LIKE SCALES FROM THEIR EYES : VISIONARY EXPERIENCE IN WESTERN EUROPE FROM AUGUSTINE TO THE EIGHTH CENTURY

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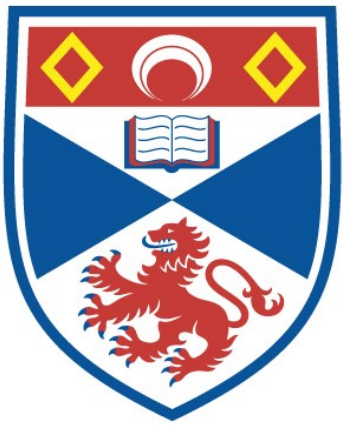

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by

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Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT.

Vision narratives provide important evidence for the social and religious concerns of the society which records them, and are important sources for the mentalité of the period in which they are produced. This thesis provides an historical study of dream and vision narratives from the fourth to eighth centuries, with the hagiographic literature of Gaul and Merovingian Francia as its primary focus.

During the period under review, there were important changes in the church's attitude towards the visionary experience. Whereas the fear of heterodoxy led early church Fathers to limit the spiritual authority of visions, by the sixth century in Gaul, dream and vision accounts were an important means by which churchmen could promote monastic and clerical ideals and their spiritual authority.

Vision accounts were an important tool in the pastoral concerns of the clergy, enabling them to resolve or perpetuate disputes, smooth the process of Christianization, and provide imaged evidence of Christian doctrine. Dreams and visions confirmed the praesentia of saints at their tombs and at the site of their relics, and confirmed the role of the episcopate as their guardians and representatives. These issues are examined with special reference to the writings of Gregory of Tours in the sixth century.

The effectiveness with which visions framed the deeds of the saints and conveyed impressions of spirituality is also examined over a broad sampling of Gallic and Merovingian hagiographic texts. The final chapter offers two case studies: the visionary experiences of St.Radegund of Poitiers, and St.Aldegund of Maubeuge.

DECLARATIONS

I, Isabel A.M.C. Moreira, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 112,000 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..26th.March.1992. signature of candidate.....

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No.12 in October 1983 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D in June 1988; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St.Andrews between 1988 and 1991.

date.26th.March.1992.. signature of candidate.....

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

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INTRODUCTION.

From the earliest historical times, dreams and visions were recorded in histories, sacred scriptures and dedicatory inscriptions as a determining influence in the activities of mankind. Their divine origin was attested in pagan and Judaeo-Christian religious literature, and was debated in philosophical and theological circles. From the farseeing Prometheus who was said to have wrested from the gods the mantic arts of augury and discerning dreams, to the divine sleep imposed on Adam by God as Eve was drawn from his side, pagan and Christian theology and mythology testify to their shared veneration for dreams and visions.[1] For early Christians, Christ's appearances to the disciples revealed the corporeal nature of the resurrection, and at Pentecost Christ's followers were empowered by the Holy Spirit to see visions and dream dreams, in fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel.[Acts 2.1-4; 2.16-18. Joel 2.28-9.] The four unmarried daughters of the evangelist Philip, for example, were prophetesses.[Acts 21.9] Personal revelations of the divine, in addition to the historic prophesies related in scripture, were thus cornerstones in the church's claim to represent God on earth.

Yet also from the earliest times the church was sensitive to the claims of false prophets who sought to undermine by their revelations the authority and doctrinal purity of the Christian faith. The history of the dream-vision in the early church is thus also the history of the church's attempt to assess the origin of the visionary experience and place controls on its authority.

This thesis arose from my interest in vision narratives in Gallic and Merovingian hagiographic literature, visions which have received scant scholarly attention hitherto. I wondered how far the authors of these texts were exposed to the oneirological traditions of antiquity, and how the church's high regard for the visionary experience evident in Merovingian texts, should be perceived. This led me back to Augustine, and even to Tertullian, in an attempt to uncover the oneirological concerns of Christian antiquity, and to uncover thereby the distinctive flavour of Gallic visionary thinking. However, it has been my primary aim to examine how the visionary experience was observed, recorded and valued by the church, and by the holy

men and women from the fourth to the eighth centuries. The vision texts of this period offer to the historian unparalleled sources for the mentalité of the early medieval world.

Although this investigation led me to North Africa, Italy, Spain and Ireland in pursuit of such narratives and echoes of ancient oneirological ideas, it has been necessary for the purposes of this study that Gaul and its hagiographic tradition remain the primary focus of this thesis. Consequently it has not been possible to include here important Insular and Iberian texts which reflect access to alternative oneirological sources and traditions. Nor has it been possible to give more than cursory attention to the visionary thinking of Gregory the Great, although insofar as his Dialogues influenced vision accounts in Frankish hagiography from the seventh century onwards, and insofar as his views often provide an interesting contrast with those of Gregory of Tours, whose near-contemporary he was, a short chapter has been devoted to him.

The study combines two approaches to the visionary experience. The first centres on vision narratives as they reflected monastic and ecclesiastical attitudes, not only towards their own vocation, but also towards those with whom the church came into conflict. Consequently I was interested both in those visions which promoted the special spiritual authority of a particular branch of the Christian community (monks, ascetics or bishops), and those which sought to define and preserve orthodox beliefs.

The second broad approach was to examine the role of visions in the structure and agenda of hagiographic compositions. I examined the way in which vision accounts were used to convey impressions of piety and spirituality, such as the saint's invisible connection to the spiritual world through prayer and meditation. I was interested in the implications which visions of salvation and damnation had for the fate of their recipients. What was the moral profile of the visionary? Was the experience of veridical visions confined to the spiritually mature? Who, or what was being seen? By surveying a large number of hagiographic texts, I examined the way visions gravitated towards key junctures in saints' lives, informing their decisions and registering divine approval. And finally, I studied the way in which visions were particularly useful in promoting the cult of the saints through demonstrating their spiritual power and their thaumaturgical efficacy.

In each chapter I have noted the use of vision or dream terminology in

the literature to describe the way that dream-visions were experienced; an author's knowledge, or lack of knowledge of specialized vocabulary, can often indicate those works with which he, or she had come into contact.

Finally, a note on my own terminology. I refer both to dreams and to waking visions as being visions, or sometimes dream-visions. Although the visionary's dreaming or waking state is sometimes noted by hagiographers, no distinction in spiritual value is made in the texts between them. I have not sought to make evaluative distinctions where these hagiographers saw none.

The thesis opens with an overview of ancient attitudes towards dreams and visions, including a brief look at Augustine's writings on the subject. The second chapter looks at visions in the earliest Gallic hagiographies, with special attention given to their reflection of factionalism in the Gallic church at the end of the fourth century. The visionary thinking of Gregory the Great as expressed in his Dialogues provides an interesting foil to the more substantial study of the vision narratives in the works of Gregory of Tours. Special attention is given to the social and religious complexion of sixth century society which embraced dreams and visions as a vital aspect of its religious life. The two final chapters look at Merovingian hagiographies, the pivotal role of visions in the genre, and two case studies; the visions of St.Radegund of Poitiers, and of St.Aldegund of Maubeuge.

The chronological approach of this study is intended to highlight the change and continuity in the ecclesiastical and individual response to the visionary experience in the time period under review.[2] As such, this study differs from that more commonly undertaken which focuses on key themes and images across a wide historical and literary spectrum.[3] This approach allowed me to discuss individual visions in the context of their religious, social and cultural background. It also made it clear that it is only through a careful examination of changing religious and social circumstances that we can understand the substantial transition in the church's attitude towards the visionary experience which is evident from late antiquity to the medieval era.

Chapter 1. VISIONARY EXPERIENCE FROM ANTIQUITY TO ST.AUGUSTINE

Propter illud quippe adipiscendum, ubi secura quies erit et ineffabilis visio veritatis, labor suscipitur, et continendi a voluptate, et sustinendi adversitates, et subveniendi indigentibus, et resistendi decipientibus. Ibi videtur claritas Domini, non per visionem significantem, sive corporalem...ut os per os loquatur ei quem dignum tali Deus colloquio fecerit...
(Augustine, De Gen.ad litt. XII.26)

As a prelude to the study of dream-vision narratives in the early Middle Ages, this chapter will provide an overview of the oneiromantic traditions in the Mediterranean world up to the fourth century. This is important because the experience of the early church in confronting pagan and heterodox beliefs about dreams and visions, was crucial to its assessment of the spiritual authority that should be vested in the phenomenon. Subsequent beliefs and attitudes on this subject as expressed in hagiographic literature may usefully be understood in their adherence to, or deviation from the conclusions of these early debates.

I. Dreams and Visions before Augustine.

i. Greek and Roman Vision Literature

For Greek and Oriental cultures, oneirology (the study of dreams and dream interpretation) was an ancient and revered endeavour. The belief that future events could be foreseen in dreams and their origin and meaning codified, spawned an extensive literature in the ancient world to which later writers attest but whose substance is largely lost to us. To judge from the literature on the subject that has survived, oneirology was an immensely practical enterprise. The ancients wanted to know if their dreams were auspicious or inauspicious, whether they signified profit or loss, death or prosperity, the safe return of children or a loss of livestock and slaves. Dream-handbooks, which were often a mixture of time-honoured observation and philosophical speculation, detailed the correct manner to evaluate and interpret a dream, offering the curious reader and professional dream interpreter alike variables which could tip the balance between joy and disaster. Of these, the dreambook of the second century Artemidorus of Daldis is the most famous.[1] Artemidorus was a professional dream interpreter who drew upon his experience as a practitioner and on ancient oneiromantic literature for his Oneirocriticon. He intended his work to

provide future generations with a clear exposition of the subject where earlier works were obscure and poorly organized, and thereby inspire those confronted by obscure dreams with a practical guide to their interpretation. The dreams he examines are enigmatic, that is to say, their meaning is not immediately evident, for this was the type of dream which required the skill of a professional interpreter. As testimony to his specialized knowledge, he offered his readers more sophisticated distinctions between dream types than the traditional five-fold categorization of allegorical dreams: personal, alien, common, public and cosmic.[2] Moreover, by his many examples of dream variables and their outcomes, he revealed the principles at work in their interpretation. The dreamer's social status, for example, often determined the dream's significance, so that a dream which might bring good fortune to a master, might bode ill if dreamt by a slave.[3] Yet for all Artemidorus' confidence in the science to which he devoted his life, he wrote his work in the face of hostility. As he relates at the beginning of his work, "...I have been afraid of the adverse criticism of those who...believe there is no such thing as divination or divine providence."[4]

The Roman attitude towards visions inherited both the 'scientific' interest of the Greeks, and their more mystical oracular tradition. The far-seeing Sibyls were accorded their place alongside the priests of the official state religion of Rome, who sought in their interpretation of the oracles and their examination of auguries, the fate of the Roman people.[5] Cicero's De Divinatione was the classic Roman exposition on the subject in Latin.[6] Although the Romans never produced a dream-book in the tradition of Artemidorus, their literature and philosophic interests show that visions and prophecy were an important part of their culture.[7] Roman mythology and heroic literature was larded with tales of dream-journeys to the underworld, and conversations with the spirits of the dead. How far such literary representations were taken to be truly representative of the features of afterlife is not clear. Plato's 'Vision of Er', the final part of his De republica, was a consciously literary piece.[8] So too was the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid which described Aeneas' descent into Hades (past an elm tree beneath whose leaves clung false dreams).[9] The danger that such depictions in literary epics would be taken for literal truth, especially those that were ancient and of national importance, was evidently there. This was specially so when death approached, for as Plato remarked to

Socrates, "...when a man faces the thought of death, there come into his mind anxieties that did not trouble him before. The stories about another world, and about punishment in the future life for wrongs done in this, at which he once used to laugh, begin to torment his mind with the fear that they might be true..." [10] Christians too were susceptible to their images. Augustine singled out Virgil's description of Aeneas' descent into the underworld in the Aeneid, the most widely read book of the ancient world among educated pagans and Christians alike, for having led people into error.[11]

However literally or figuratively the Greeks and Romans understood their myths, their peoples have left to the historian ample testimony to their belief in the inclination of the gods, daemons and the dead to work through dreams. The practice of incubation, that is sleeping at a shrine in order to receive a divinely inspired dream with curative or other benefits, was widespread in the ancient world.[12]

ii. Judaeo-Christian Vision Literature.

Dreams and visions were a fundamental aspect of Judaeo-Christian culture and religion. There are over fifty dreams recorded in the Old and New Testaments.[13] In Old Testament times, God communicated with his prophets and the spiritual leaders of Israel through dreams, in order to direct his chosen people. In the New Testament dreams and visions were considered to be manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts the prophecy of Joel 2.28-9 was recalled: "And it shall come to pass afterward,/ that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;/ your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,/ your old men shall dream dreams/ and your young men shall see visions."[Acts 2.16-18] This God-given charism, a "manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" [ICor 12.4,7], accorded to the visionary an honoured place in early Christian society, but a limited one too, for seeing visions was only one of the many gifts of the Spirit.

The Christian experience of dreams and visions was very different from their pagan contemporaries. Unlike the Romans, they did not consider that the dead had the capacity or will to return in dreams and visions to admonish the living.[14] For Christians, that feat had been accomplished by only one man, Christ, who had appeared after death first to his disciples and then to many over a period of forty days. Nor were these considered visions in any strict sense because they were understood by Christians to be actual

appearances (apparitiones) whose purpose was to embolden the disciples to their ministry by convincing them of the reality of the resurrection.[15]

In the Bible, dreams tended more often to be evident (theorematic) than allegorical.[16] Alongside the Jewish scriptures, however, there flourished a rich and ancient tradition of allegorical and symbolic vision literature such as the 4th apocalypse of Esdras (c.120 BC), the Book of Enoch (1st-2nd c BC), the Book of the secrets of Enoch (30BC-70AD) and the early 2nd century Third Apocalypse of Baruch.[17] The first two centuries of the common era likewise saw a proliferation of Christian apocalyptic and apocryphal scriptures. The mid-second century Visio Petri and the fourth century Visio Pauli, for example, had a profound influence on medieval vision literature.[18] Not all vision literature had pretensions to such exalted authorship. A very influential revelation account to issue from the Judaeo-Christian milieu without a spurious attribution was the openly literary Shepherd of Hermas, composed in Greek at Rome in the second century. Its "imaged revelations" wielded considerable influence on the Donatist Passions in the opinion of one scholar, in addition to being a seminal composition for the history of Christian visionary literature.[19]

iii. The Problem Of Heresy.

