the final ten percent was missing), and a text now known as the *Constitutum* of Caesaria II (see below, 169). Clearly the incomplete status of the manuscript does not permit conclusions to be drawn on the contents of the manuscript as a whole. The fact that some of each text is missing may suggest that they were only bound together after each had circulated separately, becoming damaged in the process. However, the selection of texts which survived into the twentieth century may indicate a conscious effort at preserving and circulating a Caesarian collection on the part of a later compiler: the works formed one volume at least from the eighteenth century, as an *ex libris* at the start of the volume makes clear: *Ex libris fratris Nicolai Brunat, religiosi Sancti Martini Augustodunensis*.¹⁵ Although Teridius' circulation of the *Regula virginum* from Arles to Autun seems a strong possibility, it is not possible to put forward any firmer conclusions as to the previous pattern of circulation of any of the individual texts which remained in the manuscript in the 1930s. It would be particularly interesting to know whether Teridius himself sent all of the Caesarian texts in the manuscript to Autun

¹⁴ *Regula Ferreoli*: PL 66, 959-976; V. Desprez, 'La *'Regula Ferrioli'*. Texte critique', *Revue Mabillon* 60 (1982), 117-48.

¹⁵ *CGM* vol. XXXVII, 495-6.

at the same time, or if, having received the *Regula*, the community there made an effort to acquire texts from other monasteries which explored the same ethos, or indeed St John himself.

The third manuscript of the *Regula virginum* is in some ways the strongest piece of evidence for the continuation or renewal of interest in the text. It now forms part of Bamberg, Königliche Bibliothek, ms. Lit. 142, which was transcribed at the end of the tenth century for the monastery of Niedermünster in Regensburg during the abbacy of the 'reform abbess' Uta (990-1025), and, as Morin notes, may have formed part of a spiritual and material regeneration of the monastery under duchess Judith and her son Henry II of Bavaria (951-995).¹⁶ The association of the *Regula virginum* with a drive for renewal is particularly striking given that the first half of the manuscript is composed of the *Regula Benedicti* adapted for women, the archetypal document of monastic correctness in this period. F. 65r carries a depiction of Caesarius giving a copy of his *Rule* to a pair of nuns, perhaps those of Niedermünster, beneath the description in gold minuscule '*S(an)c(tu)s c(a)esarius commendans ius monachab(us)*'.¹⁷ On the book which the figure of Caesarius hands to the nuns is written '*Om(ne)s unanimi(er) et concorditer vivite*' ['Let all live in unanimity and concord', RV 21]. While an apt recommendation for any religious community to abide by, this instruction also resonates particularly in a community which seems to have used two monastic rules together: the rules themselves should (and could) coexist in harmony.¹⁸

¹⁶ Morin, 'Problèmes', 9-10. Details of the manuscript are in F. Leitschuh (ed.) *Katalog der Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Bamberg*. I (Wiesbaden, 1966) 292-4. On the dating of the manuscript with regard to the abbacy of abbess Uta, see J. Gerchow and P. Marx (eds.) *Krone und Schleier: Kunst aus Mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern* (Munich, 2005) 186-7. De Vogüé, *Oeuvres monastiques*, 129, states that the manuscript was only produced after the death of Uta, who had died 10-15 years previously. However, a miniature of Uta on f. 163 would suggest that it was at least in part under her auspices that the manuscript was produced.

¹⁷ Bamberg ms. Lit. 142, f. 65r. See particularly Gerchow and Marx, *Krone und Schleier*, 186-7.

¹⁸ Although see Gude Suckale-Redlefson's comments on the likelihood of such an aristocratic community adjusting well to a stricter rule, Gerchow and Marx, *Krone und Schleier*, 186. In her opinion, such difficulties may have formed the context for the removal of the manuscript to Emperor Henry II's new foundation for men, St Michael, in Bamberg, where the text was subsequently amended to be suitable for a male community.

The question that presents itself is that of the origin of the Caesarian material. Did abbess Uta request the rule from another monastery, perhaps inspired by its earlier association with the Benedictine rule in Benedict of Aniane's 'reform documents', or was there a pre-existing knowledge of the text in Bavaria?¹⁹ One possible conduit that Morin identified lies in the missionary activities of Erhard and Emmeram in the seventh century. Both men came from Gaul; Emmeram (d.c. 715), most notably, came from the Poitiers region, where knowledge of Caesarius' rule was strong.²⁰ Indeed, Emmeram's *vita*, by Arbeo, bishop of Freising (764-783), claims that its subject was the bishop of Poitiers, which would place him in the ideal position for gaining knowledge of the monastic rules in his diocese.²¹ However, Wood suggests that this might have been a rhetorical device with the aim of increasing Emmeram's episcopal credentials.²² There is unfortunately no other evidence for Emmeram's life to confirm or disprove the details given in his *vita*.

Despite its high quality illumination, this was a manuscript for practical use. The text differs in several places from that of the other copies of the *Regula virginum*; it was not merely a collector's item of antiquarian interest to accompany the *Regula Benedicti*. The present manuscript contains all of the 'original' rule (caps. 1-47) and the *recapitulatio* (caps. 48-65). In common with the Munich and Berlin manuscripts, it includes a table of contents at the beginning of the 'original' rule, but of particular interest, it is the only manuscript to have a second such table at the beginning of the *Recapitulatio*.²³ These were instructions intended to be referred to. Not only does this demonstrate the currency of the rule within the community, it also alerts us to the fact that originally the manuscript also contained most of Caesarius' *ordines* on prayer and eating.²⁴ In sum, this recension of the rule contained all of its elements apart from two chapters of the *ordines* and the final three concluding chapters, which included the

¹⁹ One of the extant manuscripts of the *Institutio Sanctimonialium* was almost certainly known at the community at Niedermünster: see below, Chapter Five, at 246-7.

²⁰ Morin, 'Problèmes', 10. Erhard was buried at Niedermünster, which he founded; Emmeram was the martyred bishop of Regensburg.

²¹ Arbeo of Freising, *Vita Emmerammus*, AASS Sept VI, 474-84.

²² I. Wood *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (Harlow, 2001), at 151.

²³ This table of contents is reproduced in de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 130-1.

²⁴ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 130-2.

subscriptions of Caesarius and of the other bishops. The community in Regensburg had clearly obtained a copy of an exemplar which was close to the original.²⁵

The text itself also illustrates that the *Regula* was intended to be used. References to buildings and the layout of St John have been excised; there is no mention of the basilica in Arles which the nuns there were forbidden to enter; the nuns taking their turn at cooking were, in Regensburg, not permitted the extra measure of wine enjoyed by their counterparts in sixth-century Arles.²⁶ In addition, the fact that the text of the *Regula virginum* refers to that of the *Regula Benedicti Vt supra* demonstrates that the two rules were intended to be cross-referenced.²⁷

The most recent manuscript to contain the *Regula virginum* is Berlin, Königliche Bibliothek, ms. Phillippici 1696, dating to the thirteenth century. It is a composite manuscript, of which the parts have differing origins. Each of the five definable sections is, according to the catalogue, of approximately the same date, but they differ in size and writing area and it therefore seems probable that they were produced in different scriptoria. The first section contains extracts of the homilies on the Book of Ecclesiastes and of the *Allegories* on the Old and New Testaments of Hugh of St Victor (d. 1142); the second, a wide range of the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Augustine of Hippo, Roman poetry including Ovid and Juvenal, and extracts of classical prose writings including those of Seneca and Aristotle; the third, Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*; the fourth, the *Regula virginum*; and lastly, an eleventh-century miracle collection from the monastery of Sainte-Trinité in Fécamp.²⁸

The portions of the *Regula* included in this manuscript bear close similarities to those in the Bamberg recension. It contains the main body of the rule (caps. 1-47), the *Recapitulatio* (caps. 48-65), the *ordo ieiuniorum* (cap. 67), the *ordo convivii* (cap. 71) and

²⁵ For a persuasive *stemma* of the *Regula virginum* manuscripts, see de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 161-2.

²⁶ RV caps. 45, 14.

²⁷ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 133.

²⁸ V. Rose and F. Schillman (eds.) *Verzeichniss der Lateinischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin I* (Hildesheim, 1976) 126-130.

the greater part of the conclusion and summary (caps. 71-3), but omits the list of subscriptions found in the Tours recension (cap.73).²⁹ It is perhaps likely that this list would have seemed less important as time went on. At the end of the six folios of the *Regula virginum* (ff. 142r-149r), a note in a fourteenth-century hand states that ‘*Iste liber est domus vallis profunde et fuit datus eidem a domo [...] in manu domni [sic] david prioris vallis profunde*’.³⁰ Clearly, the manuscript did not originate at the female monastery of Vauparfond, close to Paris, but was given to it; de Vogüé posits another female house in the same region.³¹ The only other fact of provenance known is that by the seventeenth century, it belonged to the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris.³²

In sum, therefore, the extant manuscripts demonstrate that knowledge of Caesarius’ writings for religious women survived until the ninth century and beyond; that centres of this knowledge were the monastery of St John itself and possibly also Holy Cross in Poitiers; and that the *Regula virginum* continued to be seen as a relevant, useful document into the eleventh century. Although it is an observation that takes us outside the parameters of this study, the existence of two manuscripts from this period may also suggest that the monastic works of Caesarius enjoyed a resurgence of popularity during the reforms in the tenth century, a period when many female houses were given over to male communities. It remains to enquire into other sources for evidence of the circulation of the *Regula virginum*.

External evidence for the use and circulation of the *Regula virginum*

The use of the *Regula virginum* is not solely attested to by its circulation in manuscript form. Other sources illuminate its appearance in passing. Following the late sixth-century traditions of Columbanus, the rule appears to have been used in one of the

²⁹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 134-5.

³⁰ ‘This book belongs to the house of Vauparfond and was given into the hands of lord David, the prior of Vauparfond, from the house of’.

³¹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 135. Vauparfond had been founded in the ninth century by Richild, wife of Charles the Bald: see Cottineau, II, cols. 2200-1.

³² De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 135.

‘mixed rules’ of the seventh century.³³ This was in the foundation of Chamalières, near Clermont, in the mid-seventh century, which was made under the auspices of Praejectus (d.676), bishop of Clermont. Chapter 15 of the *Passio Praeiectionis* may be quoted at some length.³⁴

[Praejectus] energetically began to offer to the aforesaid Count Genesisius this wholesome advice: that as he had no descendant to make his legal heir, he should adopt the stainless, unmarked Church. It did not take this illustrious man long to accept the advice. He arose to build with unsparing effort and endeavour a monastery of holy virgins in a suburb of the aforesaid town [Clermont] in a place called Chamalières, and the monastery followed the rule of all the holy men, that is, St Benedict, St Caesarius and St Columbanus. With the greatest eagerness, of that monastery he put in charge the aforementioned Evodius to exercise the norms of faith and religion and the keeping of mortifications, and he made over for their need there some of his goods obtained by law. Moreover the holy bishop Praejectus also instituted there as abbess a certain woman of distinguished family called Gundilena who since adolescence had delighted in putting all her energies to Christian use.³⁵

Although the author of the *Passio* is unknown, it is probable that knowledge of the rule in use at the monastery of Chamalières was either first-hand or from someone equally versed in monastic rules. Fouracre and Gerberding note the strong possibility that a nun of Chamalières composed the *Passio*, particularly since the information on Praejectus’ early life seems to have been supplied by the abbess Gundilena, probably a member of

³³ These rules are discussed in C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* 3rd ed. (Harlow, 2001), at 46-7. See also the comments of Adalbert de Vogüé in his *Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes (400-700)* Typologie des Sources 46 (Turnhout, 1985), at 39.

³⁴ *Passio Praeiectionis* MGH SSRM 5 212-248; tr. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (eds.) *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography 640-720* (Manchester, 1996) 255 – 301.

³⁵ Quotation from Fouracre and Gerberding (eds.), *Late Merovingian France*, at 284-5. Gundilena shares the same name element as Praejectus’ father Gundolenus. The new abbess therefore probably came from Praejectus’ own family; see *ibid.*, 285, n. 92.

the bishop's family.³⁶ Other possible candidates that have been suggested are monks of the monasteries of Volvic or Amarin, who might equally be expected to have some familiarity with the monastic rules listed here.³⁷ This type of 'mixed rule' in which several separate rules were combined was common, as it provided communities with the ability to devise a rule for themselves that would best suit their individual circumstances. In this particular case, it is impossible to trace the means by which knowledge of Caesarius' rule came to Clermont. It may be likely that, as in the cases of Autun and Auxerre, Teridius had sent a copy of the *Regula virginum* to a monastery in the city. A more tenuous suggestion may be that of connections between Clermont and Autun. Praejectus himself travelled to Autun, notwithstanding his less than cordial relationship with its bishop, Leodegar (662-676): it was on his return from pursuing a court case in the city that he was murdered. Leodegar, in turn, was the nephew of bishop Dido of Poitiers (628-667) and grew up there, in what must have been one of the main nodes of Caesarian influence;³⁸ it may be this very fragile web of personal connection that helped to spread knowledge of religious texts. The geographical circulation of the *Regula virginum* clearly extended well into the Auvergne region.

The remainder of the *Passio Praeiectionis* cannot be passed over without one further point, however tentatively made. As well as providing an interesting insight into the state of female monasticism in seventh-century Clermont, an extract from Chapter 16 notes a familiar name:

The God-filled man [Praejectus], seeing Christ's following spring up all around him, ordered another monastery to be built in a suburb of the town on a piece of land which had once belonged to a woman named Caesaria and he consecrated it by filling it with girls dedicated to God. Actually, before that time it was difficult to find a convent of girls in those parts.

³⁶ Fouracre and Gerberding (eds.), *Late Merovingian France*, 260-1.

³⁷ These possibilities are discussed in Fouracre and Gerberding (eds.), *Late Merovingian France*, at 260.

³⁸ *Passio Leudegarii* MGH SSRM 5 249-362, ed. and tr. P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding (eds.) *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography 640-720* (Manchester, 1996) 194-254.

Could this Caesaria be a connection of the Châlons/ Arles Caesarii? The mysterious Caesaria of Clermont is attested to in 555 and subsequently in 572/3, as the wife of Britianus/ Britanus, the count of Javols.³⁹ According to Gregory of Tours' *Histories*, this Caesaria was the sister-in-law of count Firminus and took refuge with him in the cathedral in Clermont as a result of the persecution of Chramn (Book IV:13). Caesaria's son Palladius subsequently inherited the position of count of Javols (Book IV:39), but made several enemies 'despite his mother's vigilance' and ultimately killed himself.⁴⁰ Was this another member of the Caesarii with an interest in fostering female dedicated life? Fascinating as it would be to find family interest extending over generations, it is impossible to do more than speculate.

Moving back into the reading of hagiography, one may also turn to the evidence of the *Lives* of female saints for the adoption of the *Regula virginum*. This, however, can be inconclusive, as the intermingling of rules and practices can suggest a number of options for the rule in use at any given monastery. The *vita Sadalbergae abbatissae Laudunensis viduae*, a ninth-century *Life* of a seventh-century abbess, appears to reveal knowledge of Caesarian monastic practice, in the detail that Sadalberga herself took part in the weekly cooking duty.⁴¹ However, knowledge of several monastic traditions seems to have been current at Laon. For instance, nuns were appointed as cellaress for the space of a year, as provided for in both the *Regula Benedicti* and *Regula Columbani*.⁴² As in the case of Chamalières, some form of mixed rule may be the most likely normative text to have been used at Laon.

More striking are the references in the *Life of Glodesind* (composed c.830). This text, set late in the sixth century, describes the struggle of one young woman to embark upon a dedicated life in opposition to the wish of her parents.⁴³ With their eventual

³⁹ *PLRE* 3, 258.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV:39, trans. L. Thorpe, *The History of the Franks*, 234.

⁴¹ *Vita Sadalbergae abbatissae Laudunensis viduae* MGH SSRM 5: 40-66, at c.23. Tr. at SWDA 176-194. The reference is to RV 14.

⁴² *Vita Sadalbergae* c. 20; *Regula Benedicti* c. 31; *Regula Columbani* c.61.

⁴³ *Vita Glodesindis*, AASS July 25, 198-244. Tr. at SWDA 137 – 154.

permission, she went to Trier where her aunt lived, and there learnt ‘the rule’.⁴⁴ Based on its suitability for urban monasticism, McNamara notes the likelihood that, although not specified, this was the rule of Caesarius.⁴⁵ Even more strikingly, the author of Glodesind’s *vita* appears to have access to a copy of the *vita Caesarii*. The passage of the *vita* concerning her entry to dedicated life is also couched in terms very similar to those of the *vita Caesarii* in its discussion of the reason for Glodesind’s stay: ‘Living there [Trier] with her [aunt] monastically, she learned the holy rule. Thus having been taught herself, she might give instruction to other nuns.’ The *vita Caesarii* reads ‘He [Caesarius] recalled from a monastery in Marseille his venerable sister Caesaria whom he had sent there to learn what she would teach, and to be a pupil before becoming a teacher.’⁴⁶ This would also serve to reinforce McNamara’s suggestion that the rule at Glodesind’s monastery may have been Caesarius’. One interesting point here is the emphasis laid by both authors – three centuries apart – on the necessity for practical training in religious life, even in a context where a written rule seems to have been available and current. Clearly the importance of written texts as the bedrock of coenobitic knowledge can be overstated. The transmission of practical experience between religious women forms an essential (but often unnoticed) counterpart to the circulation of written texts, and although

⁴⁴ External sources do not suggest an obvious contender for the identity of this anonymous religious establishment. The editors of Glodesind’s *Life* in the *Acta sanctorum* suggest a lifespan for the saint of c.578 to c.608. The closest known possibility in terms of date would seem to be the monastery of St Symphorien, founded in c.630 by Modoaldus, bishop of Trier, for his sister Severa (Cottineau, II, col. 3213). However, it seems far more likely that Glodesind and her aunt lived in a small monastery which did not survive for long after their deaths, thereby leaving no trace in record. It also seems likely that the author of the *vita* would have identified the community if it had still been in existence.

⁴⁵ SWDA, 140.

⁴⁶ *Vita Antiquior Glodesindis* 12: *ibique una cum ea religiosissime degens, sacram didicit Regulam; ut & seipsam instrueret, ac ceteris sanctimonialibus normam daret*. The corresponding passage from the *Vita Caesarii*, c. 35, reads ‘*Evocat e massiliensi monasterio venerabilem germanam suam Caesariam, quam inibi ideo direxerat, ut disceret quod doceret, et prius esset discipula quam magistra...*’ The discernable manuscript transmission of the *Vita Caesarii* does not reveal which monasteries may have had access to the text in the early middle ages. None of the seven extant manuscripts (Orléans, Bibl. Munic. ms. 173, Paris BN mss. Lat. 5295, 5298, 11749, 11759, Rome Bibl. Angelicae ms. 1269, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, ms. Thott 135) dates prior to the eleventh century. Of these, Orléans, Bibl. Munic., ms. 173 (dating to the eleventh century) belonged to Fleury, and Paris BN Lat. 11759 (fourteenth century) belonged to Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Of course, the clear quotations from both the *Vita Caesarii* and the *Regula virginum* in Baudonivia’s *Vita Radegundis* demonstrates the Poitiers nun’s knowledge of the texts (see above, 91-3), and similarly, there is no actual manuscript evidence for the presence of the *Vita Caesarii* or the *Regula* at Holy Cross. Textual references may often be the best evidence we possess for plotting the spread of another text.

this will move into focus in the next chapter, it is vital to keep it in mind equally when considering the transfer of written texts between communities.

Circulation of the other texts: the ‘Caesarian booklet’

While it is informative about the vicissitudes of early medieval female religious life, the study of the manuscripts of the *Regula virginum* is not itself an untrodden path. The same cannot be said of Caesarius’ letter *Vereor*, addressed to his sister Caesaria in c.508. The second part of this chapter breaks new ground in offering a detailed study of the transmission of this letter. This is of fundamental importance to the study of early medieval female religious life in two areas. Firstly, it raises questions of gender and authority. Morin notes the existence of three manuscript copies of the letter on which his edition was based (in Vatican, Reg. Lat. ms. 140; Toulouse, Bibl. Munic., ms. 162; Tours, Bibl. Munic., ms. 617).⁴⁷ De Vogüé, realising that Caesarius’ *Sermo ad quosdam germanos* was in fact the same text but addressed to a male reading audience, was able thereby to add a further three (Paris, BN, ms. Lat. 12238; Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana ms. C 79 Sup; Grenoble, Bibl. Munic., ms. 306).⁴⁸ The simultaneous circulation of a female and a male version of an identical text is evidently of great interest and importance for the study of both masculine and feminine religious life, and the implications that the existence of such variants possess for the way in which early medieval monasticism is seen will be discussed in greater detail throughout this chapter.

The second and perhaps more important point of interest concerning the circulation of the letter *Vereor*, and one which neither of its editors seem to have noticed or appreciated, is the manuscript context in which it appears to have been circulated. In two of the ‘female recension’ manuscripts, Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Reg. Lat. 140 and Toulouse, Bibl. Munic., ms. 162, the same collection of texts, in the same order, is found. The following consideration of these manuscripts will argue that the letter

⁴⁷ G. Morin (ed.) *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia* II (Maredsous, 1937-42), 134.

⁴⁸ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 285-6.

Vereor circulated as part of a ‘package’ of Caesarian texts – omitting the *Regula virginum* itself – which provided a guide to the ethos of Caesarian monasticism without the prescriptions of a rule.

i) *Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica, ms. Reg. Lat 140*

Dating from the beginning of the ninth century, Vatican, Bibl. Apost. ms. Reg. Lat. 140 is a collection of works originating from the monastery of Fleury in the Loire region of France.⁴⁹ Fleury, founded in about 650, was one of the richest and most well-known monasteries in France.⁵⁰ Its importance stemmed from its claim to possess the body of Benedict of Nursia from the second half of the seventh century.⁵¹ Its scriptorium copied large numbers of manuscripts. In the ninth century, abbot Magnulf had to build a separate reading room next to the church so that the monks could read in comfort, with a table so that the monks did not need to rest manuscripts on their knees.⁵² Abbot Theodulf (798-818), also bishop of Orléans, promoted the copying of manuscripts in the monastery schools.⁵³

At first glance the manuscript appears to be the product of more than one scriptorium. While folios 3-26 and 75-150 are composed of twenty-eight lines per page, folios 27-74 have thirty. The Biblioteca Apostolica’s own catalogue states that the first part (ff. 3-26) was produced in another library, and it is uncertain when this was put together with the rest of the codex. It suggests, however, that it was written at around the same time, the beginning of the ninth century, and that the hand may indicate an origin in or near Tours.⁵⁴ However, closer examination of the manuscript shows that the hand and style of decoration are the same throughout the codex. The nineteen quires all have the same number of pages and are put together in the same way. In his reconstruction of the library at Fleury, while noting that the manuscript was composed in ‘several distinct

⁴⁹ M. Valtaso *et al* (eds.), *Codices Vatican Latini* 16 vols. (Rome, 1902-1985), I, 337.

⁵⁰ *DHGE* 1712.

⁵¹ On the cult of Benedict at Fleury, see also T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: the Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁵² *DHGE* 1744.

⁵³ *DHGE* 1744.

⁵⁴ Valtaso, *Codices Vaticanani*, 341.

parts', Mostert also suggests that all the elements were produced at Fleury.⁵⁵ He divides these parts into ff. 1-2, the partial *Lives* of Germanus; ff. 3-26, the *Collationes* of John Cassian; and ff. 27-74, from Eucherius to Gregory the Great, which has an *ex libris* at f. 60v, added in the twelfth century. A new quire begins at f. 27, and this folio is weathered, suggesting that the Eucherius section circulated at the beginning of a codex for a period of time. The opening folios of other quires are not weathered, which would suggest that the items were kept and read in the order they are in now. The section containing the Caesarian works, ff. 75-150, originated at Fleury and has two *ex libris* comments, at ff. 150v (*lib(er) sancti benedicti floriacensis cenobii*; possibly tenth century), and 122v (*hic est liber s(an)c(t)i Benedicti*; twelfth century). At f. 57v, the marginalia have been cut through, suggested that the pages have been trimmed to fit with the others for the current codex. Similarly, at f. 106v, the marginalia in a thirteenth-century hand have been cut through.⁵⁶ This section, containing the Caesarian works, appears comparatively less used than that including the Augustine material.

In order to consider the inclusion of *Vereor* (and the other texts by Caesarius) in this manuscript, it is necessary to list briefly the contents of the entire manuscript:

ff. 1-2	[several lines of two mutilated <i>Lives</i> of 'Germanus of Autun' (St Germain of Paris), dating from the beginning of the eleventh century]
ff. 3-26	John Cassian <i>Collationes</i> XVIII-XXIV
ff. 27-29	Eucherius of Lyons ⁵⁷ <i>Exhortatio ad monachos</i> [PL 50, col. 865]
f. 29-29v	Paulinus of Aquileia ⁵⁸ <i>Sententia ad monachos de paenitentia</i> [PL 103, cols. 699-702]
ff. 29v-31v	Eucherius of Lyons <i>Sententia ad monachos</i> [PL 50, cols. 1207-1210]
ff. 31v- 36	Athanasius of Alexandria ⁵⁹ <i>Liber de observationibus monachorum</i> [PL 103, cols. 665-672]

⁵⁵ M. Mostert *The Library of Fleury: a provisional list of manuscripts* (Hilversum, 1989) 258.

⁵⁶ Valtaso, *Codices Vaticanani*, 341.

⁵⁷ Eucherius died c. 449. He was also responsible for a *Passio martyrum acaunensis*: see T. Vivian *et al* (eds.), *The life of the Jura fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999).

⁵⁸ Paulinus, bishop of Aquileia, 726-802.

ff. 36-40v	? ⁶⁰	<i>De ieiunio et de iona dicta dominica I quadragesimae</i>
ff. 40v-44v	Ambrose ⁶¹	<i>De Helia et ieiunio</i> (caps 1-24) [PL 14, cols. 731-740]
ff. 44v-45v	Ambrose ⁶²	<i>Sermo de hospitalitate</i> [PL 57, cols. 725-728]
ff. 45v-51v	Jerome	<i>Sententiae de opusculis ad monachos</i> [PL 30, cols. 321-330]
ff. 52-53v	Augustine	<i>Tractatus de oboedientia</i> [PL 40, cols. 1221-1224]
ff. 53v-56	Augustine	[Commentary on Gal. VI:2]
ff. 56v-60	Augustine	<i>Epistola ad letum missa</i> [<i>Epistula</i> CCXLIII] [PL 33, cols. 1055-1059]
ff. 60r-62	Caesarius	<i>Sermo qualiter verbum dei desiderari debeat vel requiri</i> (Sermon IV) [CCSL CIII, 21-5]
ff. 62-64	Caesarius	<i>Sermo de versu psalmi LXXV</i> (Sermon CXXXV) [CCSL CIII, 555-60]
ff. 64-66	Caesarius ⁶³	<i>Sermo ad monachos</i> CCXXXVIII [CCSL CIV, 949-53]
ff. 66-67v	? ⁶⁴	<i>De electis omnia reliquentibus</i>
ff. 67v-68	? ⁶⁵	<i>De spontanea paupertate</i>
ff. 68-69v	? ⁶⁶	<i>De vita vel conversatione monachorum</i>
ff. 69v-70	? ⁶⁷	<i>De humilitate vel opere monachorum</i>
ff. 70-71	? ⁶⁸	<i>De remissa conversatione monachorum</i>

⁵⁹ Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, 298-373.

⁶⁰ Unknown author, the incipit is '*Adest nobis splendidissimus dies. et desideratum tempus aduenit*'.

⁶¹ Ambrose, bishop of Milan, 374-397.

⁶² Attributed to Maximus of Turin, d.c. 466

⁶³ A rubric at this point reads '*Excerpta complura quae videntur de monachorum officiis*'.

⁶⁴ The author and of this text is now unknown; the incipit is '*In fine saeculi cum deo iudices uenient qui nunc pro deo iniuste iudicantur*'.

⁶⁵ Unknown author, the incipit is '*Quisquis stimulo diuini amoris excitatus hic possessa reliquerit*'.

⁶⁶ Unknown author, the incipit is '*Omnes monachi saeculum reliquentes*'.

⁶⁷ Unknown author, the incipit is '*Ammonendus est monachus ut reuerentiam habitus sui in actu in locutione*'.

ff. 71-72	? ⁶⁹	<i>De monachis qui in curis saeculi implicantur</i>
ff. 72-72v	? ⁷⁰	<i>De tepiditate monachorum</i>
ff. 72v-74v	Gregory the Great	<i>Moralia in Job</i> [I. XXXV 27-32] [PL. 76, cols. 765-8]
ff. 74v-75	Isidore	<i>De contemptoribus mundi</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XVI 1-5] [PL. 83, cols. 691-2]
ff. 75-75v	Isidore	<i>De sanctis qui a consortio mundi se separant</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XVII 1-5] [PL. 83, cols. 692-3]
f. 75v	Isidore	<i>De praeceptis altioribus monachorum</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XVIII 1-2] [PL. 83, cols. 693-4]
ff. 75v-76	Isidore	<i>De tepore monachorum</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XX 1-3] [PL. 83, cols. 694-5]
f. 76-76v	Isidore	<i>De humilitate monachi vel opera</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XIX 1-5] [PL. 83, col. 694]
ff. 76v-77	Isidore	<i>De monachis qui curis saeculi occupantur</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XXI 1-7] [PL. 83, cols. 695-6]
f. 77-77v	Isidore	<i>De his qui mundi amore praepediuntur</i> [<i>Sententiarum</i> I, III, c.XXII 1-9] [PL. 83, cols. 696-7]
ff. 77v-78v	Isidore	<i>De libro soliloquiorum isidori</i> [<i>Synonymorum</i> I, II 71-75] [PL. 83, cols. 861-2]
ff. 78v-79	Columbanus	<i>Ordo lectionum officii</i> [<i>Instructio</i> XVI] [PL. 80, cols. 258-8]

⁶⁸ Unknown author, the incipit is ‘*Sunt nonnulli qui post uitam perditam ad semetipsos redeunt*’.

⁶⁹ Unknown author, the incipit is ‘*Nequaquam mens monachi ad superna adtollitur*’.

⁷⁰ Unknown author, the incipit is ‘*Nonnulli monachorum mundi quidem actionem figiunt* [corr. *fugiunt*]’.

ff. 79-81	Columbanus	<i>Qualiter monachus deo placere debet</i> [<i>Instructio</i> III] [PL. 80, cols. 235-238]
f. 81-81v	Columbanus	<i>De octo vitiis</i> [<i>Instructio</i> XVII] [PL. 80, cols. 259-260]
ff. 81v-83	Columbanus	<i>De disciplina</i> [<i>Instructio</i> XI] [PL. 80, cols. 250-252]
ff. 83-90	Nilus ⁷¹	<i>De octo principalibus vitiis</i> [PG. 79, cols. 1145-1164]
ff. 90v-94v	Faustus of Riez ⁷²	<i>Ammonitio fausti episcopi</i> [Sermon VII, <i>Ad monachos</i>] [PL. 58, cols. 883-887]
ff. 94v-98	Faustus of Riez	<i>Sermo de admonitione monachorum</i> [PL. 50, cols. 850-855]
ff. 98-101v	Eutropius ⁷³	<i>Epistola ad Petram papam de districtione monachorum</i> [PL. 80, cols. 15-20]
ff. 101v-105	Valerianus	<i>Liber de bonae disciplinae</i> ⁷⁴ [PL. 50, cols. 691-696]
ff. 105-106v	? ⁷⁵	<i>De eo quod scriptum est in psalmo CXVIII</i> [PL. 39, cols. 1849-1851]
ff. 106v-108v	Alcuin	<i>Sententia cuius de laude psalmodiae</i> ⁷⁶ [PL. 101, cols. 465-468]
ff. 108v-112	Alcuin	<i>Epistola cuiusdam ad adolescentiam missa</i> ⁷⁷ [PL. 101, cols. 649-656]
ff. 112-114v	Novatus ⁷⁸	<i>De humilitate et oboedientia</i> [<i>Sententia de humilitate et obedientia et de calcanda superbia</i>] [PL. 18, cols. 67-70]

⁷¹ A monk of Sinai; d. c. 430.

⁷² Faustus, abbot of Lérins from c. 432 and subsequently bishop of Riez; d. c. 490.

⁷³ Eutropius, bishop of Valencia, d. c. 610.

⁷⁴ Later corrected to *Agustini* [sic] *ad Valerianum... episcopum*.

⁷⁵ Unknown author, the incipit is '*Quid orandum. Bonitati necessaria disciplina*'.

⁷⁶ Alcuin, taken from *De psalmorum usu*.

⁷⁷ Alcuin, *De confessione peccatorum ad pueros Sancti Martini*.

⁷⁸ Ascribed by Migne to an uncertain date in the fourth century; otherwise unknown.

ff. 114v-118v Evagrius ⁷⁹	<i>Proverbia ad eos qui in cenobiis et sinodochiis habitant fratres</i> [PL. 20, cols. 1181-1186]
ff. 119-120v ⁸⁰ Jerome	<i>Homelia secundum mattheum libri iohannis hosaurei</i> [<i>Homilia in Mattheum</i> , ed. Morin, <i>Anecd. Mareds.</i> III, 2, 373-6]
ff. 120v-123v Caesarius	<i>Epistola... ad Caesaream abbatissam eiusque congregationem</i> [Coegisti me]
ff. 123v-129v Caesarius	<i>Caesarius... Cesariae sanctae sorori abbatissae vel omni congregationis suae</i> [Vereor]
ff. 129v-132 Caesarius	<i>Epistola ortatoria ad virginem deo dicatam</i> [O Profundum]
ff. 132-134 Caesarius	<i>Sermo de decem virginibus</i> ⁸¹ [Sermon CLV] [CCSL CIV, 632-5]
ff. 134-135v Caesarius	<i>Sermo de decem virginibus</i> ⁸² [Sermon CLVI] [CCSL CIV, 635-638]
ff. 135v-137 Caesarius	[Sermon CLVI cont.] ⁸³ [CCSL CIV, 638-641]
ff. 137-139v Caesarius	Sermon XXXVII <i>Incipit ad virgines quae tamen et in admonitione monachorum communitari potest</i> [CCSL CIV, 944-949]
ff. 139v-149 ? ⁸⁴	<i>Item ad virgines</i> [PL. 20, 227-242]
ff. 149-150v Evagrius	<i>Ad virgines</i> [from <i>Sententiae</i>] [PL. 20, cols. 1185-1188]

⁷⁹ Evagrius monachus, writing c. 420.