Dreams and visions were part of the fabric of the Christian experience. Enshrined in scripture were the well-loved accounts of angelic epiphanies and the promise of continued spiritual renewal through the movement of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately for the leaders of the early church, the illumination promised by the Holy Spirit infected the minds of many whose views did not coincide with their own, and who claimed, often in the name of Christianity, to have received divine guidance through revelation on matters of doctrine and the direction of the church. Consequently, many of the earliest writings by church Fathers on the subject of visions and their place in the Christian's spiritual life were influenced by a fear of heterodoxy.

The most pernicious threat to the early church expressed through visionary revelations came from the various branches of Gnosticism. The 'Gnostics', those who claimed divinely inspired knowledge or 'gnosis', looked to an alternative apostolic tradition based on the continuous experience of the divine through revelation.[20] To the mystic Paul they accorded a retroactive apostleship, as related in the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul.

Christ's disciples, which according to this tradition included Mary Magdalene, had required additional visionary infusions in order to make them spiritually capable of fulfilling their apostolic duties.[21] In the Dialogue of the Saviour three disciples, Matthew, Mary Magdalene and Judas Thomas, are chosen to receive special visions disclosing secrets of the cosmos, and are further told how to discriminate between temporal visions and the eternal vision of God.[22] The message that was being propagated by this and other gnostic works was that receptivity to visions, and the ability to assess them correctly, was a requisite for the spiritually active. The education of humanity initiated during Jesus' earthly ministry was considered to be only the first step in a continuous process of Man's spiritual maturity. Thus to initiates, the teachings of Jesus through the medium of visions were perceived as a continuous spring of knowledge and revelation. Guided through the temporal and spiritual worlds by such revelations, the Valentinian Gnostics could claim greater authority in spiritual matters even than the original apostles.[23]

It is not difficult to see how these teachings were particularly feared and criticised by the orthodox bishops of the day. Irenaeus of Lyon and Tertullian in the second century were particularly active in refuting Gnostic doctrines. Their objections centred on the implications of such beliefs for the doctrine of the Resurrection. They argued that as the only direct witnesses to the specific historical event of the corporeal resurrection of Christ, the apostles were a direct link to God. Definitive authority on questions of faith and religion was restricted to this first apostolic generation, their writings, and the interpretation of their writings by their apostolic successors in the church.[24] The authority of bishops thus rested on their fidelity to apostolic tradition, and their mission to preserve it.[25] It was their position, and the position of the church thereafter, that revelations through visions carried no weight in the face of scripture, by which they must be judged: Omnem vero doctrinam de mendacio praeiudicandam quae sapiat contra veritatem ecclesiarum et apostolorum Christi et Dei.[26]

By Augustine's day, the second century brand of Gnosticism had lost much of its vigour, although strains of Gnosticism were to be found in later heresies such as Manicheism and Priscillianism.[27] The experience of the second century church in confronting Gnosticism, however, had firmed up its attitude towards visions and made it particularly sensitive to their dangers.

Henceforth the test of any visionary experience was the degree to which it conformed to scripture and church teaching. The church could revere the historical visions of the apostolic era, and even treasure them in their mystics, but they would always be chary of their potential for setting up a rival source of spiritual authority. It had become all too evident that the forces of evil could have no easier way to undermine the authority of the church.

iv. A North African Tradition.

The Second Century.

By Augustine's day, North Africa had a long history of literature devoted to dream-visions. Both pagans and Christians debated the means by which divinely inspired dreams were effected, and how they could be categorised. The second century saw important philosophical and theological contributions to the subject and Augustine was familiar with much of this literature. He cited with respect, for example, the views of the Egyptian 'Hermes Trismegistus' [28] and with contempt those of Apuleius of Madaura, another North African of the second century, author of De Deo Socratis and the Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass).[29] The writings of Porphyry, by contrast, and his master Plotinus, had a profound impact on Augustine's approach to the visionary experience and his establishment of a Christian cosmology based on perception.

Parallel to pagan Neoplatonic philosophy was a Christian brand of "mystical Platonism" which sought to combine hellenistic learning with the Christian scriptures. The impact of Neoplatonic thinking on Christian authors can be seen in their approach to the dream and vision issue, especially their tendency to examine the question in the context of the theology of the soul. The visionary phenomenon stimulated discussions on the nature of the soul (its substance, agility, independence of operation, and visibility) and its residency in the body (during waking hours, sleep and death). In the Dialogues of Justin the Philosopher an aged man is asked three questions: how is it possible for the nous to see God? Can the divine being be perceived by the senses? And must the nous be aided by the Holy Spirit to see God? The answer to the latter question, that indeed the nous required the aid of the Holy Spirit to see God (rather than the soul's having an innate prophetic capacity), marks as Christian a work which would

otherwise appear to be a classic Platonic exposition.[30] The Cappadocian Fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa forged a theological language drawn from Platonism, and Augustine was heir to this process.[31] From Justin's Dialogues to those of Gregory the Great in the late sixth century, the activity and immortality of the soul after death was a natural entrée into the world of dream and vision phenomena. Did the soul have independent powers of divination? What was the role of the Holy Spirit in aiding the visionary process? These were issues which engaged the theologians of the early church just as they attracted the attention of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophers.

Tertullian

The most important and influential Christian discussion of dreams, visions and the nature of the soul prior to the fourth century, is to be found in Tertullian's De anima, written 210-13.[32] Like his pagan contemporary Artemidorus, Tertullian preluded his discussion by classifying the phenomenon. Unlike his pagan contemporary, however, Tertullian considered the originating source of the dream rather than its realm of signification to be the determining factor in dream classification. He considered three categories: The first type of dream came from the devil, the second from God, and the third from the independent operation of the soul itself. To ecstasy, in his view an essential part of the veridical dream, he accorded a special status.[De anima 47.1-4]

Tertullian's categorization derived ultimately from Philo of Alexandria's De Somniis, a work which has survived incomplete and in which dreams were also classified according to their origin.[33] The first type was from God, the second from the Mind or understanding moving in concert with the Mind or Soul of the Universe (the highest Neoplatonic hypostasis), and the third the independent operation of the soul.[Philo, De Somniis I.i, II.i] This latter category links Tertullian's thought not only to the ideas of Philo of Alexandria but also to Artemidorus. In his De Genesi ad litteram book XII, however, Augustine rejected the notion that the soul could operate independently of divine agency and yet be capable of some kind of innate power of prophecy.

Tertullian's attitude towards dreams stemmed from his desire to see in the contemporary church those manifestations of the Holy Spirit promised by

Christ to the early church. He believed that dreams enabled the Christian to know God, and offered universal access to this knowledge as long as the spirit was pure. His conviction in the universality of mankind's access to God's will through dreams and visions was counter to the trend in the orthodox church to emphasize the limited relevance of revelation.

Tertullian's hope for a return to the spiritual vibrancy of the early church in which laypeople (like Tertullian himself) had a role to play in the direction of the church, was a position which was no longer viewed favourably by the episcopal hierarchy. Largely this was due to the time in which he lived, for in the second century religious sects and heresies, many of which were forms of Gnosticism, challenged the authority of the apostolic church by claiming apostolicity through the Spirit. Yet although Tertullian himself was a vigorous prosecutor of heresy and paganism in his works, his own views on the place of revelation placed him dangerously close to certain aspects of Gnosticism greatly feared by the church.[34]

In the Montanist movement, (a millenarian sect), Tertullian discovered sympathy with his own views.[35] Although not immediately denounced, Montanism was eventually repudiated by the Pope, and Tertullian's views were thenceforth considered to be tainted by heresy. Augustine, who knew his work on dreams cited it only to challenge its views.

Tertullian was not only convinced of the spiritual value of dreams but of their necessity for spiritual health. He noted in his De anima that veridical dreams are attested in tota saeculi litteratura.[De anima 46.10] He calls to witness the writings of Homer, Aristotle, and the Stoics, and takes issue with the Epicureans who were less convinced. He argued for the restorative value of sleep, and believed that since the soul cannot be naturally free of dreams (Dum ne animae aliqua natura credatur immunis somniorum)[49.3], their absence signalled demonic possession or madness. This belief in the physiological necessity of dreams which stemmed from the natural state of sleep led him to give serious consideration to the theological meaning of sleep and its divine use. His conclusion was that the sleeping and waking states offered a daily reminder of the Christian's experience of death and rebirth. Sleep was thus an image of death, and the soul's preparation for death. This he saw prefigured in scripture.[43.10; 43.12] Si enim Adam de Christo figuram dabat, somnus Adae mors erat Christi dormituri in mortem, ut de iniuria perinde lateris eius vera mater viventium

figuraretur ecclesia.[26] Sleep was intended by God to be a lesson in the Christian life, Voluit enim deus...initii ac finis lineas cotidie agere nobiscum...Proponit igitur tibi corpus anima vi soporis elisum, blanda quietis necessitate prostratum, immobile situ, quale ante vitam iacuit et quale post vitam iacebit... [43.11] Ita cum evigilaverit corpus, redditum officiis eius resurrectionem mortuorum tibi affirmat.[43.12]

Turning now to the state of ecstasy, Tertullian accorded to it an essential role in the divinely inspired dream. Inspired dreams came to the sleeper through the mixture of sleep with ecstasy, he argued, just as it was related in the passage from the book of Genesis cited above.[Gen.2,21] Commenting on this passage, he suggested that ecstasy preceded Adam's sleep in order that his soul would not rest even while his body did.[45.23] The soul's movement was considered important in the ancient world for it was the agility of the soul, always in motion, wandering across land and sea, which brought the soul its dreams.[43.12] Although he did not believe that the soul actually left the body in a physical sense during sleep, Tertullian did, in common with the common understanding of the period, consider ecstasy to be a state in which the soul was temporarily removed from, and deprived of bodily senses. Just as sleep was the image of death, he saw in ecstasy's separation from the senses an image of insanity (amentia).[45.5]

In his De Genesi ad litteram Augustine likewise considered ecstasy to be an important means of identifying the veridical dream-vision, especially in view of its use in Genesis.

In his De anima Tertullian was alert to the dangers of superstition and error in the arena of dream-visions, should have been condemned. He flatly denied the pagan belief that the soul can escape from the body prior to death itself, and rejected also the idea that the souls of the dead remained on earth, wandering about. At death, he believed, the soul passed on to receive its punishment or its reward.[56-8] This matter of the immediate fate of the souls of the dead was one which preoccupied Augustine also, most notably in his De cura pro mortuis gerenda, for it had a direct relevance for reports of visions in which the dead seemed to appear to the living, but he does not refer to Tertullian even though their views coincide.

Third Century: Cyprian, Arnobius and Lactantius.[37]

In contrast to Tertullian, St.Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (d.258)

represented a solidly establishment attitude towards dream-visions in the life of the church. His letters show a profound regard for inspired dreams and the importance of heeding their message, and like Tertullian he envisaged a church inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. Unlike Tertullian he believed that the Holy Spirit worked primarily through the dreams of bishops and martyrs.

The Roman schismatic Novatian (martyred 257-8) and Arnobius of Sicca (d.c.330) argued against the idea that God could appear in visible form in a dream-vision. Novatian considered that in those biblical accounts where God was said to have appeared to the patriarchs, it was the angel of God who appeared or Christ, a common view in antiquity shared also by Prudentius.

Lactantius (c.240-c.320) accepted the divine inspiration of dreams, although he did not consider delusionary dreams necessarily to be demonically inspired. He recorded the story of Constantine's dream and conversion, but he recorded also accounts of pagan epiphanies. In his view veridical dreams appeared not so much to Christians to guide them as to pagans to warn and convert them.

Fourth Century; Ambrose, Jerome, and Prudentius.

Ambrose's understanding of visions are believed to show the influence of Tertullian, through the medium of Lactantius (c.240-c.320), although this view is disputed.[38] It is unnecessary to look for a direct literary model for the general belief implicit in most Christian writers that dream-visions may be divine or demonic in origin. Like Tertullian, Ambrose recognized three types of dream; that provoked by the memory of daily events; that provoked by demons; and the genuinely divinely inspired dream.[39] Also like Tertullian, Ambrose considered the Apocalypse to be a spiritual vision, not a material one.[40] Ambrose's prime contribution to ~~the~~ dream-vision literature was his funeral oration for his brother Satyrus. In it he recounted how he conversed with his dead brother's soul.[41] That the souls of the dead could return to converse with the living in their dreams was a relic of pagan heroic literature and popular belief, contradicted both by Tertullian and Augustine. Rather than attribute to him a pagan error, it might be fairer to Ambrose to suggest that the classical pagan inspiration under which he wrote the oration, offered him poetic licence to satisfy vicariously, through the medium of a poem, his psychological need for such

contact with his brother. As such it should not be treated as a mature theological statement on the post mortem fate of the soul. Perhaps Ambrose's most famous dream was the revelation which directed him to the invention of the relics of saints Gervasius and Protasius, an event which took place during Augustine's time in Milan, and which was mentioned by him with reverence both in the Confessions and in the City of God.[42]

Although Jerome (c.342-420) had no direct connection with North Africa, he was familiar with its literature. He knew and admired Tertullian's work, although unlike him he did not regard delusionary dreams, somnia vana, as being necessarily the devil's work.[43] His own conversion dream described in a letter, in which he was accused of being a Ciceronian, not a Christian, was widely reproduced with variations in later literature.[44]

Prudentius (c.348-410), who lived and wrote in Spain was influenced in his vision thinking by Stoic ideas, discernible also in Tertullian. He described the ascent of St.Agnes to heaven through the atmosphere to the ether above.[Cathemerinon 6] He also ascribed to the Stoic view that the senses of the soul travelled in sleep to rejoin the realm of ether from which the soul was created.[45] Somnia vana he attributed to the devil, showing the influence of Tertullian's thinking, and also like him distinguished between theorematic and enigmatic dreams. The former he considered to be divinely inspired, the latter demonic.[46]

For Prudentius God was invisible to human vision except in some moderating guise: Nam filius hoc est / quod de patre micans se praestitit inspiciendum / per species quas possit homo conprendere visu. / Nam mera maiestas est infinita nec intrat / obtutus, aliquo ni se moderamine formet.[47] In visions, although swathed in unapproachable light, God shows himself to earthly eyes saepe et in angelicas vel mortales moderatum / induci species, queat ut sub imagine cerni... [Apoth 11.47-8]

Macrobius.