⁸⁰ This amends the catalogue entry, which states 118v-120v.

⁸¹ The incipit of this sermon is '*In lectione quae nobis recitata est*'.

⁸² The incipit of this sermon is '*In lectione evangelica quae nobis de decem virginibus recitata est*'.

⁸³ A note in the text reminds the reader that this sermon can be split in half here: *Si uis hic eam diuide*. This part of the sermon also has its own incipit: '*Virgines vero qui integritatem corporis*'

⁸⁴ Migne attributes this text to Sulpicius Severus.

The Vatican manuscript is evidently a compendium of works of guidance for monks, with individual texts ranging in date from Athanasius (d. 373) to Alcuin (735-804). The inclusion of a number of Alcuin's writings serves to provide a *terminus post quem* for the date of the production of the manuscript. This is a collection of shorter texts rather than *regulae*: a body of work that could be used to supplement the teachings of the Benedictine rule in the monastery of Fleury. However, as Mostert suggests, the manuscript was almost certainly not copied either at the same time, or by the same scribe, although almost certainly in the same scriptorium.⁸⁵ There is a large clue to this in the placement of Caesarius' works in the manuscript. This is in general an organised, coherent collection: works by the same author are grouped together. The exception to this is Caesarius, whose writings are now in two distinct and separate groups in the manuscript: the first, ff. 60r-66, of three sermons; the second, ff. 120-139v, of his writings to religious women. One may imagine a first set of extracts and complete texts of monastic guidance being gathered together, organised and copied; indeed, the work immediately following Caesarius' *Sermo CCXXXVIII*, the anonymous *De electis omnia reliquentibus*, continues directly on from the sermon on the same folio. A second set of similar guidelines, Mostert's section of ff. 75-150, perhaps written slightly later or by a different scribe in the same scriptorium, was subsequently added to the manuscript. Given that this second section, commencing with the *De contemptoribus mundi* of Isidore of Seville, appears somewhat less weathered than the first section, it may be that a slightly later date of production is indicated. Thus, Caesarius' work appears in two groups in the manuscript.

The question that concerns us here, however, is the relationship between the group of Caesarian texts for women and the remainder of the manuscript. The consistent script between this and the rest of the manuscript, and the lack of weathering at the start of the Caesarian material, indicate that these texts did not themselves physically circulate as a separate booklet. However, their grouping, and above all the fact that they all concern dedicated women, in contrast to the texts in the rest of the manuscript, suggest

⁸⁵ Mostert, *The Library of Fleury*, 258.

that these works by Caesarius had been copied into the manuscript from another manuscript that also included them in this order. In order to gain more insight into the inclusion of the works for dedicated women by Caesarius, we must now turn to examine the other manuscript in which the same texts are found: Toulouse, Bibl. Munic., ms. 162.

ii) *Toulouse, Bibl. Munic., ms. 162*

Toulouse, Bibl. Munic., ms. 162 is a composite manuscript of which the vast majority of texts are spiritual. An *ex-libris* in a later hand on f.1 states that the manuscript belonged to the Augustinian convent in Toulouse. It was removed from the convent during the Revolution and ultimately became the property of the Bibliothèque Municipale.⁸⁶ The manuscript is composed of two distinct sections. The first part is a collection of twenty-four items copied by a number of twelfth-century hands; the second part is Albert the Great's *Postilla in evangelium S. Joannis*, copied in the thirteenth century.⁸⁷ The first part of the manuscript is composed of ten quires of eight folios and one of six folios. The leaves have modern pagination. Folios 1-2v and 80-215v are in two columns; folios 3-79v are in long lines. The complete list of contents is as follows (titles are taken from the Bibliothèque Municipale's own catalogue unless otherwise indicated):

ff. 1-2v	Jerome[tr.]	<i>Adhortationes sanctorum patrum Egyptiorum ad profectum monachorum</i> [PL. 20, col. 1181]
ff. 2v-53v	Jerome[tr.]	<i>Sententiae seniorum</i> [PL. 73, col. 855]
ff. 53v-56	Nilus	<i>De VIIIo viciis principalibus</i> [PG. 79, cols. 1145-1164]
f. 56	Gualo Cambrensis	Poem against simony ⁸⁸

⁸⁶ I am grateful to Jocelyne Deschaux of the Bibliothèque Municipale in Toulouse for this information.

⁸⁷ *CGM* in 4-o, VII, 95.

⁸⁸ See W. Hazlitt, 'Gualo', in S. Johnson and W. Hazlitt, *The Lives of the British Poets* (4 vols.) (London, 1854) I, at 434.

		Incipit: <i>Sacrilegis monachis emptoribus ecclesiarum</i>
f. 56	?	[Extract of verse on the three Marys] ⁸⁹
f. 56	Bernard of Cluny ⁹⁰	<i>De contemptu mundi</i> [extract of 150 lines]
f. 57	Caesarius	<i>Epistola ad Cesariam abbatissam eiusque conventum</i> [Coegisti me]
f. 57v-59v	Caesarius	<i>Epistola Cesarie s(an)c(t)e soror abbatisse vel omni (con)gregationi sue</i> [Vereor]
ff. 59v-60v	Caesarius	<i>Epistola hortatoria ad virginem Deo dicatam</i> [O Profundum]
ff. 60v-61	Caesarius	<i>Sermo de decem virginibus</i> [Sermon CLV]
ff. 61-62	Caesarius	<i>Sermo de decem virginibus</i> [Sermon CLVI]
ff. 62-63	Caesarius	Sermon XXXVII [CCSL CIV, 944-949] <i>Ad virgines, tamen ad munitionem monachorum commoniri potest</i>
ff. 63-66	?Jerome	Homily on virginity ⁹¹ [PL. 18, col. 77]
ff. 66-67	Evagrius	<i>Ad virgines</i> [from <i>Sententiae</i>] [PL. 20, cols. 1185-1188]
f. 67	? ⁹²	Homily on virginity
ff. 67v-71	? ⁹³	<i>Penitentia de Maria Egiptiaca</i> [cf. AASS Apr. 2, 69-90]
ff. 71-74v	? ⁹⁴	Passion of the Seven Sleepers
ff. 74v-75	?	Prayer ⁹⁵
f. 75	?	Prose text ⁹⁶

⁸⁹ This poem by a now unknown author begins 'Anna viros habuit Jhoachim, Cleopha Salomeque...'.
⁹⁰ Bernard of Cluny (or of Morlaix), a Benedictine monk of the early twelfth century.

⁹¹ The incipit is 'Quantam in celestibus beatitudinibus'.

⁹² This homily by an unknown author has the incipit 'Agite itaque, specialis tirocinii professores'.

⁹³ The incipit of this text is 'Fuit quidam senex in Palestine monasteriis'.

⁹⁴ The incipit of this text is 'In tempore illo, regnante impio Decio imperatore, facta est ingens...'.
⁹⁵ Incipit: *Alpha et Omega, magne Deus, Heli, Heli, Deus, amen...* See F.J. Mone, *Lateinische Hymnen des Mittelalters*, 3 vols., I, (Freiburg, 1853-5), 14.

⁹⁶ Incipit: *Amor patris et filii, Veri splendor auxilii* (Mone, *Lateinische Hymnen*, I, 236.).

ff. 75v-77v	Postumianus	<i>Narratio Postumiani de itinere peregrinationis sue</i> ⁹⁷ [PL. 73, col. 813]
ff. 77v-78v	John Chrysostom ⁹⁸	<i>Homelia sancti Johannis Crisostomi de eruditione discipline</i> Incipit: <i>Eruditio disciplinae custos est fidei et vinculum fidei</i>
ff. 78v-79	John Chrysostom	<i>Sermo de militia spirituali</i> Incipit: <i>Bona quidem sunt et utilia</i>
f. 79	?	Recipe for bitumen to line a well
ff. 79v-80	?	Poem of 33 verses ⁹⁹
ff. 80-215	Albert the Great ¹⁰⁰	<i>Postilla in evangelium S. Joannis</i> [A. Borgnet (ed.) <i>Opera Omnia</i> , vols. XX-XXIV]

As with the Vatican manuscript, the grouping of Caesarian material within the manuscript may suggest that this section was, or had been copied from, a separate booklet circulating independently. We may note at this point that the Caesarian texts appear in the same order in both Vatican and Toulouse manuscripts, suggesting a connection between them.

However, how appropriate is it to view the ‘Caesarian sections’ in these two manuscripts as putative ‘booklets’? The existence of such ‘booklets’ was first identified by Pamela Robinson in her articles ‘Self-Contained Units in Composite Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Period’ (1978) and ‘The ‘Booklet’: a Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts’ (1980).¹⁰¹ Robinson posits the existence of ten criteria for determining

⁹⁷ Postumianus was a Gallic monk of the fourth century who visited Paulinus of Nola.

⁹⁸ It has not been possible to identify these two fragments of Chrysostom’s writings.

⁹⁹ Incipit: *Lactea corpora summaque robora preripiuntur...*

Explicit: *Dulcis enim prius evolat oculus acta libido.*

¹⁰⁰ Albertus Magnus, b. c. 1200

¹⁰¹ P.R. Robinson, ‘Self-Contained Units in Composite Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Period’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 7 (1978) 231-8, repr. in M.P. Richards (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings* (Routledge: New York and London, 1994), 25-35; *eadem*, ‘The ‘Booklet’: a Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts’, *Codicologica* 3 (1980) 46-69.

whether any given section was or was not a 'booklet' prior to being incorporated into its current manuscript. These are:

1. The dimensions of its leaves may differ from those in other parts of the manuscript.
2. The hand or *mise-en-page* may differ.
3. The style of decoration or illustration may differ.
4. Any catchwords may run only within the booklet.
5. It may have its own series of quire signatures.
6. Its outer leaves may be soiled or rubbed.
7. The number of leaves may differ between quires.
8. There may be a relatively large or small final quire, where the scribe has had to modify the quire structure in order to ensure that the final text finishes at the end of the quire.
9. The last page(s) may be blank because the text did not fill the booklet. There may be evidence of such leaves having been cut away.
10. Text may have been added to such a space at the end of the quire, by the scribe or subsequent collator. This may bear no relation to the previous contents.¹⁰²

In 1986, however, Ralph Hanna proposed a number of qualifications to this list.¹⁰³ He began by adding three further determining factors:

11. The material from which different parts of the manuscript are made may differ.
12. The sources of the different sections of the manuscript may differ.
13. The subject matter in different parts of the manuscript may differ.¹⁰⁴

He then sought to determine whether the presence of any of the thirteen factors could be taken as conclusive evidence for the identification of a given section in a manuscript as a

¹⁰² P.R. Robinson, 'The 'Booklet'', 47-8

¹⁰³ R. Hanna, 'Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations' *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986) 100-111.

¹⁰⁴ Hanna, 'Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts', 108.

‘booklet’. He rejects numbers 1, 3 and 2 (as it refers to scribal hand) on the basis that these could also indicate a manuscript compiled from elements purchased separately.¹⁰⁵ He suggests that numbers 4 and 7 are so typical of medieval manuscripts in any case that they cannot be taken as an indication of anything unusual. In addition, numbers 10 and 13 are not necessarily indicative of fascicles or ‘booklets’. Some literary texts are brief and their inclusion may not therefore be a sign of the end of a booklet. Hanna also suggests that booklets which are not textually self-sufficient may occur, so a cohesive ‘textual unit’ does not necessarily signify a booklet.¹⁰⁶ Of Robinson’s remaining factors, Hanna selects only three as being of particular importance in identifying a booklet. The first is criterion 5: if a section has an independent system of quire signatures, he posits that it is very likely to have been conceived as an independent textual unit. Features 8 and 9 are different ways of tackling the problem of concluding a section, and therefore argue strongly for the original end of the unit.¹⁰⁷

Clearly, in discussing the circulation of Caesarius’ works, it is of vital importance to ascertain if the groups of his works in the Vatican and Toulouse manuscripts could have circulated as a booklet by themselves, or if they could have been copied from such a booklet. According to the above criteria, the status of the Caesarian material as originally a booklet with its own pattern of circulation is highly likely, if not possible to establish beyond all doubt. Taking the Toulouse manuscript first, the uncertainty remains because, following Hanna’s criteria, the three most important features for the establishment of a booklet are absent. There are no quire signatures on the Caesarian texts, possibly due to the trimming of the leaves (on which, see below, at 154). In terms of Hanna’s second most important factor, the variation in size of the hypothetical final quire of the ‘booklet’, the Caesarian material again does not fit this model. It is composed of two quires of eight leaves (ff. 57r - 64v; ff. 65r – 72v), and most of the quires in the manuscript are made up of eight folios. The exception is the quire immediately following the Caesarian section. This – the final quire written in a twelfth-century hand – is made up of six folios, and

¹⁰⁵ This point is perhaps more relevant to manuscripts dating from the twelfth century onwards, when stationers began copying and selling individual works.

¹⁰⁶ Hanna, ‘Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts’, 110.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

contains a number of shorter pieces. The first of these, the *Passio septem dormientem*, actually starts on the final leaf of the second Caesarian quire. It seems possible that the *Passio* text was begun on the final leaf of a text that had already been copied (the *Life* of Mary of Egypt). On this folio, the scribe has continued the *mise-en-page* of the scribe of the Caesarius section, in that long lines are used, as they have been for the entirety of this section. By contrast, as soon as a new quire is started, the scribe changes to copying the same text in two columns, suggesting a desire to keep the same style throughout one quire but changing to his own 'house style' at the first opportunity. This may actually suggest Hanna's third 'most useful' feature, the existence of a blank page at the end of the quire. Instead of being cut away, as he notes is often the case, the subsequent scribe has chosen to make use of the spare parchment.

Robinson's original criteria for defining a booklet form a model which the Caesarian material of Toulouse, Bibl. Munic., ms. 162 fits much more closely. The first criterion that she notes is variation in the size of leaves in the manuscript. Although they are now all the same size, the fact that much of the marginalia in the Caesarius section have been cut shows that its leaves were originally somewhat larger. This trimming extends up to f.71 and rarely thereafter (there is only one subsequent clear example of marginalia being cut, at f. 127). The extent of marginal notation that had evidently been cut in the Caesarius texts suggests that these quires did form a separate, larger, section previously. Having noted that, there are some examples of trimmed marginalia earlier in the manuscript, at ff. 50 (the top of the leaf), 25v and 45r (at the sides). F. 39, in the middle of the Jerome texts, also has cut marginalia. The possibility that several sections (or indeed the entire manuscript) were written on larger folios cannot therefore be dismissed. Hanna's doubt over the usefulness of this criterion may have some basis. In any case, however, it is apparent that the individual texts did not originate in the same manuscript.

Perhaps the most revealing criteria of Robinson are those of variation in hand or *mise-en-page*, variation in the decoration and illumination, and the soiling of the outer leaves of the suspected booklet. As noted previously, one immediately apparent

difference in the Caesarius section is the use of long lines of text, a single text block, rather than two columns. It seems probable that at the very least different scribes copied the text. Close inspection of the manuscript reveals at least nine different hands across the twelfth-century texts. There appears to be one hand for the two Jerome texts (ff. 2v-53r), one for the Nilus text (ff. 53v-56v), a third for the next three short texts (f. 56r), a fourth for the entire Caesarius section (ff. 57v-71r), a fifth for the *Passio septem dormientem*, and the following prayer (ff. 71v-74v), a sixth for the short piece of prose (f. 75), a seventh for the Postumianus text, Chrysostom's homilies, and sermon (ff. 75v-78v), an eighth for the bitumen recipe (f. 79), and a ninth for the poem (f. 79v). The thirteenth-century Albertus Magnus text is of course in yet another hand. It is likely that these were texts copied out in different locations.

A still more suggestive feature is the change of decoration in the Caesarius section. The texts immediately before Caesarius' works begin – Gualo's poem and Bernard of Cluny's *De contemptu mundi* – are illuminated with letters infilled with blue and yellow. The decoration of the Caesarius texts is, by contrast, limited to red *incipits* and *explicitis* with some decorated initials. It seems unlikely that both of these styles were the work of the same scriptorium.

Perhaps the clearest indication that the Caesarius section circulated independently at one time is the fact that the outer leaves of its two quires are so soiled compared to the leaves immediately before and after it. This can be compared to f. 2, the start of Jerome's *Sententiae*, and ff. 73-79v, the final folios of the twelfth-century part of the manuscript, which are all in some way damaged and were possibly loose sheets bound into the current codex for the first time. The last of these folios, f. 79v, is severely damaged and in fact shows signs of having been at least singed at some point in its past. As one might expect, the first folio of the Albertus Magnus text is also weathered.

Turning now to the same group of Caesarian works in the Vatican manuscript, they do not appear to have had a physically separate circulation at any point. Yet the fact that the same group of texts appears in a manuscript compiled three centuries later is

revealing. It suggests that this collection of texts for dedicated women by Caesarius of Arles had circulated as a booklet prior to the composition of the Vatican manuscript in the ninth century, when monks in the Fleury scriptorium copied it into a manuscript of texts, aimed largely at men, which were concerned with the ideology and practice of living an ascetic life. Meanwhile, the Caesarian booklet continued circulating into the twelfth century, when one copy of it was bound into a larger manuscript, perhaps at the Augustinian convent in Toulouse. The fact that the 'Toulouse' booklet is written in a twelfth-century hand implies the existence of further, older copies of the booklet from which it had been copied. The copy of it in the Vatican manuscript was not made from a single copy of the booklet that now forms part of the Toulouse manuscript. The booklet's circulation was therefore wider than it now appears.

While it may therefore be possible to establish the existence of the Caesarian material in this manuscript as a separate booklet, is it possible to narrow its putative date of construction? Here, the presence of the letter known as *Coegisti me* is useful. Morin, editing the works of Caesarius in the 1930s, accepted the authorship of the bishop of Arles and included it in his edition. However, in 1975 Raymond Étaix published an article which demonstrated conclusively that the letter could not have been written by Caesarius.¹⁰⁸ *Coegisti me* bears strong similarities to Pelagius' letter to Demetrias of c.413, Jerome's to Eustochium, and the *Moralia in Job* of Gregory the Great, as Étaix sets out clearly.¹⁰⁹ While it would not be inconceivable to posit that Caesarius had used extracts of the two patristic letters, and Gregory the Great had in turn taken original Caesarian material to use in his *Moralia*, it is unlikely in the extreme that Gregory would have been able to do so without also using some of the phraseology of the Jerome or Pelagius letters, of which there is no sign.¹¹⁰ The letter *Coegisti me* must therefore post-date the composition of the *Moralia in Job*, which places it after 579 x 585. It was also cited in Defensor of Ligugé's *Liber scintillarum*, suggesting that the letter must have

¹⁰⁸ R. Étaix, 'Trois notes sur saint Césaire d'Arles', in *Corona Gratiarum: Miscellanea patristica, historica et liturgica Eligio Dekkers O.S.B. XII lustra complenti oblata* I (Bruges, 1975) 211-227.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 212-7.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 217-8.

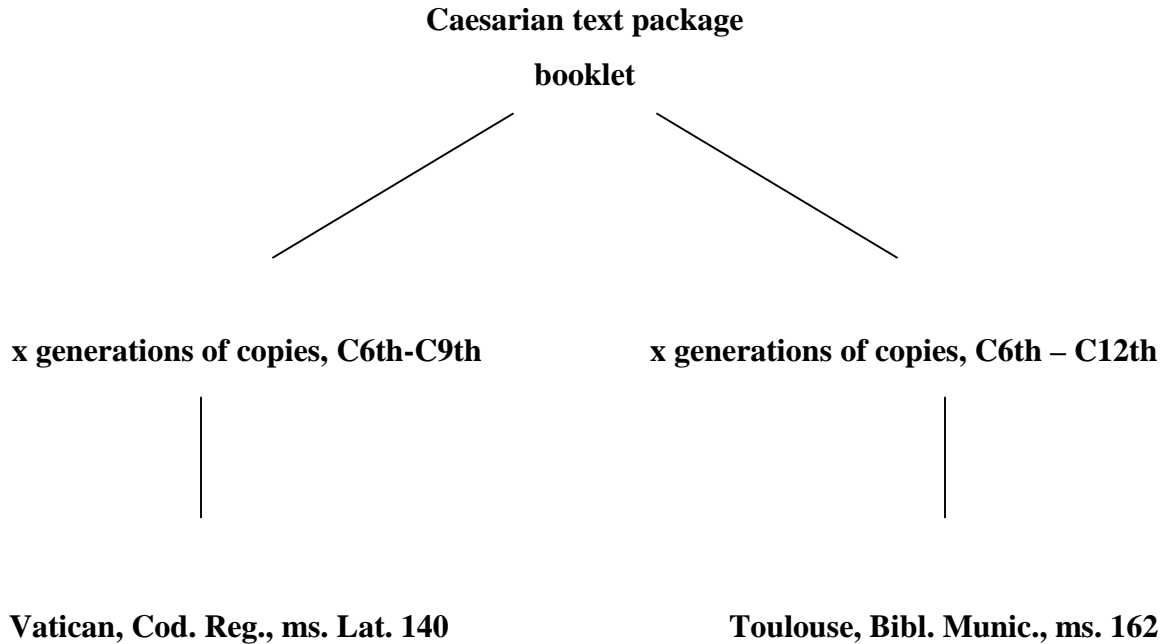
been composed before c.700.¹¹¹ On this evidence, the ‘booklet’ can probably only have been established as such after the seventh century, when this letter was in circulation.

In a different regard, however, the false attribution of the letter to Caesarius makes the text more, not less, interesting. The earliest extant copy of the letter dates only to the ninth century (Vatican, Bibl. Apost., ms. Reg. Lat. 140); sources are silent on when this attribution occurred, whether it was a deliberately false attribution to an established monastic authority, or an accidental inclusion in a body of texts to which it did not belong, at some time between the seventh and ninth centuries. Clearly it was deemed to belong to the Caesarian canon by the time that Defensor used it in the seventh century, and remained so at least until the twelfth; going by its content alone, later medieval readers saw nothing inappropriate about its inclusion in a body of work by the renowned Caesarius. The bishop’s fame as an author of texts of guidance for those engaged in a dedicated life continued beyond the early middle ages.

Returning to consider both manuscripts together, in general the Caesarian texts in the Toulouse and Vatican manuscripts do not have the same variations from the other codices in common, as one might expect if they had been copied from the same source.¹¹² It may be possible to speculate that their textual forebears had been copied from the same booklet, and enough time had passed for each strand to have developed its own variations. Such a pattern of dissemination may be represented as follows:

¹¹¹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 287-8.

¹¹² One example of where this does occur is in the text of the letter *O Profundum*, where both manuscripts insert the word *subditae* into the phrase ‘*ne forsitan [subditae] audientes tacitis cogitationibus dicant...*’, De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 428.



The circulation of this booklet of Caesarian material – which did not include the *Regula virginum* itself – suggests that interest in Caesarius’ guidance on monastic matters, his explorations of the coenobitic ethos, were of interest to communities who did not require the rule itself. The fact that this collection was disseminated separately to the *Regula virginum*, and that there were indeed more manuscripts of this collection circulating in the period before the ninth century, suggests that there was strong demand for works which guided female dedicated life without being prescriptive. One may speculate that by the eighth century, therefore, women devoting their lives to God evidently had more need of ideological works which left them free to find their own practical paths to holiness, than of rules which governed the *minutiae* of their existences. The existence of this collection makes it clear that female religious life remained in a strong state, but lived beyond the bounds of the monastery wall. The next chapter will discuss this hypothesis further.

Circulation of Caesarius' works: *Vereor*

The feminine recension of *Vereor* is, as we have seen, part of a Caesarian 'booklet' in the two manuscripts considered above. Two further manuscripts (of which only one is still extant) also contained this text in combination with a different constellation of works. The first, Tours, Bibl. Munic., ms. 617, dating to the late tenth or eleventh century, has been discussed above (at 130-3) in the context of the dissemination of the *Regula virginum*. This manuscript contained both the *Regula virginum* and *Vereor*, bringing to the fore the possibility of multiple layers of circulation. However, if it is correct that this manuscript was a copy of a very early one sent by Teridius, it is more likely that both texts would have been sent to Autun to facilitate new religious institutions there. The second, which now lacks the beginning of the letter and was therefore not substantially used by Morin or de Vogüé, is Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. M.p.th.o.1. This manuscript, which dates to the mid-eighth century, has been associated with an unidentified women's community east of the middle Rhine.¹¹³ It contains a partial (mutilated) copy of *Vereor*, a selection from the *Regula Magistri* addressed to *venerabiles filiae*, and ten sermons to monks, attributed to Caesarius but now considered the work of both Caesarius and Eusebius Gallicanus.¹¹⁴ Felice Lifshitz argues that this manuscript 'was clearly prepared for a female religious community'.¹¹⁵ This was a deliberate collection of the works of Caesarius, with the addition of an extract from the rule of the Master. As Lifshitz notes, such a collection would be particularly suitable for a community of women; the emphasis laid by Caesarius on the ability of nuns to read and write 'was presumably part of the arsenal of texts which female religious and their allies invoked to justify the women's claims to financial and educational resources'.¹¹⁶ Perhaps more importantly, the creation of such a collection suggests a context for the Caesarian 'booklet' of texts in Vatican Reg. Lat. 140 and Toulouse 162. A female community might have made such a collection or had it made for them. Where would such a collection have

¹¹³ F. Lifshitz, 'Demonstrating Gun(t)za: women, manuscripts, and the question of historical 'proof'', in W. Pohl and P. Herold (eds.) *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens: Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz im Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2002) 67-96, at 78-80.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79. These are sermons XXXIX, VI, XL, XLI, and XLIV of Eusebius Gallicanus, and sermons CCXXXIII, CCXXXV, CCXXXVI, CCXXXIV and CLV of Caesarius.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

stood with regard to the ownership and circulation of the *Regula virginum*? One suggestion might be that communities already in possession of Caesarius' *Rule* for nuns desired a complementary compendium of his other texts aimed at dedicated women. However, given the vibrant scribal activity and evident interest in Caesarian monastic texts of Lifshitz's anonymous female community on the Rhine, it would therefore be surprising that they did not either make or preserve a copy of the accompanying *Regula virginum*.¹¹⁷ It seems probable, therefore, that such a collection of 'non-*Rule*' material was a desirable manuscript to produce or acquire in its own right, and therefore had a pattern of transmission separate to that of the *Regula*.

Vereor* for men: the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos

The fundamental importance of the letter *Vereor* for the study of early medieval female religious life is clear. Yet beyond that, it has profound importance for the study of early medieval religious life in general. Its centrality lies in the fact that it circulated in versions for both genders simultaneously, throughout the early middle ages and afterwards. As we shall discuss below, although conceived for his sister and her nascent community of religious women, Caesarius himself subsequently directed the contents of the letter to the male communities under his direction as bishop of Arles. As in the case of the *Regula virginum*, he did not draw a distinction between texts suitable for men and for women to read. Indeed, the earliest manuscript of the text in a male recension, Paris, BN., ms. Lat. 12238, dating to the ninth century, continued to describe the work as an '*Epistola ad quosdam germanos*'.¹¹⁸ It retained the same purpose and structure as the letter composed for Caesaria.

The earliest evidence for the circulation of a masculine recension of *Vereor* to a male audience is attested to not by extant manuscripts but by its quotation in subsequent

¹¹⁷ Particularly since the 'Caesarius' manuscript from this house, Würzburg Universitätsbibliothek, ms. M.p.th.o. 1, also contains selections from the *Regula Magistri* (ff. 2v-4): Lifshitz, 'Demonstrating Gun(t)za', 79-80.

¹¹⁸ F. 28r.

works. As noted previously in Chapter 2, the very first of these is the use of a portion of the letter by Caesarius himself, in his *Regula monachorum*. At the end of the rule for monks, the final exhortative passage is a copy of the second paragraph of *Vereor*, with the final sentence of the first paragraph to serve as an introduction.¹¹⁹ It is, moreover, a copy rather than an adaptation: nowhere else in his rule for monks does Caesarius employ the direct address to his ‘*venerabiles filii*’; this is a direct substitution for the ‘*venerabiles filiae*’ of *Vereor*. Of course, the fact that only one other change needed to be made (*sollicitae* – *solliciti*) also reminds us that a significant proportion of the extract, perhaps a third, is made up of Scriptural citation that evidently had no need of adjustment.

Beyond Caesarius’ lifetime, the circulation of the masculine *Vereor* can be detected at some distance from Arles. Towards the end of the seventh century, Defensor, a monk of Ligugé, made use of the letters *Vereor* and *Coegisti me*, in addition to some sermons of Caesarius, in his *Liber scintillarum*.¹²⁰ Ligugé is only about five miles outside Poitiers; Defensor lived near to the poitevin centre of Caesarian monasticism at Holy Cross. This text brings together selections from the works of seventeen patristic authors (in addition to the Bible) to illuminate Defensor’s themes of moral instruction and ascetic teaching. The preface to the text describes the process by which he selected his ‘sparks’: ‘I attentively read the pages one by one, and, finding a shining sentence, as one would with a discovered pearl or gem, I collected it with eagerness’.¹²¹ Some of his texts are wrongly attributed: Caesarius’ sermon XXXIII, for instance, is credited to Augustine.¹²² Conversely, Defensor also attributes sermons to Caesarius which actually originated from Eusebius Gallicanus and Faustus of Riez.¹²³ Evidence for Defensor himself exists only in

¹¹⁹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 287; the text of the rule is in A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau (eds.) *Césaire d’Arles. Oeuvres monastiques. II, Oeuvres pour les moines* SC 398 (Paris, 1994), 204-227.

¹²⁰ H.-M. Rochais *Defensor de Ligugé. Livre d’Étincelles* SC 77, 86 (Paris, 1961-2). See also D. Ganz, ‘Knowledge of Ephraim’s Writings in the Merovingian and Carolingian Age’ *Hugoye* 2:1 (1999), publ. online at <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol2No1/HV2N1Ganz.html>; H.-M. Rochais, ‘Contribution à l’histoire des florilèges ascétiques du haut moyen âge latin’ *Revue Bénédictine* 63 (1953) 246-291.

¹²¹ *Praef*: ‘*paginas quasque scrutans, sententiam repperiens fulgentem, sicuti inuentam quis margaritam aut gemmam, ita auidius collegi*. See Rochais, ‘Contribution à l’histoire des florilèges ascétiques’, 259-61, for discussion of the prefaces in different manuscripts.

¹²² This applies to five sermons: Defensor uses Augustine’s sermons CXLI, CXLII, CCV, CCLXV and CCLXVII, which are in fact Caesarius’ sermons 198, 199, 223, 13 and 33. Rochais, ‘Contribution à l’histoire des florilèges ascétiques’, 284.

¹²³ Rochais, ‘Contribution à l’histoire des florilèges ascétiques’, 285.

the Preface to his ‘book of sparks’, and its composition can be dated only by the works from which he cites: at the earliest, 632, the date of the death of Isidore of Seville, the most recent author; at the latest, c.750, the date of the oldest extant manuscript.¹²⁴ Its editor therefore places the text at around 700.¹²⁵ It was a very popular text; more than three hundred and fifty manuscripts ranging in date from the eighth to sixteenth century are extant.¹²⁶ By this means alone, therefore, a selection of Caesarius’ work (albeit a very limited one) became widely circulated.

Defensor used extracts from a masculine recension of *Vereor* in his chapters on prayer (cap. 7), virginity (cap. 13, cited twice), fornication (cap. 21), and being watchful of sin (cap.23).¹²⁷ De Vogüé posits that Defensor’s extracts came from a masculine rather than the female recension by virtue of differences to the ‘female’ edition. These include the *sollicitae* – *solliciti* change as noted above, but also alterations to the remaining body of the letter *Vereor*: Defensor had access to a masculine recension of the complete text, and not just that portion of it in the *regula monachorum*.¹²⁸ It may be that a slightly more cautious approach to the use of a putative complete masculine recension should be taken than that evinced by de Vogüé, however.¹²⁹ The changes to the original text of *Vereor* are not those which particularly concern or include references to religious of a defined gender; the alterations are to phrases of a more general nature. One such change, noted by de Vogüé, is Defensor’s inclusion of the phrase *Caesarius dixit: Sic lectione et oratione debetis incumbere, ut interdum etiam manibus aliquod possitis exercere*, as opposed to the original *Caesarius dixit: Sic lectione et oratione debetis incumbere, ut ante omnia etiam manibus aliquod possitis exercere*.¹³⁰ This can hardly be described as conclusive proof that Defensor had access to a text of *Vereor* adapted in its entirety for a male audience, or indeed, as de Vogüé acknowledges, that Defensor was even citing rather than adapting.

¹²⁴ Würzburg Mp. th. f. 13

¹²⁵ H.-M. Rochais *Defensor de Ligugé* I, 9.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁷ Taken from *Vereor* 7,1; 7,13; 5,4; 4,10; 2,8.

¹²⁸ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 287-9.

¹²⁹ In his defence, de Vogüé’s uncertainty as to the conclusiveness of his argument – ‘Defensor cite-t-il ou adapte-t-il?’ (at p. 288, n. 2) – should be noted here.

¹³⁰ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 288.

However, the use of Caesarius' text itself demonstrates how useful his ideas were perceived to be – to a probable male audience – at the moment the *Liber scintillarum* was composed. In Rochais' words, 'C'est un exemple de ce qu'un homme d'Église croyait utile de faire à la fin du VIIe siècle pour s'édifier lui-même et instruire de leurs devoirs chrétiens ses frères, ou les fidèles à lui confiés'.¹³¹ The transmission of Defensor's work at the very least spread awareness of Caesarius' writing on spiritual issues, both within monasteries and, possibly, among a lay audience.¹³²

We are perhaps on more productive ground with a consideration of the extant manuscripts of the masculine recension of *Vereor*. There are at least nine copies of the masculine version of *Vereor* extant, ranging in date from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries.¹³³ The two most recent editors of Caesarius' collected works, Germain Morin and Adalbert de Vogüé, vary in the selection of codices used in their editions. Both aimed only to produce an edition of the feminine recension of *Vereor*; they each selected manuscripts, including those that contained the 'male version' of *Vereor*, the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos* as scribes usually entitled it, that would best fit their twentieth-century ideas of a text aimed at women. While acknowledging the greater number of manuscripts containing the text in its masculine form, Morin's edition of *Vereor* does not discuss any of them in detail (an omission rectified to some extent in his later edition of

¹³¹ Rochais *Defensor de Ligugé*, 15-6. For discussion of the audience of the *Liber*, see 26.

¹³² However, it must be noted that a recent study of 'German-insular' manuscripts casts a somewhat different light on the production of the *Liber scintillarum*. Felice Lifshitz, *Demonstrating Gun(t)za*, at 74-5, notes that the editor of the *Liber*, Henri Rochais, based his edition on Würzburg M.p.th.f. 13, the oldest witness of the florilegium. Lifshitz notes that in preparing his edition, Rochais took no account of the fact that a woman named Gun(t)za had twice signed her name on the manuscript. His attribution of the florilegium to a 'Defensor monk of Ligugé' was made on the basis of prologues naming 'Defensor', found in thirty-two manuscripts of the eleventh century or later. Of course, the appearance of a woman's name on a manuscript does not constitute proof that she, rather than 'Defensor', was the original compiler. It does suggest that the community of which she was a part found such a text useful. It also suggests an element of caution in accepting Rochais' attribution of the text to an individual first named four centuries after the production of the text.

¹³³ The best discussion of the manuscripts for the *Sermo* is provided in G. Morin (ed.) *Caesarius Arelatensis. Sermones* 2 vols. CCSL 103, 104 (Turnhout, 1953). Note that Morin omits two manuscripts containing the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos*: Grenoble, Bibl. Munic., ms. 306 and Milan, Bibl. Ambros., ms. C.79 Sup., both dating from the twelfth century.

Caesarius' sermons) and includes textual variations rarely.¹³⁴ De Vogüé, in his turn, used the three earliest manuscripts of the *Sermo* to assist in his edition of *Vereor*.¹³⁵

The earliest manuscript containing the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos* is now Paris, BN., ms. Lat. 12238. It is written in a variety of hands of which the latest is ninth century. A marginal note in a fourteenth-century hand on f. 3r records its ownership at least from then: *Iste liber est sancti germani de p(ra)tis q(ui) [??] celaverit v(e)l furaverit. anathema sit*. In brief, the manuscript is composed of homilies of Caesarius, including the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos*; the *Instituta monachorum* of Basil; and various works and letters of Jerome. At the end of the manuscript are two additional folios: the first is a fragment of a theological topic in an eighth-century hand; the second is a seventh-century folio from the Code and Novellas of Theodosius.

As Paris, BN ms. Lat. 12238 is the earliest extant manuscript for the *Sermo*, it will be instructive to consider the changes that have been made to the text of *Vereor* in order to make it 'suitable' for an audience of monks. By far the majority of changes concern simple grammatical correctness: *Vereor, venerabiles in Christo filiae* becomes *Vereor, venerabiles in Christo filii*; *si nobiles natae estis* becomes *nati estis*, and so on. On f. 29r, a warning 'brothers' has been inserted above a line, to read *Cogitate iugiter fr(atre)s unde existis et ubi pervenire meruistis*.¹³⁶ One of the more notable omissions is a passage concerning the necessity to avoid men, and to receive male visitors – even family members – infrequently.¹³⁷ In a similar vein, the phrase 'flee from familiarity' (*familiaritatem debes refugere*) is left out of a discussion of avoiding scandal by having too sure a conscience, even though the rest of the passage is left in. There are other minor differences. Caesarius' original suggestion that the *religiosae* might like to give their relatives small gifts to remember them by has been left out; were men perhaps seen as less sentimental beings, or should this rather be read as minor evidence of the ties

¹³⁴ G. Morin (ed.) *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia* II (Maredsous, 1937-42), at 134.

¹³⁵ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 285-6.

¹³⁶ F. 29r, Paris, BN Lat. 12238.

¹³⁷ *Vereor* 3; de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 306.

religious women were expected to retain with their families?¹³⁸ A further alteration deals again with the issue of sexuality. Whereas the recipients of the original letter were urged to avoid the dangers of familiarity which would lead to carnal desire ('For familiarity with anyone, if it has begun to be frequent, not only begets corruption [and] conceives passion...'), the male audience of Paris BN ms. Lat. 12238 were specifically warned to stay away from women: 'For familiarity with any woman, if it begins to be frequent, not only begets corruption... [and] conceives lust'; there is not a particularly striking difference between them.¹³⁹ The most striking omission from the Paris text is the greater part of the final section of the letter. This encompasses Caesarius' final discussions of the hardships and rewards of chastity, and Caesarius' own plea for the letter to stand as a witness to his good intentions at the last judgement. It is not inconceivable that such a piece could have been deliberately omitted: much of it repeats what has already been stated, and Caesarius' plea to be remembered by those in receipt of the *virginitatis corona* in Arles perhaps too personal to be of continuing relevance. However, the fact that the passage concerned breaks off mid-sentence in the manuscript may suggest rather that the folio was subsequently excised.¹⁴⁰ In sum, then, although there are some changes to the text of the letter *Vereor* under its alternative description and gender, the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos*, the ethos and substance of the text remain very much unaltered. This was a text whose contents were deemed appropriate for both men and women.

There may be a suggestion that the Caesarian material in this manuscript, the collection of homilies (including the *Sermo*), was produced as a separate booklet. This is largely down to the *mise-en-page*. Where the other items in the manuscript are written in twenty-nine lines per page, the Caesarian texts have only twenty-three. The first folio of the Caesarian material is weathered (it is now the second folio in the manuscript, as an almost illegible folio in an earlier hand has been inserted at the beginning) but the last page is not, nor is the first page of the next item, Basil's *Instituta monachorum*. The fact

¹³⁸ *Vereor* 8, de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 324.

¹³⁹ *Vereor* 9, de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 330: *familiaritas enim cuiuslibet, si frequens esse coeperit, non nisi corruptionem seminat, ... cupidinem concipit* (version for women); *familiaritas enim cuiuslibet feminae, si frequens esse coeperit, non nisi corruptionem seminat, ... libidinem concipit* (version for men).

¹⁴⁰ Only the first word remains of *Periculosa navigatio est, ubi saepe naufragatur*. *Vereor* 10, de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 334.

that the subject matter of the manuscript deals with the same broad theme – monasticism and the spiritual life – perhaps makes the possibility of separate circulation less likely.

A second manuscript containing the male recension of *Vereor* is Reims, Bibl. Munic., ms. 414. It is a composite manuscript. The first part, ff. 1-48, is a ninth-century copy of a hexameron of uncertain authorship. At the top of the first folio is a twelfth-century *ex libris*: ‘*Liber Sancti Theodorici; auferenti sit anathema*’. The monastery of St Thierry of Reims was founded c.500.¹⁴¹ The remainder of the manuscript (ff. 49-111) is of tenth-century date, but on the basis of content seems to divide itself again. In the first section of this part are found Julian of Toledo’s *Prognosticon* and Gildas’ *In reges correptio*. In the second part are found Caesarius’ twelve sermons to monks and the letter *Vereor*, described in the incipit as an *epistola ad quosdam germanos*, which now lacks two-thirds of its text.¹⁴²

The latest manuscript of the male version of *Vereor* is now Milan, Bibl. Ambros., ms. C 79 Sup., which dates from the third quarter of the twelfth century. A note on f. 1r records the manuscript’s purchase in Lyon, and from that the catalogue editors deduce a French provenance.¹⁴³ The first two-thirds of the manuscript contain Smaragdus of St Mihiel’s *Diadema monachorum*, followed by the *Sermo sancti Cesarii ad monachos* [*Vereor*]; a further sermon attributed to Caesarius but in fact the work of Eusebius Gallicanus (*homilia XXXVIII*); two anonymous works, *De septem vindictis Cain* and *Nota de tribus Mariis*; Ps. Bede’s *Paenitentiale*; the preface to a *Paenitentiale Cummeani*; excerpts from Augustine and Bede on penitence; an anonymous *De sacris ritibus libri 4*, which has its own chapter tables; and a mutilated copy of Innocent III’s letter *Licet quibusdam monachis*.

Neither Morin nor de Vogüé has made explicit use of the remaining manuscripts of the *Sermo ad quosdam germanos*. There are a further five: Douai, Bibl. Munic., ms.

¹⁴¹ Cottineau, II, cols. 2901-2.

¹⁴² *CGM XXXVIII*, 558-9.

¹⁴³ L. Jordan and S. Wool (eds.) *Inventory of Western manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana* II, 111-3. Unfortunately the Bibliotheca is unable to furnish any more details on provenance.

206 dates from the twelfth century; Douai, Bibl. Munic., ms. 217, Luxemburg, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. 46, Paris, BN ms. Lat. 2153 and Paris, BN ms. Lat. 2182 date from the thirteenth century.¹⁴⁴ The first four of these manuscripts came from the monasteries of Anchin (Benedictine, diocese of Arras), Marchiennes (Benedictine, diocese of Cambrai), Orval (Cistercian, diocese of Trier), and Foucarmont (Cistercian, diocese of Rouen) respectively; the provenance of the fifth, Paris BN Lat. 2182, is unknown. Although the number of manuscripts is insufficient to draw any firm conclusions, and their date is somewhat beyond the scope of the present study, the location of these houses in northern France suggests that Caesarius' writing continued to be strongly valued as a work of guidance for male religious. Indeed, the close proximity of Anchin and Marchiennes (both in the valley of the river Scarpe, approximately five miles apart) suggests a cross-fertilization of ideas. It may also be relevant that until 1028, Marchiennes had been a community for nuns;¹⁴⁵ knowledge of Caesarius' writing for women may have remained in this community's library and thus made the nascent male community eager to obtain his writings for men.

The writings of the Caesarii

Running parallel to the circulation of Caesarius' own writings on dedicated women were those of his family, in the shape of Caesaria II's letter to Radegund, already considered in detail above, in Chapter Two, and her *Dicta* and *Constitutum*. Teridius' letter to Caesaria herself, *O Profundum*, as we have seen, forms part of the Caesarian 'booklet' in Vatican Reg. Lat. ms. 140, ff. 129v-132, and in Toulouse Bibl. Munic. ms. 162, ff. 59v-60v. While it may be an obvious methodological step to compare the transmission of Caesarius' writings to dedicated women and the letter to Radegund of Caesaria II along gendered lines, in order to arrive at the equally obvious conclusion that male-authored works of guidance received a vastly wider circulation than that of a woman, this oversimplifies the processes of textual circulation. Even as Caesarius wrote

¹⁴⁴ Morin erroneously lists the latter Paris manuscript as Paris Mazarineus ms. 2182.

¹⁴⁵ *DHGE* XXIII 199-200.

his apparently personal letter of guidance, *Vereor*, to the elder Caesaria, his wider responsibilities for overseeing the lifestyles of dedicated women throughout the diocese of Arles must have been in his mind. And indeed, as this study has suggested, Caesarius himself would very quickly use parts of this letter in his rule for monks. Not only was the monastery of St John itself involved in producing copies of Caesarius' texts to send out, the sheer volume of Caesarius' writings – in particular his sermons – quite simply meant that each of his texts benefited from the high visibility of the others. By contrast, the abbess Caesaria had no other works (as far as we know) to spread knowledge of her authority in matters monastic. Of course, the issue of gender remains when we turn to consider the preservation of texts. To what extent were writings circulated between women's religious establishments lost, when those establishments, often in existence only for the lifetime of their foundress, ceased to function? Such short pieces of writing as exist here, in the shape of Caesaria's *Dicta* and *Constitutum*, may represent only a small proportion of the texts available to dedicated women.

Dicta

De Vogüé ascribes these three 'Sayings' to Caesaria II. They all concern meditation on the word of God. In the first, Caesarius is held up as an example of the practice; in the second, meditation is presented as a barrier against evil thoughts; the third recommends meditation as a means of preserving a pure heart.¹⁴⁶ They survive due to the collating activities of Benedict of Aniane, who illustrated chapter 19 of the *Regula Benedicti* with them in his *Concordia regularum*. They are accompanied by Caesarius' sermon 152, which Benedict attributes to Augustine. As such, the *Dicta* survive in two manuscripts, Orléans, Bibl. Munic., ms. 233, dating from the ninth century, and Vendôme, Bibl. Munic., ms. 60, from the eleventh century. Benedict may have taken the writings from the same 'Corpus arlésien' that Bonnerue suggests he used for the other Caesarian texts contained in the *Codex regularum*. The sheer volume of material emanating from Arles, all constructed around similar themes and largely based on ideas expressed in the *Regula virginum*, may have rendered the inclusion of these writings –

¹⁴⁶ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 443.

and it remains uncertain whether they are extracts from one or more longer texts, or do indeed represent the totality of the text to which Benedict had access – unnecessary in the collection but of use in the illustration of a particular point of Benedictine practice.¹⁴⁷

Constitutum

This short piece concerns the necessity of preserving the basilica of St Mary for the burial of the nuns only, barring it to the community's priests, in an attempt to retain enough space for all the nuns to be buried together. De Vogüé made his ascription to Caesaria on the grounds that such written instructions would not have been necessary if Caesarius was still alive.¹⁴⁸ The only manuscript witness to this text, written by the second abbess Caesaria, was Tours, Bibl. Munic., ms. 617, which was lost during the second world war (see above, at 130). As noted above, the tenth or eleventh-century manuscript was discovered by Martène at the monastery of St Martin in Autun. The interest of this manuscript derives chiefly from the fact that connections between Arles and Autun are well-documented. The lost manuscript 617 bore a copy of the monogram of Teridius, and it therefore seems probable that this was a copy of a sixth-century manuscript sent by Teridius to the community of St Mary in Autun, founded by bishop Syagrius.¹⁴⁹ This was the bishop who took a close interest in the monastery of St John under its third abbess, Liliola. A further link in the chain of dissemination of knowledge of the *Regula virginum*, and of the other writings on female monasticism emanating from Caesarian Arles, is provided by Aunacharius, bishop of Auxerre (561-605), who entered the Church in Autun before moving to Auxerre to become its bishop.¹⁵⁰

These shorter texts, with less of an immediate connection to the monastic writings of Caesarius, had very different patterns of circulation. Only one, the *Constitutum*, seems to have been kept with Caesarius' own writings, and this may be because it dealt directly

¹⁴⁷ A demonstrative '*iste*' in the second saying which now refers to nothing suggests that it was part of a larger piece.

¹⁴⁸ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 461.

¹⁴⁹ G. Morin, 'Le monogramme d'un Deuterius'; G. Morin, 'Le prêtre arlésien Teridius: Propagateur des règles de S. Césaire d'Arles', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 28 (1938) 257-263.

¹⁵⁰ *Vita Aunacharii* 4, AASS Sept. vol. 7, 97. See also de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 195-7.

with matters affecting the monastery itself. It is interesting that neither of the texts by Caesaria the Younger, the second abbess, seem to have been preserved by St John itself, although of course the vagaries of time, wars and Revolution may account for this apparently odd omission.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that through study of the transmission of the manuscripts of the monastic works of Caesarius of Arles, immensely important insights can be gained into the contexts of religious life in which they circulated. This is the study of manuscripts as artifacts in themselves, rather than merely as the vehicles of information. Two main points have emerged from the discussion. Firstly, a body of Caesarian texts circulated, separately to the *Regula virginum*, which contained the ethos of Caesarius' conception of dedicated life for women. This 'package' of texts emerged at some time in the eighth century and circulated until at least the twelfth; a time span delimited by a combination of manuscript and textual evidence. This suggests the popularity of the works of Caesarius. The separate patterns of manuscript dissemination further suggest that the 'booklet' of Caesarian texts may have had a different clientèle from that of the rule itself. Could this be the codicological reflection of different groups – with possibly different needs from their spiritual and normative texts – that may be detectable through other sources? The following chapter will focus on the possibilities of answering this question. The second point to emerge from this chapter demands that a still broader view of early medieval religious life is taken in terms of gender. The fact that the texts Caesarius composed for nuns enjoyed a large and well-attested circulation among male communities is deeply significant. There was no gender bar, here, between a text considered suitable for a dedicated woman to read and a text that could be provided for dedicated men. This suggests that the ideologies of female and male dedicated life were similar. This, too, will be considered further in the following chapter. In sum, this chapter

¹⁵¹ The history and cartulary of the monastery of St-Césaire (as it had become), written by Melchior Fabre in 1699, makes no mention of any of Caesaria's literary output. Arles, Bibl. Munic. Ms. 168.

has demonstrated the ways in which close analysis of the circulation of individual manuscripts can offer insights into the use of the texts they contain. Such a methodology is of particular importance to the study of early medieval religious women, where the accessibility of normative texts was therefore much wider than is indicated by the range still extant.

CHAPTER 4

Dedicated Women, Monasteries and Reform in the Eighth Century

In the opening chapters of this study, we have seen a dynamic monastic world of innovation and adaptation. In the sixth and seventh centuries, Caesarius' writings for dedicated women spread, and with them went (among other things) ideas of claustration and the most suitable ways of organising a monastery. Yet as the previous chapter has demonstrated, Caesarius' influence went far deeper than the practicalities of dedicated life. Equally as popular were his writings on the ethos of dedication: his letter *Vereor*, which found resonances among both female and male religious audiences, and his sermons, which in their written form were much longer-lived and reached a far greater audience than merely the communities in Arles for which they were originally intended.

However, the study of the manuscript transmission of Caesarius' writings also reveals a period fairly lacking in direct evidence of their circulation. After references to the use of the *Regula ad Virgines* in the sixth and seventh centuries, for instance, the first subsequent witness to its existence is its appearance in the manuscript of Benedict of Aniane's *Codex regularum* in the early ninth century. This leaves a gap, broadly spanning the eighth century, for which there is very little evidence for the use of Caesarius' works.

The aim of this penultimate chapter is to some extent to find a means of bridging the apparent gap between the 'peaks' of monastic foundation and textual composition of the sixth and seventh centuries, and the subsequent reform-related re-emergence of interest in monastic writings in the ninth. At first glance, sources show very few new foundations being made in the eighth century. Jane Schulenburg, in her statistical survey of monastic foundations from 500 to 1100, illustrates this in stark numerical terms.¹ Her study brings out a vibrant picture of seventh-century foundation, largely those connected with the missions of such luminaries as Columbanus, Eligius, Philibert and Amandus in

¹ J.T. Schulenburg, 'Women's monastic communities: Patterns of expansion and decline' *Signs* 14:2 (1989) 261-92.

the areas of northern France and Belgium.² In numerical terms, she noted one hundred and two foundations between 600 and 649, of which twenty-five (25.5%) were for women; between 650 and 699, there were one hundred and fifty-nine foundations of which fifty-two (32.7%) were for women.³ In the eighth century, she shows a noticeable drop in the number of new foundations. Between 700 and 749, the overall figure had reduced by almost two thirds, at sixty-three; the proportion of female foundations was down to 12.7% (8 new houses in real terms). In the second half of the century, there were ninety-one new houses, of which only eleven were for women (12.1%).⁴ Schulenburg views this as a decline, and attributes this to waning enthusiasm for the monastic life in the eighth century. Underlying this were a variety of other reasons: too many small 'proprietary' houses which had to compete for the same resources, invasions by the Normans in the north and the Arabs from the south, the short life expectancy of many houses which were intended to last only as long as it was deemed beneficial to the aristocratic family concerned, and lastly the twin generalisms of 'disorder' on the one hand and 'reform' on the other.⁵

However, this summary perhaps raises as many questions as it answers. Most importantly, to what extent did each of these factors – and others not discussed by Schulenburg – affect the ways in which eighth century women lived out a life dedicated to God? As a context within which to understand the transmission of Caesarius' works for dedicated religious women in the preceding chapter, this discussion will evaluate some of the evidence for dedicated women in the eighth century. While following conventional historiographical approaches by examining southern and northern Gaul separately, this study will go further by placing the vicissitudes of monastic life within a wider political context as a means of appreciating the fates of individual monasteries

² On Columbanus, see above, Chapter Two. For Eligius of Noyon (Eloi) (d.660), see his *vita* by Dado of Rouen, Krusch (ed.) MGH SSRM IV: 669-742. The *vita Filiberti* is at MGH SSRM V, 583-606. The multiple *vitae* of Amandus are in AASS Feb. I, 848 ff.

³ Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities', at 266.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 274-5; 277-8. See also J.T. Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience', in J.A. Nichols and L.T. Shanks (eds.), *Medieval Religious Women. I: Distant Echoes* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1984) 51-86, at 71.

more fully. In particular, the contexts for the production and circulation of the ‘booklet’ of Caesarian texts will be identified.

The second objective of this chapter is to discuss the attempts at reform, largely centred on legislation, of Boniface and Chrodegang of Metz, bolstered by Carloman and Pippin. Availability of evidence can suggest that the religious landscape of the eighth century was dominated by one reformer after another, and, indeed, the wealth of material attached to Boniface’s mission to Francia will serve as a case study illuminating both Anglo-Saxon and Frankish nuns’ lives. However, this chapter will also demonstrate the limitations of such reforming initiatives and draw on alternative evidence to discuss dedicated life for women as a whole.

Dedicated women in eighth-century Gaul

As Schulenburg has described, far fewer foundations for women are recorded as being made in the eighth century than in the previous century. The political situation in eighth-century Francia undoubtedly played its part: aside from encouraging specific missionary endeavours which were themselves part of a wider strategy of gaining control of more remote territories, Charles Martel (d. 741), father of Carloman and Pippin III, was more occupied with uniting the Frankish kingdoms than with making new foundations.⁶ From her examination of new foundations in northern Gaul, Michèle Gaillard has noticed that while, in the seventh century, most new houses were created by the women who would subsequently go on to reside in them, new foundations from the eighth century onwards tended to be the work of either bishops or of royal and aristocratic men and women who had no intention of retiring into the houses they founded.⁷ Gaillard suggests that the decreasing numbers of aristocratic women whose piety led them to create a monastic establishment for themselves may have stemmed from

⁶ M. Gaillard ‘Les fondations d’abbayes féminines dans le nord et l’est de la Gaule, de la fin du Vie siècle à la fin du Xe siècle’, *RHEF* 76 (1990) 5-20, at 6. For the Church in Francia under Charles Martel, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), 132-42.

⁷ Gaillard, ‘Les fondations d’abbayes féminines dans le nord’, 7-9.

both more restrictive attitudes towards women in aristocratic society, and from the fact that as devotion and the round of prayer came to centre increasingly on the mass, the foundation of male monasteries came to be preferred.⁸

While this analysis is persuasive, it does not account for those women who did not embark on such relatively high-profile monastic adventures but confined themselves to a quieter life of dedication, perhaps on a family estate. As Alain Dubreucq has argued, such smaller foundations ‘ne constituent pas réellement un monastère’.⁹ Although an argument for the existence of such individual *deo devotae* cannot be made from silence, their presence is suggested by continuing references to them in a variety of sources. Both the Penitentials of Bobbio (700x725) and of Paris (c.750) prescribe penitence for sexual activity with a nun or *deo devota* (Bobbio)/ *deo decata* (Paris).¹⁰

Indeed, statistical surveys pay little attention to another type of source: the evidence provided by conciliar activity. The councils which were held under the auspices of Boniface in the 740s, and subsequent councils, had as their clear intention the eradication of what were deemed to be unsuitable ways for dedicated men and women to live and to comport themselves. These decrees can therefore shed some light on the ways in which religious women were living. Most importantly, they attest to the continuing existence of dedicated women who lived outside monasteries; the very women, indeed, who are invisible to the statistical eye, but among whom the booklet of Caesarian writings would have found a ready audience.

The first of these councils was the *Concilium Germanicum*, held in 742, and overseen by Boniface and Carloman.¹¹ Here, the sixth canon refers to dedicated religious. If a monk (*servus Dei*) or a nun (*ancilla Christi*) committed fornication, they would be made to do penitence on bread and water. This canon, however, makes separate reference

⁸ Gaillard, ‘Les fondations d’abbayes féminins dans le nord’, 11.

⁹ A. Dubreucq ‘Le monachisme féminin dans le nord de la Gaule à l’époque carolingienne’ in *Les Religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours: Actes du Deuxième Colloque International du C.E.R.C.O.R., Poitiers, 29 septembre - 2 octobre 1988* (Poitiers, 1994) 55-71, at 57.

¹⁰ Penitential of Bobbio cap.13; Penitential of Paris cap. 8, cited in E. Santinelli, *Des femmes explorées? : les veuves dans la société aristocratique du haut Moyen Âge* (Villeneuve d’Ascq, 2003), 161.

¹¹ The exact location of the council is unknown, other than being in Austrasia.

to ‘*nonnae velatae*’, who in addition to the same penance would have their hair cut off.¹² Were the *nonnae* and *ancillae* intended to describe two different statuses of dedicated women? It seems probable that they were, and, further, that the description of the latter group as ‘veiled’ may be a way of differentiating women who were only veiled (that is, dedicated but living in the community) from those who were fully-fledged members of communities.¹³ The fact that the punishment for such women was having their hair cut off may also indicate that such women were expected to be visible to outsiders in their localities, as it was a means of shaming them. This assertion is reinforced by the next canon, which decrees that *monachi* and *ancillae Dei* in monasteries must follow the Benedictine rule.¹⁴

Such different types of religious women continued to exist into the reign of Pippin. In 755, a capitulary issued at Verneuil ruled that *ancillis Dei velatis* (here again, the veil seemed to be the sign that a woman lived outside a monastery) were to enter either a monastery or a house of canonesses, or face excommunication.¹⁵ Unusually, the main concern of the canon is with men who lived outside monasteries; their existence is even harder to detect than that of comparable women. But this serves even more to demonstrate the flexibility of dedicated life; both men and women had a choice of how they wanted to live. This is particularly underlined by the capitulary of Compiègne, of 757. Here, a woman who left her husband ‘to place a veil upon her head’ was permitted to return to the marriage, if her husband would take her.¹⁶ Yet again, and in contradiction

¹² Conc. Germ. (742), MGH Conc. II:I, 4, can. VI: *Statuimus...ut, quisquis servorum Dei vel ancillarum Christi in crimen fornicationis lapsus fuerit, quod in carcere poenitentiam faciat in pane et aqua... Similiter et nonnae velatae eadem penitentia conteneantur, et radantur omnes capilli capitis eius.*

¹³ There is a sizeable literature on the different forms of consecration for dedicated women: see in particular the work of René Metz *La Consécration des Vierges dans l'Église Romaine: Étude d'histoire de la liturgie* (Paris, 1954); *idem*, ‘Benedictio sive Consecratio Virginum’ *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 80 (1966) 296-293; *idem*, ‘La Consécration des Vierges dans l'Église Franque du VIIe au IXe siècle’ *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 31 (1957) 105-121; *idem*, ‘La consécration des vierges en Gaule, des origines à l'apparition des livres liturgiques’ *Revue de droit canonique* 6 (1956) 321-339.

¹⁴ Conc. Germ., can. VII.

¹⁵ Capit. Vern., MGH Conc. II:I can. XI: *De illis hominibus qui se dicunt propter Deum quod se tunsorassint, et modo res eorum vel pecunia habent, et nec sub manu episcopo sunt, nec in monasterium regulare vivunt, placuit ut in monasterio sint sub ordine regulari, aut sub manu episcopi sub ordine canonica. Et si aliter fecerint, et correcti ab episcopi suo se emendare noluerint, excommunicentur. Et de ancillis Dei velatis eadem forma servetur.*

¹⁶ Capit. Compend., MGH Conc. II:I can. V: *Mulier si sine comeatu viri sui velum in caput miserit, si viro placuerit, recipiat eam iterum ad coniugium.*

of the ruling of two years before, women appeared to have a choice in the way their dedication was played out: a subsequent canon of the same council rules that a man could remarry if his wife left him, either to enter a monastery or to live as a veiled woman outside the monastery, and this latter option is mentioned explicitly.¹⁷

At the end of the eighth century, the situation appears similar in Charlemagne's Italian kingdom. A canon of the council of Friuli, convened by Paulinus of Aquileia, reveals the existence of virgins or widows who had taken a vow [*propositum*] of continence, the sign of which was to be dressed in black, for such had been the old custom.¹⁸ In Italy the definitions and terminology of dedicated women appear to have been quite clear. At the council of Rome in 743, the bishops distinguished five different categories of religious who were forbidden to fornicate: priests, deacons, *nonnae*, *monachae* and *spiritualae commatrae*. Using the distinction which seems to have been made by councils in Francia, women were divided into those who lived outside of monasteries, those who lived in monastic communities (*monachae*), and 'spiritual companions'.¹⁹

From the shadowy women who lay behind these articles of legislation, then, we turn now to consider examples of dedicated women for whom documentary evidence still exists.

Eighth-century dedicated life in practice: north and south

i) The South

While the northern half of Gaul was the centre of government, inextricably linked to centres of reform, the south of Gaul, the regions of Aquitaine, Provence and Burgundy,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, can. XVI: *Si quis vir mulierem suam dimiserit, et dederit commeatum pro religionis causa infra monasterium Deo servire, aut foras monasterium dederit licentiam velare, sicut diximus, propter Deum, vir illius accipiat mulierem legitimam. Similiter et mulier faciat.*

¹⁸ Conc. Foroiul., MGH Conc. II:I can. XI: *Item placuit de faeminis cuiuscumque conditionis, puellis scilicet vel viduis, quae, virginitatis sive continentiae propositum spontanee pollicentes, Deo emancipate fuerint, et ob continentiae signum nigram vestem quasi religiosam, sicut antiquus mos fuerit in his regionibus, indutae fuerint: licet non sint a sacerdote sacratae, in hoc tamen proposito eas perpetim perseverare mandamus.*

¹⁹ Conc. Romae, MGH Conc. II:I can. V: *Capitula, ut presbyteram, diaconam, nonnam aut monacham vel etiam spiritalem commatrem nullus praesumat nefario coniugio copulari.*

appears not to have played so large a part in the ecclesiastical affairs of the eighth century. In the context of female religious life, no new burst of enthusiasm for making foundations revealed itself. There is indeed no evidence for any new female monastic foundations in the eighth century in the region south of the Loire. As has been underlined more than once, it is difficult to make categorical statements about the state of affairs in southern Gaul in almost any field of discussion, due to the much smaller range of surviving sources. Magnou-Nortier ascribes this to the twin destructive impulses of the sixteenth-century wars of religion and the eighteenth-century Revolution.²⁰ It may be particularly apposite to bear in mind, therefore, the partial nature of the evidence that exists for female dedicated life in the area; the evidence offered by councils, in particular, can only be taken as an indication of dedicated life in the north of the Frankish kingdoms.

Our point of departure for the south should be, of course, Caesarius' foundation in Arles. Here, however, the issue of lack of evidence immediately arises. The fate of St John during the eighth century is uncertain, and a search for manuscripts possibly written in the *scriptoria* of the city in this period has proved fruitless. The only community for which some eighth-century evidence does exist is Holy Cross of Poitiers. The perilous existence of eighth-century religious communities in general may be illustrated by the plight of the nuns of Holy Cross, who were forced to flee to one of their dependent priories at Jard, on the Vendée coast, following Viking raids in 732.²¹ Disruptions such as this may support Wood's supposition of a decline in scribal activity. However, such dramatic episodes do not seem to have had long-term repercussions for Holy Cross. Here, the nuns continued to be commemorated in stone. In 1860, the abbé Auber discovered the epitaph of the *deo devota* Mumlenau close to the tomb of Radegund in the crypt of the church in Poitiers.²² The stone, now in two pieces, has fairly large lacunae:

²⁰ E. Magnou-Nortier, 'Formes féminines de vie consacrée dans les pays du Midi jusqu'au début du XIIe siècle', *La femme dans la vie religieuse du Languedoc (XIIIe – XIVe siècles)*. *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 23 (Toulouse, 1988) 193-216, at 203.

²¹ J. Verdon, 'Recherches sur les monastères féminins dans la France du sud aux IXe – Xie siècles' *Annales du Midi* 88 (1976) 117-138, at 120.

²² R. Favreau and J. Michaud (eds.) *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale* I: Poitiers (CNRS, 1974)

[...] ²³N : ²⁴AN : NO : XX [...] ²⁵RE [...] NAN : TE
 K : [...]JO : LO : RE : GE [...] ²⁶R[...] : VIII : KL : IVNS :
 SIC : FUID : MVMLE : NAV DO : DVOTA
 DE : FVCT : CV : IVS : [...] ²⁷P [...] CULUS : IC [...] ²⁸
 [...] ²⁹IES : CIT : REQVIES [...] VS : IN : P [...] ³⁰

The editors of the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale* supply the following restitutions:

[I]N : AN : NO : XX [...]RE [G] NAN : TE
 K : [R]O : LO : RE : GE [FRANCO]R[VM] : VIII : K[A]L[ENDAS] : IVN[IA]S :
 SIC : FUID : MVMLE : NAV D[E]O : D[E]VOTA
 DE : FV[N]CT[A] : CV : IVS : [COR]P[US]CULUS : IC
 [QV]IES : CIT : REQVIES [CAT ANIMA EI]VS : IN : P[ACE]

(In the twenty... year of the reign of Charles, king of the Franks, the ninth of the calends of June [24th May], Mumlenau, a woman devoted to God, died. Her humble body rests here. May her soul rest in peace.)