Even while Christianity became increasingly dominant in parts of north Africa in the latter part of the fourth century, non-Christian works of oneirology continued to find acceptance. It has been suggested that oneiromantic works, sufficiently removed from the most overt doctrinal disputes of the day, provided a subject of study which could be seen as religiously neutral.[48] But this was only the case for as long as their

content did not touch on issues which affected the authority of the established church.

The most important work on dreams inspired by pagan philosophy was Macrobius' Commentary on Cicero's Dream of Scipio from the De republica.[49] This work transmitted Artemidorus' five categories of dreams to the medieval world. Macrobius' identity, date, even his religious affiliation is something of a mystery, although Alan Cameron argued convincingly that he flourished a generation later than has been generally thought.[50] The Commentary's lack of anti-Christian polemic, even while it lacked a specifically Christian focus, commended itself to a broader readership than it could otherwise have enjoyed. The date of its composition is important because it would be useful to know if Augustine was aware of the project when he embarked on his exposition on dreams and visions. The traditional dating of the Commentary places its completion before 410 at which date Augustine was engaged in writing his study on Genesis of which the final chapter dealt with his own vision study (405-14/15). There might be a case then for arguing that Augustine's decision to branch off from his commentary on Genesis into the study of visions based on a New Testament text, was at least in part a response to the publication of a pagan work to which he wanted to produce a Christian counterpart. If we accept Cameron's later date for Macrobius' endeavours, c.430, and his positing that Macrobius could have been a Christian, as I believe we should, Macrobius' subject matter was in no way responsible for Augustine's own study.

North African Ascetic Literature.

The hagiographic Lives and Passions of the early Christian saints often lent great weight to consolatory and empowering visions. These texts and their visions could not be lightly dismissed even by someone as pragmatic as Augustine. The second and early third century persecutions together with the beginnings of monasticism produced an important corpus of passions and ascetic literature. One of the most renowned of the African passions was that of SS.Perpetua and Felicity.[51] As Perpetua awaited martyrdom she was encouraged by her brother to pray for a vision. Soliciting visions was prohibited by the orthodox, but being on the point of martyrdom Perpetua's circumstances would have beeen considered exceptional. Martyrs often merited visions and so it might be expected that someone of Perpetua's spiritual

maturity would be granted this consolation and assurance.

In her first vision Perpetua saw a golden ladder ascending to the heavens with iron weapons on each side and a dragon beneath it signifying the terrifying torture she must endure. On ascending the ladder she saw her future reward as she was accepted into a great garden in which, surrounded by many white-robed people, a white haired man dressed as a shepherd sat milking sheep. He welcomed her to heaven. [Pass.Perp I.3] In her second vision she saw her young brother Dinocrates who had died of a face cancer when still a boy. He was trying to drink from a fountain of water which he could not reach. Realizing his torment, Perpetua prayed for him. In her next vision she saw him clean, happy, able to drink the water and to play. [ibid II.3-4] Perpetua's concern for the salvation of her family members, even after their death, was a feature which appealed particularly to later saints, especially female saints, although Dinocrates' suffering may owe more to pagan ideas of Hades than it does to a Christian hell. Her final vision prepared her for the trial before her, promising her manly vigour in her fight with the devil through spiritual and corporeal mascularization. The Passio concludes with the vision of Saturus, who had brought Perpetua and her companions to Christianity. His vision was of an airborne ascent into the eastern sky in which they were carried by angels until they reached a beautiful garden with rose trees and other flowers. From the trees in the garden the leaves fell continuously. Then they reached a place with walls as if of light, and there their faces were caressed by the hand of a white-haired man with a youthful countenance. [ibid. IV]

Accounts of earlier persecutions likewise linked suffering with visions. The second century Polycarp of Smyrna foretold his martyrdom in a fire, and heard a voice from heaven instructing him to "play the man."[52]

In early ascetic literature visions brought both consolation and temptation to the solitary hermit. Athanasius' Vita Antonii recounted Anthony's experiences in the desert, and was full of advice as to how best to recognize the origin of visions and how to conduct oneself in the face of them. When monks came to Anthony for advice, we are told, "they would learn of the good fruit that the ascetic life brings and that often visions are granted as a compensation for its hardships."[V.Antonii 66] Many of the views expressed by St.Anthony, especially on the problem of demonic visions, are reiterated by St.Augustine and by later hagiographers. St.Anthony's

insights were based on a life-time of ascetic experience in which visions were commonplace, and Augustine, like many others, learned their reverence for the ascetic life through reading about St.Anthony's life. But Anthony was not immune to the ecclesiastical controversies of his day. Athanasius was careful to place his hero's ascetic life within a framework of unimpeachable orthodoxy, as he himself defined it, and in St.Anthony, Athanasius found a champion against heretics with whom he himself disputed: "...he never had anything to do with the Meletian schismatics, aware of their wickedness and apostasy from the beginning. Nor did he have any friendly dealings with the Manichaeans or any other heretics, except only to admonish them to return to the true religion...he loathed the heresy of the Arians..."[53] Orthodoxy was especially important to emphasize when a saint pushed back the boundaries of asceticism and visionary familiarity with celestial beings, as Sulpicius Severus was also to recognize in writing the Life of St.Martin.

This brief overview of some of the oneirological works written prior to the fourth century, identifies some of the dynamics at work behind their production. Artemidorus was confident of an audience for his practical guide but in part compiled his dreambook to rejuvenate belief in the significance of dreams against an undercurrent of unidentified scepticism. Tertullian, writing in the same century, wrote on dreams to refute Gnostic and pagan 'errors' while at the same time promoting their value as evidence of Christ's unbroken promise that the Holy Spirit would guide the Christian community. He looked to scripture to support his belief in the relevance of the inspired dream to the church, and the visions of early Christian martyrs confirmed his belief in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the community. Meanwhile the church, which saw survival in terms of organizational and doctrinal unity, distrusted the concept of universal access to divine revelation reserving its religious significance to those who were pure in heart (i.e. orthodox) and to the bishops who inherited apostolic authority through spiritual descent. Augustine's views on dreams and visions have to be seen in the context of this rich tradition of dream-vision philosophy and theology expounded by pagan and Judaeo-Christian writers in the ancient world.

II. Visionary experience in the life of Augustine and his circle.

Augustine's views on the place of dreams and visions in the Christian's knowledge of God and the spiritual world, are dispersed throughout his considerable corpus of writings. From the views expressed in his spiritual autobiography the Confessions, in his City of God, and in his many letters and treatises, his deliberations on the subject demonstrate clearly that he stood both as heir, and as critic of an ancient tradition of pagan oneiromantic thought, which had discussed for centuries the place, purpose and causation of dream-visions in religious and everyday experiences. At the same time he was a pastor, dedicated to eradicating pagan superstition which was often associated with dreams and visions. In this section I shall examine Augustine's thought on the subject of dreams and visions in two broad contexts. In the first I shall examine his documentation of visions that foretold and express his own spiritual quest, and his conversion to Christianity. In the second I shall focus on Augustine's correspondence with episcopal colleagues and the pastoral concerns about belief in dreams and visions expressed in it.

i. The voice of experience: Augustine's spiritual quest, and Monica.

Augustine was born and raised as a Christian by his mother Monica in the provincial north African town of Thagaste. From his youth to mature adulthood he embarked on a spiritual quest which led him first to repudiate the religion of his childhood, and led him back again to catholic Christianity. His attitude towards dreams and visions was profoundly influenced by the history of his own spiritual development.

Moving to Carthage in his teens Augustine came into contact with philosophy (in the form of Cicero's Hortensius) which inspired in him a love of wisdom, a wisdom he did not as yet associate with Christianity. The death of a close friend who embraced Christianity on his death bed turning on Augustine for his irreverence, was the first profound jolt to his complacency.[Conf. IV.4] Through other friends he came to interest himself in astrology and Manicheism, and he became an adherent of the latter.[54] Augustine's first major disappointment with the Manichees, a religious sect founded on the revelations of the Persian Mani, came with the long awaited arrival in Carthage of the Manichean bishop Faustus, who could not satisfy Augustine's urgent inquiries or dispel his doubts.[Conf. V.6-7] Nevertheless when he moved to Rome he still consorted with the Manichees.[Conf. V.10]

Soon after his arrival in Italy he repudiated astrology [Conf. VII.6], and shortly thereafter repudiated Manicheism.[Conf. V.10, 14]

Augustine moved next to Milan to take up the post of teacher of literature and elocution where he met Ambrose, the city's bishop. It was in Milan that he came into contact with Neoplatonic writings which were to provide an important stepping stone to his acceptance of catholic Christianity.[Conf. VII.9] And in the example of Victorinus, a distinguished and famous pagan philosopher who made public his conversion to Christianity, he found the courage to overturn his own publically pronounced views. [Conf. VIII.2-5] Soon thereafter Augustine met an African Christian who told him about the Egyptian monk Anthony and how his story had inspired its readers to undertake the ascetic life.[Conf. VIII.6] And finally, among his closest friends at Cassiacum, Augustine faced his gravest spiritual crisis.[Conf. VIII.12]

Augustine's spiritual torments, his despair and ultimately his submission to the religion of his childhood was never a solitary quest. Always he was surrounded by friends, being influenced by them and influencing them in his turn. But ultimately the one person whose influence was to make the most enduring mark was the one closest to him and whose advice he had disregarded for so many years; his mother Monica. And Monica believed in dreams.

Monica.

Monica, it emerges from Augustine's Confessions, was a careful observer of her dreams, able to distinguish between those which were divinely inspired and those which were the product of her own yearnings. One of her veridical dreams foretold Augustine's eventual conversion to Christianity. At the time of her dream, however, he did not accept Monica's interpretation of it. In the dream, Monica saw herself standing on a wooden rule crying for her son's soul when an angel came to her and in answer to her fears indicated where Augustine stood, beside her on the rule (regula lignea). Augustine tried impertinently to interpret her dream otherwise, claiming that one day she would reach the level he was then at. Monica retorted, Non enim mihi dictum est: ubi ille, ibi et tu, sed: ubi tu, ibi et ille.[Conf. III.11] Augustine was impressed by her answer, and as for the dream, he asked God, Unde hoc, nisi quia erant aures tuae ad cor eius, o tu bone omnipotens...? In the very

passage where Augustine recounted his conversion in the garden at Cassiacum, he recalled Monica's dream and wrote of his new place standing on the regula fidei.[Conf. VIII.12]

Although Augustine never relates that he experienced a prophetic dream himself, and although he often questioned how true visions were to be distinguished from false visions, he never doubts Monica's ability to distinguish between them. As Augustine faced the prospect of marriage, he asked Monica to ask God for a vision concerning its future. No vision was forthcoming on this marriage which would never take place, except that Monica videbat quaedam vana et phantastica, quo cogebat impetus de hac re satagentis humani spiritus, et narrat mihi non cum fiducia qua solet cum tu demonstrabas ei, sed contemnens ea. Dicebat enim discernere se nescio quo sapore, quem verbis explicare non poterat, quid interesset inter revelantem te ad animam suam somniantem.[Conf.VI.13] This ability to discern dreams that were divinely inspired from somnia vana, was a gift granted only to those truly guided by the Holy Spirit, and Augustine never doubted Monica's simple faith and piety, or her enormous trust in divine guidance.

Augustine's careful description of Monica's prophetic dreams in his Confessions, heavy with biblical and literary allusions, and their strategic use in the work to signal the "alpha and omega" of his conversion, has brought to the fore questions about their historical accuracy.[55] It seems to me, however, that for Augustine the impact of his mother's character with regard to dreams and visions can be discerned far beyond the time of his conversion and his interest in the divine signs which presaged it. Many years after Monica's death, writing to Paulinus of Nola in refutation of the pagan idea that the souls of the dead returned to the dreams of the living (a belief particularly associated with the cult of the dead), Augustine had a very personal point to make which relied on his knowledge of Monica's character, and his certainty of her love for him even beyond the grave. To Paulinus he questions poignantly: Si rebus viventium interessent animae mortuorum, et ipsae nos, quando eas videmus, alloquerentur in somnis; ut de aliis taceam, me ipsum pia mater nulla nocte deseret, quae terra marique secuta est ut mecum viveret. Absit enim ut facta sit vita feliciore crudelis, usque adeo ut quando aliquid angit cor meum, nec tristem filium consoletur, quem dilexit unice, quem nunquam voluit molestum videre.[De cura.13(16)] Augustine's rejection of the popular superstition that the

souls of the dead returned to haunt the dreams of the living did not rest on this circumstance alone, but Monica's absence from his dreams confirmed this conviction.

Notwithstanding his belief in his mother's dreams, at the heart of Augustine's attitude towards dreams and visions was his belief that knowledge of God and spiritual truths could not be gleaned reliably from images. In his De Genesi ad litteram, he subordinated the imaged vision to that intellectual understanding of God that required no image.[56] The imaged vision, both that seen through the body (corporeal vision) and through the mind's eye (spiritual vision) he considered vulnerable to demonic illusion or human self-delusion. The intellectual realm perceived by the non-imaged intellectual vision, by contrast, was that which was most pure, the understanding that was most clear, the nadir at which deception was not possible, and thus the repository of Truth. Through an ecstatic removal from corporeal and spiritual senses, the divinity might be touched by the intellectual vision. Augustine's famous vision experienced in his mother's company at Ostia, describes precisely a spiritual ascent beyond the senses. Ostia.

Shortly before his mother's death at Ostia, Augustine and Monica while meditating on the blissful life of the saints, were whipped up to ecstatic union with God. As they surveyed their passage they ascended three levels of creation: ...erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in id ipsum perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram. And so they passed beyond the material realm of corporeal vision. Et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indificientis, ubi pascis Israhel in aeternum veritate pabulo... They had now broken through the confines of the soul and spiritual vision to reach Wisdom's own abode, the intellect perceived by intellectual vision: ibi vita sapientia est, per quam fiunt omnia ista, et quae fuerunt et quae futura sunt,...Et dum loquimur et inhiamus illi, attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis... [Conf.IX.10]

After this fleeting pinpoint of joy, both he and Monica returned to the sound of their own voices, entering once more the material realm. Augustine regarded this intellectual vision as the spiritual first-fruits (primitias spiritus) of his conversion.[57]

In book ten of the Confessions Augustine embarked on an assessment of the senses, their capacity for sin, and the extent of his own dependence on them. As each sense was mentioned, he confessed his involvement with it and renounced it. The senses too participated in the corporeal, spiritual and intellectual categorization. Augustine was confident in renouncing the corporeal senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, marshalled by the soul to impinge on the material world. Renouncing the spiritual sense of memory was the next obstacle to be overcome in order to reach God. The images stored in the memory were those employed by angels and demons in order to introduce into man's soul a spiritual vision, just as Augustine was subsequently to describe in book XII of his De Genesi ad litteram. The vast chambers of the memory were but the spiritual stage, the preserve of animals as well as humans, so they must be passed by.[Conf. X.17] Within the confines of memory itself Augustine surveyed the material, spiritual and intellectual memory in search of God but did not find him there.[Conf.X.25] And where did Augustine find God? Both above him and within him; Et ecce intus eras, et ego foris... [Conf.X.27]

And so it was that after the rigour of self-examination (clearly influenced by the Neoplatonic teaching on the purification of the senses), Augustine refound the senses he had renounced, each now modified by God: Vocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam, coruscasti, splenduisti et fugasti caecitatem meam, flagrasti et duxi spiritum et anhelo tibi, gustavi et esurio et sitio, tetigisti me, et exarsi in pacem tuam.[Conf. X.27]

The three levels of the senses, the three perceptual faculties must in this world be ascended in order to reach the vision of God. In the next they will be combined.[58] Having disposed of the corporeal senses and the memory, the final renunciation was the intellectual sense, especially intellectual pride. On reading Cicero's Hortensius at the age of nineteen, Augustine had learned to long for wisdom for its own sake and not merely as a means towards professional advancement. He had learned to love philosophy and its search for eternal wisdom. This love, he recognized, had been an important step in his learning to love God.[Conf. III.4] Now he rejected wisdom and philosophy as an end, prefering rather to see it as a means towards knowing God who is Wisdom himself. He reviled curiosity as an indulgence of the mind, delving into matters which distracted him from God. Even when employed within the margins of religion, inquisitiveness had an

unhealthy and disruptive effect, inciting man to ask and look for signs from God for the gratification of curiosity.[Conf. X.35]

Augustine included the desire for visions as an unhealthy product of pride in knowledge for he saw the dangers to which his own pride in learning had brought him close. There were those who solicited the help of angels and demons to curry favour with God, and their reward was curious visions and delusions.[Conf. X.42] The love of learning and intellectual pride was a fault Augustine most acutely recognized in himself, and the misery it had brought him. Worldly learning could not bring him true happiness, he concluded on observing a happy beggar in Milan [Conf. VI.6], and on hearing about the blessed life of the untutored hermit Anthony and his African followers.[Conf.VIII.6] Only by rejecting the knowledge of the world as an aim, while treasuring it as a means, could the seeker come to a true understanding of God, and party to the fullness of wisdom.

Augustine's examination and rejection of the corporeal, spiritual and intellectual senses, rising even above the intellect to God beyond, shows clear evidence of Neoplatonic thinking, especially in the placement of God above the nous. The conception of spiritual development in the form of an ascent from the lower to the higher, and in its internalization from the external to the internal, was the hallmark of this philosophy.[59] The Neoplatonic idea of the purification of the senses as a means towards attaining spiritual maturity, became in Augustine's work both a confession and an exorcism [60].

ii. Augustine's correspondents on visions.

If Augustine's theories of perception had its bearings in Christian Neoplatonic philosophy, Augustine's reflections on the subject of dreams and visions in the context of the Christian life arose primarily from his pastoral office and his prominence in the north African Christian community.

Dreams and visions were a prominent feature in the religious experience of a large spectrum of north African society. Dreams concerning the souls of the dead were an important element in the propagation of the pagan cult of the dead, widespread in north Africa as in the rest of the Mediterranean world.[61] Augustine, as bishops before and after him, was involved in drawing up ecclesiastical legislation to stem the infiltration of pagan beliefs and practices into the Christian community.[62] The need for a

Christian exposition on the subject of visions was keenly felt. On Augustine's completion of his De Genesi ad litteram of which book XII touched on dreams and visions, his friends, and episcopal colleagues inundated him with correspondence on the subject. Their interest reflected a growing momentum in miraculous events centred on the shrines of saints springing up all over Numidia many of which involved cures through visions.[63] And in addition to these miracles, further tales were being brought to the notice of the bishops and clergy from the monastic communities in their dioceses and from pious laypeople. Bishops like Evodius of Uzalis wanted answers to suggestive occurrences which would satisfy both their own theological curiosity as well as providing pastoral guidance for the expectations raised in their congregations by such events.

Evodius, bishop of Uzalis.

One of Augustine's most insistent correspondents on the subject of visions was bishop Evodius of Uzalis, one of Augustine's closest friends. Circa 414, just before Augustine's treatise on Genesis was complete, Evodius wrote two letters to Augustine concerning visions of which only the second survives.[64] In his letter Evodius related a recent case in which a twenty-two year old youth who was his secretary died and then appeared in a dream to a widow of Uzalis, a dream in which his blameless life was seen to be rewarded. The youth appeared to have been chaste and virtuous, according to the testimony of others, but his life was otherwise unexceptional.[65]

One might have expected Evodius' first question to centre on the dream's credibility, and its interpretation. Instead, Evodius was concerned about death and judgement. On the young man's death Evodius described his feeling of great joy, as if the youth's soul had entered Evodius' body infusing it with brightness. This experience led Evodius to wonder about the mobility of the soul. Is the soul on leaving the physical body united with some other sort of body in order to travel to the other world? How will one soul (and hence its fate) be distinguishable from another? Evodius then supplies a tentative answer himself. Is it possible that the soul takes one of the body's four elements with it, for instance heat, by which means it could move? But how can the soul move without at least the sense of sight?

Augustine's answer, when it came, categorically rejected the idea that the soul leaves the body with a material body [Ep. 159] for the soul will not

need a body to 'see' any more than the physical body needs eyes to 'see' images in dreams.[Ep. 162] He also outlined in brief his ideas on the difference between images of reality and images of likenesses (similitudines), before referring Evodius to his forthcoming publication on the matter (book XII of his work on Gensis) which he would be able to consult as soon as it was corrected and published.[66]

Augustine answered Evodius' theological queries, but he did not approach the existential anguish voiced in the letter. Evodius' concern about death was that without some corporeal form, the soul would be helpless, without the senses which are its life. Death would be too great an annihilation: Satis autem me perturbat, si soporem quemdam accipit animus ipse, ne talis sit, qualis cum dormit in corpore constitutus, quasi sepultus, et in spe tantum vivens: caeternum nihil habens, nihil sciens; maxime si somnio nullo pulsetur. Quae res vehementer terret, et quasi exstinctum indicat animum.[Ep. 158.7] Rather than confront such a prospect, Evodius would prefer to think of a sociable soul consoled by friends, a soul totus serenus effectus est, in tranquillitate sine tentatione positus, videat quod desideravit, amplexetur quod amavit. Recordetur quoque et amicorum, et quos iam praemisserat... Evodius wanted to think of a soul in a form in which it could recognize its friends and reconstitute the happinesses of human society in the world to come. His experience of joy at the death of the young man in his community and the dream confirming his blessed state filled Evodius with hope that even in its immediate context, death might hold such promise.

Evodius had further questions concerning the souls of the dead and their habit of returning to the homes and to the dreams of the living, sometimes forewarning them of their death. Augustine's reply scorned such speculative beliefs. He returned to the comment made in the De Genesi ad litteram that men are quick to form opinions on unusual phenomena while being content to remain in ignorance of ordinary experiences. How may the visions of the deluded be distinguished from those of the holy when they are described in like manner? Augustine will not indulge Evodius' desire to seek comfort in pleasant images which are founded only on such vision accounts. Dreams and visions are not for Augustine a means to true knowledge concerning the fate and nature of the soul after death, even if in certain dreams concerning the living, like Monica's dreams, he can concede the hand of God.

Yet the connection perceived by contemporaries between dream-visions and

their implications for the fate of the soul at death did not abate. Where Augustine saw reflected in the visionary experience the architecture of divine creation, his episcopal colleagues like Evodius and Paulinus of Nola saw comfort in the face of death. The connection of the two themes continued for centuries to come.[67]

Paulinus of Nola.

In response to his friend and correspondent Paulinus of Nola in 421, Augustine found himself addressing death and visions once again.[68] This letter known as De cura pro mortuis gerenda was primarily concerned with how the honourable care for the dead affected their otherworldly rest and salvation. It was Augustine's view that the dead were beyond physical suffering and therefore any ministrations performed for them were primarily for the consolation of the mourners and out of respect for the person when he was alive. Furthermore Christians should not be found to be less respectful in this matter than pagans. The question of visions arose because it was quite common for people to have dream and vision visitations from the dead demanding honourable burial.

To Paulinus, Augustine commented frankly on the human weakness from which such a predisposition to belief arose. Sic autem infirmitas humana sese habet, ut cum in somnis quisque viderit mortuum, ipsius animam se a videre arbitretur; cum autem vivum similiter somniaverit, non eius animam, neque corpus, sed hominis similitudinem sibi apparuisse non dubitet... [69] He was concerned furthermore to emphasize the theological errors which had arisen in Christian and pagan minds from familiarity with dream accounts of this nature, especially in literary works like the Aeneid. Yet Augustine was also aware that martyrs were reported to have saved cities through visionary visitations, as St.Felix was said to have saved Nola. Augustine therefore conceded that although true visitations from the dead were impossible, angels might assume the recognizable forms of the martyrs in order to carry out divine plans and accrue reverence to the saint.

Conclusion.

Augustine's writings on visionary matters spanned forty years. Different facets of the visionary experience were explored through varying literary forms. In the autobiography of his conversion he showed reverence

for his mother's prophetic dreams foreshadowing his conversion. In the final book of the De Genesi ad litteram he examined philosophic questions in the context of a Neoplatonically inspired cosmography of perception. In his letters to his friends Augustine found himself brought to consider the role of visions in the Christian community, and the danger of pagan beliefs suggested by a too ready credence in visions of the dead. And finally, in the Civitate Dei he sought to place the prophetic vision in the context of Christian history emphasizing God's external agency through angelic powers while dismissing the natural divinatory power accredited to the soul by pagan philosophers.

Yet despite the many contexts in which Augustine examined the visionary experience, and a mellowing of his attitude towards miraculous events in later life [70], his thinking on visionary issues remained remarkably consistent. He would not countenance the belief that the souls of the dead returned to the dreams of the living, nor did he encourage unfounded speculation on life after death based on dreams and vision accounts. His schematization of the visionary experience into three categories in which the lower was always subservient to the higher, placed a theoretical check on the imaged, spiritual vision which fueled interest and error. Augustine never relaxed the Christian's responsability to seek God through scripture rather than in visions, and by reserving the title of prophet and interpreter to the intellectual vision, he provided a theoretical framework, based on what he viewed as the natural order of divine creation, to uphold the imperative felt by himself and church leaders before him to subordinate visionary accounts to the authority of the church.

Chapter 2. VISIONS IN GALLIC HAGIOGRAPHY TO THE SIXTH CENTURY.

In the century after Augustine there is a significant decline in works touching on the issue of dreams and visions from a theoretical angle. There is certainly no work to compare with Augustinian writings on the subject. At the same time, as the Lives of the Saints gained a literary ascendancy in Gaul, the substance of dreams and visions were increasingly recorded.

Fifth century Gaul witnessed an explosion in hagiographic writings, which recorded the life and deeds of men and women dedicated to God, be they eremite, coenobite, or cleric. Each category found their disciples who often in turn became their hagiographers, convinced that their protagonists had lead lives pleasing to God. Yet the daily lives of these solitary eaters of herbs and roots, more notable for the activities they shunned than for those they pursued, made for monotonous reading. The very foundation upon which these saints built their reputation, that being the passing of every virtuous hour, presented the hagiographer, who was eager to discover and expose to his reader evidence of the saint's service to the community and to God, with a substantial literary challenge. And so it was that alongside miraculous healings and sudden conversions, the dreams and visions of the saints, and of those around them, aided the hagiographer in charting the saint's spiritual course, while giving substance to their claims of intimacy with the divine.

In this chapter I shall examine dream and vision accounts in hagiographic literature prior to the sixth century, especially Sulpicius Severus' Life of St.Martin of Tours and the anonymous Vita Patrum Jurensium. I will focus on the way in which their visions reflected ideas of spiritual authority, while at the same time expressing many of the spiritual and religious concerns of the period in which they were written.

I. Sulpicius Severus' Martinian Writings.

Very little is known of St.Martin's life beyond the publications of his disciple Sulpicius Severus.[1] It is Severus' selection and interpretation of Martin's activities which are presented to us in his Vita of the saint and in his other writings, making it often difficult to distinguish between views held by Martin and those held by his hagiographer. Consequently the following discussion of St.Martin's dreams and visions will be examined in

the context also of Severus' attitudes and agenda.

Sulpicius Severus was a young Gallo-Roman nobleman who converted to the ascetic life in his prime, and following the example of his friend Paulinus of Nola, dissolved his patrimony to live a life of ascetic poverty. His model for the ascetic life was the aged Martin whom he got to know three or four years before the saint's death, and whose biography he decided to write. His vision of St.Martin's sanctity, based on his knowledge of the saint and of others who knew him, outlived the objections of some contemporaries who challenged the historical fidelity of his biography. For Severus and the readers of his writings on St.Martin (which included three open letters and his Dialogues) St.Martin's life, works and miracles, came to define the Gallic saintly ideal. It was an ideal which clearly had its roots in the ascetic tradition made famous by Athanasius' Life of Anthony, a work familiar to both Martin and Severus. Like St.Anthony, Martin's ascetic life and spiritual purity gained him that spiritual sight whereby he could discern the devil's agency behind innocent facades.[2] Yet St.Martin is more than a pale Gallic reflection of an Egyptian ascetic hero. Religious and social conditions in Gaul were very different from those which framed Anthony's life and these differences are reflected in the hagiographic account of Martin's Life and its visions.