Favreau and Michaud note the Merovingian characteristics of the letterforms, and the use of the contraction ‘Krolo’ for Karolo/ Carolo, which is also found on another Carolingian inscription from Poitiers.³¹ Taking into account the letterforms, they suggest that this is a reference to Charlemagne rather than Charles the Bald.³² The existence of this inscription also indicates that the community was back in Poitiers at least by the end of the eighth century. Tracing the name Mumlenau may also provide some indication as to the origins or background of the woman herself. Although Morlet, in *Les noms de*

²³ This section is missing.

²⁴ The use of the colon indicates a vertical row of three *puncta*.

²⁵ The stone is broken in the middle here.

²⁶ The broken middle section.

²⁷ The broken middle section.

²⁸ The end of this line has been broken off.

²⁹ The bottom left hand corner has broken off.

³⁰ The bottom right hand corner has broken off.

³¹ Favreau and Michaud (eds.) *Corpus des inscriptions*, 116.

³² Ibid, 116.

personne, does not include ‘Mumlenau’ itself, she does list ‘Mumma’, ‘Momola’, ‘Mummolus’ and ‘Mummolenus’.³³ From this, Favreau and Michaud deduce a Germanic origin for the name, which seems a reasonable supposition.

Magnou-Nortier suggests further reasons for the apparent lack of enthusiasm for founding religious communities. Firstly, Roman law specified that women could not formally dedicate themselves until they were aged forty, and she suggests that the stronger hold of Roman laws and customs in the south meant that women would be likely to adhere to such a regulation.³⁴ However, this argument is difficult to sustain given that one of the most famous abbesses in the south, Rusticula of St John, entered the community as a child and became abbess at the age of eighteen, and this, even in the seventh century.³⁵ She further suggests that it would have been very much harder to hold out against family pressure to marry until the age of forty. Strong family bonds further ensured that women were not so able or willing to leave their parental households, with the result that women from southern Gaul tended to stay much closer to their families and adopt lives as informal *Deo devotae* within their own family households.³⁶ It is evident, however, that Magnou-Nortier’s definition of what constituted a religious community is a fairly narrow one; she is interested only in those sizeable communities for which good evidence of a formal date of foundation exists. This must be the reason for her apparently contradictory conclusions with regard to southern families, in that they both discouraged and encouraged their daughters to dedicate themselves to God. Large-scale formal foundations were discouraged; informal dedication within family networks was encouraged. Even then, however, the earliest and only example that Magnou-Nortier can put forward is that of Emenana (Immena), placed at the head of a foundation made by her parents for the good of their souls, in 823.³⁷ With the exception of foundations such as

³³ M-T. Morlet *Les noms de personne sur le territoire de l'ancienne Gaule du VI^e au XII^e siècle* 3 vols. (Paris, 1968-) I, 121.

³⁴ Magnou-Nortier, ‘Formes féminins de vie consacrée’, 201.

³⁵ See Chapter Two, 94-5.

³⁶ Magnou-Nortier, ‘Formes féminins de vie consacrée’ 195, 201.

³⁷ Magnou-Nortier, ‘Formes féminins de vie consacrée’ 204-5. For a much fuller discussion of the circumstances of Immena’s foundation and career, see J. Martindale, ‘The nun Immena and the foundation of the abbey of Beaulieu: a woman’s prospects in the Carolingian Church’ *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990) 27-42, and Chapter Five, below, 248-9.

Holy Cross, therefore, it is probable that patterns of devotion among women in the south of Gaul drew them into less formal religious institutions, where less prescriptive writings such as those of Caesarius were most useful. Added to which were the continuing cults of Caesarius himself and, among the abbesses of St John, of Rusticula in particular. Caesarius' status as the great bishop-founder of Arles would ensure that dedicated women in Provence and the Rhone valley, at the very least, would have interest in and probable recourse to, his writings.

ii) *The North*

Although the number of documented foundations was at a lower level than in previous periods, the north of Gaul continued to see foundations being made by and for dedicated religious women. In part this was a continuation of the practices established by Columbanus and his followers in the region; there had now been several generations' worth of traditions founding monastic houses for both men and women. For families which did make foundations, the benefits of association with a house of perpetual prayer were as strong as ever; the relative political stability of the Neustrian and Austrasian heartlands of Francia ensured that such commitments would have a good chance of remaining in place for at least a number of generations. Michel Rouche's suggestion that such founding families and their pious offspring were also attracted by the continuing ability either to innovate or pick-and-choose their own monastic rule is perhaps less convincing for the majority of communities.³⁸ As will be discussed below, if the nascent emphasis on conforming to Benedictine norms was felt anywhere, it would be in these areas.

It was, moreover, the closeness to the court – both geographically and socially – which led to many such foundations being made, as a means of demonstrating and consolidating family power in a region. One such family is that of Irmina, abbess-

³⁸ M. Rouche 'Les religieuses des origines au XIIIe siècle: premières expériences', in *Les Religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours: Actes du Deuxième Colloque International du C.E.R.C.O.R., Poitiers, 29 septembre - 2 octobre 1988* (Poitiers, 1994) 15-28, at 21.

foundress of Oeren.³⁹ She had several children, of whom Plectrude married Pippin of Herstal, Adela founded Pfalzel and Crodelinda became abbess of Oeren in her turn.⁴⁰ Pippin of Herstal's grandmother Itta had founded Nivelles; Crodelinda's niece Glossindis founded Saint-Pierre-le-Bas in Metz. A large and well-connected family such as this could afford to diversify and vary the style of religious foundation they favoured. Irmina's foundation at Oeren was based in former farm outbuildings; Adela and her community were installed at Pfalzel, which had originally been a family villa; by contrast Glossindis' monastery was created in the urban surroundings of Metz from the ruins of a Roman basilica.⁴¹

A further example of an extended family's involvement with a women's monastery is that of Hamage. The monastery of Hamage (dép. Nord) is a rare and fascinating example of archaeological remains that have survived from the seventh and eighth centuries.⁴² It formed part of a strategy of monastic foundation in Artois, driven by the missionary zeal of Amandus (584-679) in concert with the aristocratic Neustrian family of Adalbald. His grandmother Gertrude founded Hamage itself; soon afterwards, his widow, Rictrude (614-688), entered the recently-established house of Marchiennes, transforming it into a double monastery.⁴³ One of Rictrude's daughters succeeded her mother as abbess of Marchiennes; another, Eusebia, was brought up at Hamage and became abbess there at the age of twelve.⁴⁴ In turn, a second Gertrude, whose name suggests membership of the same family, became abbess of Hamage.⁴⁵ The seventh century origins of the monastery are illustrated by archaeological finds uncovered in the

³⁹ Unfortunately I have not been able to gain access to Matthias Werner's major study of this family, *Adelsfamilien im Umkreis der frühen Karolinger : die Verwandtschaft Irminas von Oeren und Adelas von Pfalzel : personengeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur frömmittelalterlichen Führungsschicht im Maas-Mosel-Gebiet* (Sigmarigen, 1982).

⁴⁰ Gaillard, 'Les origines du monachisme féminin', 47-8.

⁴¹ Gaillard, 'Les origines du monachisme féminin', 49.

⁴² E. Louis 'Fouilles archeologiques sur le site du monastère mérovingien puis carolingien de Hamage' in *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* XLIX (Gent, 1995) 45-69.

⁴³ Hucbald, *Vita sanctae Rictrudis*, AASS May 12, 78-98. *Vita S. Amandi*, MGH SSRM 5: 395-449.

⁴⁴ *Vita sanctae Rictrudis* 25.

⁴⁵ *Vita Eusebiae* II, 13; AASS March II 445-52.

1990s. Among the most noteworthy are a cup inscribed with its owner's name, *Aughilde*, and a second bearing the instruction *Mitte plino* ('fill it up!').⁴⁶

Hamage is of great importance to a study of eighth-century women's monasticism in Gaul as it is a unique example of surviving archaeological remains of an early medieval monastery. Archaeological surveys have distinguished a second period of the monastery's development (from the second half of the seventh century to the beginning of the ninth century), comprising a wooden building in which the rooms were reconfigured around a central area. These smaller rooms were perhaps the nuns' cells. The building also contained latrines, giving onto an external ditch, and an oven.⁴⁷ From this era, bowls inscribed with devotional phrases such as *amen* survive, as do needles, weavers' pins, clothing clasps and glass beads. These items identify the remains as those of a female community. The large amount of eating utensils further suggest the eating of communal meals.⁴⁸ Referring to the 'plan of St Gall' of 818-823, Louis suggests that the foundations of Hamage bear a close resemblance to the *scola*, the location within the monastery for the education and residence of children. Louis also points to the corroborative presence of animal bones to suggest that only children would have been permitted to eat meat, although acknowledges that the adults in the community may not have conformed rigidly to their rule.⁴⁹ The dating of this layer has been determined by the presence of *fibulae* of the type of this period, and by two coins, a 'pseudo-sceat' of Danish or Frisian origin, of 720-775, and a coin of Pippin (754-768). Louis posits a further reconfiguration of the monastery around the time of the reforms of Louis the Pious (816-7).⁵⁰ At this stage, a wooden cloister was constructed.⁵¹

Although eighth-century foundations for women for which evidence still survives are few in number, enough detail survives for some of them to provide some indication of the processes of foundation. One of these was made by Aldebert, count of Ostrevant, and

⁴⁶ Louis, 'Fouilles archeologiques', 55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 58.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 60.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 66.

⁵¹ E. Louis *Hamage, Abbaye Mérovingienne et Carolingienne* (Douai, 1996).

his wife Reine (Regina?), a relative of Pippin the Short, on their estate near Lille.⁵² The monastery was built in 764, and the family's eldest daughter, Ragenfreda, gave her name to the foundation (Ste-Remfroye). The *vita* states that nine of her younger sisters formed the remainder of the new community. After her death in 805, a blind woman named Ava came to Ragenfreda's tomb and stayed on as abbess, making large endowments to the monastery.

Of more uncertain but probable eighth-century origin is the house of Auchy. Around 700, Adalscaire, lord of Hesdin and his wife Aneglia founded a monastery at Auchy (départ. Pas-de-Calais) for their daughter Siecheda, under the direction of Silvinius, who was a missionary in the Théroutanne area.⁵³ In 717 or 718, he was buried in the church there, as were the abbess' parents. This type of family foundation with the assistance (and presumably, spiritual input) of a missionary reflects on a much smaller scale the activities of Columbanus the century before. Despite its origin as a family foundation, the monastery existed until 881, when the nuns fled in the face of Norman attacks. In 959, Gerard of Brogne refounded the monastery as a community of monks.

The monastery of Denain (départ. Nord) was founded along similar lines. The foundation was made in 764 by Aldebert, count of Ostrevant and his wife Regina (a granddaughter of Pippin the Short), whose ten daughters formed the first community.⁵⁴ The eldest daughter, Ragenfreda, who died in 805, gave her name to the community. The community had begun to struggle economically when a woman called Ava arrived in search of a cure for her blindness at Ragenfreda's tomb. Remaining at the community as a nun, she endowed it with her own resources (*servos, ancillas & omnem sui juris suppellectilem*), built a new church, and was therefore considered as a second founder. It is indeed from her existence in a martyrology and in the *Chronici Cameracensis* that much of the information about the original founders is recorded.⁵⁵ Pillaged by the Normans, the

⁵² *Vita Ragenfredis* AASS Oct. IV, 295-334.

⁵³ *DHGE* V, 288.

⁵⁴ *DHGE* XIV, 218. Regina's cult appears to have been the most long-lasting at the monastery. Her relics were translated in 1400 and the *ordo* from that event is extant: AASS Jul. I, 237.

⁵⁵ AASS Apr. III, 635.

monastery was refounded for nuns by Charles the Bald, only to be ruined a second time. The community was refounded yet again in c.1029, again for women.⁵⁶

Communities could also be founded by bishops. The monastery of Caladon, near Le Mans, was founded before 710 by Berarius, probably bishop of Le Mans. It is first mentioned in his will, dating to that year. This document records that he endowed the community with the monasteries of *Busogilus* (Saint-Jean-sur-Mayence), *Priscosiccinus*, and St-Victeur-du-Mans, and the oratory of Saint-Martin-du-Mans. At the time of writing, the abbess of the community was named Cagliberta, and Berarius states that the second abbess will be Chrodilda, the daughter of *dux* Chrodegarius, who had helped significantly with the foundation of the monastery. The will closes by asking Herlemond, bishop of Le Mans, to look after the monastery and oversee the election of the next abbess after Chrodilda.⁵⁷

One further issue that must be brought out is that of income. Certainly income was always an issue for monastic houses, even, as we have noted, for Caesarius' own foundation of St John. Even in the ninth century, the *Institutio Sanctimonialium* had to include the provision that that no monastic house could accept new entrants that it could not comfortably feed.⁵⁸ Added to the ever-present internal pressure on resources was the uncomfortable presence outside of those overseeing the monasteries. Opportuna (d. c. 770) was less fortunate. Her brother Chrodegang, the bishop of Sées, was away, and in his absence the guardian of his properties, Chrodobert, seized those belonging to her monastery. At the same time, Chrodobert arranged the death of Chrodegang.⁵⁹ Indeed, one of Opportuna's miracles amply illustrates the importance of resources and, in this case, the measures to which an abbess might have to take. A peasant who stole a donkey from the monastery refused to acknowledge his crime; by the next day, the peasant's fields had been miraculously sown with salt, and he handed over both the donkey and the

⁵⁶ See also the community's entry in <http://monasticmatrix.usc.edu>.

⁵⁷ *DHGE* XI, 264.

⁵⁸ *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, can. VIII. MGH Conc. II:I 421-456.

⁵⁹ *Vita Opportunae* AASS April 3: 62-73, at 63.

field.⁶⁰ Without adequate defence measures, be they human or celestial, monasteries could find themselves at the mercy of external depredations.

The Frankish landscape of dedicated life thus varied immensely. There is very little evidence of any kind, for any description of dedicated life in the south. Poitiers remained in good health (despite the Vikings) although the situation of St John in Arles is less certain. In the north, there is more evidence for foundations continuing to be made. Yet turning away from the histories of individual foundations, and towards legislative sources, the impression of a much more vibrant atmosphere of dedication is given. Clearly, the capitularies and councils discussing these matters were in the north, and so to a large extent only serve to reinforce the picture already gleaned. Beyond this, however, the acts of this legislation reveal a continuing diversity of forms of dedicated life. This must support the assertion of the previous chapter that the religious women of the eighth century were turning more to ideological texts, which were suitable for a more informal style of dedicated life, over prescriptive *regulae* that had a natural home in monasteries.

Eighth-century reform endeavours: Boniface

Of course, a great proportion of this legislation was intended to govern and even eliminate such informal practices of devotion. At the helm of much of it was the figure of Boniface, who came from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex as a missionary to Bavaria, and ultimately attempted to direct the reform of the entire Frankish church. Below, Boniface's involvement in legislation forms the focus for a discussion of the degree to which this kind of directive emanating from the court could ever hope to control the behaviour of women (and their families) who desired to live a dedicated life in a way that answered all of their needs. Before that, however, and to contextualize much of what Boniface set forth as the path for dedicated women in Francia to follow, there exists a further body of source material to explore. This collection is composed of the letters written between Boniface and several consecrated women, who wrote to him

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, at 68.

when he first set out for Francia as a missionary.⁶¹ Largely describing affairs across the Channel, the significance of these letters to the present study lies in the insights they offer into the mental world of dedicated women, and also into the broad scope of their concerns and activities. Identifying the variety of forms of life available to dedicated women, they additionally serve as a comparison to their counterparts in the north and south of Gaul.

i) Career and contacts with Anglo-Saxon religious women

Some of the most revealing documents concerning the practical and emotional life of nuns and, in particular, abbesses in the eighth century are the letters from the nuns supporting Boniface in his mission to Bavaria from 718 until his death in 755. Although somewhat beyond the stated geographical compass of this study, much of what they have to say has universal relevance to a consideration of enclosed women.

Boniface, a West Saxon who had had an active career in his native church, arrived on the Continent in 718, having had one abortive attempt at missionary work two years before.⁶² Boniface himself made monastic foundations for both men and women. Kitzingen in the diocese of Würzburg was reputedly founded by him in c.734-749 and placed in the charge of abbess Thecla, although it is unknown whether the earliest nuns came from England or from Germany.⁶³ One exception to this anonymity is Leoba, who was credited with miraculously saving the monastery from burning down.⁶⁴ In 828, Louis the Pious ordered the bishop of Würzburg to reform the monastery. More well-known is the monastery of Tauberbischofsheim, founded in c. 748, which was governed by

⁶¹ Much of this section makes use of the excellent *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* database: www.pase.org.uk). Essential studies of Anglo-Saxon dedicated women are S. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon women and the church: sharing a common fate* (Woodbridge, 1992); S. Foot, *Veiled Women* 2 vols. (Aldershot, 2000); B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon royal houses* (London, 2002); for literary perspectives, see now C.A. Lees and G.R. Overing, *Double agents : women and clerical culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Philadelphia, 2001).

⁶² See B. Yorke, 'The Bonifacian mission and female religious in Wessex', *EME* 7:2 (1998) 145-172.

⁶³ *DHGE* XXIX, col. 211.

⁶⁴ *Vita Leobae* 13.

Leoba.⁶⁵ A third was the double house of Heidenheim, founded in c.750 as a joint enterprise of Wynnebald and Walburga, brother and sister of bishop Willebald of Eichstätt. When Wynnebald died, Walburga carried on alone as abbess. It was at this monastery that Hugeburc composed her life of Willebald and Winnebald sometime between 776 and 786. By 790, however, it had become a community of male canons.⁶⁶

The cross-fertilization of monastic ideas between Francia and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is evident. In the latter half of the seventh century, Bertila, abbess of Jouarre and subsequently Chelles, sent female and male teachers, relics and books to help establish communities in England.⁶⁷ The nephew of Theudechildis, the first abbess of Jouarre, was bishop Leuthere of Winchester.⁶⁸ Conversely, Barbara Yorke has suggested that Boniface's foundation of Tauberbischofsheim for his relative Leoba may have been influenced by similar practices in England. Bishop Eorcenwald of London had founded Barking in c.666 for his sister Aethelburh.⁶⁹ Of course, as she herself acknowledges, such foundations by bishops for their sisters already had a long tradition in Francia by that point; the example of Caesarius and Caesaria need not be laboured here.

Leoba, or Leobgyth, is perhaps the most well-known of Boniface's female followers owing to the composition of her *vita* early in the ninth century.⁷⁰ The work was composed on the orders of Hrabanus Maurus, and was completed by c. 836, dateable by the lack of mention of the translation of Leoba's relics in 837. Leoba died in 779, and Rudolf's sources are the written memories of four nuns, Agatha, Thecla, Nana and Eoloba, and a priest named Mago.⁷¹ The dedicatee of the work, a nun named Hadamout, is otherwise unidentified. The fact that Mago appears to have gathered much of his information on Leoba as a result of extended conversations held with the four named nuns shows in itself that the women at Tauberbischofsheim enjoyed considerable

⁶⁵ *Epist.* 67, ed. Dümmler MGH Epp. III, 335-6.

⁶⁶ *DHGE* XXIII, cols. 785-6.

⁶⁷ *Vita Bertilae Abbatissae Calensis* ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM VI (Hanover, 1913) 95-109, at 106-7.

⁶⁸ Yorke, 'The Bonifacian mission', 164.

⁶⁹ Yorke, 'The Bonifacian mission', 163.

⁷⁰ Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita Leobae* MGH SS XV:I ed. Waitz (Hanover, 1887), 118-31; ed. and trans. C.H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Germany* (London, 1954) 205-226.

⁷¹ *Vita Leobae, praefatio*.

communication with the outside world.

Leoba was so greatly esteemed by Boniface that he requested that her remains should be buried in his tomb.⁷² Rudolf also notes the regard in which Leoba was held by members of Charlemagne's court: 'Many times he [Charlemagne] summoned the holy virgin to court, received her with every mark of respect and loaded her with gifts suitable to her station'. Hildegard, Charlemagne's wife, also seems to have enjoyed Leoba's company; she 'revered her with a chaste affection and loved her as her own soul', and asked Leoba to visit her when she was dying.⁷³ Indeed, Leoba seems to have attained the status of a spiritual advisor to Charlemagne and his court. 'And because of her wide knowledge of the scriptures and her prudence in counsel they often discussed spiritual matters and ecclesiastical discipline with her'.⁷⁴ Not only that, but Leoba also took on wider responsibilities. '...her deepest concern was the work she had set on foot. She visited the various convents of nuns and, like a mistress of novices, stimulated them to vie with one another in reaching perfection.'⁷⁵ Leoba's spiritual authority and ability to interpret the *Regula Benedicti* are unquestioned. In this regard, her situation has parallels with that of the two abbess Caesarias of Arles in the practical application of a written text. Leoba seems to have had a role at Charlemagne's court not dissimilar (although somewhat circumscribed by her gender) to that of Benedict of Aniane at his son Louis the Pious', in terms of spiritual consultation at court and the re-energising of female communities along stricter, presumably Benedictine, lines. No-one seems to have been concerned that Leoba herself was not adhering to directives to remain inside a monastery.

However, Leoba's continental career contrasts with her life at Wimborne, where she had grown up and begun her religious career. There, 'any woman who wished to renounce the world and enter the cloister did so on the understanding that she would never leave it... Furthermore, when it was necessary to conduct the business of the monastery and to send for something outside, the superior of the community spoke

⁷² *Vita Leobae* 19.

⁷³ *Vita Leobae* 18, tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries*, 223-4.

⁷⁴ *Vita Leobae* 18, tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries*, 223-4.

⁷⁵ *Vita Leobae* 18, tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries*, 223.

through a window and only from there did she make decisions and arrange what was needed.’⁷⁶ Did the newness of the monastic enterprise in Bavaria grant freedoms to women that more established cultures of monasticism did not? However, Rudolf also makes it clear that Leoba was regarded as very much a unique case, since Boniface had ‘commended’ her. ‘Sometimes she came to the monastery of Fulda to say her prayers, a privilege never granted to any woman either before or since... Permission was only granted to her, for the simple reason that the holy martyr St. Boniface had commended her to the seniors of the monastery and because he had ordered her remains to be buried there.’⁷⁷ One of the most crucial issues for those attempting to regulate the behaviour of nuns was their ability to leave their monastery. Leoba clearly could, but her activities at court were described in a way that made clear that she had not set a precedent to be followed. Her travels between the royal court and her monastery foreshadow to some degree those of another abbess, Charlemagne’s sister Gisela, whose activities will be discussed in the next chapter.

One of the most striking features of the letters to and from Boniface is the emphasis placed by the writers on family ties to those both within and outside monastic communities. Abbess Ecgburg, writing between 716 and 718, reminded Boniface that ‘since cruel and bitter death has taken from me one whom I loved beyond all others, my own brother Oshere, I have cherished you in my affection above almost all other men’.⁷⁸ It is not known if this Oshere was a layman or a monk, but the emotional bonds to a relative who lived outside Ecgburg’s community are evident. Although Ecgburg’s identity is otherwise unknown, the names of her sister and brother have led Patrick Sims-Williams to suggest that she was a member of the royal house of the Hwicce, and possibly the abbess of Gloucester. In her turn, Barbara Yorke has posited a West Saxon identity for her, based on her use of a scribe who was associated with the abbey at Glastonbury.⁷⁹ In any event, Ecgburg was clearly well-educated. For example, she refers

⁷⁶ *Vita Leobae* 2, tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries*, 207.

⁷⁷ *Vita Leobae* 18, tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries*, 223.

⁷⁸ *Epist.* 13, ed. Dümmler MGH Epp. III, 259-60, tr. E. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York, 1940), 34.

⁷⁹ B. Yorke, ‘The Bonifacian mission’ 152-5. See also P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England 600-800*. (Cambridge, 1990), at 220 and 229.

to God as ‘*superi rector Olympi*’ [‘the ruler of high Olympus’], recalling the ‘*superi regnator Olympi*’ of *Aeneid* II, 79.⁸⁰ The construction of her letter demonstrates how well Ecgburg had been educated in the use of rhetoric to describe her suffering to Boniface; the subject of learning is returned to below, at 193-4.

Ecgburg also felt profound grief for her sister Wethburg, not because the latter had died but because of her enclosure in the cell of a recluse in Rome. For Ecgburg, this was ‘a new wound and a new grief; she with whom I had grown up, whom I adored and who was nursed at the same mother’s breast - Christ be my witness, everywhere was grief and terror and the dread of death. Gladly would I have died if it had so pleased God from whom no secrets are hidden, or if slow-coming death had not deceived me’.⁸¹ Ecgburg’s acknowledgement of her sadness at the loss of her sister is a striking counterpoint to the vast number of texts glorifying a life dedicated to God, and simultaneously reinforces impressions of religious life as typically a family enterprise. This is a useful context in which to place the rules of Caesarius or Benedict which tried to discourage close connections with relatives outside the monastery.

Another letter reveals the networks of influence between such well-educated Anglo-Saxon dedicated women and churchmen as Boniface. In their letter to Boniface, Eangyth and Bugga requested that the former might welcome their nephew Denewald and, as they put it, ‘that you will send him on with your blessing and a favourable recommendation to the venerable brother, priest, and confessor Berththere, who has long been occupied in that mission [in Germany]’.⁸² Clearly these women were aware that Boniface held them in such esteem that such a request would not be unreasonable.

The correspondence of Eangyth and her daughter Heahburg (Bugga) reveals the worry and responsibility attached to the position of abbess. Eangyth and Bugga summarise their plight: ‘there are those external worldly affairs, which have kept us in

⁸⁰ *Epist.* 13, ed. Dümmler MGH Epp. III, 259-60.

⁸¹ *Epist.* 13, MGH Epp. III, 259, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 34.

⁸² *Epist.* 14, MGH Epp. III, 263, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 39.

turmoil... and the chain of innumerable sins, and the lack of full and perfect confidence that whatever we may do is good.' All of these difficulties had particular resonance for an abbess, and Eangyth's tale of woe of c.719-722 may be repeated at some length:

We are worried, not only by the thought of our own souls, but - what is still more difficult and more important - by the thought of the souls of all those who are entrusted to us, male and female, of diverse ages and dispositions, whom we have to serve and finally to render an account before the supreme judgement seat of Christ not only for our manifest failings, but also for those secret imaginings hidden from men and known to God alone... Then there is added the difficulty of our internal administration, the disputes over diverse sources of discord which the enemy of all good sows abroad, infecting the hearts of all men with bitter malice but especially monks and their orders, knowing, as he does, that 'mighty men shall be mightily tormented'. We are further oppressed by poverty and lack of temporal goods, by the meagreness of the produce of our fields and the exactions of things. So also our obligation to the king and queen, to the bishop, the prefect, the barons and counts. To enumerate all these would make a long story, much easier to imagine than to put into words. To all these troubles must be added the loss of friends and compatriots, the crowd of relatives and the company of our kinsfolk. We have neither son nor brother, father nor uncle, only one daughter, whom death has robbed of all her dear ones, excepting one sister, a very aged mother, and a son of a brother, a man rendered unhappy because of his folly and also because our king has an especial grudge against his people.⁸³

Clearly much of what troubles Eangyth and Bugga is related to the specific context of a monastery in England; here, they describe the rule of either Ine, king of the West Saxons (688-726) or Wihtred, king of Kent (690-725). However, most of their complaints would have struck a universal chord. One need only think of the problems Burgundofara's monastery had in the preceding century stemming from the antipathy between her family

⁸³ *Epist.* 14, MGH Epp. III, 261-2, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 37.

and that of Ega, the mayor of the palace (see above, at 123). The support of family members was essential to the survival of the monastery, but aristocratic connections could at the same time be something of a double-edged sword. Earthly worries were compounded by the precarious ability of the monastery to feed itself, and if it could not, resources would have to be found from elsewhere to buy what the inhabitants could not grow. It is on a spiritual plane, however, that Eangyth and Bugga's letter underlines the very real pressure facing the abbess. The responsibility for taking care of the souls of the women and men under their care was weighty, and the prospect of having to answer to God for it a real one. The very human 'lack of full and perfect confidence that whatever we may do is good' made clear by the worries in Eangyth's letter seems something of an antidote to the confidence and ability described in normative texts and hagiography.

A further point implied by the joint authorship of the letter is the association of Bugga in the abbatiage of the monastery. When Bregowine of Canterbury wrote to archbishop Lull sometime between 759 and 765 he described the recently deceased Bugga as *honorabilis abbatissa*, which may suggest that she had succeeded her mother as abbess.⁸⁴ Again, this situation found parallels in Gaul: Anstrude succeeded her mother Sadalberga as abbess of her convent in Laon, for example.⁸⁵

As must already be evident, the dedicated women corresponding with Boniface were possessed of a high degree of education and literacy. That this extended to their monasteries as a whole is demonstrated by their function as centres of book production for Boniface. Boniface wrote to Eadburg, abbess of Thanet (d. 751) to request a copy of the Epistles of St Peter, which were to be written in gold 'to impress honour and reverence for the Sacred Scriptures visibly upon the carnally minded to whom I preach'.⁸⁶ Although Boniface also included the materials to produce such a work, he was evidently confident that the nuns at Thanet could use them to produce the book to the standard he required. Bugga also procured books to send to Boniface, in addition to money.⁸⁷ On a

⁸⁴ Epist. 117, MGH Epp. III, 407-8, at 408.

⁸⁵ *Vita Anstrudis abbatissae Laudunensis* in Levison, ed., MGH SSRM VI: 64-78; cap.4.

⁸⁶ Epist. 35, MGH Epp. III, 285-6, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 64-5.

⁸⁷ Epist. 15, MGH Epp. III, 264-5.

more personal level, Leoba credited her education in the art of poetry to a different Eadburg.⁸⁸ Once abbess of Bischofsheim, Leoba in her turn agreed to educate ‘a certain maiden’ in her monastery, with the agreement of Boniface.⁸⁹ Monasteries could clearly still be used as educational centres, despite Gregory II's prohibition of oblates leaving their monasteries at puberty in his letter to Boniface of 22nd November 726.⁹⁰ On a more personal note, Angildruth, a later abbess of Tauberbischofsheim, asked Eigil to produce a life of Sturm, the founder of the monastery of Fulda.⁹¹ She, and the other dedicated women who had joined Boniface in Bavaria, felt themselves to be deeply involved in the progress and success of his mission, and wished to have their own texts commemorating its leading lights.

Perhaps the clearest example of the intellectual wealth of the nuns attached to the Bonifacian mission comes in the person of Huneburc of Heidenheim, author of the *Hodoeporicon* of St Willibald. In her preface to the text, Huneburc makes much of her lack of literary accomplishment: ‘I know that it may seem very bold on my part to write this book when there are so many holy priests capable of doing better, but as a humble relative I would like to record something of their deeds and travels for future ages’.⁹² However, she is also careful to note that her work is based on the best authority: ‘We heard them [Willibald’s adventures] from his own lips in the presence of two deacons who will vouch for their truth: it was on the 20th of June, the day before the summer solstice.’⁹³ Huneburc’s work is a mixture of her own words, organisation and interpretation, and what appears to be text taken down from Willibald as dictation. Occasional sentences betray Huneburc’s absorption in the story that was unfolding: ‘There, between the two fountains [at the source of the river Jordan], **they** passed the

⁸⁸ *Epist.* 29, MGH Epp. III, 281. Although Tangl assumed these two abbess Eadburgs to be the same person, Barbara Yorke has convincingly argued for there to have been one abbess Eadburg in Thanet (the writer of letters to Boniface) and one in Wessex (the teacher of Leoba). Yorke, ‘The Bonifacian mission’, 150-2.

⁸⁹ *Epist.* 96, MGH Epp. III, 382-3.

⁹⁰ *Epist.* 26, MGH Epp. III, 275-6

⁹¹ Eigil, abbot of Fulda, *Vita Sturmi*, MGH SS II, 365-77. Angildruth’s commission is noted in the Preface.

⁹² Huneburc, *Vita Willibaldi Episcopi Eichstetensis [Hodoeporicon]* MGH SS XV:I (86-106), *Praefatio*, 87; tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 153.

⁹³ *Vita Willibaldi, Praefatio*, 87; tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 153.

night and the shepherds gave **us** sour milk to drink'.⁹⁴

The movement of Wethburg to Rome to begin a new life as a recluse may itself provide insights into the options for women wishing to live dedicated lives.⁹⁵ At the very least, moving to Rome to undertake this particular lifestyle was an option for Wethburg, certainly economically. It is impossible to say whether this was done with or without the permission of a bishop, or a community (perhaps Ecgburg's?) in which she may have lived prior to her move. Ecgburg's comments illustrate the relative status such recluses were accorded. Although flavoured by her own bitterness (and, perhaps, resentment that Wethburg's calling seems to have overridden her familial bond with Ecgburg herself), Ecgburg provides a neat summary of the difference she perceives between an 'ordinary' nun and a recluse.

It was not bitter death but a still more bitter and unexpected separation that divided us one from the other, leaving her, as I think, the happier and me the unhappy one to go on, like something cast aside, in my earthly service, while she, whom, as you know, I loved so tenderly, is reported to be in a Roman cell as a recluse. But the love of Christ, which grew and flourished in her breast, is stronger than all bonds, and 'perfect love casteth out fear'.... She treads the hard and narrow way, while I lie here below, bound by the law of the flesh as it were in shackles. She, the happy one, shall declare in the day of judgement, as our Lord did: 'I was in prison and you visited me'.... But I here in this vale of tears lament my own sins as I deserve, because through them God has made me unworthy to join with such companions.

However, despite Ecgburg's evident sense of loss, Wethburg appears to have remained very much part of the circle of correspondents centred on Boniface. Another abbess, Bugga, asked Boniface for his advice on undertaking a pilgrimage to Rome. In his reply,

⁹⁴ *Vita Willibaldi, Praefatio*, 96; tr. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 164, present writer's emphasis.

⁹⁵ On dedicated women living beyond the cloister in England, see S. Foot, *Veiled Women* vol. 1 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 56-9.

written sometime before 738, Boniface mentions Wethburg's life in Rome as an example of how best to proceed:

It would seem to me better, if you can in no wise have freedom and a quiet mind at home on account of worldly men, that you should obtain freedom of contemplation by means of a pilgrimage, if you so desire and are able, as our sister Wethburg did.⁹⁶ She has written me that she has found at the shrine of St Peter the kind of quiet life which she has long sought in vain. With regard to your wishes, she sent me word, since I had written to her about you, that you would do better to wait until the rebellious assaults and threats of the Saracens who have recently appeared about Rome should have subsided. God willing she will then send you an invitation.⁹⁷

It is tempting (if somewhat unkind) to believe that the absence of the 'quiet life' Wethburg had sought in England may have been in part due to the presence of her sister Ecgburg. More seriously perhaps, Wethburg's status as a recluse (at least in the eyes of Ecgburg) did not prevent her from long-distance communication and a practical awareness of the precarious situation of Rome at the time. Also, Wethburg does not appear to have set out for Rome with the express intention of becoming a recluse (unless it was understood that going 'on pilgrimage' to Rome was a one-way trip). It may have been a sudden decision to remain in Rome which provoked Ecgburg's description of their 'bitter and unexpected separation'.

The abbess Bugga, who seems to have had a long and varied monastic career, appears to have altered her desire to go on pilgrimage with her mother Eangyth to a wish to become a recluse. However, she evidently wrote to Boniface informing him that all was not calm contemplation in her new life, as his response to her is extant: 'I have learned from many reports of the storms of troubles which with God's permission have befallen you in your old age. I have deeply regretted that after you had thrown off the

⁹⁶ In Talbot's translation, Wethburg is given as 'Wiethburga'. For the sake of clarity I have amended this to the form used in the *Prosopography*.

⁹⁷ *Epist.* 27, MGH Epp. III, 277-8, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 56-7.

pressing cares of monastic rule in your desire for a life of contemplation, still more insistent and weighty troubles have come upon you'. Boniface's answer is 'a brotherly letter of comfort and exhortation.'⁹⁸ Possibly the women with whom Boniface corresponded were a self-selecting group of women confident in their spiritual abilities, but the desire to transform a life as abbess into a new life as recluse or pilgrim seems to be a fairly common motif in these letters. These were women who felt that the nature of their dedication could change as their spiritual growth suggested. For them, life in a monastery and adherence to a rule were not necessarily permanently binding.

One of the most striking aspects of the Anglo-Saxon nuns' letters to Boniface is their evident desire to go on pilgrimage to Rome. Boniface's attitude to dedicated women going on pilgrimage to Rome has typically been described as forbidding, with reference to his letter to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury in 747. He suggests that

...it would be well and favourable for the honour and purity of your church, and provide a certain shield against vice, if your synod and your princes would forbid matrons and veiled women to make these frequent journeys back and forth to Rome. A great part of them perish and few keep their virtue. There are very few towns in Lombardy or Francia or Gaul where there is not a courtesan or a harlot of English stock. It is a scandal and a disgrace to your whole church.⁹⁹

However, his early letters seem to indicate rather a wish that if a pilgrimage is to be performed, it should not be undertaken lightly or without careful planning. His letter to Bugga goes so far as to disclaim any ability to form a 'policy' on the matter: 'I dare neither forbid your pilgrimage on my own responsibility nor rashly persuade you to it. I will only say how the matter appears to me.'¹⁰⁰ At all events, dedicated women were themselves aware of the restrictions on such travel. In the letter of 719-722 which

⁹⁸ *Epist.* 94, MGH Epp. III, 282-3, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 170-2, at 171.

⁹⁹ *Epist.* 78, MGH Epp. III, 350-6; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 136-141. I have amended his translation to use the given Latin word *Francia* rather than the anglicised 'Frankland'.

¹⁰⁰ *Epist.* 27, MGH Epp. III, 277-8, tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 56-7.

occasioned Boniface's reply on the subject, Eangyth and Bugga acknowledged that

We are aware that there are many who disapprove of this ambition and disparage this form of devotion. They support their opinion by the argument that the canons of councils prescribe that everyone shall remain where he has been placed; and where he has taken his vows, there he shall fulfill them before God. But, since we all live by diverse impulses and the judgements of God are unknown and hidden from us... and since his secret will and pleasure in this matter are completely hidden from us, therefore, in these dark and uncertain problems, we beseech you with bowed heads to be our Aaron, that is, our mountain of strength... We trust in God and beseech his mercy, that through the supplication of your mouth and your innermost prayers He may show us what He judges most profitable and useful: whether to live on in our native land or go forth upon our pilgrimage.¹⁰¹

In the event, Bugga (by then abbess) did make her pilgrimage, and met Boniface himself in Rome.¹⁰² This event was described by king Aethelberht of Kent (725-762) in a letter to Boniface of 748 x 754, which is particularly of interest as it identifies Bugga as a royal relative.¹⁰³ Together, the abbess and bishop made 'frequent visits' to the shrines of the Apostles. On her return, Bugga arranged a meeting with Aethelberht to convey Boniface's promise to pray for him, at the same time discussing 'other matters of importance'. Bugga's foreign travel made her perfect as an emissary.

Anglo-Saxon pilgrimages are difficult to place in a pan-European context since there are so few specific examples of Frankish people going on pilgrimage, let alone religious women. There are occasional references: Willibald mentions that while Boniface was in Rome, 'Many Franks, Bavarians and Saxons who had arrived from

¹⁰¹ *Epist.* 14, MGH Epp. III, 260-4; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 36-40, at 39.

¹⁰² As Barbara Yorke notes, it is uncertain of which monastery in Kent Bugga and her mother Eangyth were consecutive abbesses. Discounting Minster-in-Thanet, whose abbesses are known from other sources, the remaining royal communities were Folkestone, Hoo, Lyminge and Sheppey. See B. Yorke, 'The Bonifacian mission', 145-172.

¹⁰³ *Epist.* 105, MGH Epp. III, 391-2; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 177-9.

Britain and other countries followed his teaching with the closest attention.’¹⁰⁴ It must be pointed out, however, that Willibald would almost certainly have wanted to display his hero enjoying a high degree of popularity. By ‘Franks, Bavarians and Saxons’, Willibald may simply be listing all of the peoples encountered by the Bonifacian mission. Further, the likelihood that any of these Frankish people were dedicated women is very small. Julie Ann Smith has suggested that the barbarian migrations in the fifth and sixth centuries, and the Viking migrations in the ninth and tenth, would have made such journeys more than usually difficult and dangerous. The desire to make pilgrimages was therefore fairly weak.¹⁰⁵ However, this does not altogether ring true as an explanation for a perceived lack of Frankish women going on pilgrimage. The same difficulties involved in travel applied equally to women from the British Isles – even more so, given that a sea voyage was involved. The permissible activities for dedicated women – and indeed, the entire nature of that dedication – had changed. In the late Roman world, women such as Melania who wished to live a dedicated life were able to use the wealth and status that were the accoutrements of their senatorial position to show their devotion through travel to holy sites.¹⁰⁶ In the early middle ages, women of equivalent position found their urge to live a holy and devoted life channeled into founding or joining a dedicated establishment. In some respects, the shifting abilities of women to go on pilgrimage may therefore be the image of their dedicated lives writ small.

Later in the century, however, several female members of Charlemagne's family went to Rome on pilgrimage with other male relatives, including his mother Bertrada and his wife Hildegard – although how far such royal pilgrimages were to be of purely spiritual significance, and how far they were rather to be perceived in terms of a state visit, is open to question. One should also note that the council of Friuli still felt the need to legislate against nuns going on pilgrimage in 796/7: clearly religious women were still

¹⁰⁴ Willibald, *Life of St Boniface* c. 7, MGH SS II, 331-353, at 336, tr. Talbot (ed.) *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 49.

¹⁰⁵ J.A. Smith, ‘Sacred Journeying: Women’s Correspondence and Pilgrimage in the Fourth and Eighth Centuries’ in J. Stopford (ed.) *Pilgrimage Explored* (York and Woodbridge, 1999), 41-56, at 41-2.

¹⁰⁶ Melania (d.438) and her husband Rufinus (by then living chastely together) spent a year in a hostel for pilgrims in Jerusalem; Jerome (d.420) and his disciple Paula founded one in Bethlehem. For a brief outline of pilgrimage in its earliest centuries, see D. Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage* (Basingstoke, 1992), 1-20.

traveling, even if it is not recorded in narrative sources.¹⁰⁷ The existence of pilgrim hostels in Rome for Franks, among other groups, is a general indicator of considerable Frankish pilgrimage. There is also limited evidence for ninth-century women going to Rome with their husbands in search of relics. In 846, for instance, Oda, the countess of Saxony accompanied her husband Liudolf to Rome to obtain relics for their new foundation at Gandersheim.¹⁰⁸ In their different ways, then, these letters demonstrate the maintenance of relationships between religious women and their families and friends despite their dedicated status.

Perhaps most importantly, Boniface's letters demonstrate the ways in which dedicated women and their communities were regarded as centres of spiritual strength. This, of course, cannot but remind us of Caesarius' attitude to the nuns at St John. The abbess Cuniburg (the identity of her monastery is unknown) received a letter from Denehard, Lull and Burchard, Boniface's followers, who requested her community's prayers for their endeavour.¹⁰⁹ At the same time the three men sent packages of frankincense, pepper and cinnamon to Cuniburg, suggesting the international scope of a community such as hers. In a similar manner, Boniface himself asked for the prayers of Eadburg of Thanet, describing his situation: 'On every hand is struggle and grief, fighting without and fear within. Worst of all, the treachery of false brethren surpasses the malice of unbelieving pagans.'¹¹⁰ It is to these, Boniface's own struggles to reform the Frankish church that we now turn.

ii) *Boniface's reforming activities*

As Peter Brown underlines, Boniface 'had come to the Continent as a man already gripped by passionate loyalty to principles of order.'¹¹¹ When he reached a position

¹⁰⁷ Conc. Foroiul., cap. XII. MGH Conc. II:I, 194.

¹⁰⁸ J.M.H. Smith, 'Old saints, new cults: Roman relics in Carolingian Francia' in J.M.H. Smith and T.S. Brown (eds.), *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West* (Leiden, 2000) 317-340, at 330.

¹⁰⁹ *Epist.* 49, MGH Epp. III, 297-8; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 77-8.

¹¹⁰ *Epist.* 65, MGH Epp. III, 333-4; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 121-2.

¹¹¹ P. Brown *The Rise of Western Christendom* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2003) 418.

secure enough to legislate for the reform of the Frankish church, he did so, creating a package of initiatives. These had as their primary objective the removal of pagan (which may also include the merely outdated) practices that he found were still existing on the Continent. To a great extent this was yet one more attempt at a task that had existed in the eyes of bishops and missionaries alike for centuries: it is similar to some of Caesarius' aims and objectives in Christianizing the population of Arles and its surrounding countryside.¹¹² The written basis for such reform was created in 743-44. Boniface attended the *Concilium Germanicum* convened by Carloman, and had clearly been in discussion with Carloman beforehand, as he later related to pope Zacharias: 'Carloman... summoned me to his presence and desired me to convoke a synod in that part of the Frankish kingdom which is under his jurisdiction. He promised me that he would reform and re-establish ecclesiastical discipline, which for the past sixty or seventy years has been completely disregarded and despised... The episcopal sees, which are in the cities, have been given, for the most part, into the possession of avaricious laymen or exploited by adulterous and unworldly clerics for worldly uses.'¹¹³ Werminghoff, in editing the text of the council's canons, dates it to 21 April 742.¹¹⁴ There is no record of Boniface's presence at the two subsequent synods, at Estinnes and Soissons, both held in 743.¹¹⁵ However, Alain Dierkens has since argued for a date of 743 for the *Concilium Germanicum*.¹¹⁶ As Rosamond McKitterick suggests, the synod at Estinnes under Carloman and the synod of Soissons under Pippin III would have taken place three days, not a year, apart, and all three synods 'part of the same effort at reform'.¹¹⁷ Estinnes was one of Carloman's residences and not far from Soissons, which would make Boniface's attendance at the latter more likely, despite his evidently more cordial relationship with

¹¹² For the differences and similarities between Caesarius and Boniface see R.A. Markus, 'From Caesarius to Boniface: Christianity and Paganism in Gaul' J. Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth (eds.) *The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity* (London, 1992) 154-172.

¹¹³ *Epist.* 27, MGH Epp. III, 277-8; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 99.

¹¹⁴ MGH Conc. II:I, 1-4.

¹¹⁵ MGH Conc. II:I, *Conc. Lift.* 5-7; *Conc. Suess.*, 33-6.

¹¹⁶ A. Dierkens, 'Superstitions, christianisme et paganisme à la fin de l'époque mérovingienne. A propos de l'*Indiculus superstitionum et paganiorum*' in H. Hasquin (ed.) *Laïcité: Magie, Sorcellerie, Parapsychologie* (Brussels, 1984) 9-26, cited in R. McKitterick 'The diffusion of insular culture in Neustria between 650 and 850' in H. Atsma (ed.) *La Neustrie. Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850. Beihefte der Francia* 16/11 (Sigmaringen, 1989) 395-432, at 414 n.112.

¹¹⁷ R. McKitterick, 'The diffusion of insular culture in Neustria', 414, n.112.

Carloman.¹¹⁸ Carloman was later to renounce his position of Mayor of the Palace in 747, and set off for Rome to enter monastic life. Such piety formed an evident bond between himself and Boniface.

The stated concern of the *Concilium Germanicum* was ‘how the law of God and the religion of the Church can be recovered, which in days gone by were first squandered then collapsed, and how the Christian people can attain the health of their souls and not be lost through the deception of false priests.’¹¹⁹ To this end, the first decision of the synod was to meet every year. All members of society would have their part to play in the reinvigoration of a ‘correct’ Christianity driven by Boniface. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, for monks and nuns, this meant obeying their vows: those guilty of fornication would do penitence on bread and water.¹²⁰

However, the single requirement repeated by all three councils, the *Germanicum*, and those of Estinnes and Soissons, is that monks and nuns should be governed by the rule of St. Benedict. For Boniface and Carloman in 742, this was a matter of self-regulation: ‘both monks and nuns alike should arrange and live [according to] the rule of saint Benedict, so that they may learn to govern their own lives’.¹²¹ Clearly, as with the Caesarian texts, the *Regula sancti Benedicti* was held to be of equal applicability for both genders. At the council of Estinnes, the focus returned to the restoration of a way of life for monks (who were probably intended to represent all dedicated religious) which had been allowed to grow lax.¹²² By the council of Soissons in 744, the emphasis had returned to following the monastic way of life correctly: ‘Monks and nuns should persist

¹¹⁸ Boniface’s somewhat tentative letter to Pippin concerning a miscreant ‘servant of our church’ may illustrate this: *Epist.* 107, MGH Epp. III, 393-4; tr. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 180.

¹¹⁹ ... *quomodo lex Dei et aecclesiastica religio recuperetur, quae in diebus preteritorum principum dissipata corruit, et qualiter populus Christianus ad salutem animae pervenire possit et per falsos sacerdotes deceptus non pereat.* Prologue, MGH Conc. II:I, 2.

¹²⁰ Conc. Germ, 6.

¹²¹ Conc. Germ, 7: *Et ut monachi et ancillae Dei monasteriales iuxta regulam sancti Benedicti ordinare et vivere, vitam propriam gubernare student.*

¹²² Conc. Lift., 1. *Abbates et monachi receperunt sancti patris Benedicti regulam ad restaurandam normam regularis vitae.*

steadfastly according to the holy rule [of Benedict] until the end'.¹²³ Additionally, all clerics were forbidden to wear lay dress and from hunting with dogs. There was to be a clear separation from lay society for those dedicated to religion, who for Boniface formed the vanguard of his missionary efforts east of the Rhine.

The impacts of Boniface's efforts to reinvigorate the Christianity of the Franks generally, and on dedicated women in particular, are not easy to detect. Few manuscripts of the text of the decrees of these church councils are extant, and those that do exist do not appear to reflect a dissemination far beyond the north and east of Francia. The edicts of the *Concilia Germanicum* and *Lifinense* are preserved in the same manuscripts; seven date to the tenth century or earlier, of which two are now in Vatican libraries and five in German collections.¹²⁴ The deliberations of the council of Soissons were circulated as a capitulary of Pippin III; three ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts survive, in Rome and Paris.¹²⁵ These previously belonged to the cathedral libraries of St Peter in Beauvais and St Martin in Mainz, and the abbey of St Vincent in Metz.

By 755, the canons of the Council of Verneuil show that Boniface's desire to reform all Frankish monasteries as Benedictine institutions was proving difficult to fulfill. The council decided to introduce stringent penalties for non-compliance. Communities that failed to observe the rule could be excommunicated; individual recalcitrant nuns could be imprisoned, although no equivalent sanction is listed for reluctant monks.¹²⁶ However, the council did not take the final step of stipulating a single type of institution in which dedicated women should live. Its third measure concerning them was to decree that women who had veiled themselves or monks who had tonsured themselves were to join a community, '*sub ordine regulari*', or to live under the supervision of a bishop, '*sub ordine canonica*.'¹²⁷ One of the major implications of this legislation must be the

¹²³ Conc. Suess, 3: *Ut ordo monachorum vel ancillarum Dei secundum regula sancta stabiles permaneant...*

¹²⁴ For these manuscripts, see H. Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium regum Francorum manuscripta : Überlieferung und Traditionszusammenhang der fränkischen Herrschererlasse* (Munich, 1995), 1080.

¹²⁵ For these manuscripts, see Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium regum Francorum manuscripta* 1080.

¹²⁶ Conc. Vernense, can. 6, MGH Capit. I, 34; see also Wemple *Women in Frankish Society*, 166.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, can. 11.

continuing existence of individual dedicated women, or those in small, family-based religious communities.

One further subject tackled by the council of Verneuil was the movement of abbesses outside of their communities:

We establish that no abbess has licence to leave the monastery unless hostility forces her to do so. But the lord king says that he wishes that whenever he orders any abbess to come to him, once a year and with the consent of the bishop of the diocese in which she is, then she shall come to him, and at his command, if it is necessary; then she is not to pass through any villas or any other places, unless thereby she is able to come and return the more quickly. And she is not to move from her monastery until she has sent her own notice to the king. And if the king orders her to come, let her come. But if not she is to remain in the monastery... Similarly, no other consecrated woman ought to go outside the monastery.
MGH Capit 1, cap. 6, p.34

It is in this canon that we see perhaps for the first time the status accorded to abbesses as officers of the realm. While the bishops at the council desired the abbesses never to leave their communities, Pippin needed to ensure that they would be able to travel to carry out their responsibilities towards him.¹²⁸

Yet to what degree could the decisions taken towards a uniform Benedictinism ever be expected to have an effect on the entire Frankish territory? The personnel at the *Concilium Germanicum*, listed after Boniface himself, show a preponderance of bishops from eastern Francia. They are Burchard of Würzburg, Reginfred of Cologne, Wintan of Buraburg, Willibald of Eichstätt, Dada, whose see is unknown, and Edda of Strasburg.¹²⁹ The sees of Burchard and Wintan had been created by Boniface himself. While Boniface

¹²⁸ D. Hochstetler, *A Conflict of Traditions: Women in Religion in the Early Middle Ages, 500-840* (Lanham, 1992), 38-9.

¹²⁹ MGH Conc. II:I, 1.

may have desired his reforms to take effect throughout Francia, his reach did not extend far beyond the territories in which he was undertaking missionary activity. In addition, Boniface's implicit (and not so implicit) criticism of the existing episcopate doubtless deepened their resistance both to self-reform and the reform of those they were responsible for.¹³⁰ As Robert Markus has shown, Boniface could only interact with the existing Frankish church as an outsider.¹³¹ Moreover, it is easy to overestimate Boniface's importance by virtue of the survival of the large amounts of documentation accompanying his mission: letters, councils, and of course his *vita*. Other figures – such as Emmeram, Rupert, Corbinian – undertook similar missionary activity which was recorded in *vitae*, but their actions were not reflected in conciliar activity.¹³²

Here also the political structure of the Frankish territories must come into play. Although now a subject of some debate, the southern and western duchies of Francia – Aquitaine, Burgundy, and Provence – were semi-autonomous and had made concerted efforts to break away from the control of the Neustrian court.¹³³ Aquitaine had regained its independence under duke Hunald, after the death of Charles Martel, the father of Carloman and Pippin. The brothers invaded in 742, but achieved little, and a treaty of 745 acknowledged the re-emergence of the duchy.¹³⁴ Charles Martel had himself invaded Burgundy in 736, taking Lyon by force, following resentment at his redistribution of lands and offices to his own followers.¹³⁵ The following year, Charles and his brother Childebrand continued down the valley of the Rhône into Provence, controlled by duke Maurontus. Arab control of the region from the city of Narbonne may have provided a pretext for military intervention in the region. Two years later, in 739, Charles attacked duke Maurontus, sacking Avignon, and the duke fled.¹³⁶ Such a history of non-alignment

¹³⁰ R. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe* 2nd Ed. (Basingstoke, 1999), 259.

¹³¹ R.A. Markus 'From Caesarius to Boniface', 163.

¹³² R. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 260. See Arbeo of Freising, *Vita Emmerammus*, AASS Sept VI, 474-84; for Rupert, see AASS Mart. III, 702-4; for Corbinian, see AASS Sept. III, 281-95.

¹³³ R. Collins *Early Medieval Europe*, 269-274. See also *idem*, 'Pippin I and the Kingdom of Aquitaine' in P. Godman and R. Collins (eds.) *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990), 363-390.

¹³⁴ R. Collins *Early Medieval Europe*, 271-2. Described in the *Continuations of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, cap. 28, ed. and tr. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (London, 1960).

¹³⁵ *Continuations of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, caps. 14 and 18.

¹³⁶ *Continuations of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, caps. 20 and 21.

with Neustrian and Austrasian-based interests of the Arnulfings must suggest that decisions taken by church councils in the north-east of Francia would have little bearing on territories further south. In fact, no synods would be held in the southern Frankish regions until the five simultaneous regional councils of Charlemagne in 813. An essential point to bear in mind when considering the evidence of such ‘reforming’ councils, not only for those of Boniface but also for the subsequent councils of the early ninth century, is this geographical dissonance.

Reform Endeavours: Chrodegang

At around the same time as Boniface directed attempts at reform at the *Concilium Germanicum* in 742 and at Soissons in 743, another star was rising in the episcopal firmament: Chrodegang of Metz.¹³⁷ Chrodegang’s name is not recorded at these councils, which suggests that he had not in fact been consecrated at that stage, despite the traditional date of 30th September 742.¹³⁸ Martin Claussen suggests that Carloman and Boniface may have seen in Chrodegang an example of a Frankish aristocrat appointed to the episcopate by his father, just the type of man about whom Boniface complained in his letters. If that were the case, Chrodegang might have found his role in the Church circumscribed until Carloman retired.¹³⁹

Chrodegang’s reforms extended over two main areas. The first of these was the new set of guidelines he drew up for the canons of the cathedral of Metz. These were based on the Benedictine rule, but also drew on Gregory the Great, Caesarius, and Julianus Pomerius (under the name Prosper of Aquitaine).¹⁴⁰ Chrodegang intended this new *Regula canonicorum* to be of use only to the Metz community, and it was not until the beginning of the ninth century that the text was applied explicitly to female communities. Chrodegang set forth his own purposes in the rule’s prologue, where he

¹³⁷ On Chrodegang, see M.A. Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz and the Regula Canonicorum in the Eighth Century* (Cambridge, 2004).

¹³⁸ Claussen, *Reform*, 26.

¹³⁹ Claussen, *Reform*, 27

¹⁴⁰ Claussen, *Reform*, 166

described the necessity for reform in general, for reform in Metz specifically, and the need for bishops to take the decisions in such matters.¹⁴¹ His intention was to restore (*recuperare*) that which had been lost.

Evidently, the use of older spiritual authorities such as Caesarius was one of Chrodegang's chosen means of recovering the glories of the past. Caesarius' sermons were well-known and widely circulated in the eighth and ninth centuries; moreover, in his own use of Augustine, Caesarius had shown himself to have much the same theological loyalties as those of the later Franks.¹⁴² In Caesarius, in short, Chrodegang may have seen 'a model for his own actions and behaviour'.¹⁴³ It is significant that Caesarius' sermon to the monks of *Blandiacum* (Blanzac, dép. Charente) on humility (sermon 233) appears in the very first chapter of the *Regula canonicorum*. The tone of Caesarius' writing would also help to set that of Chrodegang.

Although this extract from Caesarius is relatively short, Claussen has demonstrated that Chrodegang relies on what would now be termed the techniques of intertextuality to make his point. As Claussen outlines, Chrodegang's use of fragments of and quotations from older texts relies on pre-existing knowledge of their contents and ethos.¹⁴⁴ In Claussen's apt expression, such fragments were a form of textual shorthand that Chrodegang's audience would recognise.¹⁴⁵ Counting on this knowledge, Claussen argues that the clerics of Metz would have been encouraged to return to the complete Caesarian sermon on humility, originally written to a community of monks, and 'fill in' Chrodegang's own 'laconic' instruction with Caesarius' much fuller description of the uses of humility.¹⁴⁶ In this way, the cathedral clergy of Metz were encouraged to discard the monastic way of life but not its teachings.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ Chrodegang of Metz, *Regula canonicorum* PL 89: 1057-1120.

¹⁴² Claussen, *Reform*, 180.

¹⁴³ Claussen, *Reform*, 181.

¹⁴⁴ Claussen, *Reform*, 166-7.

¹⁴⁵ Claussen, *Reform*, 181.

¹⁴⁶ Claussen, *Reform*, 180-1. The text is taken from Sermon CCXXXIII.

¹⁴⁷ Claussen, *Reform*, 184.

As Claussen notes, this sermon typically formed part of a *libellus* of Caesarius' ten sermons to monks, which were very widely circulated. The earliest extant manuscript of it dates to the end of the seventh century and originated at St Médard of Soissons;¹⁴⁸ other eighth-century copies belonged to St Bertin¹⁴⁹ and St Gall.¹⁵⁰ Although none of the eighth-century manuscripts can be placed in Metz, a later copy, Metz, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 134, written at the end of the eighth century, at least suggests that the clerics of Metz had access to this material at a marginally later stage.¹⁵¹

The second aspect of Chrodegang's involvement in reform was his participation in and direction of several councils, in association with Pippin III. The location of these councils at the Frankish court, rather than in Metz or in Austrasia, shows that these councils were intended to have general applicability throughout Pippin's kingdom. But again, how much influence did this legislation have over the dedicated women in Francia as a whole?

The first synod with which Chrodegang is associated is the council of Verneuil (755), held at Pippin's palace of the same name.¹⁵² This council was convened with the explicit aim of reform. Its prologue notes that Pippin has gathered 'almost all of the bishops of Gaul' (*'universos paene Galliarum episcopos'*) to reinstate the former norms of the Church which were no longer adhered to.¹⁵³ The council has several things to say on the subject of religious women. Both nuns and monks are to live according to 'a rule', and will ultimately be excommunicated if they refuse.¹⁵⁴ Nuns and monks who have veiled or tonsured themselves are either to live '*regulariter*' in a monastery or '*sub ordine canonica*' under the supervision of a bishop.¹⁵⁵ Clearly, not all dedicated women

¹⁴⁸ Now Brussels, Bibl. Royale., ms. 9850-52.

¹⁴⁹ Saint-Omer, Bibl. Munic., ms. 33*bis.*, discussed by Morin in CCSL, *Sermones* I, xxxiii-xxxix.

¹⁵⁰ St-Gall, Bibl. Munic., ms. 194.

¹⁵¹ Claussen, *Reform*, 179.

¹⁵² Although Chrodegang's presence is not explicitly attested at the synod, Claussen has made a convincing case for the bishop's presence there due among other things to textual links between the prologues of the council and of the *Regula canonicorum*. See Claussen, *Reform*, 47-8.

¹⁵³ Conc. Vernense (755) MGH Capit. I, 33.

¹⁵⁴ Conc. Vernense (755) MGH Capit. I, 34. Canon 5: *Ut monasteria, quam virorum quam puellarum, secundum ordinem regulariter vivant...*

¹⁵⁵ Conc. Vern. cap. 11.

resided inside monasteries – and this canon gives permission for that state of affairs to continue. However, does ‘*regulariter*’ mean according to *a* rule, or according to *the* rule, which must be that of Benedict? A further chapter deals particularly with abbesses. No woman may be abbess of two monasteries; no abbess may leave her monastery, unless in case of *hostilitate* (it is unclear whether this refers to external or internal strife) or if summoned by the king, in which case she may leave once per year and only with the permission of her bishop.¹⁵⁶ When travelling, abbesses were to proceed as swiftly as possible with no deviations through towns or other places.¹⁵⁷ Ordinary nuns could not leave their monasteries, on pain of being confined to their house to do penitence, which the bishop would oversee.¹⁵⁸ Veiled women who lived outside monasteries were to join established communities.¹⁵⁹

Although Suzanne Wemple notes that monks were not constrained to follow a rule in the same manner as were nuns, they were dealt with in other canons of the council.¹⁶⁰ Monks were forbidden from travelling to Rome or any other place unless under obedience to their abbot.¹⁶¹ There was also an effort to maintain the quality of the spiritual life within monasteries. If male houses came under lay control, individual monks could move to a different monastery for the good of their souls.¹⁶² In comparison with

¹⁵⁶ *Constituimus ut nulla abbatissa dua monasteria non praesumat habere, nec extra monasterium licentiam exire, nisi hostilitate cogente. Sed dominus [sic] rex dicit, quod vellit, ut, quando aliquas de ipsa abbatissas ipse dominus rex ad se iusserit venire, semel in anno et per consensu episcopi in cuius parrochia est, et tunc ad eum aliquas veniant...*

¹⁵⁷ *... et aliubi omnino non debeat nec per villas nec per alia loca demorare, nisi tantum cum celeris potuerit ad ambulandum et ad revertendum*

¹⁵⁸ *Similiter nec illas monachas extra monasterium exire non debeant. Quod si aliqua in aliquo lapsu ceciderit, infra monasterio per consilium episcopi penitentiam agat.*

¹⁵⁹ *Et si tales foeminae velatae ad praesens ibidem congregatae inveniuntur qui regulariter vivere non vellent, nec ad hoc dignae sunt ut cum illas alias habitent, episcopus vel abbatissa praevideant locum aptum, ubi separatim cum custodia in pulsatorio habitare debeant, vel operare minibus quod ipsa abbatissa eius iusserit, interim quod probatas, si dignae sunt, in congregatione recipiantur.*

¹⁶⁰ S.F. Wemple *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1985), 166.

¹⁶¹ Conc. Vern. cap. 10: *Ut monachi, qui veraciter regulariter vivunt, ad Romam vel aliubi vagandi non permittantur, nisi oboedientiam abbatis sui exercent.*

¹⁶² *Ibid: Et si talis causa evenierit, quod absit, quod ille abbas sic remissus vel negligens inveniatur aut in manus laicorum ipsum monasterium veniat, et hoc episcopus emendare non potuerit, et aliqui tales monachi ibidem fuerint qui propter Deum de ipso monasterio in alterum migrare vellent propter eorum animas salvandas, hoc per consensum episcopi sui licentiam habeant, qualiter eorum animas possint salvare.*

abbesses, abbots appear to have had more freedom to travel to court (and thereby be part of decision-making processes).

However, the use of canons such as these as evidence for a thoroughgoing reform is dangerous. It is evident that the canons prescribe an ideal form of Christian life which might never have found a practical response in wider society. There is but one example of a female community, that of Valenciennes, being re-founded as a house for male canons in 749, and even for that it is impossible to know what the exact circumstances of the re-foundation were: it could, conceivably, have had nothing whatsoever to do with any laxness on the part of the original community.¹⁶³ More concretely, the signature lists of the bishops who attended such gatherings show that by no means all of the Frankish bishops were involved in their design. In his study of Chrodegang's attempts at reform, Eugen Ewig notes that the geographical reach of such a reform can be sketched out by the sees of bishops attending the meetings, alongside the witnesses to certain charters.¹⁶⁴ In the privilege of 757 produced for his new foundation of Gorze, Chrodegang is accompanied by the bishops of Cologne, Reims, Rouen, Sens, Tours, Trier, Besançon and Alemannia. At the council of Attigny of 762, these bishops had been joined by those of Lyon, Vienne, Tarentaise and Rhaetia. The bishops of certain areas seem never to have been involved in the construction of Chrodegang's reforming documents: those of Aquitaine, Provence and most of Burgundy do not appear as signatories. By no means, then, were the measures that Chrodegang set out in his councils taken up across Francia. This is not to say, of course, that individual bishops did not make their own prescriptions for the religious in their dioceses, but these must have been much more local in scope.

Chrodegang had close links with Rome - Pope Stephen II travelled to Francia in 743 and gave him the archiepiscopal *pallium* in 754 – and this had implications for the reform and development of religious life in Francia. One aspect of this was the particular form of devotion employed by Chrodegang in the cathedral of Metz. A second, and of

¹⁶³ GC III, 156.