Severus on the Dream-Vision

Although in his Martinian writings Severus gave prominence to Martin's visionary experiences, especially those which spoke to issues of interest to him, he did not consider at any length how, or in what form, the visions occurred. Such information as he provides is usually brief. He notes, for example, that certain of Martin's visions came to him as a dream. Martin's vision of Christ after sharing his cloak with a beggar, was seen cum se sopori dedisset [VM 3.3], and he was admonitus per soporem that he should set out to convert his parents to Christianity.[VM 5.3] He makes no distinction between a vision which is waking and that experienced through a dream and he uses the term visio to describe the spiritual sight seen in both. Other visions are even less clearly described. Martin's encounter with the ghostly shade (umbram sordidam) of a brigand was merely seen on his turning to the left, ad laevam videt.[VM 11.4] The devil showed himself to Martin in visible form, visibilem se ei formis diversissimis ingerebat.[VM 21.5] And

later, disguised as Christ, the devil simply appeared to Martin one day in his cell.[VM 24.4]

Severus's knowledge of the specialized vocabulary used to describe dream-vision experiences is meagre. He never employs the term "ecstasy", although such a state is described in the tale of a monk who died without baptism but was then restored to life by St.Martin's prayers. The monk, Severus relates, used to tell that while his soul was out of his body, he was brought before a heavenly tribunal at which he was condemned to a gloomy place. He described the soul as casting off the body (corpore exutum).[VM 7.6]

Yet where Severus is relatively uninformative about the way Martin experienced his visions, he is precise about his own. In a letter to the deacon Aurelius, Severus related that in the early morning hours of the day of Martin's death, he was visited by the saint in a dream.[Ep 2] Every circumstance under which the dream came to him is explored, from his own state of mind before the dream, to the way in which sleep hovered above him as he dozed. These details, combined with the vision description itself, makes his description among the most comprehensive to have survived from late antiquity.

Severus relates that after the deacon Aurelius had visited him, he sat alone in his cell brooding on his fear of the day of Judgement and on the sad recollection of his sins. Exhausted by his grief, he rested his limbs on his bed. Sleep then overcame him (somnus obresit), a morning sleep which he describes as the kind which is light and uncertain, indecisively suspended over the limbs, such as is not the case in any other kind of sleep. The kind of sleep in which almost awake, you know youself to be sleeping: somnus obresit - qui, ut semper matutinis horis levior incertusque, ita suspensus ac dubius per membra diffunditur ut, quod in alio sopore non evenit, paene vigilans dormire te sentias... [Ep. 2]

In this description, Severus shows his familiarity with the time and circumstance considered optimal in the ancient world to receive a veridical dream. That is to say, when sleep is not so heavy that the mind succumbs to the body's need for rest. Although most often this kind of sleep is described as occurring at dawn, at the end of a natural period of sleep, Severus' morning doze provides the same set of circumstances. Severus' use of the word obresit recalls the ancient belief that divine sleep is an

externally imposed weight which temporarily incapacitates the body but makes receptive the mind.

Severus' description of the vision itself reveals the influence of a long oneiromantic tradition. As sleep overtook him, suddenly he seemed to see the holy bishop Martin, dressed in a white toga, face alight, with eyes like stars and his hair blazing red. Severus was able to recognize Martin from his outward appearance, without actually being able to look at him (an experience Severus admits to be difficult to explain). Martin's appearance, though recognizable, is clearly transfigured by his proximity to the divinity.[3] Martin's smile and blessing echo the iconography of ancient theophanies, while his white toga indicates the rank and purity of God's chosen.[4]

The first action of the vision is truly astonishing. Martin hands to Severus a copy of his Vita of the saint. J.Fontaine noted Severus' irreverence in substituting for the apocalyptic gesture of showing the celestial book, the proffering of his own publication! He associates this action in the vision to Severus self-appointed role as prophet of a Martinian apocalypse.[5] The pious parody which this scene poses, however, need not be as presumptuous as Fontaine suggests, if we look not at the iconography of the vision but rather to the context in which the vision occurred. Severus had drifted into sleep troubled by his thoughts on the Day of Judgement and his sins. It was a depressing thought for although he had written the biography of the saintly Martin, he had not yet taken the step of following Martin in true discipleship. In the dream, then, and in answer to his anxieties, Martin offered back to him, with spiritual irony, the portrait of a life which Severus' own skill had crafted. To a certain extent Martin endorsed Severus' book by this action, but more importantly, by returning to him Severus' own record of his life, he challenged Severus to follow him. This interpretation is confirmed if we turn to the end of the letter where Severus reveals to Aurelius the meaning of the vision. He writes that Martin showed that heaven is open to those who follow him, that he taught us where we should follow him, and instructed us where our hopes and thoughts should be directed.[Ep.2.17] This was the message of Martin's life, and its hagiographic portrayal in the Vita. It was a positive message of hope which Severus had not yet properly accepted into his own life.

Martin proceeded to bless Severus in the dream, repeating the name of

the Cross. Severus recalled that he stood transfixed, intent on the light as if he could not satisfy his desire to see Martin's face, until suddenly Martin was rapt up to heaven, traversing the immense vastness of the air until he was out of sight. The sudden break from Severus' intent gaze, to Martin's rapid movement heavenward, is similar to many descriptions of ecstatic states, although it should be noted that Severus never uses the precise term. The very final part of the dream-vision also recalls the common experience of dreams, for on seeing his friend, and Martin's disciple Clarus ascend heavenward after Martin, Severus tried to follow, but found that he could not move his limbs.

The final aspect to this vision account which should be mentioned here is the literary medium in which it is preserved. The dream-vision brings us closer to Severus' inner life than any other passage in his writings. The experience is recorded with a great amount of care and attention, as is his account of his emotional reaction to the vision. Severus opens up to his reader his most intense fears and his most cherished joy. Yet the narrative is in the form of a letter, the kind of open letter written to be read by a larger audience than its intended recipient. The public aspect of this personal account, gives the narrative an iconographic function which triggers associations with ancient theophanies. So while the psychological integrity of the account impresses on the reader the conviction that the dream is not simply a literary creation [6], the account nevertheless bears many indications of biblical and classical images, and the oneirological understanding of its author.

Demons and Angels

According to Severus' Life of the saint, dreams, visions and conversations with angels illuminated Martin's deeds and inner life. Severus tells us that Martin was in a constant state of prayer, praying even when he appeared to be doing something else. [VM 26,3-4] From his youth, Martin is depicted as attentive and responsive to his dreams. Not long after his conversion Martin was warned in a dream that he should return home to convert his pagan parents, and this he did although with mixed success. [VM 5,3; 6,3] It was also in a dream that Martin saw a vision of Christ dressed in the half-cloak which he had given to a beggar at Amiens. [VM 3,3] This vision did not make Martin proud, we are told, but enabled him to recognize God's

goodness. Although he was not yet baptised, Martin had fulfilled Christ's call to serve the poor, which early Christians saw completed in conversion to the ascetic life. In his later life, Severus recorded, Martin was often visited in his cell by angels who conversed with him.[VM 21,1] Some of the accounts must have originated with Martin. Others were the reports of outsiders, such as the monks who while standing outside his cell heard Martin conversing with angels within.

From the time of his decision to lead a holy life, St.Martin found himself beset by demonic abuse. Severus portrayed Martin as the hero of a lifelong personal struggle with Satan, ready to pitch his battle lines wherever the devil makes his appearance, in dreams, visions, in his cell or on the open road, in fearful form or in the deceiving guise of a familiar face. The devil makes his first appearance in the Life as Martin is on the road to Milan, having set out in response to a dream instructing him to convert his parents to the Christian life. The context is important, for in this scene Martin is embarked on his first proselytizing mission (to his parents). The Devil will be seen in different guises in the Life conspiring to deter Martin from his Christianizing mission, and his message to Martin on the road to Milan set the stage for conflict in the whole work: "Wherever you go, or whatever you set out to do, the Devil will always oppose you."[VM 6,2]

There is, however, a significant aspect to this encounter, and that is the Devil's human form. Severus states that on the road to Milan the Devil appeared to Martin humana specie adsumpta, following this with Martin's retort, "The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what Man may do to me." Is Martin's enemy mankind? Certainly not, but Severus is careful to sketch at every turn of his narrative, how the Devil is seen at work in human activities. His focus on the human face of malevolence, alerts the reader early on in the Life to the fact that demonic agency will be seen to be operating behind Martin's personal conflicts.

Historians have been intrigued by what such episodes reveal about the mentality of an age which sees the Devil so clearly in its fellow man. J.Fontaine brought two strands together when he suggested that Satan is both a personal facet of the spiritual perception of the believer, while at the same time, the Devil's depicted deeds can often be seen to conform to historical events.[7] That is to say, that while seeing the Devil is often

the individual's response to human malevolence, those occasions when the Devil appears or enters into dialogue with the individual his identity can also correspond to known people and genuine conflicts in society. It is in accepting the historical basis for many of the views attributed to the Devil in Severus' Martinian writings that the discussion of contemporary ecclesiastical conflicts will be examined below.

While the historian may look for the human agency behind demonic apparitions, saints looked for the demonic agency behind human, animal and supernatural activities. Martin, like Anthony before him, was gifted with that spiritual sight, that power of discerning spirits, which enabled him to penetrate the external appearance of any phenomenon and spy its spiritual origin. Such a vision, the gift of the Holy Spirit, was the endowment of the pure of heart, honed by a life of obedience and asceticism. It was the exercise of this gift which separated saints like Martin from the deluded would-be prophets who were all too common at the time. Severus' portrayal of Martin's visionary life is dedicated to making this distinction clear. He had the challenge of portraying an active visionary saint while at the same time warning that the coming of the Anti-Christ was at hand, a time which was associated with the rise of false-prophets. Consequently we are furnished with a number of narratives in which the claims of false prophets are shown to be exposed by Martin's discerning vision, or by the threat of encountering it.

Martin's reputation for seeing to the heart of the matter was enough to deflate even the most ambitious and presumptuous of claims. At Clarus' monastery, close to Marmoutier, a would-be prophet, Anatolius tried to convince his fellow monks that he spoke regularly with angels, and that messengers came and went between himself and God. He presented himself to the community in a white tunic of remarkable brightness, claiming that it had been conferred on him by Christ as a sign of his God-given power. The man's claims caused some consternation in the community and so Clarus decided to take him to Martin to assess his claims. In the course of the journey, even before they had reached Martin, the white tunic disappeared, along with the man's presumption. So great was the Martin's reputation for discernment, that the threat alone of being brought into Martin's presence was enough for the demonic fantasia to be unmasked.[VM 23]

Less emphasized, but no less significant, is Martin's ability to discern

the presence of good, or potential good, in evil. This is true not only of Martin's boast that he could secure salvation even for the Devil [VM 22,5], but also in its human dimension, Martin could see the potential physical and spiritual health of a leper whom he kissed, curing him and restoring the outcast to the community. [VM 18,3]

But it was Martin's power to see evil and the political currency that was made of it, rather than his power to see good, which drew most attention from his contemporaries. Tales of Martin's daily visions and explosive encounters with the Devil and his minions did not receive uniform acceptance. Martin, it seemed, saw demons everywhere, sitting on the shoulder of the wicked Count Avitianus, sitting on the back of a disturbed cow, or calling from the crags around his cell announcing the arrival of his enemy Brictius. The reports of such goings on, not surprisingly, aroused in some quarters suspicion and disbelief.

Martin's most outspoken critic was the presbyter Brictius, a one-time disciple of Martin's, who ridiculed Martin's visionary life as the ravings and delusions of a senile old man.[8] Brictius seems not to have been alone in his scepticism. Severus admits as much when he states that belief in such mystical events was difficult even for himself and the monks at Martin's monastery, so that only the quality of Martin's life and spiritual powers compelled belief: Nam nisi inaestimabilem vitam adque virtutem Martinus egisset, nequaquam apud nos tanta gloria praeditus haberetur. [Dial II.13]

In the case of Brictius' attacks, the question is how far the criticisms levelled at Martin depended on rejection of the ascetic's visionary mentality, and how far comments about Martin's delusions were simply part and parcel of Brictius' opposition to Martin on other grounds. It has been suggested that Brictius' attacks were motivated by his belonging to a faction in the Tours clergy, possibly Felician, which was opposed to Martin.[9] This seems likely in view of his subsequent election to the See of Tours, on Martin's death. But it is also clear that tales of Martin's visions repelled certain elements in the clergy. Coming from a man with little education, Martin's communication with angels, demons and the ghostly shades of the deceased seemed too close to superstitions of the pagan rustici to invite respect from the cultured clergy.

Whatever its precise source, Brictius' attack on Martin as a credulous and demented old man, stung Severus to defensiveness where Martin's visionary

experiences were concerned. His criticisms was one more reason why Severus was inclined to give prominent space to accounts in which Martin was seen to debunk false visionary claims. The case of the false prophet Anatolius is one such occasion. Another will be discussed at greater length below in a different context, and that is the occasion when Martin discerned the demonic agency behind an apparent vision of Christ.

Severus linked Anatolius' case with the wider phenomenon of false prophets and the coming of the Anti-Christ. In Spain a young man had claimed first to be Elijah, and then Christ, and a Spanish bishop named Rufus had believed in him, worshipping him as is if he were God. For that reason, Severus adds, he was deposed. In the East, another man claimed to be John the Baptist and was believed by many.[VM 24,1-3]

From these references, Severus' thinking on the subject of visions and their link to spiritual authority is clear. In the first place he demonstrates how endowing visionary claims with spiritual authority can lay the Christian open to demonic delusion. Secondly, that Martin can be relied upon to be able to discern the true spiritual origin of visions, in contrast to other church leaders. This latter point ensures that Martin's evaluation of a vision can be trusted, and by extension, that the stories of his communication with angels and saints cannot be dismissed as the ramblings of an aging mind.