¹⁶⁴ E. Ewig 'Saint Chrodegang et la réforme de l'église franque', *Saint Chrodegang: Communications présentées au colloque tenu à Metz à l'occasion du douzième centenaire de sa mort* (Metz, 1967), 25-53, at 33-41.

more direct interest for the study of dedicated women, was the introduction of sacramentaries influenced by Roman liturgical practices. This so-called ‘eighth-century Gelasian’ type of sacramentary was introduced by Chrodegang with the support of Pippin III to eliminate variation in liturgical practice.¹⁶⁵ Although it does not seem to have received a particularly wide circulation, the treatment of dedicated women in this liturgical source remains of interest.

The *Liber Sacramentorum Engolismensis*, originating as its name implies from Angoulême, is one such text which, although Frankish in origin, drew heavily on Roman prayers and practices. It was certainly compiled before 844, and according to its editor is more likely to date from between 768 and 781.¹⁶⁶ Two different blessings for religious women are given. The first is to be used ‘When a virgin nun is blessed or when mass is celebrated in a monastery of nuns.’¹⁶⁷ This may suggest that it is applicable to women whether living in a monastery or not; but the use of the term *sanctae monialis* for women not in a monastery would be unusual, and this blessing may rather be intended for different situations in the same monastic context.¹⁶⁸ The purpose of the second blessing is even less clear, being intended for *ancillas dei*, which is a very general expression.¹⁶⁹ In fairly general terms it states the intention of the virgin to persevere in faith with a devoted mind, so that she can be numbered among the *sanctae virgines* who will hasten towards the heavenly Bridegroom, *lampadibus inextinguibilibus*.

In sum, Chrodegang with Pippin’s support made limited efforts to reform what were perceived to be faults in the Frankish church. However, in neither of the fields

¹⁶⁵ C. Vogel, ‘Saint Chrodegang et les débuts de la romanisation du culte en pays franc’, in *Saint Chrodegang: Communications présentées au colloque tenu à Metz à l’occasion du douzième centenaire de sa mort* (Metz, 1967) 91-109.

¹⁶⁶ MS Paris, B.N. Lat. 816, published as P. Saint-Roch (ed.) *Liber Sacramentorum Engolismensis* CCSL 159C (Turnhout, 1987).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, #1849: *Cum sanctae monialis virgo benedicitur vel cum in monasterio puellarum missa caelebratur*.

¹⁶⁸ Although somewhat beyond the scope of the present study, the issues of the terminology of and vocabulary for dedicated women are important. Some words, such as *virgo*, *puella*, and *Deo vota/Deo devota* enjoyed a wide and continuous usage across the entire period and are found in all types of source. The term *sanctimonialis* is found as early as the 453 Council of Angers (can. V), but only appears sporadically until the late eighth century, when it is used to differentiate types of religious women in discussions of church councils.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, at #1850.

which saw changes - the composition of a new rule for the cathedral canons of Metz, and the promulgation of legislation through church councils and new sacramentaries – were substantial impressions made on the existing situations of religious women in Francia.

Conclusion

While there is some evidence for the foundation of women's monastic houses in the northern parts of Gaul in the eighth century, there is very little for the south. To some extent this was clearly due to the enthusiasm for religious life which remained from the activities of Columbanus and his followers in the previous century. It was also linked to the geographical location of the centre of power in Francia: for families linked to the court, monastic foundation continued to prove a way of consolidating their hold on their lands. The increasing northerly bias of the Frankish territories was also reflected in the production and preservation of written sources. From the evidence which remains for southern Gaul, it is difficult to make conclusive statements on the nature of dedicated life for women in those regions. The climate of dedicated life had therefore changed considerably from Caesarius' day, in that the centres of monastic gravity and innovation had shifted north. In other respects, however, much would still be recognisable. Amongst several relatively well-documented monastic foundations in Francia, there is evidence for the continuation of less formal dedicated lifestyles, and this is not surprising: a life dedicated to God lived at home or in a smaller community would have been both more economical and easier to arrange than a formal foundation. It is in this context that Caesarius' writings, and in particular the 'booklet' of shorter texts, must have found a ready audience.

For these reasons, efforts towards the reform of dedicated life in the eighth century were not as fruitful as either Boniface or Chrodegang would have hoped. The question that remains to be answered in the following chapter is how far their reforming initiatives laid the groundwork for subsequent attempts to reform the Frankish church in the ninth century.

From Caesarius to Benedict: religious life and reform in the ninth century

From a codicological point of view, the history of Caesarius of Arles' rule for nuns can commence only at the beginning of the ninth century, three hundred years after its composition. The earliest surviving manuscript containing the rule – now Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 28118 – is itself the only extant copy of Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum* dated to circa 815.¹ Forming part of its collection of thirty-six monastic rules and other normative texts, the *Codex* also contains a letter of Pope Hormisdas (514-523) approving the foundation of the monastery of St John and a collection of six prayers for deceased members of the community, neither of which are found elsewhere.² Although the *Regula* itself would almost certainly be extant without its inclusion in the *Codex*, its contents would be by no means as complete or as well established as is now the case, nor would much of the monastery's accompanying documentation have survived.³

The survival of several of the other Caesarian texts owes an equal debt to Benedict of Aniane's other main works concerned with monastic legislation, the *Concordia Regularum* and the *Institutio sanctimonialium*. The former includes an otherwise unknown sermon (now no. CLII), a fragment of Teridius' letter *O Profundum* to the second abbess Caesaria, and the so-called *Dicta Caesariae*, the same abbess' brief writings on prayer, thought and purity of heart.⁴ The *Institutio* preserves extended extracts from Caesarius' letter to nuns, *Vereor*, although as has been noted in previous chapters, the circulation of this work was sufficiently wide to ensure it was not dependent on inclusion here for its survival.

¹ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999) 83.

² *Ibid* 92; de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 136.

³ See the *stemma* established by de Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 155, which shows that the tenth century copy owned by the female community at Niedermünster (Bamberg, Königliche Bibliothek, ms. Lit. 142, fol. 62r – 83v) was drawn from a different exemplar from that of Benedict's ninth century edition.

⁴ *Concordia* 5,11 (*O Profundum*); 25,11 (*Serm.* 152); 25,14-16 (*Dicta Caesariae*). The text of the *Concordia* is most readily accessible in P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 A (Turnhout, 1999).

By any standards, however, the degree to which Benedict of Aniane re-used the works of Caesarius of Arles is remarkable, and merits an extended consideration. Caesarius writings became one element in texts which were intended to provide the normative backbone of ecclesiastical reform. The major figure in this reform has traditionally been seen as Benedict of Aniane, abbot, author and director of the reforming legislation at the councils of 816-9. However, Benedict's position was neither so pre-eminent, or the proposed and actual reforms as effective, as such historiography would set forth. This chapter therefore falls into three parts. Forming a prologue to the main body of the chapter, the first assesses Charlemagne's legislative activity concerning dedicated women and contrasts this with the situation of Charlemagne's sister Gisela, the abbess of Chelles. Continuing the theme of legislative activity, the final councils of Charlemagne's reign in 813 are assessed for their interpretations of female dedicated life: both what can be gleaned of the actuality, and what attitudes were towards it. The second main part of the chapter makes a detailed study of the documents of reform which appeared under Benedict of Aniane's aegis: the *Institutio sanctimonialium*, and the *Codex* and *Concordia regularum*. Of critical importance, these documents allow us to assess the ways in which Caesarius' writings were used in the ninth century. Lastly, this weight of normative evidence will be set against a range of other types of evidence for women's dedicated life in the ninth century, in order to assess the impact of the reform measures which were ongoing throughout this period.

Prologue: Charlemagne and Gisela

In 794-5 Angilbert, Alcuin's pupil and protégé, composed a poem on Charlemagne ('David') and his entourage, praising the king and those around him. Among the latter was his sister Gisela (d. c. 810), abbess of Chelles, who made her appearance in the following terms:

I greet you too, Gisela, God's holy virgin,
distinguished sister of David, in my never-ending poem.

You are loved, I know, by Christ, your husband and the heavens' glory,
for to Him alone you have dedicated your body.⁵

The appearance of a dedicated religious woman at court may seem incongruous, but the king's sister was no ordinary religious woman. Her position was ambiguous: on the one hand, courtiers such as Angilbert and Theodulf (see below, 220 ff.) underlined her separate status, reiterating the sense of interior cloister she was expected to retain even while away from Chelles. On the other, Charlemagne's sister was a central figure at court and possessed lands and wealth, giving lands to St Denis in 799 for the souls of their parents, confirmed by Charlemagne and witnessed by his sons Charles, Pippin and Louis.⁶ As will be discussed at greater length below, the uniqueness of Gisela's position may well make her a difficult subject for a case study for female religious life in the Carolingian period. She stands, however, at the centre of a number of intersecting areas for discussion, and provides a counterpoint to the main discussion of Charlemagne's legislation on religious women, both in the main body of his reign and in the councils of 813.

Recent work on Charlemagne's legislation has focused on governing through assemblies held at court, and on their output in the form of capitularies.⁷ From the beginning of his reign, these formal documents demonstrate Charlemagne's attempts to re-shape a Christian society. In 769, a confirmation of Pippin's Aquitanian capitulary saw Charlemagne and his brother Carloman focus on the rights and duties of men with regard to the law. The three canons dealing with the clergy emphasise their duty of care towards ecclesiastical property, and underline that 'bishops, abbots and abbesses are to live under a holy rule'.⁸ The point is here being made that the monastic rule equates to monastic

⁵ MGH Poetae I, 360-3. Ed. and tr. P. Godman, in *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1985) at 115.

⁶ MGH *Diplomata* I, nos. 190 and 319.

⁷ On Charlemagne, see now the articles in J. Story (ed.) *Charlemagne: a New History* (Manchester, 2005). On the mechanisms of government, see in particular S. Airlie, 'The palace of memory: the Carolingian court as political centre', in S. Rees Jones et al. eds, *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe* (York, 2000), pp. 1-20, at 18-20; T. Reuter, 'Assembly politics in western Europe from the eight century to the twelfth' in P. Linehan and J.L. Nelson (eds.) *The Medieval World* (London, 2001), pp. 432-450; M. Innes, 'Charlemagne's government', in Story, *Charlemagne: a New History*, 71-89.

⁸ MGH Capit. I, 42, can II; trans P.D. King, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Kendal, 1987), 202.

law: all men (and in this case, women) are subject to a higher and unassailable authority. This basic understanding of the place of monastic men and women in his kingdom would be substantially refined over the following decades. The capitulary of Herstal (779), for instance, reflects different perceptions of the textual basis of male and female religious life. While both genders are enjoined to live according to a rule, for monks it is assumed to be the Benedictine *regula*, and for nuns, an *ordo sanctus*.⁹ Further underlined are the different expectations of male and female religious. While abbots were present at Herstal for these very discussions, abbesses were now reminded that they could not leave their monastery, a persistent complaint of synods that, as will be seen, was not always listened to.

Charlemagne's efforts to reform the Frankish church reached their apogee with the *Admonitio Generalis* of 789, the first of his capitularies to concern the church directly.¹⁰ This work, substantially drawn from the canons of the early church councils, was directed at all the ranks of the church (but particularly, one suspects, bishops and the heads of monasteries) to insist that they 'bear the erring sheep back inside the walls of the ecclesiastical fortress on the shoulders of good example and exhortation'. From now on, the *missi* would be the main channel of instruction from king to church, and would themselves have the authority to correct 'those things which ought to be corrected'.¹¹ Basing his intervention on the precedent of Josiah, reformer of the laws of Israel, the watchwords for the future royal relationship with the church would be *circumeundo*, *corrigendo* and *ammonendo*: visitation, correction and advice.¹²

The first fifty-nine of the eighty-two articles are drawn from early church councils via the collection known as the *Dionysia-Hadriana*. Charlemagne had been given this collection of canon law, based on that compiled in the sixth century by Dionysius

⁹ Capit. Harist., can. III: *De monasteriis qui regulares fuerunt, ut secundum regulam vivant; necnon et monasteria puellarum ordinem sanctam custodiant*.... MGH Capit. I, 47.

¹⁰ MGH Capit. I, 53-62. See in particular J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983) 259-60.

¹¹ *Admonitio Generalis*, praef., at 53.

¹² Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, at 259.

Exiguus, by Pope Hadrian in 774.¹³ These provide the *Admonitio* with a flavour of looking to the past: tenets once known but partially forgotten. In its treatment of nuns, the *Admonitio* points out that they may not approach the altar and must be twenty-five before they can be veiled; that monks and nuns must observe their way of life in all respects but that *virgines Deo sacratae* in particular must be watched over ‘by persons of graver character’.¹⁴ It is open to question whether Charlemagne understood those consecrated virgins to be the same as cloistered nuns, for whom the *Admonitio* uses the terms of *virgo* or *nonna* interchangeably, or if they were still regarded as a separate entity. The weight attached to previous legislation is reflected in the fact that only three of the new articles deal specifically with monks or nuns, with a much greater emphasis being placed on the role of priests: the Carolingian emphasis would be on the correct instruction of the population at large. All dedicated religious were to use the Roman rite which Charlemagne was introducing; the role of monks and nuns with regard to the spiritual life of the kingdom was vital, and Charlemagne saw his task as ensuring that they were performing it as correctly as possible.¹⁵ This may also be reflected in the insistence that monks are to live according to their vow (which clearly was not seen to be as self-evident as it may appear), and were particularly to go through a trial period, or novitiate, before being allowed to leave the house on monastic business.¹⁶ The quality of the life being lived by each individual monk was of paramount importance. The third of the new monastic articles concerns abbesses, who are called upon to stop blessing men, and also to stop veiling virgins – presumably their own new daughters. This article, addressed to bishops and abbots, should perhaps be seen more in the light of an effort to safeguard the authority of bishops, whose tasks these were, than as evidence of particular reservations over the standing of abbesses.¹⁷ Wemple’s emphasis on legal texts such as these as

¹³ See R. McKitterick, ‘Knowledge of Canon Law in the Frankish Kingdoms before 789: the Manuscript Evidence’, *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 36/1 (1985) 97-117, repr. in *eadem*, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th to 9th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994).

¹⁴ *Admonitio Generalis*, can. XL, at 56.

¹⁵ Can. LXXX.

¹⁶ Can. LXXIII.

¹⁷ A slightly belated sidelight may be thrown on this issue by comparison of Charlemagne’s legislation with references to veiling in hagiography. One interesting example is that of Rictrude, whose *vita* was written by Hucbald of St-Amand in c.907 (*Vita sanctae Rictrudis*, AASS May 12, 78-98). She veils herself at a banquet to avoid a second marriage. Although Hucbald is careful to underline that the veil had previously

indicators of a loss of the abbess' former influence may be reading too far into canons composed with a subtly different purpose in mind.¹⁸

Subsequent capitularies continued to reflect older concerns with female religious life. The capitulary of Frankfurt (794) stated this explicitly with its note that older canons should be consulted for directives on the appropriate age for veiling a nun.¹⁹ The so-called programmatic capitulary of 802 went so far as to outline the basic tenets of female dedicated life, noting the importance of an unbroken cloister, obedience, stability in one foundation and the rejection of women who were unwilling to follow the rule.²⁰ Yet these requirements were not merely cited because of their relative antiquity, or because they provided solutions to problems then besetting female monastic life. Rather, they reflect Charlemagne's concern that members of religious communities should be able to fulfill adequately the role he had allotted them, that of praying for the safety and stability of his kingdom and empire.

However, capitularies did express concern at some aspects of female religious life. It appears that female communities were seen as particularly prone to existing without recourse to any rule: the Frankfurt capitulary decreed that abbesses who lived without either the rule of canons (presumably Chrodegang's) or a monastic rule (Benedict's?), (*quae canonice aut regulariter non vivunt*) were to be deprived of their *honor*.²¹ This may suggest the existence of smaller communities or family foundations, which did not actually follow a written rule. In essence this repeated Charlemagne's edict of commission of 789, promulgated at the same time as the *Admonitio Generalis*, which attempted to combine very small communities of women into one larger one, based on a rule, under the authority of the bishop. It also states that no abbess or nun was to leave her enclosure without the bishop's permission, that the writing or singing of vulgar songs was forbidden, and care should be taken over excessive bloodletting.

been blessed by bishop Amand, the action and final decision are Rictrude's. This further suggests that the legislation here is concerned with the authority of bishops, not of abbesses.

¹⁸ S.F. Wemple *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1985), 169.

¹⁹ Frankfurt (794), can. XLVI. MGH Capit. I, 77.

²⁰ *Capitulare missorum generale* (802), can. XVIII. MGH Capit. I, 95.

²¹ Frankfurt (794), can. XLVII. MGH Capit. I, 77.

While canons such as these may reflect previous legislation and older conceptions of the problems associated with female monastic life, Charlemagne's legislation also reflects new priorities. By far the greatest proportion of articles referring to abbesses do so as part of discussions of the responsibilities of the leading members of Carolingian society: counts, bishops, abbots and abbesses, all having a role in the re-formation of a Christian society. This was made particularly clear in the programmatic capitulary of 802. Charlemagne's first requirement was that these groups should be in accord with each other, so that 'always, everywhere, a just judgment on a matter may be effected because of them and among them.'²² On this foundation, counts, bishops and monasteries should offer protection to the poor, widows, orphans and pilgrims, in order to secure Charlemagne's passage to eternal life.²³ Charlemagne's legislation thus reflects a tension between, on the one hand, a clear recognition of the place of abbesses within society, as keepers of the peace, upholders of the law, responsible lords, and members of aristocratic society and a perception of the more longstanding problems associated with women religious.

Such prescriptive sources as these can only shed a partial light on religious women during the reign of Charlemagne, and it is to Charlemagne's sister Gisela, in the absence of other documented *Deo devotae*, that we must return. As the abbess of Chelles, much of Charlemagne's legislation was directly applicable to her, and yet it is evident that she was not bound by the requirement of the capitulary of Herstal that she remain always at Chelles;²⁴ indeed, the activities of Gisela and other abbesses may have lain behind the later canon of Chalons that recognised their need to leave the monastery. As another court poet, Theodulf, puts it,

If the king's most holy sister should happen to be there
let her give kisses to her brother and he to her.
Let her restrain her great joy with a tranquil expression

²² *Capitulaire missorum generale* (802), can. I. MGH Capit. I, 92.

²³ Can. V.

²⁴ Capit. Harist. (779), can. III. MGH Capit. I, 47.

and bear in mind the joys fitting for the eternal husband.²⁵

This passage strongly evokes the strictures of earlier writers on virginity from Jerome onwards; clearly, although Gisela may not have been confined to Chelles, her mental cloister was expected to remain unbroken. However, Theodulf's depiction of the court suggests that Charlemagne himself ought to have a hand in his sister's spiritual life:

Should she request that the ways of Scripture be revealed to her,
may the king, himself taught by God, teach her.²⁶

Although intended more as a laudatory reflection on Charlemagne than a comment on the education of nuns, the inclusion of this statement suggests that the presence of religious women at court and even their spiritual formation beyond the walls of the monastery were not abominations in the eyes of Theodulf's audience.

Yet even at Chelles, Gisela was not isolated from political and intellectual currents. In her discussion of the probable composition of the *Annales Mettenses priores* at Chelles under the auspices of Gisela, Janet Nelson has underlined the role of the monastery as a satellite court. A letter of Alcuin reveals that he and Angilbert, both royal *missi*, met there; the *Annales* record the visit of Charlemagne to Chelles in 804 *ad colloquium germanae suae Gislæ*.²⁷ As she summarises, '[t]hus it was at Chelles... that political contacts met, that information could be gathered from all over the realm'. Charlemagne's capitularies could not and were not intended to legislate for subtle networks of influence and patronage which were centred on female monasteries. Gisela's links with her brother's court were not solely maintained by her presence there; on occasion the court came to her. Gisela's case is of such a network of influence writ large; her connections are royal, and subsequently imperial. The lack of any surviving evidence

²⁵ *Quod si forte soror fuerit sanctissima regis,/ Oscula det fratri dulcia, frater ei./ Talia sic placido moderetur gaudia vultu,/ Ut sponsi aeterni gaudia mente gerat.* MGH Poetae I, 483-9, at 486. Ed. and tr. P. Godman, in *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (London, 1985) at 155-7.

²⁶ *Et bene scripturae pandi sibi compita poscat,/ Rex illam doceat, quem deus ipse docet.* MGH Poetae I, 483-9, at 486.

²⁷ Alcuin, ep. 214; *Annales Mettenses priores*, s.a. 804, at 92. J.L. Nelson, 'Gender and genre in women historians', in *eadem*, *The Frankish World* (Hambledon: London, 1996), 183-197, at 191-2; see now her 'Gender and Courts in the Early Medieval West', in L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (eds.) *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004) 185-197, for a more extended consideration of monasteries functioning as courts.

for such networks being connected with any other religious women does not preclude their existence. Indeed, there are occasional suggestions, albeit from a somewhat later date: Lupus of Ferrières met Felix, the chancellor of king Aethelwulf of England, at Faremoutiers in the 840s.²⁸ This is probably a reflection of the longstanding links between Faremoutiers and the Anglo-Saxon nobility dating back to its foundation.²⁹ While there is no mention of an active role being played by the abbess or her nuns, this meeting shows how monasteries could function as environments for social interaction.

This extended prologue raises a number of issues that are of central importance to any discussion of the careers of dedicated women in the ninth century. In particular, Charlemagne's efforts to re-design the landscape of dedicated life foreshadow the better-known ambitions of his son, Louis the Pious. The existing atmosphere of re-thinking religious life forms an essential context for examining the intentions and effectiveness of Louis' subsequent legislation; in brief, much of the groundwork had already been laid, even if neither father or son could put into practice the degree of reform that they might have envisaged. The necessity of one monastic rule for all had been implied in the *Admonitio Generalis* and the *duplex legationis edictum* of 789. However, the fact that the simultaneous councils of 813 differed in their recommendations on the use of the Benedictine rule suggests that it was never imposed as firmly as might appear to be the case.³⁰ In many respects Louis' legislative activity merely continued that of his father, albeit developing themes which Charlemagne had already initiated.³¹ For Charlemagne, the career of his sister Gisela demonstrated the powerful role abbesses continued to play; indeed, the powerful role that the king needed them to play. Charlemagne persevered with his drive to re-think the roles of the ecclesiastical members of his society until the end of his life. In 813, he called five regional councils to discuss these issues. They now provide a fascinating snapshot of the legislative concerns of the regions of western Francia at this moment in time; it is these councils to which we now turn.

²⁸ G.W. Regenos (ed.) *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières* (The Hague, 1966), 104.

²⁹ The daughter of king Eadbert of Kent entered Eboriac in c. 640: see Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* III:8, ed. L. Sherley-Price and R.E. Latham (Harmondsworth, 1990), at 155.

³⁰ J. Semmler, 'Benedictus II: una regula – una consuetudo' in W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (eds.) *Benedictine Culture 750-1050* (Leuven, 1983) 1-50, at 4-5.

³¹ G. Schmitz, 'The Capitulary Legislation of Louis the Pious', in P. Godman and R. Collins (eds.), *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990) at 425-36.

Legislation for dedicated women: the councils of 813

The last synodal consideration of religious women took place at the very end of Charlemagne's reign, in the five regional councils of 813, held in Arles, Reims, Tours, Mainz and Chalons-sur-Saône. The results were coordinated at Aachen in September of that year, but Charlemagne died before a capitulary could be issued.³² These councils clearly had differing priorities but some measures were promulgated by more than one. To give but one example, the councils of Chalons and Tours both legislated against abbesses leaving their monasteries without either the permission of their bishop or an order from the emperor.³³ However, the council legislation as a whole offers a valuable insight into contemporary descriptions and conceptualisations of different religious communities.

In this regard, the Arles council's thinking must be of particular interest: how was dedicated life seen, here in one of its cradles? In the event, the council at Arles was not particularly concerned with its religious communities, devoting only three canons to it. The only one to deal specifically with women is merely a restatement of the decree of the Council of Epaon in 517 that only priests of age and good character may enter female communities.³⁴ A second concerns only male communities, but here reveals that two types of community were available in Provence. Canon six decrees that bishops were to watch over both canons (*canonici*) following an *ordo canonicorum*, and monks (*monachi*), following a rule.³⁵ The third canon legislates for all religious, stating that nobody was to be admitted to a religious community – *monasterio canonicorum atque monachorum seu etiam puellarum* – unless it had the resources to feed them.³⁶ The interest of this canon is twofold. It shows, of course, that the economic livelihoods of monasteries were on a precarious footing in the south. It also illustrates the categories these foundations were slotted into by the bishops at the council. While monks and

³² Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 262-3.

³³ Chalons, can. LVII; Tours, can. XXX. For all five councils, see MGH Conc. II:I, 245-306.

³⁴ Arles, can. VII; Epaon (517), can. XXXVIII.

³⁵ Arles, canon VI.

³⁶ Arles, can. VIII.

canons had their own communities and needed to be mentioned separately, dedicated women were all in one group. This suggests one of two alternative explanations. Either there was only one – monastic – type of female institution, or at least for there to be so few female canonical communities that they were not significant enough to mention, or canonical life for women was perceived to have so few significant differences to its monastic cousin that even communities which thought of themselves as following a canonical *ordo* could safely be dealt with under one heading.

Moving north, similar formulations were employed at the council of Tours. There, concerns were expressed over admitting large troops of men into *monasteria canonicorum, monachorum seu puellarum*; again, there were perceived to be two distinct types of male religious but only one for women.³⁷ The main interest of this council, however, is in the wide variety of dedicated life and its issues under discussion. For instance, one particularly contemporary concern is over the decline of use of the *regula beati Benedicti* in communities of monks.³⁸ At the same time, Tours (alongside Arles) also holds the most longstanding concerns in the case of dedicated women. Canon XXVII notes that young widows should not be veiled until the depth of their faith [*religio*] and conversion to the dedicated life can be proven.³⁹ The point here is not the reasons for which such a decision was set down, but that the council still discusses the vocations of widows in terms of a simple veiling and not the entry to a monastery. Here, women could be dedicated to God without being enclosed in a community. This point is borne out by the next canon, XXVIII, which states that dedicated virgins may not be veiled until they are twenty-five, unless out of strong necessity (which remains unspecified).⁴⁰ The canons

³⁷ Tours (813), can. XXXI.

³⁸ Tours (813), can. XXV: *Monasteria monachorum, in quibus olim regula beati Benedicti patris conservabatur, sed nunc forte qualicumque negligentia subrepente remissius ac dissolutius custoditur vel certe penitus abolita neglegitur, bonum videtur ut ad pristinum revertantur statum...*

³⁹ Tours (813), can. XXVII: *Ut iuvenes viduae cito nequaquam velentur, usque dum probetur illarum religio, et bona ab eis nota sit conversatio...*

⁴⁰ Tours (813), can. XXVIII: *Virginibus quoque sacrum velamen accipiendum decreta patrum interdicunt ante XXV annos, nisi forte aliqua cogente necessitate, pro qua licitum est haec statute mutare, ut in canonibus, si requiratur, inveniri poterit.* This canon dates back to the Council of Carthage in 418. This regulation came to the attention of the council via the canonical collection of Denis Exiguus (d. before 556), known as the *Dionysiana*. On this, see M. de Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', in Story (ed.), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, 103-135, at 117-8. The same age limit was prescribed in the *Admonitio*

of the council of Tours cannot but suggest the variety of forms of dedicated life in the region. On the one hand, there is concern over the failure of monks to live out the ideals of the Rule of Benedict adequately, but no such concerns over nuns. On the other, the council appears particularly concerned with the quality of women being veiled as *Deo devotae*, but seems perfectly satisfied that such women might live in their homes outside the walls of established monasteries. The overriding impression is of a council concerned that dedicated men and women should be adhering to the highest ideals of their chosen lifestyle, but with no particular worry over what form that lifestyle should take.

Progressing to the north-east, the council of Reims was much more concerned with the lifestyles of male religious than with their female counterparts. It includes the illuminating ruling that *monachi* and *canonici* were not allowed to frequent taverns.⁴¹ On a more serious note, both canons and monks were reminded to read canonical works and the Rule of Benedict respectively to ensure that their lifestyles adhered to the standards set therein.⁴² The only concern regarding nuns to be set down by this council was of a quite different nature. As with the council of Tours, no particular mention is made of any distinct types of dedicated women; here, they are all described as *puellae* and *sanctimoniales*. As in the council of Arles, the canon deals with the economic issues of sustaining a religious community.⁴³ In this case, an appeal is made to Charlemagne to help sustain female communities, who by virtue of the ‘fragility of their sex’ are at greater risk of hardship.⁴⁴ The emperor’s help was sought because the problem for women was so acute. Female communities were generally smaller than men’s, and there could be a basis here for the argument that there was a general shift towards favouring male religious houses for making endowments, resulting in the decline or eradication of

Generalis (789; can. XLVI), MGH Capit. I, 57, and at the council of Frankfurt (794; can. XLVI), MGH Conc. II: I, 170.

⁴¹ Reims (813), can. XXVI.

⁴² Reims (813), can. VIII: *Lecti sunt sancti canones, ut quisque canonicus legem vitamque suam minime ignoraret, quod omnimodis non expedit, sicut in decretali legitur Innocentii. Can. IX: Lecta est regula sancti Benedicti, ut ad memoriam reduceret abbatibus minus scientibus, si qui forte adfuerint, qualiter et se et suos secundum eandem regulam custodire valerent atque gubernare.*

⁴³ Reims (813), can. XXXIII; Arles (813), can. VIII.

⁴⁴ Reims (813), can. XXXIII: *De monasteriis puellarum considerandum est et domni [sic] imperatoris misericordia imploranda, ut victum et necessaria a sibi praelatis consequi possint sanctaemoniales [sic], et vita illarum et castitas secundum fragilitatis sexum diligenter provisae tueatur.*

female monasteries.⁴⁵ This was a concern of some longevity: it had already been addressed by the council of Verneuil in 755. If nuns were too poor to keep observance of their cloister, they could appeal to king for financial assistance.⁴⁶

By far the greatest attention to dedicated women was given by the council of Chalons. (weave in stuff already written). As with the council of Tours, the particular concern of the council is with the standards of religious life. The series of canons on dedicated religious opens with a statement on the proportion of male monasteries which follow the Benedictine rule. Noting that the majority (*paene omnia*) of male *monasteria regularia* in the region now follow the *regula sancti Benedicti*, the bishops state their intentions to discover which communities do not.⁴⁷ This enquiry suggests that the bishops at the Chalons council fully intended the male houses in the region to be Benedictine – although the proposed survey possibly also indicates that they are somewhat less sanguine about the precise numbers of houses which follow the Benedictine rule than first appears. The council does not express similar concerns about the number of female monasteries that are Benedictine. It includes a number of clauses dealing with the proper behaviour of *sanctimoniales* within their monasteries: canon fifty-nine, in particular, decrees that nuns should learn to read and to sing, lists the *ordo* they should complete, and even describes how they should eat and sleep.⁴⁸

Perhaps most significantly, two clauses indicate that the bishops at this council recognised two distinct types of institution-based dedicated women. In addition to clauses dealing with general aspects of nuns' conduct, one clause deals specifically with

⁴⁵ For an example of this, see Jane Martindale's article about the somewhat later community at Beaulieu, J. Martindale 'The nun Immena and the foundation of the abbey of Beaulieu: a woman's prospects in the Carolingian Church' *SCH* 27, 27-42.

⁴⁶ Verneuil (755), MGH Capit I, 34, can. VI.

⁴⁷ Chalons-sur-Saône (813), can. XXII: *De abbatibus vero et monachis idcirco hic pauca scribimus, quia paene omnia monasteria regularia in his regionibus constituta secundum regulam sancti Benedicti se vivere fatentur; quae beati Benedicti documenta per omnia demonstrant, qualiter eis vivendum sit. Inquiratur ergo diligenter, ubi secundum ipsum ordinem vivitur et ubi ab ipso ordine digressum est, et iuxta eiusdem beati viri institutionem vivere certent qui se, ut ita viverent, cum adtestatione professi sunt.*

⁴⁸ Chalons-sur-Saône (813), can. LIX: *Sanctimoniales in monasterio constitutae habeant studio in legendo et in cantando, in psalmorum celebratione sive oratione et horas canonicas, completoriam pariter celebrent et omnes, excepta quam infirmitas tenet, in dormitorio dormiant et omnibus diebus ad collationem veniant.*

‘*sanctimoniales... quae se canonicas vocant*’.⁴⁹ The clause suggests that although these women already live according to a monastic rule, their particular way of life merits further *admonitiunculas* being produced by order of the council. While the basic nature of their lifestyle remained the same as those nuns who were not *canonicas*, they lived out their vocations in a somewhat different manner. A further clause suggests one of the differences. Canon sixty-one decrees that nuns (*sanctimoniales*) should not eat, drink or hold meetings with men of whatever kind in their own houses (*in propriis mansionibus*).⁵⁰ Clearly the basic ethos behind this statement can easily be traced back to Caesarius’ warnings that men should not be permitted to enter the monastery of St John, and if they are, must be met in the *salutatorium* with two or three other nuns in attendance.⁵¹ The difference lies in the fact that according to this clause, nuns who followed a monastic rule were also living in their own houses. Does this indicate, however, that such women were still in their own family households, and living according to a monastic rule? Probably not; presumably the presence of men would be much harder to control. This clause therefore appears to suggest a different form of community in which women lived in their own houses but within the defined space of a religious community: canonesses.