Martin and Monasticism.

Although a bishop in later life, Martin was first and foremost a monk, and his dedication to a life of asceticism so often stressed in the Life, is the mainstay of his religious persona. Severus lovingly describes Martin's privations, for the saint is persevering in abstinence and fasts, able in keeping vigils and prayers day and night, eating and sleeping only as nature demanded.[VM 26,2]

In Severus' Vita Martini we are fortunate in having a document which sets out monastic ideals at that very juncture in Gallic history when monasticism was being introduced into Gaul. Even if Severus' Martinian writings were not so extraordinary in their skill and range, they would have a singular importance by virtue of this fact alone. For beyond their commentary on the disputes of the day, the Martinian writings also sketch a rôle for monasticism within the Christian community at a time when it was in

the process of formation.

The introduction of Martinian monasticism was not smooth, for Martin's ascetic rigorism and other aspects of his monastic philosophy drew criticism from certain quarters. In the eyes of some Gallic bishops, Martin's extreme asceticism smacked of Priscillianism, and it is no doubt in response to this suspicion that Severus carefully remarks that in addition to being persevering he was also moderate in abstinence (temperamentum in abstinentia).[VM 26,2]

One important vision account related in the Life addresses precisely the issue of ascetic rigorism and its role in monastic ideology. As we shall see, vision places Martin in the middle of a dialogue concerning the admittance to the monastic community of those who had lapsed after baptism.

Severus relates that one day, as some of the brothers in Martin's monastery were standing outside his cell, they heard him being upbraided by the devil for having received into the community monks who had transgressed since baptism.[VM 22,3] Martin retorted that by desisting from further sin and undertaking a better life in the monastery, the transgressors' faults were absolved. The devil continued to argue for a stricter code of conduct in which God's mercy was not available to the lapsed. Martin then made his famous boast, that even if the Devil himself renounced his evil deeds, Martin would guarantee his salvation.[10]

Although set within the framework of a demonic apparition, and hence into the traditional literary mould of confrontation between the saint and the Devil, it is clear that the issues raised by this episode are precisely the type which dogged early ascetic communities. An important issue of the day was the question of ascetic rigorism. Severus distances Martin from too great a rigorism by attributing to the Devil the desire for an overly strict definition of those souls eligible to be saved. Severus was interested in juxtaposing Martin's orthodoxy with the potential disruption inherent in the strict values of Novatianism and Priscillianism.

The vision's primary focus, however, is its discussion of rehabilitating the lapsed while at the same time maintaining within the monastic community certain standards of Christian purity. In Christian antiquity the office of baptism was often reserved for the later stages of the Christian's life because the consequences of sin for salvation were considered far greater after baptism than they were before. St.Anthony, it may be remembered,

rebuked the demons who tried to tally his faults from birth, but permitted them to count them from the time of his baptism.[V.Antonii 65] The lapsed discussed in this vision, however, had been guilty of serious wrongdoing, probably to the extent of having committed "capital" or "mortal" sins.[11] Martin was essentially proposing that entry into the monastic life was like baptism, a commitment to the pursuit of spiritual perfection, and that by undertaking the ascetic life, post-baptismal sins were washed away. Martin's stance in this episode forges a philosophy or interpretation of the role of the monastery in society. It offers to the reader a definition of monasticism which focuses on the ongoing nature of pursuit of spiritual perfection. Martin's decision to admit into his community the grievously imperfect, therefore, charted a role for monasticism within the Christian community which could be set alongside ecclesiastical ritual (baptism) as a purgation and hence a route to salvation.

Martin and the Episcopate.

In contrast to the wealth of information supplied by Severus on Martin's ascetic practises, and despite the fact that his description of Martin draws on stories from the time when he was already a bishop, Severus records few details about Martin's official functions as a bishop. Martin is the ideal bishop precisely because he remained at heart a monk with monastic virtues: plenus auctoritatis et gratiae, inplebat episcopi dignitatem, ut non tamen propositum monachi virtutemque desereret. [VM 10,2] Even as bishop, Martin attempted to retain a semblance of his monastic life, building a cell next to the episcopal church, and then moving out of the city to establish a monastery close by.[VM 10]

Severus emphasizes the lengths to which Martin went in eschewing sacerdotal office. As a young man, Martin had protested strenuously against the desire of Hilary of Poitiers to ordain him as deacon, being finally induced from his sense of humility to accept the humblest order of exorcist.[VM 5,1-2] When Martin was elected to the important see of Tours, Severus relates that he had to be taken there as if held in custody. No mere episcopate should be seen to honour such an exceptional man. Although there must have been important episcopal support for Martin, Severus contrasts the unified desire of the people to elect him bishop, with a small coterie of bishops who opposed his election. Severus depicts this episcopal opposition

as a demonic plot, foiled by a miracle.[VM 9]

In his Martinian writings Severus betrays an attitude towards the ecclesiastical establishment, especially the episcopate, which is complex. Martin was for most of his Christian life a bishop. Yet in this office, Martin's activities attracted criticism from his fellow bishops. Already in the Life, written shortly before Martin's death, Severus has taken a very defensive stand against the episcopal hierarchy, for bishops, he tells us, were Martin's persecutors.[VM 27,3] Severus in turn denounces the bishops for making court to secular princes, especially to the Emperor Maximus, accusing them of debasing episcopal honour to mere clientship of the Emperor.[VM 20,1] In Martin alone, he claims, did the true bishop's apostolic authority remain: in solo Martino apostolica auctoritas permanebat.[VM 20,1] In the Dialogues written three or four years after the Life, Severus' position had hardened as his own work came under clerical attack. Indeed it is hard to find any redeeming aspect to the Gallic episcopate in Severus' works.

Severus' critical attitude notwithstanding, and despite Martin's resurrection miracles performed while still a monk, it is as bishop that Martin is seen to perform his most famous miracles in Severus' Life. He destroys pagan temples with celestial aid, he cures a paralytic in Trier, rids a slave and a cook from ferocious demons, and cures a leper with his kiss.[VM 12-18] When the bishop slips on some uneven steps and injures himself very badly, an angel appears to him and washes his wounds.[VM 19] At each turn, Martin is supported and protected by divine aid, and becomes in his turn a potent dispensor of divine mercy. However, in contrast to the propensity in later Gallic hagiography there are no miracles or visions in Martin's Life which seek to cast a special luminance upon the episcopal office per se. It is only insofar as Martin's activities can be seen to be episcopal in orientation, that these activities were informed and protected by his visionary capacity.

One facet of Martin's episcopal office which is emphasized in the Vita is his pastoral activities which, in addition to visitations, included his mission to Christianize the largely pagan countryside. In this arena Martin is shown to be protected by angels, sometimes bearing celestial arms. But whereas Christianization was to become a classic clerical and indeed episcopal endeavour in Gaul, Martin's initiative is shown by Severus to be an

aspect of his saintliness which long preceded his tenure as bishop. Martin's dream instructing him to visit his parents and convert them, set him on the road to his homeland. On his way he converted a brigand who had intended to rob him. This he did by speaking to him of God. Converting pagans by preaching was an important aspect to Martin's Christianizing efforts although sometimes overshadowed in Severus' narrative by the more dramatic razing of pagan temples. Martin's first conversions were thus carried out while as yet a simple monk, and as such they introduced early into the Vita a Christianizing theme which merely expanded in scope as Martin took on episcopal office.

In his portrayal of Martin as bishop, it is the source of Martin's spiritual authority which is Severus' primary concern, and he felt justified in drawing on the bad examples of Martin's episcopal contemporaries to make this distinction clear. For Severus, the episcopal office, which in secular terms denoted ecclesiastical authority, could be, and often was, the antithesis of spiritual authority. Bishops oversaw their flock by the apostolic authority vested in them by tradition and by the sacraments. Martin too had this authority vested in him by his ordination as bishop. Yet Severus is careful to distance the source of Martin's apostolic authority from the episcopal office. Already as a monk he considered Martin to have apostolic authority.[VM 7,7] Then as a bishop, and in contrast to his fellow bishops, Martin is seen to be an uncompromised vessel of apostolic authority.[VM 20,1] Severus was eager to assert by such examples that Martin's spiritual authority was not increased by his elevation to the episcopate.

Severus never claims that Martin's authority derived from his timely prophecies or visionary encounters. Rather it is through the pattern of Martin's daily life, his integrity as a bishop, and his virtues as a monk that Martin is considered righteous. It is in contrast to the deluded visions and claims to authority of would-be prophets that Martin is shown to have true authority and to be truly prophetic. Other bishops might be swayed by false prophets but Martin was not deluded by such self attributions.

Only on one occasion is Martin portrayed as active in seeking a divine revelation. Martin wanted to ascertain the identity of the individual worshipped by the countryfolk at a rural altar, a cult in fact legitimized by previous bishops. Since none of the clergy were able to say for certain to

which saint the altar was dedicated, Martin prayed that the one worshipped there might be revealed to him, (oravit... ut quis esset...ostenderet).[VM 11,4] The repulsive shade which appeared to Martin, a brigand in his former life, justified Martin's efforts by confessing his criminality. As a result of Martin's request for revelation, the cultic purity of the community was restored. Of all the visions which saintly clerics were to receive in Gallic and Merovingian hagiography, the ascertaining of shrine dedication and other issues of cult veneration was the most common. Indeed it is almost the only occasion upon which a saint is considered justified in requesting divine revelation. The reason for this being, in all probability, that such a request was for the benefit of the community as a whole, and not for the saint him- or herself.

Martin and Priscillian.

The promotion of monastic values, so clear in the vision narratives, is the common thread underlying all Severus' Martinian writings. Severus went further, however, in vilifying what he perceived as the worldly corruption of the clergy. Severus' anti-clerical fervour must be seen in the context of the ecclesiastical disputes of the day.

The last two decades of the fourth century was a time of tremendous change for the Gallic church. It was a time when the newly introduced monastic life-style, (at this juncture little more than a loosely organized eremetism), was expanding rapidly. Hermitages and monasteries were springing up outside the major cities of Gaul, often under the protection of the local bishop, and disciples flocked to join the holy men whose miracles and wisdom could not be hid despite their pursuit of solitude. Inevitably the presence of these largely autonomous communities of monks who shunned bishops along with other institutional authorities as being too much of the world, became in many instances a source of concern to the episcopate, not only in terms of the rival spiritual authority which they sometimes represented, but also their potential for heterodoxy. Such had already been the case in the East, and in the wake of Martin's introduction of monasticism to Aquitaine, similar tensions arose in Gaul.

Severus' work is one of our major sources for the bitterness which this tension produced in some quarters. In Martin was combined ascetic and cleric, and in Severus' portrait Martin's life and experience epitomised

precisely these tensions. The extent to which Severus's Martinian vision narratives offer a faithful testimony to a church in conflict will be given lengthier consideration below. What is very clear is that the tensions to which Severus refers took a personal toll on Martin, and it was in conveying this aspect of Martin's involvement in the church politics of the day that the dream-vision medium had most to contribute.

The issue which triggered these tensions in Gaul was the church's handling of the Spanish heretic Priscillian and his followers.[12] Priscillian was the charismatic leader of a layman's movement who preached a life of strict abstinence. He also attracted the support of a number of bishops both in Spain and Gaul, and was elevated to the bishopric of Avila in 381. Shortly thereafter he was deposed from his See by an opposing faction of bishops, who accused him of, among other things, over-zealous abstinence and holding beliefs akin to those of the Gnostics and Manichees.[13] After travelling through southern Aquitaine, where he and his ideas attracted an enthusiastic following, he continued on to Rome where he obtained the support of the Emperor Gratian and he and his followers were reinstated in their bishoprics. The affair did not end here, however, and after Gratian's death, the imperial usurper Magnus Maximus (383) ordered an episcopal Synod to be convened at Bordeaux, where Priscillian's teachings were in fact condemned as heretical in 384/5. Priscillian then appealed to the Emperor in Trier, as did his enemies, and soon saw his case moved to the secular courts where he found himself on trial no longer for heresy, but for sorcery, a capital crime. He was found guilty of the charge, and in 385 he was executed along with some of his male and female followers.

It was a case which appears to have had more to do with church politics than with theology.[14] Indeed, it is quite possible that Priscillian's views were no more unorthodox than those of many churchmen of his time. Severus himself attributed to Martin beliefs of dubious orthodoxy.[15] Martin was drawn into the affair, not as a defender of Priscillian's orthodoxy but in his call for leniency in dealing with the condemned man. On hearing of Priscillian's fate, Martin and his followers protested by refusing to enter into communion with those bishops who had been responsible for his death. The rift which his decision was making among the Gallic clergy concerned the bishops who once more appealed to imperial power, demanding of the Emperor that Martin be made to comply. The Emperor then delivered to

Martin an ultimatum. If Martin agreed to join in communion with his fellow bishops, and help consecrate as bishop of Trier the candidate Felix, he would not execute some of Gratian's followers, and he would recall military tribunes already sent out to Spain to root out remaining Priscillianists. In order to save lives, and to prevent a witch-hunt which, according to Severus, intended to identify Priscillianists only by their pale faces and ascetic garb, Martin complied.[Dial III.11]

The affair shook the Gallic church. Bishops were seen to use secular authorities to murder other bishops, and ascetic communities modelling themselves on the Holy men of the Egyptian desert found themselves in danger of being hounded as heretics.[16] Martin was shaken by the events, and Severus informs us that from that time forward he held aloof from gatherings of bishops.[Dial III.13]

The memory of these events, coupled with some further assaults on the monastic way of life in Severus' time, ensured that in his Martinian works, the friction which arose between ascetics and the ecclesiastical establishment were commented upon. This is especially evident in the vision accounts.

One vision account which comments directly on the aftermath of the Priscillianist affair, is related by Severus in his Dialogues. He records that after being coerced into communion with the guilty bishops, Martin left the city of Trier in profound sorrow. Once in the countryside, Martin retreated from his fellow travellers a little way to sit in solitude in a clearing in the woods. In that solitude, Martin grieved, first condemning himself for his actions, and then defending them. [Dial III.13] Then suddenly an angel appeared before him with the following message, "Merito... Martine conpugneris, sed aliter exire nequisti. Repara virtutem, resume constantiam, ne iam non periculum gloriae, sed salutis incurras."

This sorry tale points us in two directions. The first to the impact which this defeat might be seen to have on Martin's reputation (gloria) in the public sphere (a reminder that Martin's life as a bishop was a very public one), and the second to the very personal crisis occasioned by spiritual self-doubt.

In the public arena, Martin had to confront humiliation. Communing with the Felician bishops was a public retraction from what he regarded as a righteous position. In confronting the bishops and the Emperor, Martin had

gambled on his reputation, but the move had back-fired. Furthermore, the strong-arm tactics of the Emperor had prevailed over Martin's objections, and Holy Men were not accustomed to losing out in confrontation scenes with secular potentates. As a catechumen, Martin had bravely confronted the Emperor Julian, as Severus tells us, and announced that he would no longer fight in the Imperial army. Yet here was Martin, a bishop with a mighty reputation in the prime of his life, and he had been made to capitulate. The long journey back to Tours where he must confront his congregation and clergy, must have been a terrible ordeal.

At the same time, the angel identifies Martin's inner turmoil as the greater source for concern. One can almost see in this vision account, as Martin sits in solitude in the forest, drawn away from the company of his followers, an echo of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane; the inner destruction created by self-doubt to the point where salvation itself is imperilled. The angel does not give his approval for what Martin had done. (Severus, no less than Martin, believed that his action in communing with these bishops was wrong.) However, the angel conveys to Martin and to the reader of his story, divine acceptance of his compromised action.

In purely functional terms, the vision's accomplishment is its ability to set Martin's capitulation into a broader context than that of a single defeat, one in which his spiritual integrity can be maintained. However, the way in which the vision is narrated, with its echo of Jesus' suffering, creates a very moving episode, and better conveys to its audience a deep understanding of the tragedy of the moment than all Severus' tirades against the clergy. Severus' comment that Martin felt a diminution of his spiritual powers after this time rings true to the impression given in the account of Martin's disconnection from the source of his spiritual strength (<u>virtus</u>): confidence in the righteousness of his mission.

<u>The Christ Vision, true and false: a conflict in images</u>.

We have already seen how Severus was careful to distance Martin from Priscillianist ideas, by emphasizing his <u>moderate</u> abstinence, and by placing in the mouth of the Devil the rigorist sentiments which would proceed from zealous asceticism. However, while concerned to distance Martin from extreme asceticism, Severus was equally determined to describe in lurid terms the demonic element in secular ambitions such as was often vaunted by the higher

clergy. This is particularly evident when we juxtapose two vision accounts in the Vita Martini. The first is Martin's vision of Christ, and the second his vision of the Devil masquerading as Christ.

Martin is accredited with only one true vision of Christ by Severus. It is the most famous story related in the Vita Martini. While still a cathecumen, Martin came across a beggar outside the city of Amiens. The winter cold was fierce and no-one stopped to help him. Martin, taking pity on the beggar's plight, but having only one covering himself, took his sword (he was still in the army) and cut his cloak into two pieces, giving one half to the beggar. That night, Martin had a dream in which Christ appeared to him, dressed in Martin's half cloak. Christ commented to his angelic entourage, "Martinus adhuc catechumenus hac me veste contexit."[17]

Later in Martin's life, he was confronted by another vision, a demonic illusion which purported to be a vision of Christ. Severus relates that one day, the Devil appeared before Martin in his cell. He wore a kingly robe, with a diadem on his head and golden slippers on his feet. The apparition demanded to be recognized as the Christ. But Martin, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, retorted, "..non se...Iesus Dominus purpuratum nec diademate renidentem venturum esse praedixit; ego Christum, nisi in eo habitu formaque qua passus est, nisi crucis stigmata praeferentem, venisse non credam.[18]

There are a number of issues raised by this false Christ vision [19], but I want to focus simply on the contrast in images, for although Severus makes it clear that Martin is illumined by the Holy Spirit to know the vision's demonic origin, Martin attributes his rejection of the vision to its outward appearance.

The first point to note is that the kingly vesture of the false Christ vision was not in itself theologically unsound. It was increasingly popular in late antique Christian art and exegesis to focus on Christ as King of Heaven. Rather than a comment on the veridical appearance of Christ, Severus' intention appears to be to contrast the regal pride of the false vision with the humility of the true vision of Christ. The true Christ vision is not depicted as Martin said he should be, in the garments of his passion and bearing the stigmata, however, in his commendation of Martin's charity towards the beggar, he is associated with poverty and suffering.

It has been suggested by some commentators that the kingly vesture of the demonic vision was intended as a comment on imperial power.[20] However,

the image serves equally well as a criticism of the princes of the church, the bishops who luxuriated in their finery and worldly status. Martin, by contrast, in his shabby clothes so ridiculed by the clergy, wins Christ's approval.

The association of the devil's sumptuous vesture and proud demands with the false spiritual values of the self-important clergy is particularly evident in a speech attributed to Postumianus in the Dialogues, in which he complains about the effects of sacerdotal office on even the humblest of men, as they broaden their fringes and want only soft clothing. Ceterum cum neque opere neque virtute conspicuus sit, si quis clericus fuerit effectus, dilatat continuo fimbrias suas,... vestem respuit grossiorem, indumentum molle desiderat... [21]

The contrast of images, and of spiritual values, can be taken beyond Martin's own immediate circumstances to give wider expression to the conflict between the spiritual priorities of ascetics and the clergy. The higher clergy, with their fine education, and fine clothes being the image of ecclesiastical authority on the one hand, and the poverty-stricken monks, beggared for their love of Christ, as the ascetic image on the other. Severus, who was himself of an aristocratic family, had given up all his possessions to lead a life of poverty like that of St.Martin and it was the humble Christ, happy with a beggar's garb, whom Martin and Severus followed.

For its ascetic audience, the spiritual message behind these iconographic differences is clear: The claims of powerful bishops to represent Christ may deceive the faithful, while the humble monk is truly in Christ's image. Beyond this, however, the fundament of this polarisation is more than simply another jibe against the clergy by a bitter Severus. It is a plea for a particular type of spiritual life, one in which Christians are free to follow Christ (and Martin) by taking on a life of poverty and suffering; a spiritual vocation Severus saw to be under attack.

I would, however, emphasize that one must be careful not to read too much in to the conflict in images and ideals presented to us by Severus in his vision accounts, especially in the true- and false-Christ visions. Severus was hardly an impartial observer of the tensions which rent the church in his day, and his personal bitterness towards many in the ecclesiastical establishment sours his view of their spiritual purity. Nor

does Severus appear to have been interested in giving up his rancour after the disputes which occasioned the schism were officially resolved.[22] He makes reference to continuing turmoil in the church which does not allow Christians to be left in peace, to bishops who persecuted him (as they had once persecuted Martin), and to his estrangement from monks and women.[Dial I.2; II.8] It was not only in his defence of St.Martin, but rather in additional disappointments that Severus took on the clergy.

One should, therefore, be cautious about the extent to which the role of asceticism within the Gallic church as a whole was really brought into question in this period. The visionary experiences which Severus told of St.Martin are representative of Severus' (and perhaps Martin's) own convictions of the perceived tensions between the two paths to God, but the strong use of image contrast may not be an accurate reflection of contemporary sentiment. Polarizing the two evils of Priscillianism and the tainted episcopate was, however, an extremely effective way for Severus to open up a middle gound for the acceptance of ascetic spirituality, and the centrality of the monastic life-style to the Gallic church. However, the dichotomy between the two spiritual paths may not have been as clear to other ascetics and their communities as it was to Severus at Primuliacum.

In fact, evidence is strong that in the fourth and early fifth centuries, monasticism was actively encouraged and flourished under clerical and episcopal patronage. Martin's first monastery had been founded under the patronage of Hilary of Poitiers. Martin's own disciple Brictius went on to episcopal office, a vocational pattern which was even more pronounced in other parts of Gaul, especially in the Rhône Valley.[23]

This is not to say that Severus' sense of contemporary hostility towards monasticism did not have a legitimate basis. There was a very scathing attack on ascetic communities by a certain Vigilantius. But the attack was soundly rebuffed and the pamphleteering did not prevent monastic communities from continuing to grow and flourish in Gaul.[24] In the following monastic ideals rapidly became incorporated into the episcopal ideal for bishops other than Martin. In the 470s Constantius of Lyons extolled Germanus of Auxerre for providing two paths to God, the first through his monastic foundations and the second through his sacerdotal office.[25] By the sixth century, as we shall see, bishop Gregory of Tours used vision accounts to emphasize the special sanctity of the episcopate. And most impressive of all, the visions

of the nun Aldegund in the seventh century adopted the image of specifically sacerdotal ritual (the eucharistic act) to strengthen the spiritual authority of her monastic life.

Whatever we may think of Severus' sometimes crude image polarizations, later vision narratives show that Severus was not the last to recognize how important vision tales could be in identifying and impressing on to the imagination of its audience images of spiritual worth.

Expansion of the Martinian Cult.

The cult of St.Martin and its place in nascent Gallic monasticism, although set in place by Severus' writings, was fully nurtured by the bishops of Tours from the mid-fifth century who promoted his tomb as a pilgrimage site.[26] Severus attested to the strength of popular devotion to Martin, by stating that the people, unlike the clergy and bishops, were able to recognize Martin for what he was.[Dial 26] The increasing number of miracles and cures associated with Martin's tomb from that time on were eventually recorded in the many supplements to Severus' oeuvre listing Martin's virtutes.

The first of many medieval versions and adaptations of Severus' Martinian biography appeared in the mid-fifth century. Paulinus of Périgueux, a pilgrim himself to the tomb of St.Martin, composed a metrical version of the Life possibly before the 460s.[27] It seems likely that Paulinus had already completed at least three books of his five book versification of the Vita Martini and the Dialogues when he came to the attention of the bishop of Tours, Perpetuus.[28] Perpetuus then commissioned him to versify a pamphlet which he himself had composed relating miracles which had occurred at Martin's tomb. This became book six, the final book of Paulinus' work. It has been argued that Paulinus' work should be seen in the light of popular devotion to the saint upon which Perpetuus himself then built, rather than as purely an expression of Perpetuus' own motivation. Perpetuus was certainly very active in promoting Martin's cult in the 460s, constructing a magnificent church over Martin's remains and commissioning Sidonius Apollinaris to compose a poem for its apse.[29] However it is likely that he was building on the solid foundation of popular devotion.

Looking now at the visions in Paulinus' poem, it is clear that Paulinus strove to follow his text as faithfully as versification allowed. With the

exception of digressions on subjects such as the number of pagan gods whose face the devil took to deceive the saint, Paulinus added little to the vision scenes to elucidate his understanding of their mechanism.[30] Where Severus related that in his sleep Martin saw Christ clothed in the half cloak he had given to the beggar, Paulinus explained that Martin saw the vision in a light sleep, but with heart awake, for he qualifies, it was not sleep because his mind was attentively alert: ...tenuem, vigili sed corpore, soporem / (nec sopor illud erat, quia mens adtenta vigebat)... [I.102-3] Where Severus informs us that Martin was often visited by angels and conversed with them, Paulinus sees Martin's mind, unhindered by the flesh, ranging above the stars to join with angels in conversation, an ecstasy in fact, although the term is not used: Nec mirum est tantum mentem vidisse sagacem,/ liquentem cunctas sublimi pectore curas/ et sensu aetherio penitus super astra volantem./ nam saepe angelicis miscentem verba loquellis/ pro foribus stantes monachi stupuere fideles. [III. 144-49]

Perpetuus' pamphlet which survives in Paulinus' versified version, did not provide an opportunity to discuss visions since most of the miracles recorded at Martin's tomb concerned healings.

In the sixth century, the Italian born poet Venantius Fortunatus, with Paulinus' example before him, also turned his hand to versifying the Severus' Vita Martini.[31] Fortunatus was himself a pilgrim to Martin's tomb and received a cure before settling in Poitiers eventually becoming its bishop. In his versification, he admired Martin's sharp and penetrating vision invulnerable to false images.[II.ll.132-35] In describing the way in which Martin's visions appeared to him, like Paulinus, he kept very closely to Severus' own choice of expression. Fortunatus's work was commissioned by and dedicated to Gregory of Tours, who himself set to the task of recording the many miracles at St.Martin's tomb. As with Perpetuus' list of miracles, they tended to concentrate on miraculous cures, not on vision accounts (although some do occur and are examined in the chapter on Gregory of Tours). Where Severus' vision accounts can be seen to be influential, is in later hagiographic narratives, in which saints, bishops, monks and nuns alike, saw in their dreams and visions the celestial aid and divine approval for a way of life which many had modelled upon that of St.Martin.