The fifth and final council, that of Mainz, took a similarly pluralistic view of the dedicated women in its purview. It is particularly interesting in its breakdown on recommendations by category: successive clauses deal with canonical life (*De vita canonicorum*), clerical life (*De vita clericorum*), monastic life (*De vita monachorum*, which is defined as being lived *secundum doctrinam sanctae regulae Benedicti*), and ‘holy virgins’ (*De sacris virginibus*).⁵² This last clause, dealing with dedicated women, is intended to apply to two distinct types of nuns (*sanctimoniales*). The first, those who

⁴⁹ Chalons-sur-Saône (813), can. LIII: *Libuit namque huic sacro conventui quasdam admonitiunculas breviter eis sanctimonialibus scribere, quae se canonicas vocant, quoniam hae, quae sub monasticae regulae norma degunt, totius vitae suae ordinem in eadem, quam profitentur, regula scriptum habent.*

⁵⁰ Chalons-sur-Saône (813) can. LXI: *Non debere sanctimoniales in propriis mansionibus cum aliquibus masculis, clericis sive laicis, consanguineis sive extraneis, bibere sive comedere, sed, si quando id agendum est, in auditorio agatur; et ubi auditorium deest fiat. Et cum nullo masculo eis colloquium habere liceat nisi in auditorio et ibi coram testibus.*

⁵¹ RV 36, 38.

⁵² Mainz (813), cans. IX, X, XI, and XIII.

make profession of the Benedictine rule, are to live *regulariter*, which in this context suggests the clear upholding of doctrines described in the rule itself. The second are women living *canonice*, who are exhorted to stay in their cloisters (*in claustris suis*). This makes some sense of clause sixty-one of the council of Chalons-sur-Saône, discussing *sanctimoniales* who live in their own homes. It appears that women living canonically may have had their own properties inside a ‘cloister’. However, the differences between such women cannot be overstated, as the council itself clearly considered them to be mere variations on the same theme. As at the councils of Arles and Tours, another clause – here, clause twenty, concerning the location and building of monasteries – considers monastic women to belong to the same basic category. As before, the phrase used is *monasterii canonicorum...et monachorum similiterque puellarum*.⁵³ Evidently, different styles of male community need to be mentioned separately; female communities did not, even if they could in some circumstances be sub-divided. The evidence of these councils, in addition to providing valuable insights into the condition of and attitudes towards dedicated women and their lifestyles, reiterates the point that for early ninth-century legislators, correctness of behaviour was a more important aspect of dedicated life than the precise form religious women’s lives took.

Reform under Louis the Pious: Benedict of Aniane

Charlemagne died on 28th January 814, and his son Louis, until now king of Aquitaine, arrived in Aachen to take up the reigns of the empire.⁵⁴ He brought with him the men who had helped him to govern in Aquitaine: his son-in-law Bego, who became count of Paris; his chancellor Helisachar, who retained that office until 817, and Benedict, the abbot of Aniane, who had already initiated a reform of the monasteries in Aquitaine according to the rule of Benedict of Nursia.⁵⁵ Benedict had entered monastic life at Saint-Seine l’Abbaye. Finding his new home unreceptive to his desire to a more

⁵³ Mainz (813), can. XX.

⁵⁴ On Louis the Pious, see P. Godman and R. Collins (eds.) *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990).

⁵⁵ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999), 44.

stringent monastic life than that offered by the Benedictine rule, he returned to Septimania and built a new monastery on family land at Aniane.⁵⁶ This was followed by two further foundations to accommodate increasing numbers of postulants, and Benedict, now a firm exponent of Benedictine monasticism, began to advocate and direct the reform of other monasteries in the area. After initially moving him to the monastery of Marmoutier in Alsace, Louis decided to move Benedict to a monastery within easier reach, and to that end constructed the monastery of Inden, a short distance from the palace at Aachen, for him.⁵⁷ From this model monastery, Benedict could direct the ecclesiastical reform of the empire.⁵⁸

The textual basis of reform had two strands. The first was legislation, particularly centred around the synod of 816 held at Aachen, and this will be considered below. Its provisions cover monks, canons (the *Institutio canonicorum*) and dedicated women, in the *Institutio sanctimonialium*. The second was more directly focused on the intellectual and spiritual basis of monastic life itself. Through the medium of two works, the *Codex regularum* and the *Concordia regularum*, Benedict was able to set out the justification for reforming along Benedictine lines according to the teachings of older monastic rules. Ardo's *vita Benedicti* sets out the process: 'He gave his heart to studying the Rule of blessed Benedict. To be able fully to understand it, he visited various monasteries and inquired of any skilled persons what he did not know. He assembled the rules of all the holy ones as he was successful in discovering them.'⁵⁹ The practical purpose of this endeavour was made clear by the *Concordia Regularum*: 'To demonstrate to contentious persons that nothing worthless or useless was set forth by blessed Benedict, but that his Rule was sustained by the rules of others, he compiled [a] book of statements culled from

⁵⁶ Ardo, *Vita Benedicti abbatis Anianensis et Indensis*, MGH SS XV:I, 200-220. Eng. tr. A. Cabaniss, in T.F.X. Noble and T. Head (eds.) *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania, 1995) 213-254. On Benedict's career and reforming activities, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983) 229-30; J. Semmler, 'Benedictus II: una regula – una consuetudo' in W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (eds.) *Benedictine Culture 750-1050* (Leuven, 1983) 1-50; and P. Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM 168* (Turnhout, 1999), 40-3.

⁵⁷ *Vita Benedicti* 35.

⁵⁸ *Vita Benedicti* 36: *Prefecit eum quoque imperator cunctis in regno suo coenobiis, ut, sicut Aquitaniam Gotiamque norma salutis instruxerat, ita etiam Franciam salutifero imbueret exemplo.*

⁵⁹ *Vita Benedicti* 18.

other rules. To it he gave the title, *Harmony of the Rules*. Statements in agreement with blessed Benedict's book were added to show that the latter was obviously foremost.⁶⁰

The *Codex regularum*, Benedict's assemblage of rules, contains almost all of the earliest Latin monastic rules and other normative texts which are still extant. Eight of the texts are only known through this collection,⁶¹ and others, including the *Regula virginum*, are recorded in a more complete form than is found elsewhere. The form of the *Codex* itself, however, has only been established fairly recently. The most widely available edition is that of Migne, whose outline of the work (not all of the individual texts are printed in their entirety, since he had already published them in previous volumes) was based on the 1661 edition of Holste.⁶² In order to clarify the form and meaning of the *Codex*, Holste inserted new texts, omitted others, used 'better' versions than in the original, and changed the order in which the texts were included: it was 'un recueil apocryphe, faussement présenté sous le nom de Benoît d'Aniane'.⁶³ In 1902, however, a ninth-century manuscript originating from St Maximin in Trier came to light, which has long been considered to be one of the earliest copies of the *Codex* and has therefore been used as a corrective to the Migne edition.⁶⁴ This manuscript has only been dated to some point after Benedict arrived in Aachen, so after 815/6.⁶⁵ The most recent work on the *Codex* suggests a significant alteration of the identification of this manuscript, suggesting rather that the St-Maximin manuscript offers only a portion of what was originally a much larger *corpus regularum*, the work of Benedict before he was summoned to the side of Louis the Pious.⁶⁶ In Bonnerue's opinion, this *Codex* was made as a summary of a much larger work conserved at Aachen, which was sent to St-Maximin in 816-17 to assist

⁶⁰ *Vita Benedicti* 38.

⁶¹ These include those of Caesarius' successor in Arles, Aurelian. For a full list see A. de Vogüé, *Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes (400-700)* Typologie des Sources 46 (Turnhout, 1985), 13.

⁶² *PL* 103.

⁶³ M-E. Bouillet 'Le vrai 'Codex Regularum' de saint Benoît d'Aniane' *Revue Bénédictine* 75 (1965) 345-50, at 346; A. Mundó, 'I "Corpora" e i "Codices regularum" nella tradizione codicologica delle regole monastiche' in *Atti del 7o Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1982) 477-520; de Vogüé, *Les Règles Monastiques Anciennes*, 42-4. All of these works now need to be consulted when using the *PL* edition.

⁶⁴ Now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 28118.

⁶⁵ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999), 54.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

in the reform of the monastery.⁶⁷ There may also have been a wider theological context for Benedict's text-collecting and visitation of other monasteries. In 785 Elipand, archbishop of Toledo, had begun to suggest that Christ had been merely the adopted son of God. Felix, the bishop of Urgel, had become one of his adherents, and this 'heretical' strand of thought had penetrated into Septimania.⁶⁸ In response, Benedict composed the *Disputatio adversus Felicianam impietatem*,⁶⁹ and also ensured that Alcuin's work, *Adversus Felicem Urgellitanum episcopum*, was circulated in the region.⁷⁰ Benedict also preached in person in the region, travelling in areas where adherence to this belief was strong.⁷¹ Ensuring orthodoxy within monasteries could be achieved at the same time as laying the ground work for reform on a different plane.

Caesarius' place in the *Codex*

While the composition and structure of the *Codex* have been satisfactorily established, no such certainty can be possible regarding the comprehensiveness of the *Codex*'s contents. Despite the *vita*'s assertion that Benedict included every rule he could find, this cannot be taken as proof that he either did find all of the rules or other normative texts in existence, or that he did in fact include all of them. Were there more works written for female communities that Benedict has not included – and have therefore been completely lost – because they were not composed by authors of the stature of Caesarius? It is possible, and indeed likely, given the eventual purpose of the collection, that he selected the ones to preserve, perhaps on the basis of their orthodoxy, or their popularity in monastic establishments. The disparity between the number of texts written for men and for women – thirty as against six – may bear this out. It is impossible to be sure whether these figures are a reflection on the texts actually in existence, the fact

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁸ Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999) 37-9. On Adoptionism in general, see J. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West. Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785-820* (Philadelphia, 1993).

⁶⁹ *PL* 103, 1399-1411.

⁷⁰ G.B. Blumenshine *Liber Alcuini contra haeresim Felicis* (Vatican, 1980). Alcuin's letter of June 800 is edited by E. Dümmler, *MGH Epp. IV* (Munich 1895/1978), 340-2 (no. 205).

⁷¹ See, for instance, Alcuin's letter to him on the subject: Dümmler (ed.) *MGH Epp. IV*, no. 200.

that Benedict did not exert himself to enquire at female establishments regarding the rule they used, or of his disapproval of the rules that he did find in use. As previous chapters of this study have shown, moreover, the use of texts that were not *regulae* was likely to have been significant, as were guidelines transmitted orally between dedicated women or between such women and the bishops that oversaw their lives.

However, further consideration of the composition of the *Codex*, and of the nature of female religious life itself, may shed some light on the ideological and practical contexts in which Benedict was working. The contents of the Codex divide roughly into three. Discounting the rule of Benedict, the first third is made up of patristic texts such as the rule of Jerome, the second third mainly of rules for monks from the sixth and seventh centuries, and the last part is formed of the rules for nuns. Clearly a differentiation was being made. All of the feminine rules are placed in a group at the end of the work, with the works of two authors – the rules for monks and nuns of Columbanus and Aurelian – being separated in order to do so.⁷² This may suggest that they were seen as being of lesser importance or relevance. However, if the patristic texts, perceived as the foundations of monastic life and therefore necessary as a guarantee of orthodoxy, are removed from the equation, the relative number of texts starts to look considerably less unbalanced, perhaps twelve rather than thirty against six. There is still a difference, and the contention must be that this can be accounted for by considering the nature of female monasticism in preceding centuries. Women who lived in smaller houses, perhaps supervised directly by a bishop, would have both less need of, and less access to, normative written texts than did men. One could even posit that Caesarius' rule had been so successful in circulation and adaptation that subsequent rules had been deemed unnecessary. It is therefore not surprising that there would simply be fewer rules for women in existence.

Consideration of Benedict's sources returns us to the wider issues of Benedict's use of texts aimed at women. Among those is audience: it seems probable that Benedict

⁷² In Bouillet's re-established order these are the rules of Caesarius, Aurelian, the letter of 'John' to virgins, Donatus, the *Regula cuiusdam*, and Columbanus.

made his collection with the purpose of the edification of others. Clearly, texts originally aimed at a specifically male or female community were deemed suitable to be read and used by communities of either gender. As has already been seen in previous chapters, the teachings of Caesarius had long been sent to and used by male religious. To what extent did the original intended constituency of a rule – monks or nuns – matter? Did Benedict perceive the *Regula virginum* primarily as a text dealing with *female* religious life, a text dealing with religious life, or a text by the eminent Caesarius which just happened to fit his current purposes? Benedict's regard for Caesarius makes him a difficult case study for issues of gender, because it seems likely that his monastic material would have been used whatever Benedict's opinion on female religious life happened to be.

Benedict's inclusion of Caesarius' *Regula virginum* therefore has a number of possible explanations and contexts, most of them interrelated. Caesarius' stock among Carolingian theologians was high in any case, and the relatively widespread circulation of his monastic writings made them a natural choice for inclusion. That the works of Caesarius of Arles were held in considerable esteem by Carolingian theologians is borne out by the re-use of material from sermons and church councils in addition to the monastic rules which form the main focus of this thesis.⁷³ Caesarius himself re-used existing patristic sermons (approximately one third of his sermons derive from older material) but reconfigured the content in order to provide shorter and simpler texts for more practical and more generally applicable usage. His aim was to make a significant body of spiritually beneficial material accessible to as many people as possible.⁷⁴ For Carolingian preachers such as Paul the Deacon, writing for Charlemagne, the Caesarian sermons therefore provided a ready supply of teachings on Christian virtue.⁷⁵ The number

⁷³ G. Morin, *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis Opera omnia* I (Bruges, 1937-42); reprinted as *CCSL* 103, 104. Morin briefly introduced the significance of the sermons in his 'The homilies of St Caesarius of Arles: their influence on the Christian civilisation of Europe' *Orate Fratres* XIV (1940) 481-6. See also G. Bardy 'La prédication de saint Césaire d'Arles' *RHEF* 29 (1943) 200-36, and for a general overview of Caesarius' 'legacy', the last chapter of Klingshirn, *Caesarius*.

⁷⁴ On Caesarius' skills as a preacher, see in particular Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 146-51, and W.M. Daly 'Caesarius of Arles, a precursor of medieval Christendom' *Traditio* 26 (1970) 1-28, at 8.

⁷⁵ Extract from an (unidentified) sermon cited by Paul the Deacon in the first section of his homiliary, no.80. Noted by R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895* (London, 1977), 105. For further discussion of Paul the Deacon's career, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983) 200-1. The sermons of Caesarius found a further audience through their use in

of manuscripts of the sermons which survive from the ninth century attest to Caesarius' popularity.⁷⁶ Carolingian churchmen found resonance in Caesarius' decision that the right to preach should not be confined to bishops: as much of the population as possible should be exposed to discussions of the faith.

Benedict appears to have gathered much of his material by uniting smaller collections of texts. Bonnerue has tentatively identified the sources for the texts Benedict used.⁷⁷ To summarize, comparison with other manuscripts shows that one group of Gallic and Frankish rules probably went to Benedict under the auspices of the monastery of St-Martin of Tours;⁷⁸ a second came from a pre-existing *corpus* of hispano-visigothic rules or its sources, again hinting at a Septimanian origin or connection for the collection;⁷⁹ the remainder of the texts (including the Arles works), which are largely those unknown from other sources, were listed in a ninth-century catalogue from Fulda in the same order, suggesting a common source for the *Codex* and the catalogue.⁸⁰ To some extent, therefore, Benedict's inclusion of Caesarius may simply build on continuing awareness of and regard for his work. Clearly Benedict's use of Caesarius in the *Codex* needs to be compared with his use of other writers, and the locus for that will be a consideration of Caesarius' works in the *Concordia regularum*.

Caesarius in the *Concordia regularum*

In many ways the *Concordia regularum* is a much less fluid and more fixed text. Its purpose is clear, and made explicit in its prologue⁸¹: this was the work that Benedict

Alcuin's *breviarium* on the virtues and vices apparently composed for count Wido. However, it is unclear whether Alcuin was aware that his citations were in fact from sermons of Caesarius; they are attributed to Augustine. A reason for this can be deduced from the case of Caesarius' sermon 18, which Alcuin used for chapter 14 of his work, but which was itself drawn largely from Augustine's sermon 82 (Delage, *Sermons au peuple*, I, 469).

⁷⁶ See Morin, *Sermones*, CCSL 103, xxvii to cxxii, *passim*. Morin lists forty-two manuscripts containing the sermons that date from the late eighth or ninth centuries.

⁷⁷ P. Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999) 84-93.

⁷⁸ RIVP, 2RP, 3RP, RPS, RColM, RColC.

⁷⁹ RMac, *Vita Pachomii*, 6 other Pachomian texts, Theodore *Epistula*, Orsiesius *Liber*, RBas, RCons, RI, 2nd council of Spain, RFruc, RCom, RCas.

⁸⁰ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 (Turnhout, 1999), 90-2.

⁸¹ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 A (Turnhout, 1999), 3-4.

intended would be used to guide and support the transition of monastic houses to the Benedictine rule.⁸² Its structure is simple: in turn each of the chapters of the Benedictine rule is listed, followed by the relevant sections from older rules, all to illustrate cohesion of old and new tradition, and to place the tenets of the Benedictine rule in a context that would be easily comprehensible to existing monastic communities. To give an example at random, Benedict accompanies chapter forty-six of the Benedictine rule – on the elderly and children – with selections from the rules of the Master, Caesarius, Fructuosus of Braga, Isidore of Seville and the *Regula cuiusdam*.⁸³ Benedict offers no commentary on any of his selections, and excludes those aspects of rules which do not fit his schema. Of course, silent omissions are often an index of shifts in monastic norms and practice. However, the sheer amount of material from which Benedict could make his selections might indicate that an attempt to catalogue those aspects of rules he omitted would not reveal much in the way of a consistent policy on inclusions and exclusions, beyond the criterion of broad agreement with the *Regula Benedicti*.

In general terms, the *Regula virginum* itself is used relatively seldom in the *Concordia*, in only ten out of the seventy-seven chapters. These mainly encompass organisational matters – the care of the sick, weekly cooking duty, no personal servants – and disciplinary affairs, particularly the prohibition of arguments and insults.⁸⁴ There is no place for the *Regula virginum*'s most celebrated requirement, the prohibition on leaving the monastery.⁸⁵ The rules of Basil and the Master are referred to most frequently; this is not unexpected, since one was a supply of wisdom from the eastern beginnings of coenobitism, and the other was itself a source for the Benedictine rule.⁸⁶ However, even some relatively recent rules are used almost as frequently. Chief among

⁸² *Vita Benedicti* 38.

⁸³ P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM* 168 A (Turnhout, 1999) 392-8.

⁸⁴ *Concordia* caps. 25 and 45 (care of the sick); 44 (cooking); 46 (servants); 30, 32, 42 (arguments and insults). The extracts of Caesarius throw an interesting sidelight on Benedict's working method, as there appears to be an error. Caesarius' stipulation that young children should not be admitted is used twice, in chapters 46 (as part of a longer extract) and 75. Benedict may well have given an assistant a list of chapters to copy from other works, and did not specify clearly which part of Caesarius' chapter 7 was to be included where.

⁸⁵ *RV* 2.

⁸⁶ The *Regula Basilii* is used in 43 chapters; the *Regula Magistri* in 45. Editions of the rules are available in K. Zelzer (ed.) *Basili Regula a Rufino latine uersa CSEL* 86 (Vienna, 1986); L. Eberle (ed. and tr.) *The Rule of the Master* (Kalamazoo, 1977).

these are the rules of Isidore of Seville and Fructuosus of Braga, which may be a reflection of Benedict's Septimanian origins.⁸⁷ Perhaps revealingly, even the rule for monks of Aurelian, Caesarius' successor to the see of Arles, and whose rule was largely based on those of Caesarius, is referred to more often than that of his model.⁸⁸ A number of explanations for this apparent lack of interest in the *Regula virginum* could be put forward. The most obvious is to view the texts in terms of gender, and see a general preference on the part of Benedict for rules written for men above those intended for women. In addition to the Caesarian material, only two texts written for women have been used in the *Concordia*. These two texts are referred to even less often than that of Caesarius.⁸⁹ These are the rule of Donatus of Besançon, which was itself based on a combination of the Caesarian and Benedictine rules; and an extract from the *Vita Columbani*, which recounts miracles taking place at the female monastery of Faremoutiers. This apparent oddity – a selection of miracles in the midst of a collection of *regulae* – serves to underline the normative aspects of these miracles (see above, Chapter Two, at 124 ff.). It further demonstrates once more the importance of non-*regulae* texts to guiding dedicated women, which here is given particular weight by the recognition by Benedict himself that such was the case.

However, explaining this discrepancy between the numbers of texts aimed at men and women along gendered lines is less than convincing. Two of the texts for women which are not used – the rules of Aurelian and Columbanus – have masculine counterparts, so what could be seen as ignoring much of the female-oriented material may simply be a wish to avoid duplication. More importantly, Benedict took the opportunity in the *Concordia* to include more of the body of material originating from Arles than had found space in the *Codex*. The first of these additional items, credited here and generally known in the ninth century as a 'letter of saint Caesarius', is actually the letter of his nephew Teridius to the second abbess Caesaria.⁹⁰ Perhaps more significant is Benedict's use of the three brief pieces of writing by the same abbess Caesaria on prayer,

⁸⁷ Isidore's *Regula* (PL 103, 553-572) is used in 37 chapters; that of Fructuosus (PL 87, 1099-1110) in 41.

⁸⁸ The *regula Aureliani* (PL 68, 395-406) is used in 25 chapters.

⁸⁹ The rule of Donatus is used in caps. 36, 4; 15, 10; 9, 10; 61, 14; the miracles of Eboriac are at 15, 12.

⁹⁰ Vatican, Bibl. Apost., ms Reg. 140 (s.IX) also attributes this to Caesarius, suggesting a widespread belief in his authorship.

thought and purity of heart.⁹¹ Chapter 25 of the *Regula Benedicti* is accompanied by the entirety of chapter 22 of Caesarius' rule followed by the three *Dicta Caesariae*. The earliest manuscript of the *Concordia* confirms that this time Benedict did know the identity and gender of the author.⁹² Obviously on this basis it cannot be claimed that Benedict viewed the writings of male and female religious with equal enthusiasm. But neither was the gender of the writer so great an obstacle that the abbess' writings could not be used at all or had to be attributed to Caesarius.

Of course, the connection of these texts to Caesarius raises its own questions. Benedict's antiquarianism, suggested by J. M. Wallace-Hadrill in terms of the *Codex*, might further imply that having acquired such a large dossier of material from Arles, most of which written by or based on the writings of Caesarius, Benedict wanted to use as many of the items as he could.⁹³ This in turn returns us yet again to the issue of Caesarius' own standing among the Carolingians. Can the relatively large extent to which his rule for nuns was used be indicative of anything more than Benedict's regard for him, as opposed to a gauge of the standing in which texts written for women were held in general?

In comparison with the *Codex*, some general observations can be made. Works intended for women are used to an even smaller degree, but to an extent this can be explained by the different purposes each text had: the *Codex* was a collection, a summary of monastic life made for Benedict's own use in order to assess the merits and faults of the past before moving on; the *Concordia* was the textual basis of that moving on, centred around the *regula Benedicti*, which in turn affected the other texts that could be used. One possible explanation for this must be that the use of texts written for men reflects a concern on the part of Benedict only with the reform and monastic standards of monks, and this will be explored in the remainder of this chapter. For the present, however, this conclusion is not so straightforward to draw. Benedict came from a male monastic environment; these were the rules with which he was familiar. In addition,

⁹¹ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 418-439 (*O Profundum*); 470-5 (*Dicta Caesariae*).

⁹² P. Bonnerue, *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum CCCM 168* (Turnhout, 1999), 92.

⁹³ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 230.

working on the basis that female monasticism was based on specific and known monastic rules to a far smaller degree, the male bias of the *Concordia* may simply reflect the materials Benedict had to work with.

Institutio sanctimonialium

The second strand of the reform of religious life under Louis the Pious was legislation, and here, Benedict of Aniane's direct involvement is not so clear-cut. Composed as a result of the synod held in Aachen in 816, the *Institutio sanctimonialium* [henceforth *Institutio*] and *Institutio canonicorum* bear Benedict of Aniane's mark as the driving force behind reform if not his personal authorship.⁹⁴ In fact, the authorship of the *Institutio sanctimonialium* has been the subject of some debate. According to Ademar of Chabannes, writing in the eleventh century, Louis the Pious gave the task of composing a normative text for canons to Amalarius of Metz, and allowed him use of the palace library to complete the task.⁹⁵ On this basis, Amalarius' biographer Allen Cabaniss suggests that Amalarius was responsible for the production of both the *Institutio canonicorum* and the *Institutio sanctimonialium*. However, Werminghoff argues against Amalarius' authorship of either of the texts on the grounds of his interest in liturgical works, and a difference in style between these and the canons of the *Institutiones*.⁹⁶ Neither do the extant manuscripts of the *Institutio* offer any supporting evidence for this theory. Werminghoff's own suggestion for author is Ansegis, abbot of St Wandrille from 822;⁹⁷ in turn, Schilp undermines the case for his authorship on the basis of

⁹⁴ MGH Conc. II:I, 312-464.

⁹⁵ A. Cabaniss *Amalarius of Metz* (Amsterdam, 1954), 49-50. Ademar of Chabannes, *Historiarum Libri Quattuor* III, cap. 2 (MGH SS IV, 119): [Louis] *iussit fieri regulam canonicis excerptam de diversis patrum scripturis decrevitque eam observandam a canonicis ut, sicut monachi respiciunt ad librum regulae sancti Benedicti, sic perlegant canonici inter se librum vitae canonicorum. Quem librum Amalarius diaconus ab imperatore iussus collegit ex diversis doctorum sententiis. Dedit ei imperator copiam librorum de palatio suo, ut ex ipsis ea, quae viderentur congrua, exciperet, et ita cum decretis episcoporum, qui ibi fuerunt, vita clericorum roborata est.* He acknowledges that 'this late evidence may not be sufficiently strong to be trusted'.

⁹⁶ Werminghoff (ed.) MGH Conc. 2,1, 309.

⁹⁷ A. Werminghoff, 'Die Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils im Jahre 816' *Neues Archiv* 27 (1902) 606-675, at 611ff.

circumstantial evidence.⁹⁸ Similarly, he notes that the case supporting a further contender, Helisachar, Louis' chancellor, remains unproven, although it is known he was a close friend of Louis'.⁹⁹ In his own consideration of the subject, Schilp concludes only that the same author probably did not compose both the *Institutiones canonicorum* and *sanctimonialium*.¹⁰⁰ Benedict therefore remains only one of a number of possible authors. One argument for his involvement is provided by a textual comparison of the *Institutio* with the *Concordia regularum*. In both of these texts, Teridius' letter to Caesaria II is wrongly labelled as a letter of Caesarius to 'Oratoria', a corruption of the actual title *Epistola Hortatoria*. Of course, the ability of Benedict of Aniane to make the same mistake twice is perhaps less likely than a single copy of the letter with this corrupted title being accessible to everyone at Louis' court, so even this piece of evidence is not particularly convincing.

In 817, monks were also considered by a synod under the direction of Benedict, which attempted to remove difficulties in following the rule of Benedict of Nursia, and produced a capitulary of seventy canons to cement this new understanding.¹⁰¹ Although the main focus of this study will be on the *Institutio*, recognition of its place in the wider currents of reform is of central importance to understanding Benedict's intentions with regard to female dedicated life. The most important contention by far will be that the *Institutio sanctimonialium* was not a landmark document, and did not represent any kind of turning-point in terms of the direction of women's dedicated life.

One of the main issues at stake concerning the *Institutio* has been seen as that of intended audience, and how this reflected on Carolingian dedicated life. One historiographical approach to the issue is typified by that of Suzanne Wemple, in her 1981 study of early medieval women, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the*

⁹⁸ Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im Frühmittelalter* (Göttingen 1998), 44-5.

⁹⁹ The case for Helisachar as author of the *Institutio* is made by Heinrich Fichtenau, in *Rezension Historia Mundi* vol. VI *MIÖG* 66 (1958), 384-96, at 395, as cited by Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, 45.

¹⁰⁰ Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, 46.

¹⁰¹ MGH Capit. i, no.170, pp.343-9; K. Hallinger (ed.) *Corpus Consuetudinem Monasticarum* i (Siegburg, 1963) 423 ff.

Cloister 500-900.¹⁰² Wemple outlines a systematic narrowing of religious opportunity for women in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, within which only two options were available: life in a cloistered community under the Benedictine rule, or life in a community under canonical regulations. She points to canons of the council of Verneuil in 755, an edict of 789, and a capitulary of 829 which all require religious women who had veiled themselves to join existing larger communities, whether living a Benedictine or canonical life.¹⁰³ Wemple's depiction of Carolingian religious life suggests the parallel but separate existences of Benedictine and canonical communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, a major drive towards the adherence of all religious communities to the Benedictine rule had been initiated by Boniface from 742 onwards. Almost simultaneously, between 751 and 766, Chrodegang of Metz compiled regulations for the canons attached to the basilicas of Metz, although it was not until 794 that the Council of Frankfurt made the choice of Benedictine or canonical regulations for female communities explicit. For Wemple, life according to canonical regulations had represented a freedom of choice which was gradually eroded under Louis the Pious, set against the stifling norms of a Benedictine hegemony. In her words, 'the institutes of canonesses came to resemble Benedictine houses when specific guidelines for the life of canonesses were finally issued in 813 by the Council of Chalonss'.¹⁰⁴ By 816, when these guidelines were expanded into the *Institutio sanctimonialium* at Aachen, 'little difference between the obligations of Benedictine nuns and canonesses remained.'¹⁰⁵ For Wemple, then, the *Institutio* was intended for canonesses but treated them with the same misogyny as did the Benedictine rule; its importance lay in its role as a tool for narrowing female religious opportunity and expression. A partial moderation of this view has recently been articulated by Sarah Foot in her study of Anglo-Saxon religious communities.¹⁰⁶ Drawing on earlier work by Michel Parisse,¹⁰⁷ she sees the *Institutio* rather as an attempt to group

¹⁰² S.F. Wemple *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1985). See especially 165-170.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-7, citing *Conc. Vernense* 11 (MGH Capit. 1, 35); *Duplex legationis edictum* 19 (MGH Capit. 1, 63); *Capit. ab episcopis in placito tractanda* (829) 4 (MGH Capit. 2, 7).

¹⁰⁴ Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 168.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁰⁶ S. Foot *Veiled Women* (2 vols.) I (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) 107-110.

¹⁰⁷ M. Parisse, 'Les chanoinesses dans l'Empire germanique (IXe – XIe siècles)' *Francia* 6 (1978) 107-28.

all religious women together and direct them to follow a single way of life, privileging neither Benedictine nor canonical norms.

What can the text itself reveal about its purpose? The first point here must concern the title of the work. The description *Institutio sanctimonialium* is itself original. One manuscript, Munich Bay. Staat. Clm 14431, describes the work as both *Incipit regula et modus vivendi sanctimonialium que vocantur canonicae*, and in the list of chapter headings, *Concilii Aquisgranensis liber II, qui est de institutione sanctimonialium*.¹⁰⁸ The phrase *sanctimonialium que vocantur canonicae*, ‘nuns who are called canonesses’, is of great significance. The most important fact about the dedicated women it concerned was that they were *sanctimoniales*: nuns, just as the women who lived in other styles of institution were nuns. Contemporary annalists provide their own interpretations of the documents produced at Aachen, and reflect the understanding that the ‘type’ of religious woman the rule was intended for was less important than the fact of it being for religious women at all. The Lorsch annals record that after it had been ordered that all monks should follow the rule of Benedict, *duo codices scripti sunt, unus de vita clericorum et alter de vita nonnarum*.¹⁰⁹ To some extent, then, debates over the difference between monastic and canonical forms of dedicated life are less than helpful.

The *Institutio* is recognizably part of the same instinct to present current requirements in the context of the past that lay behind the *Concordia regularum*. In particular, this is represented by the extended preface to the rule itself – perhaps just less than half of its entire contents – which is made up of selections from letters on virginity, and so forms a *florilegium* on the subject. These are Jerome’s letters to Eustochium, Demetrias and Furia, Cyprian’s *De habitu virginum*, Caesarius’ ‘sermon’ to nuns (in reality his letter *Vereor*) and Pseudo-Athanasius’ *Exhortatio ad sponsam Christi*.¹¹⁰ Caesarius stands out in this group as a somewhat later figure than the others, and also as a religious thinker more closely linked to the same monastic tradition in which Benedict

¹⁰⁸ MGH Concilia II, 1, 422.

¹⁰⁹ MGH SS I, 122. The use of the term ‘nonna’ may itself be revealing, since it was rarely used before the eighth century and then was found most often in capitularies.

¹¹⁰ Jerome *Epistolae* Ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54-6 (Vienna, Leipzig, 1910-18); Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*, PL 4, 443-444; Pseudo-Athanasius’ *Exhortatio ad sponsam Christi* CSCO 593.

himself was working. However, his writing stands firmly in a tradition of writing about virginity and, in a wider sense, interior spirituality, as opposed to institutional monasticism.¹¹¹ This is a vital distinction to make. The *Institutio* is not a prescriptive text; it cannot be, for as will be discussed below, it offers a range of guidelines for community living, which, although bearing similarities to the Benedictine tradition, contradicted it in several areas. In this work, therefore, Caesarius' letter on living a religious life, *Vereor*, is more suitable than his rule; this and the other texts have been chosen so that they do not contravene the tenets of the *Institutio* itself.

Benedict and the council's wish to concentrate on the ethos, or interiority, of religious life is evident in the choice of texts and how they are adapted for use in the *Institutio*. Before turning to examine the use of Caesarius' work more closely, it is worth looking at a very clear example of this in the use of Jerome's *Ad Eustochium*. The council has used approximately two thirds of the letter. Much of what has been removed appears to be the result of a straightforward edit: several unnecessary or repetitive Biblical citations have gone, as have Jerome's references to his own experiences in the desert, or instances in which he addresses Eustochium herself.¹¹² More interesting are those occasions in which a choice is being made as to how to present the perfect dedicated life, in both interior and exterior terms. The decision has been taken, for instance, to remove a reference to Eustochium's emulation of and similarity to the Virgin: 'You too may perhaps be the Lord's mother'.¹¹³ This is perhaps because it was too personal to Eustochium, but also may suggest reluctance on the part of Carolingian churchmen to allow nuns to compare themselves to so holy a figure. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the most sexual or erotic Biblical references have also been removed. Jerome's discussion of the failed virgin, including references both to marriage to Christ and to the fact that 'she shall be made naked and her skirts shall be placed on her face' has been edited to the bare minimum of 'Better had it been for her to have submitted to marriage with a man and to have walked on the plain, rather than to strain for the heights and fall

¹¹¹ A further example of this type of writing was Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, MGH AA xv 226-323 (prose) and 350-471 (verse).

¹¹² See for example (in the MGH edition) 424, line 16 for the excision of Eustochium; line 30 omits Jerome's retelling of Elijah and his chariot of fire.

¹¹³ *IS* 428 line 20

into the depths of hell'.¹¹⁴ Most surprising, perhaps, is the deletion of most if not all imagery from the Song of Songs, particularly as interest continued in the work into the ninth century: Benedict's correspondent Alcuin composed his own *Compendium in Canticum Canticorum*.¹¹⁵ The omission of ideas such as 'Let the seclusion of your own chamber ever guard you; ever let the Bridegroom sport with you within' perhaps suggests a narrowing of boundaries in which religious women were being encouraged to view themselves.¹¹⁶ They could no longer think of themselves as brides of Christ.

Perhaps more importantly, the use of images of Eustochium's chamber is also relevant to the physical environment of Benedict's nuns. One of the most significant omissions is that of references to Eustochium leaving the home, or to other people visiting her there, and these were quite obviously irrelevant to women who would never be leaving their community. It may have been important, moreover, to ensure that there could be no suggestion of tacit acceptance of a valid dedicated life being lived at home. For the author(s) of the *Institutio sanctimonialium*, life in a community would be presented as the only valid option.

The use of such texts to support the ethos of religious life, as opposed to its structure, is equally illustrated by the inclusion of Caesarius' letter *Vereor*, under the title *Sermo ad sanctimoniales*. This title may reflect the work's transmission in both masculine and feminine variants: de Vogüé has shown that the council of Aachen used both, and as seen in the previous chapter, two ninth century manuscripts of the 'masculine' recension, *Sermo ad quosdam germanos*, are still extant.¹¹⁷ Both male and female versions were seen to be of value and therefore used; in contrast to the *Codex* and *Concordia regularum*, the *Institutio* was specifically aimed at a female audience.

¹¹⁴ IS 425 line 11. The missing references are Isaiah 47:1, Psalm 44:10, Ezekiel 16:25.

¹¹⁵ E.A. Matter *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1992) 204.

¹¹⁶ IS 427 line 27. Comparison is with F.A. Wright, *Select Letters of Saint Jerome* (London, 1933), at 109.

¹¹⁷ De Vogüé, *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 282-91. The two manuscripts are now Paris BN Lat. 12238 and Reims, Bibl. Munic., ms. 414.

As such, the omissions from the standard contents of *Vereor* are revealing about women's religious lives in the ninth century. The longest passages left out are those dealing with the wealth of women commencing a dedicated life. The *Institutio* passage includes encouragement for the nobly-born to rejoice in their humility, and that further happiness will come from renouncing their belongings.¹¹⁸ It omits, however, Caesarius' urge that property should be disposed of promptly and in a way that does not create 'carnal shackles', and if the woman had previously been poor, an encouragement to thank God for not wishing 'to bind her to the wealth of this world'.¹¹⁹ Perhaps more significant still is the removal of Caesarius' injunction not to pass property back to their relatives: 'they do not consider that in distributing their wealth to them [*parentes*] for luxury they are condemning themselves to everlasting poverty'.¹²⁰ A plea to leave the bulk of wealth to the poor is included, but this loses a great deal of force if the statement of who *not* to give property to is removed. This adjustment of Caesarius' requirements allows two main points to be made. Firstly, the way of life envisaged for religious women living according to the *Institutio* was such that women could remain owners of property even after entry into such a community, albeit administered by someone else.¹²¹ Secondly, it acknowledges the way in which women would retain their family links and their position within familial structures of wealth holding and transmission to a far greater degree than Caesarius had done three hundred years before.

The remaining twenty-two canons of the *Institutio* outline the practicalities of dedicated life. Here, debate has focused on how far the text appears to set norms for either Benedictine or non-Benedictine institutions. Guidance is offered on the choice of abbess; the provision of food and drink; the hours of prayer, and avoiding meetings with men.¹²² As Thomas Schilp has underlined, in many respects the *Institutio* has more in common with the Benedictine rule than with later medieval constitutions for communities of canonesses, which may limit the degree to which it should be seen (*pace* Wemple) as

¹¹⁸ *IS* cap. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Vereor* 6. Morin II 134-44. Eng. trans. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 134-5.

¹²⁰ *Vereor* 8 *Ibid*, 136.

¹²¹ *IS* cap 9.

¹²² Canons 7, 12, 15, 19 and 20.

primarily intended for canonesses.¹²³ For instance, the Benedictine requirement for stability in the community finds an echo in the claustration of the nuns. As with other rules, the community is organized along hierarchical lines, with a designated abbess, cellarer, portress and so on.¹²⁴

On the other hand, some provisions of the *Institutio* remain antithetical to the Benedictine ideal being upheld by reformers. Although some canons mention the existence of a dormitory in which the nuns were required to sleep,¹²⁵ the *sanctimoniales* could have their own houses [*mansionculas*], within the enclosure, and were also permitted to retain personal property, both moveable and landed, managed through contact with an advocate.¹²⁶ The asceticism and personal poverty of earlier monastic rules is difficult to locate. Requirements for official entry to the community appear to have consisted of a reading of the Benedictine rule and a vow of chastity, and the possibility of leaving the community in order to marry also may have existed, although this has been called into question.¹²⁷

However, to attempt to fit the *Institutio* into a Benedictine or a canonical pattern is to ignore the overriding message of the preface to the text. The extended extracts from older writers deal with the ethos of dedicated life. In the more practical articles, similarly, the objective of the text is to present a range of measures that are available to be selected from according to an individual community's needs. Male communities did need to be distinguished by two different texts, and so in 819 a further rule for monks was produced by Benedict of Aniane;¹²⁸ monks and canons had different living environments (monasteries and cathedrals) and different functions.

¹²³ Schilp *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, 119-20.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹²⁵ Canons 10, 17.

¹²⁶ Canons 9 (property), 13 and 23 (housing).

¹²⁷ Canon 8. Katrinette Bodarwe suggests that this apparent laxity, often upheld as typifying the canonical life, rarely came into play in practice, and that leaving a canonical community to marry was uncommon in the early middle ages: '*Stabilitas loci*: women's self-regulation within early medieval monasticism', paper delivered at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, July 2003.

¹²⁸ K. Hallinger (ed.) *Corpus consuetudinem monasticarum I: Initia consuetudinis Benedictinae* (Siegburg, 1963), at 432-582.

No such differentiation needed to be made for female communities, which had no official functions (other than the permanent requirements for prayer, and perhaps, cynically, as repositories for daughters and sisters). This, certainly, modifies the context posited by Wemple and Foot: in their view, a ‘one size fits all’ religious life which took into account the previous traditions of monastic life (despite the best efforts of both Boniface and Benedict of Aniane, to describe this form of dedication only as ‘Benedictine’ would seem somewhat generous) and its canonical counterpart, and melded the most important features of both. It could be said, moreover, that the *Institutio* represents an acknowledgement on the part of the churchmen at Aachen that Benedict of Aniane’s efforts to turn the monastic world Benedictine were irrelevant where religious women were concerned. To a far greater extent than providing norms to follow, the important of the *Institutio* lay in reinforcing the ethos of female dedicated life.

The actual impact of the *Institutio* is equally hard to ascertain, due to lack of evidence. Thegan’s biography of Louis the Pious describes how the emperor commissioned ‘books of canonical life’ and sent the books to all towns and monasteries [*civitates et monasteria*], where further copies were made.¹²⁹ This account is of an organised top-down process of re-thinking, re-education and dissemination. There are two possible contexts for attempting to measure the practical importance or otherwise of the *Institutio*: through an examination of the manuscript evidence, and through consideration of the contemporary state of female religious life through other sources.

There are only five extant manuscripts of the *Institutio*, of which four are from the ninth century. Of these manuscripts, three have indications of provenance. The first, Wurzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. M. p. th. q. 25, which contains only the *Institutio*, probably originated near Fulda soon after 816, and thereafter entered the Würzburg Dombibliothek.¹³⁰ The second, Munich Bay. Staat. Clm 14431, contains not only the *Institutio* but also Cyprian’s *De habitu virginum*, Chrysostom’s (spurious) *sermo de malis mulieribus*, and Augustine’s *liber de mendacio*. It was originally in the possession of St

¹²⁹ MGH Concilia II, 1, 307-8.

¹³⁰ Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, 104.

Emmeram in Regensburg,¹³¹ and the contents would suggest a connection with one or both of the two female communities in Regensburg, Ober- and Niedermünster, particularly since both were communities of canonesses and Obermünster was founded as a female counterpart to the neighbouring St Emmeram.¹³² The third, Paris, BN, ms. Lat. 1534, containing both the *Institutio sanctimonialium* and the *Institutio canonicorum*, was possibly the *Instructio sacri Concilii Aquisgrani celebrati an. Domini 816* mentioned in the twelfth century catalogue of the cathedral library of Carcassonne.¹³³ The fourth manuscript, Paris, BN, ms. Lat. 1568, has been dated to the second half of the ninth century but its provenance is unknown. It contains selections from the council of Aachen alongside those from earlier church councils, from Ancyra (314) onwards.¹³⁴ The geographical distribution of the manuscripts is wide, but is numerically too small a sample to draw conclusions as to whether copies were indeed circulated from Aachen or were the subject of specific requests. This begs the unanswerable question of why so few copies of the *Institutio sanctimonialium* are extant, particularly since there remain at least seventy-three manuscripts of the *Institutio canonicorum*, of which at least eighteen date from the ninth century.¹³⁵ In terms of assessing impact, the small number may be less significant than it appears, since knowledge of the text had spread to England by the early eleventh century: Wulfstan made use of both the *Institutiones canonicorum* and *sanctimonialium* in his *Institutes of Polity*, deriving his knowledge of the latter from Amalarius of Metz' *Regula sanctimonialium*.¹³⁶ It may be possible to speculate that due to the relative numbers of male and female houses, there were always likely to be fewer copies of the version for nuns. Following traditions of dedicated women living in small institutions, those distributing the *Institutio* worked on the basis that women's access to the text would be mediated, probably orally or via letter, through the presence of their bishop.

¹³¹ MGH Conc. II:I, 422; A. Werminghoff, 'Die Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils im Jahre 816' *Neues Archiv* 27 (1902) 606-675, 634ff.

¹³² Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit* 104. See also www.datenmatrix.de/projekte/hdbg/kloster/index_extern.shtml.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 310-12.

¹³⁶ S. Foot, *Veiled Women*, 107-9.

The impact of the *Institutio sanctimonialium* is thus difficult to determine. While there is some evidence of religious communities taking decisions over how best to live a dedicated life, it would be inappropriate to view the document in isolation as the catalyst behind such a decision. As the annals show, it was seen by its creators as part of a much wider programme of reform. Moreover, the manuscript evidence does not permit firm conclusions to be drawn on how effectively it was circulated or the extent to which it was used. The final part of this chapter may permit fresh perspectives on such text-based questions, by examining (where possible) dedicated life for women in practice.

Ninth century religious life for women

Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg's statistical study of foundations made in the early middle ages shows a decline in the proportion of new foundations for women in the ninth century.¹³⁷ In her period of 750-799, she notes that there were ninety-one new foundations, of which eleven, or 12.1%, were for women. In 800-849, the total number of foundations increased to one hundred and forty six, with twelve for women: a drop to 8.2% of the total. By the second half of the century, only eight out of one hundred and seven new foundations were for women, amounting to 7.5% of the total. Clearly, the figures involved are so small that the decline in percentages of the total matters less than the large difference in overall proportions of male and female institutions.

One reason behind this may have been the increasing wish for the dead to be commemorated with masses rather than solely prayer. This has been explored, notably in the work of Jane Martindale, through the example of Immena. Jane Martindale's detailed study reveals the religious career of the daughter of a distinguished family, given as a child to a foundation on her family's lands in 823, involved in donating and selling land both as an individual and as part of a family group.¹³⁸ Despite the wish of her parents that

¹³⁷ J.T. Schulenburg, 'Women's monastic communities, 500-1100: Patterns of expansion and decline' *Signs* 14:2 (1989) 261-92, at 266.

¹³⁸ J. Martindale, 'The nun Immena and the foundation of the Abbey of Beaulieu: a woman's prospects in the Carolingian Church' *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990) 27-42.

Immena's monastery should exist as it stood to pray for the souls of her family in perpetuity, Immena's brother Archbishop Rodulf of Bourges (840-66) dissolved the female community in the 850s, replacing it with monks who were to observe the rule of Benedict and subsequently endowing the monastery with far more resources than had even been available to it when Immena presided.¹³⁹ Such a community could subsequently become the focus of more than one family's remembrance of their dead. Indeed, in April 860 a *Deo sacrata* named Rottrudis made a donation of a *villa* to the monastery of Beaulieu under its abbot Garulfus. This was for the souls of her husband, two sons and herself, and was signed by one of her sons, Drogo.¹⁴⁰

The monastic landscape at the beginning of the ninth century was not one in which wholesale change of practice was likely to be possible or desirable. As had long been the case, the majority of foundations were made by and remained closely connected to particular family or even individual interests. Donations made to the abbey of Lorsch immediately before the reforms under Benedict of Aniane reveal the substrata of smaller houses existing alongside it. One, made by a certain *abbatissa* Hiltisnot in 788, was the gift of her monastery which she had built '*in propria alode mea*'.¹⁴¹ She would retain the usufruct of the lands as a benefice of Lorsch, and after her death requested that a member of her family should be chosen as her successor as long as a suitable candidate could be found.¹⁴² A gift of a villa was made jointly in 764 by the *deo sacrata* Williswinda and her son, count Cancor, the founder of Lorsch, reiterating the importance of the ties dedicated women (and therefore their institutions) retained to their families.¹⁴³ A clear example of the proprietorial nature of Carolingian foundations is that of the nun Immena. For female houses such as this one, the relationship it had with the founder's family was of fundamental importance, which, in terms of the survival of the monastery, was of more importance than the monastery's adherence to any normative text.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 35-6

¹⁴⁰ M. Deloche (ed.) *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Beaulieu* (Paris, 1859), nos. XIX and CLXXX.

¹⁴¹ No. 13 *Codex Laureshamensis* ed. K. Glöckner (Darmstadt, 1974), 291-2.

¹⁴² *Ibid*. See also D. Hochstetler, *A Conflict of Traditions: Women in Religion in the Early Middle Ages, 500-840* (Lanham, Maryland, 1992) 160-1.

¹⁴³ No. 12, *ibid* 289-90. See also M. Innes, *State and society in the early Middle Ages : the middle-Rhine valley, 400-1000* (Cambridge, 2000) 51-9.

This relationship also worked the other way. As a member of the family which had founded and endowed a monastery, an abbess could decide the direction and nature of her community with little to prevent her (which may explain the care taken in the *Institutio* to describe the responsibilities of the abbess, and its place as the first canon of the rule¹⁴⁴). The charters of another major abbey, Fulda, reveal the case of Emhilt, who founded and became the abbess of Milz.¹⁴⁵ In her deed of gift, she made it plain that the monastery adhered to the Benedictine rule and was to continue to do so. Although taking the advice of her fellow nuns, the land and monastery were hers.

Among houses such as these, however, explicit statements of adherence to one variety of life or another are rare: again, the choice of Benedictine or canonical life does not seem to have been a major issue. The familial nature of foundations such as Immena's means that they often enter record only in connection with land transactions, which would seldom encompass a discussion of lifestyle and practices. There is no way of knowing which mode of religious observance the majority of dedicated women followed either before or after the synod of Aachen set to work. It may be significant here that only five female houses were included in the *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum*, the list of forty-eight royal Benedictine houses drawn up in 819 for Louis the Pious.¹⁴⁶ However, as Semmler underlines, taking even this document to be an accurate statement of any monastery's actual adherence is dangerous.¹⁴⁷

However, one indication that abbesses did feel themselves to be presented with a decision to make over the direction their community would follow is provided by the *vita Odiliae*.¹⁴⁸ This tenth (or possible late ninth) century *vita* makes the early eighth century abbess peculiarly concerned with Carolingian issues of reform. Calling the nuns from her two monasteries together, she presents them with a choice between monastic and

¹⁴⁴ Canon 7.

¹⁴⁵ The case is discussed by Hochstetler, *Conflict*, 161-2.

¹⁴⁶ These were Notre-Dame in Soissons, Baume-les-Dames in the Jura, Holy Cross in Poitiers, Notre-Dame in Limoges, and Swarzach in Würzburg.

¹⁴⁷ J. Semmler, 'Benedictus II' 8-9.

¹⁴⁸ *Vita sanctae Odiliae virginis* MGH SSRM VI 37-50.

canonical lives: ‘*utrum canonicam an regularem vitam ducere vellent*’.¹⁴⁹ The nuns reply unanimously that they would prefer to follow a monastic life, whereupon Odilia persuades them that a monastic rule would hinder the provision of water in the inaccessible monastery of Hohenbourg, and they would be blamed by their successors, ‘*maledictionem a successoribus nostris incurrere*’. It seems to her, therefore, that they should retain their canonical habits, to which the nuns of Hohenbourg and Niedermunster agree, and this was still the life followed there when the *vita* was composed, ‘*usque hodie*’.¹⁵⁰ A decision of this nature being addressed within a *vita* is of importance on several levels. It is a justification of the present community’s life when such things were evidently perceived to matter; more than that, its inclusion shows the issue to be of such importance that it is appropriate and necessary to play it out among the holy dead as well as through normative texts and in practice.

As a counterweight to such issues of institutional allegiance, however, the vast majority of evidence for the dedicated lives of women in the ninth century reflects rather continuities with that of preceding centuries. An immediate snapshot of such continuities is provided by a stone epitaph for a ‘*Dei virgo*’, Frodeberta.¹⁵¹ Located in the village of Estoublon in Provence, the inscription, which is still in good condition, reads HIC REQUIS//CIT IN PA//CE BONE//MEMORIE// FRODEBER//TA DEI VIR//GO FIL[I]A// AGHILBER//TO OBIIT VII// KALENDAS IHANUARIAS ANNO// PRIMO IMPERAN//[TE] DOMNO LODO//[VIC]O INDICTI//ONE PRIMMA.¹⁵² In this regard at least little had changed since the days of Caesarius.

Also familiar were issues of economic survival. In a capitulary of 822-4, Pippin I of Aquitaine set down a number of measures to protect the economic wellbeing and

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 46.

¹⁵⁰ See also M. Parisse, ‘Les chanoinesses dans l’Empire germanique (IXe – XIe siècles)’ *Francia* 6 (1978) 107-28, at 112-3, for further discussion of this episode.

¹⁵¹ R. Favreau and J. Michaud (eds.), *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale XIV: Alpes-Maritimes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Var* (CNRS, 1974), 86-7.

¹⁵² The dating clause is confused, as the first year of Louis the Pious’ reign as emperor was 814, which was in the eighth indiction, not the first. Another possibility is Louis the Blind of Provence 880-928 (Emperor 901-905).

independence of the monastery of Holy Cross, in Poitiers.¹⁵³ Following an introductory clause that ‘no-one should unjustly oppress or condemn’ the nuns of Holy Cross, Pippin decreed that there should never be more than a hundred nuns in the community, or more than thirty *clerici* to serve them.¹⁵⁴ Times had changed since the late sixth century, when Gregory of Tours recorded two hundred nuns at the time of Radegund’s funeral.¹⁵⁵ While Pippin’s capitulary may reflect new concerns over the monastery’s ability to support such numbers of dedicated religious, the article dealing with the clerics proceeds to speak more to issues of authority within the community. In it, the clerics are firmly reminded that they are there as the servants of the female community.¹⁵⁶

Indeed, for the later Carolingians, Holy Cross continued to be important. Its status as a ‘royal’ monastery perhaps made it the obvious choice for a place of custody when the sons of Louis the Pious, Lothar of Italy and Pippin of Aquitaine, revolted against their father and needed a prison for their stepmother Judith.¹⁵⁷ Lothar and Pippin even went as far as having Judith veiled, perhaps in an attempt to make her sudden status as a nun more binding and her status as Empress less potentially dangerous. In the event, Louis regained his authority in a matter of months. Despite this, Judith remained at Holy Cross for some time, returning to court in 831 to purge herself of the charges levelled against her during the revolt.¹⁵⁸ Monasteries retained the same functions in the wider political world, and were subject to the same pressures and support, as they always had been.

Female communities continued to be absorbed by intellectual and theological debates. Paschasius Radbertus dedicated his treatise *De partu virginis*, defending the

¹⁵³ MGH Capit. I, 302.

¹⁵⁴ Cans. VI (nuns) and VII (clerics).

¹⁵⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum* 104, MGH SSRM I:II, 814-6.

¹⁵⁶ Can. VII: *Ut omnino provideatur ne clericorum numerus plus quam XXX augeatur; et ipsi per omnia ad dictam congregationem sancte cruce honeste et perfecte obediētes sint atque subiecti.*

¹⁵⁷ *Annals of St-Bertin*, in G. Waitz (ed.), MGH SS Rer. Germ. V. See now the new translation by Janet L. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin* (Manchester, 1991), s.a. 830; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, cap.36; Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, caps. 43-5, both ed. E. Tremp in MGH SS Rer. Germ., 64.

¹⁵⁸ On Judith, see E. Ward, ‘Caesar’s wife: the career of the Empress Judith, 819-829’ in P. Godman and R. Collins (eds.) *Charlemagne’s Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)* (Oxford, 1990) 202-227, and *eadem*, ‘Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as critics of the empress Judith’, *SCH* 27 (1990) 15-25.

perpetual virginity of Mary at the moment of Christ's birth, to the nuns of Soissons, who had asked for his opinion on the matter.¹⁵⁹ Paschasius, abbot of Corbie, was born c.790 and given as an infant to the monastery of Saint-Marie in Soissons. The abbess was Theodrada, a cousin of Charlemagne and the sister of Adalhard and Wala of Corbie, who were also in turn abbots of Corbie, in 780-815 and 826-835 respectively. Female communities were as well-connected as they had even been.

In terms of the impact of the reforming councils and texts of 813-819, little direct evidence remains. Even for a community at the heart of Benedict of Aniane's 'reformed' monasteries, a female community appears to have been founded along the same only semi-formal structures as those in previous centuries. William, the second count of Toulouse, later celebrated in poems as one of Charlemagne's most steadfast followers, decided to retire to a monastery.¹⁶⁰ The monastery of Gellone, founded in 804, was placed under the authority of Benedict's community at Aniane, marked by William's acceptance of the habit there.¹⁶¹ According to William's *vita*, William's sisters Abbana and Bertana gained permission to accompany him to Gellone and dedicate themselves to God at the same time.¹⁶² The *vita* gives no further details on the women's subsequent residence, although Verdon suggests that they inhabited a small house near to the monastery which in its turn became a community of nuns.¹⁶³ This was still not the monastic landscape that Louis and Benedict appear to have envisaged, where women were expected to join existing monasteries rather than set up smaller institutions of their own.

A much later piece of evidence indicates that a typology of women's communities was still not particularly important in law. Charles the Bald's (840-77) *Capitulare missorum Suessionense* of 853 orders a count to be made of all dedicated religious in his

¹⁵⁹ Paschasius Radbertus, *De partu Virginis*, ed. E.A. Matter CCCM 56C (Turnhout, 1985), 11.

¹⁶⁰ J.M. Ferrante (ed.), *Guillaume d'Orange : four twelfth-century epics* (New York, 1991).

¹⁶¹ The *vita Willelmi* and his charters of donation to Gellone, now Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, are in AASS, May 26, cols. 811-822. For the connection to Aniane and further bibliography, see P. Bonnerue *Benedicti Anianensis Concordia Regularum* CCCM 168 (Turnhout, 1999), 42-3.

¹⁶² *Vita Willelmi* 11, AASS, May 26, col. 813.

¹⁶³ J. Verdon 'Recherches sur les monastères féminins dans la France du sud aux IXe – XIe siècles' *Annales du Midi* 88 (1976) 117-138, at 128.

kingdom of western Francia. The purpose of this count was to check that numbers of dedicated religious had not declined too greatly, with a view to increasing their numbers if necessary.¹⁶⁴ Clearly all members of the community of dedicated religious had a role to play in Christian society, religious women as well as men. The capitulary has further interest in the terms it uses for these dedicated men and women. The capitulary begins ‘*Ut missi nostri per civitates et singula monasteria, tam canonicorum quam monachorum sive sanctimonialium...*’¹⁶⁵ Here, still, there is no distinction between dedicated women who follow a monastic rule and those following canonical guidelines.

Conclusion

In the reforms of Charlemagne, abbesses and nuns saw their role in Christian society being increasingly defined as part of a wider effort to ensuring every element of that society worked in harmony together. Consideration of the capitularies alone suggests that this was not aimed at limiting the powers of the abbess, but that each figure of authority – bishop, count or head of monastery – was expected to know their role and adhere to it. The figure of Gisela, although inevitably something of a special case, suggests also that abbesses could have considerable room to manoeuvre, and that women’s monasteries could be centres of influence and authority beyond the enclosure.

Under Louis the Pious, the decisions of reforming councils such as those in 813 were built on to provide more detailed guidelines for dedicated women. However, these in no sense resulted in uniformity, nor, it has been argued, were they intended to. The *Institutio sanctimonialium* offered not a prescription but a set of guidelines to be selected from: its importance as a normative document lay not in advocating a wholesale reform of lifestyle for all dedicated women but in placing before them such a range of alternative

¹⁶⁴ MGH Capit. II, 266-270, at 267:...*ubi minor numerus fuerit, nostra auctoritate addamus*. See also J. Verdon ‘Recherches sur les monastères féminins dans la France du sud aux IXe – XIe siècles’ *Annales du Midi* 88 (1976) 117-138, at 133.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

patterns to follow that living according to some variety of ‘approved’ norms would be difficult to avoid.

Perhaps because of this, the impact of the *Institutio* appears to have been limited. Women continued to be described as *Deo devotae* and to live in informal contexts. The evidence of the cartularies of the large monastery of Lorsch illustrates the number of smaller communities led by women that made donations to or became subsumed by such larger houses. For both formal and less formal houses, then, the monastic writings of Caesarius continued to have relevance. The *Regula virginum* was included in Benedict of Aniane’s collection of rules to mark its value and continuing use in female communities; *Vereor*, in particular, was used in a way that showed the Carolingian court’s belief that it would be of use to future generations of dedicated women.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of the tenth century, the abbess Uta of the abbey of Niedermünster in Regensburg decided to obtain a copy of the rule of St Benedict for her community, by then following canonical norms. To ensure that the rule would be of the fullest practical benefit to her nuns, it would be copied for a female audience: there would be no risk of the canonesses of Niedermünster failing to engage with the rule as a result of being addressed as if they were men. At the same time, Uta asked for a second rule to be copied after that of Benedict: the *Regula virginum* of Caesarius of Arles, which might have been known in the city of Regensburg since the late seventh century when the missionaries Erhard and Emmeram arrived in the area, and from the foundation of the community in the second half of the eighth century. Both texts, as we have seen earlier in the current study, were to be used. However, the manuscript would not be a plain utilitarian copy. The manuscript was and is beautifully and expensively illuminated in gold: one need only examine the depiction of Caesarius giving his rule to the nuns of Niedermünster (f. 65r.; the frontispiece to the current study) to see the value placed on this copy of these rules.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the most probable context for the sudden need for a new copy of the rule was that of a reconstitution of the community along more tightly regulated norms. In the light of subsequent chapters, however, this is not so straightforward a proposition as it seems. How stood the re-thinking of the early ninth century now? The work of Benedict of Aniane had clearly not made a lasting impression in terms of the ‘reform’ of communities according to Benedictine norms. Not only had those around Niedermünster felt the need for fresh beginnings, but this tenth-century correction would involve not only Benedictine but also Caesarian norms. One hundred and fifty years after the Carolingian abbot’s obsessions with, as Semmler put it, ‘*Una regula – una consuetudo*’, the always-unconvincing mirage of an empire united in its adherence to a solely Benedictine ideal had faded. At Niedermünster, the ongoing spiritual vitality of both Benedictine and Caesarian traditions is clear.

The reforming activities of Benedict of Aniane were not a point of rupture for the traditions of female religious life. Indeed, the present study has revealed the considerable scope for a new evaluation of his career, and more generally of the drives toward spiritual rejuvenation, in the context of religious life in the ninth century. For women in monasteries, there was no sudden abandonment of older monastic traditions in favour of the Benedictine rule; for those whose dedication was lived out less formally, repeated exhortations by successive church councils did not herald a general move into fewer, larger monasteries. And indeed, how could they? One of the themes of this study has been the centrality of family concerns to both religious dedication and monastic foundation. Religious institutions fulfilled a multiplicity of functions in early medieval society: not only were they the practical contexts in which to spend a life of dedication, but by means of this central purpose were also a way in which aristocratic families strengthened and demonstrated their presence and authority in the landscape; the founders of such monasteries also strove to ensure that future generations would commemorate them and intercede for them in prayer. The juxtaposition of such awareness with legislative-based studies on the Carolingian reforms sheds new light on the realities of trying to impose large-scale change on a landscape in which different groups of people had divergent priorities.

Issues such as this bring us sharply up against the different purposes and personnel involved in making foundations, and indeed simple commitments to follow a life dedicated to God, in our period. From a cast of characters including bishops, kings, queens, aristocratic land-holders, rebellious and acquiescent daughters, sisters, wives and widows, no single paradigm of either motivation or practical process stands out. Caesarius of Arles' foundation of St John has been deconstructed to show how it fulfilled the purposes and desires, not only of Caesarius himself, but also of his sister Caesaria.

The issues of foundation and reform form the essential backdrop to this study's main focus on the transmission and use of the writings for dedicated women of Caesarius of Arles. The study of Caesarius' manuscripts has offered a unique perspective on the audiences and use of his writings for dedicated women. In and of themselves, they

demonstrate that a demand equal to that of the *Regula virginum* existed for shorter, more ideologically-based texts that could have a wider range of applications. In turn this suggests a wider range of social contexts for the use of such texts than simply an enclosed monastery. One of the most important issues raised by this study is that of the relationships between texts, gender and authority, and one of its most important conclusions that women and men were guided by the texts written for women. Clearly, at an overarching level, the use of the same texts by both men and women does not need restating. The ultimate authority for all dedicated religious (and, indeed, for all the peoples of Francia, at least in theory) was of course the Bible. Similarly, the writings of the fathers of the early Church had a comparably wide applicability: Augustine and Cassian's writings for male religious were both used by Caesarius in the *Regula virginum*, to use but the most obvious example. This makes the historiographical oversight, that writings for women could in turn have a general applicability, all the more surprising.

The fresh approach to *Vereor*, and the other letters written by the family of the Caesarii illustrated by this thesis, has profound implications for the way in which the literature of spiritual guidance is studied. In particular, it emphasises the importance of giving equal weight to the circulation and use of texts which are not monastic rules. Positivist readings of the links between monastic rules as the framework within which all dedicated life – including within monasteries themselves – took place have been shown to be unsustainable. Instead, it has become apparent that a much fuller and more nuanced understanding of dedicated religious life in the early middle ages can be gained from giving equal weight to all of the texts available to dedicated religious. The women and men discussed in this thesis relied not only on *regulae* to guide them but also on the interpretation of those rules by letter, and by orally transmitted advice. For women, in particular, who did not live in monastic communities, such letters described a way of living spiritually and chastely, but did not prescribe a precise way of doing so in practical terms.

This way of approaching the textual basis of dedicated life necessitates a thorough analysis of the patterns of manuscript circulation of any text under consideration. Moreover, one of the most fruitful avenues of exploration is the circulation of combinations of texts. In this study, such an approach has yielded the immensely important information that a group of Caesarian texts circulated together, in a pattern that was completely independent of the *Regula virginum*.

While previous studies, such as those of McNamara, have relied to a large extent upon the evidence of hagiographic sources to reconstruct female dedicated life, the findings of the present study reveal the inadequacies of such an approach. The picture drawn from *vitae* does not tally with that projected by normative texts. The importance of texts directed at religious women that were not rules – *Vereor*, for instance – is not represented by such sources. Texts concerned with proving the holiness of their subjects did not (with the possible exception of Baudonivia's *vita Radegundis*) often need to describe fully the written basis of their lifestyles as a basis for their sanctity. A wider spectrum of source material offers essential and complementary perspectives. As with normative texts, this study has signalled the importance of assessing the manuscript contexts of such *vitae*, for their valuable insights into the ways in which they were produced and used. Further, the present study makes a further contribution to current investigations of the underlying normative nature of hagiography; the uses of both Caesarius' language and his message in Baudonivia's *vita Radegundis* is but one example of this.

In sum, this thesis has greatly enriched studies of early medieval dedicated life in several areas. The extended consideration of the production of Caesarius' texts for dedicated women that opened the thesis firmly re-situated women in the process of writing and reproducing normative texts. Building on this, examinations of the subsequent circulation and use of the texts have demonstrated the parity between women and men as the recipients of Caesarius' writings. Taking a wider perspective, the use of the transmission of Caesarius' works as a framework has highlighted the continuities of female religious experience across centuries of the forming and reforming of its

institutions. The writing of a group of texts in early sixth-century Arles proved to have resonances even Caesarius would not have foreseen.

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