II. The "Vita Patrum Jurensium" and other Fifth century Saints.

Hagiographic accounts in the fifth century shared with Martin and Severus the conviction that dreams and visions were avenues for God's communication with his saints. Nor were vision experiences confined to hermits and monks who withdrew entirely from the world. In an echo from the Vita Martini, St.Germanus, the energetic bishop of Auxerre, was visited in a dream by a figure in shining white, who healed his strained ankle so that he could continue his mission to eradicate Pelagianism in Britain.[32]

In the Life of St.Honoratus of Lérins, Hilary of Arles related how the saint had dreams of martyrdom, not as a prophecy of what was to be, but of what his mind desired, non aliquid praesagantia neque aliqua in futurum anxietate sollicita, sed inquietis animae desideriis excitata.[33] Honoratus' experience of martyrdom in his dreams should probably be seen in the light of an apology for his lack of martyr status, a shortfall often compensated for in hagiographies, and discussed at considerable length by Severus in his second Martinian letter.[Ep.2]

The fifth century Life which shows perhaps the greatest influence of Severus' Vita Martini is the anonymous Vita Patrum Jurensium which records the lives of three saintly abbots of the Jura monasteries, the brothers Romanus and Lupicinus, and a later abbot Eugendus (commonly known as Saint Oyend).[34] About the year 435, Romanus, imitating St.Anthony, left his family home to live in the wilds of the Jura mountains, keeping the company only of wild beasts. His brother joined him, after Romanus came one night to Lupicinus' mind in a night-dream (per visionem nocte). And soon the two brothers lived in the 'desert' like two doves in a nest.[VPJ 12] Romanus founded a monastery at Condat (Condadisco) and his brother founded Lauconnum (St.Lupicien), both modelled on the eremitical communities of the Egyptian desert. This type of monastic organization was probably known to them through the example of the Gallic monasteries of Lérins and Lyons, where monks living in individual cells, assembling primarily for prayer and meals. (The monastery did not take on the communal aspect of a monastic community until the time of St.Eugendus (490-c.510) who rebuilt the monastery after its destruction by fire.[VPJ 170])

Romanus oversaw his monks with gentleness, and by providing a contemplative example. And like eremitical saints before him, the saintly abbot attracted the devil's particular ire. Unable to upset the abbot, however, the devil turned his fury against the monks of the community, trying

to compel them to leave the monastery by frightening them with monstrous phantasmata.[VPJ 51] A certain saintly deacon who lived there as a monk, Sabinianus, suffered horrific night-time abuse from the devil, who beat him about the head with stones and tried to set his cell on fire.[VPJ 53] The devil, who had appeared in the guise of a man, now changed into the form of two very chaste young girls: mutata virili diabolus specie, sub duarum puellarum forma pudicissimo...advenit. [VPJ 54] The girls' modesty was soon changed to lasciviousness, however, as they began to remove their clothing. Sabinianus while able to avoid looking at them and able to chastise the devil, could not escape another terrible beating.[VPJ 55-6] The description of Sabinianus' abuse by the devil shows a clear connection with the torments endured by St.Anthony whose Life we know to have been an important source of inspiration to the monastery's first abbots.[35] In an incident which was clearly connected with Sabinianus' struggle with the devil, a giant serpent showed itself to Sabinianus and his fellow workers as they worked in a canal. The serpent slipped into the icy water and the monks were afraid to continue their work. Sabinianus, however, recognizing the serpent as the devil, had the brothers make the sign of the cross over his hands and feet and continued his work in the water.[VPJ 57-8]

Lupicinus like his brother believed in the concrete efficacy of prayer. The author of the VPJ tells the long and gripping tale of the way in which Lupicinus, through prayer, was able to appear in two visions to his imprisoned friend, the comes Agrippinus.[VPJ 96-110] Agrippinus was falsely accused by the magister militum Egidius of plotting to overthrow the government with the aid of the barbarians. He was imprisoned at Rome without a proper hearing. As a result of Lupicinus' continuous mortifications and prayers, assaulting the ears of divine mercy, he was able to appear to Agrippinus in a vision and tell him to push away the stone door of his cell. In the manner of Peter's liberation from prison by an angel in Acts 12,6-7, the door was opened to him. In another vision Lupicinus soothed the troubled Agrippinus and promised him food. The next day a senator's wife took him for a pilgrim and gave him sufficient alms for him to buy food. In a dramatic denouement, Agrippinus revealed his identity to the crowd among which he moved incognito, and was subsequently exonerated by the Emperor. The count returned to Gaul, and to the monastery to tell his story to the abbot, and so it was, we are told, that the community came to know of the affair. However,

the visions also show the imprint of a mind steeped in biblical imagery which lent its own gloss subsequent to Agrippinus' recitation.

In the life of St.Eugendus, the centrality of visionary experiences in expressing the protagonist's spirituality, and divine approval of his tenure as abbot, is far more extensive than in the lives of the earlier abbots.

In his childhood, Eugendus' holy life was presaged in a vision, one whose biblical character was carefully underscored by the author. In his vision the youthful Eugendus was taken to the threshold of the monastery so that he could diligently scan the eastern sky, just as once the patriarch Abraham had done.[VPJ 121] This was, the author relates, so that it could be said to Eugendus figuratively (typice... dicebatur), "This shall be your inheritance" (Sic erit semen tuum).[36] As Eugendus stood there in his vision, one by one people joined him until a crowd surrounded himself and the saintly Fathers Romanus and Lupicinus. Then Eugendus saw the heavens open in the east and a pathway, shining with light like a crystal ladder, descended to the place where he was, and choirs of angels, dressed in white came towards him. He and the others assembled there were so struck by the sight that they could not talk. Then the angels carefully mingled with the assembled mortals, and gathering them up and uniting them to themselves, they ascended with them once more to heaven.[VPJ 123] As they ascended the angels sang a phrase which Eugendus was not to hear again until he entered the monastery a year later, "Ego sum Via et Vita et Veritas." As the vision receded, the star studded sky closed leaving Eugendus alone. He woke up in terror and related the whole to his father who knew it to be a sign of his son's future mission.[VPJ 124]

The early presaging of a saint's holy career was a common motif in the Lives of the Saints. What makes this vision so outstanding is its strong biblical imagery. Eugendus will be, like Abraham, the patriarch of a fine dynasty of people dedicated to God begot, metaphorically speaking, by his seed. The shining path like a ladder descending from heaven reminds us of Jacob's ladder [Gen 28,12] as well as a host of pagan and Christian vision accounts. The Old Testament images are then given a New Testament rallying cry suitable for the mission undertaken by the Jura monasteries; "I am the way, the Life and the Truth" [adapted from John 14,6]. Although at the time of the vision Eugendus was still a young boy under his natural father's care, his spiritual parentage is fostered by his association with the holy founders

of the monastery. And finally, using another image favoured in monastic writings and adapted from a biblical source, the many souls gathered around him who were gathered up by angels, are described as a swarm of bees. The mystical image directs the reader to the spiritual progeny which will be generated from his spiritual powers.

Eugendus entered the monastery of Condat a year after this vision. The next watershed in his monastic career came as the abbot under whose direction he had been living, Minausius, became ill and designated Eugendus as his successor. Eugendus was relatively young, and his appointment appears to have met with some opposition.[37] It was at this time that Eugendus was seen to be intimately linked with the future prosperity of the monastery by means of a vision. He was struck, as the author states, by a very clear revelation (evidentissima revelatione percellitur).[VPJ 134] During the night, he was rapt up to the vision of the abbots Romanus and Lupicinus. The vision scene was the sacristy to the right of the monastic church, and the holy founders were accompanied by the monastic seniores who had lived in their time. After receiving the abbots' blessing Eugendus saw the present abbot enter the room clothed in a white pallium with purple stripes.[VPJ 135] Romanus took from Minausius' his belt of office and set it around Eugendus' waist. He then took the pallium from the abbot's shoulders and likewise clothed Eugendus with it. Romanus then declared that those signs of abbatial office were now Eugendus' but that in the future he would also be given the sacerdotal dalmatic.[VPJ 136] Then suddenly, the seniores dashed their lamps against the walls, extinguishing them, and plunging the saint in darkness. A voice then spoke through the darkness, telling him not to be sad for the loss of the present material light (praesentium ac materialium luminum) but to look to the east where he would soon be aided by divine light. On turning to look in that direction Eugendus saw the light of dawn creeping in until a ray of day and light (radium ...diei ac lucis) streamed towards him. He came out of the vision state and jumped from his bed in joy. The vision soon came to pass, states the author.[VPJ 137]

The first part of the vision, in which the reigning abbot's tokens of office are placed upon Eugendus by the community's founder, is a spiritual representation of their approval for the transmission of abbatial authority to the saint. The passing of these symbols of office from one abbot to another strengthened the idea of spiritual continuity from Romanus to

Eugendus, and thus from the monastery's past to the present. The second section of the vision, the extinction of the light, is explained by the author as representing those who from jealousy sought to take away from him powers already vested in him; it is a clear reference to the troubles which surrounded Eugendus' appointment to abbatial office, and may even allude to an interim period during which his appointment was thwarted.[VPJ 138] We are told that some disaffected monks left the monastery complaining of Eugendus' youth.

The light of dawn approaching from the east should be interpreted in the light of the author's following attestation to the saint's receiving from this time the gift of healing and many prodiges.[38] These signs manifested externally Eugendus' spiritual powers and soon, we are told, his reputation was such that the clergy were happy for any contact with him, and the pseudofratri who were Eugendus' detractors were from that time on regarded as degenerate wretches.

This important vision, which supports the justice of Eugendus' elevation to abbatial office and foretells in its images the short-term persecution which Eugendus will have to endure, falls into a category of visions which was to become very popular in Gallic hagiography, that is, the transferral of political conflicts or embarrassments into a post facto apology rendered in the language of a vision. In this case, the vision brought together images in a sequence which offered a spiritual exegesis of conditions endured in reality.

Another arena in which visions were important in the Lives of the Saints was the acquisition of relics. One summer's day as he sat under a tree sleeping suddenly three men came towards Eugendus in his dream. He asked them who they were and they revealed themselves to be the apostles Peter, Paul and Andrew.[VPJ 153-4] They declared their desire to stay with the Condat community. Eugendus awoke from his dream to see approaching two of his monks who had been away from the monastery for two years. With them they brought relics of the three apostles who had greeted Eugendus in his dream.[VPJ 155] The vision story is a simple one, but one very popular in hagiography because it conveyed in a recognizably human form the very real presence of the saints' in the tangible remains which were deposited in the monastery's reliquary. The apostles' greeting to the monastery's leader, coming in advance of their relics adds to the sense of their being honoured

guests who share with Eugendus the kiss of peace, and are come willingly to grace the community.

Thus far Eugendus' visions have shown their profound debt to biblical images and hagiographic motifs. There is one final vision which I wish to examine here, and that is a vision which reveals the importance of St.Martin's Life as a model for the monks at the Jura monasteries.[39]

One day, as Eugendus slept, exhausted from crying, a brightness like that of a very bright sun envelopped him on his pallet. It was St.Martin, who asked him what he wanted. Eugendus related his concern about the fate of two brothers who were away from the monastery. Martin then soothed him by reminding Eugendus that when the brothers had left he had prayed to Martin commending them to his care. Martin was able to assure Eugendus that the two were safe and that indeed one of them would arrive at the monastery the following day to put to rest concern for their well-being.

The dream-vision is has little interest in its content, but there are certain reminiscences of Severus' account of his own vision of Martin. In the first place, Eugendus falls asleep exhausted from his tears. He is not only concerned for the monks but for criticisms in the community from those who accused him of exiling them. Severus was overcome by mental exhaustion stemming from anxiety about his sins. Eugendus' vision of Martin as an exceptionally bright light also reminds us of Severus' description of Martin emitting a great light. It does not seem unlikely that the author had Severus' second Martinian letter in mind when he related this tale.

St.Martin was certainly an important saint for the monks at Condat in Eugendus' time, and his miracles are extolled, including one in which a flask of his oil was untouched by the conflagration which gutted the monastery.[VPJ 161-4] There are further echoes of the Vita Martini in the description of Eugendus' struggles to avoid sacerdotal office.[VPJ 132-3] Eugendus' predecessor Minausius tried to persuade him to accept the priesthood. The saint, we are told, resisted his efforts, as he was also to resist the bishops' efforts later on.[VPJ 151] The rationale for this resistence was two-fold. In the first place Eugendus believed it was better for an abbot not to have the office since it did not give a proper example to the young monks [VPJ 133], and secondly in a passage which is very reminiscent of Severus' Dialogues he remarks that many seasoned monks who led spiritually mature lives became secretely puffed up when sacerdotal office was conferred

on them.[VPJ 134] Eugendus did eventually take priestly orders in fulfillment of his vision, but the insistence on his rejection of the office harks back to traditional ascetic wariness of bishops for which Martin is a very clear example.

Turning now to the author's understanding of the dream-vision process in the Vita Patrum Jurensium and his terminology, we find similarities to that displayed by Severus and other Gallic hagiographers of the period. Many of the visions are night dreams, [VPJ 12, 121, 135] but day-time dreams are also included.[VPJ 153, 159]. The term visio is used to describe images seen in dreams, and the vision generally ends as the saint awakes from sleep. At the end of Eugendus' vision of the apostles Peter, Paul and Andrew, for example, the author notes, Et in haec verba visio finivit et somnus.[VPJ 154. Other examples: 124, 137]

The protagonist's experience of the vision is often described as transcending the self. In his youthful vision Eugendus was in visione...a duobus religiosis viris sublatus [VPJ 121 and his vision of induction as abbot was seen as he was subito raptus in visione.[VPJ 135] Only on one occasion is the term ecstasy used and it did not describe an imaged vision, but rather the meditative trance into which Eugendus would sink as he contemplated the day's reading from scripture. So deep in thought was he that he forgot to eat and was velut in exstasi positus.[VPJ 169] The use of exstasi here is a very early example of the term in Gallic hagiography. The term appears not to have been known to Severus, nor at a later date to Gregory of Tours. The case of the latter may be explained in part, however, by the fact that although Gregory of Tours knew the Lives of Romanus and Lupicinus, he did not know the Life of Eugendus' where the term makes its sole appearance.[40]

Visions are described in the work as presaging future events, and providing very clear revelations evidentissima revelatione percellitur. They present to the saint both knowledge of the reality of heaven, and figurative representations of spiritual realities. Eugendus' dream-vision as a child shares elements of both. He was taken to a place where, within the vision, he could see in a deeper vision the unfolding of a scene from the future, one in which angels collect the souls under his charge. This was both a vision of a future reality and intended to be understood figuratively (typice) as a prophecy concerning his future mission. In his later vision in which he was

inducted as abbot, Eugendus experiences in figurative terms the tranference of spiritual authority which Minausius proposed in addition to confirmation of its divine approval by the founding abbots.

Figurative visions, which were popular in antiquity, continued to be a favoured means by which saints were apprised of spiritual realities and informed of divine intent. Such visions were often open to subsequent literary modelling in the light of scriptural examples or other hagiographic motifs. This is particularly evident in Lupicinus' appearance to Agrippinus and in Eugendus' visions. Examples can be found in some of the most important Lives, and they are witness to a common language in which spiritual ideas are given imaged form. An interesting example of this is to be found in the early sixth century Life of St.Caesarius of Arles which relates how a nightmarish dream alerted Caesarius to the dangers of immersing himself in pagan secular literature.[41] The vision is doubly interesting insofar as the issue which provoked the nocturnal message was the subject of Jerome's famous dream.[Ep.22] As Caesarius fell asleep over the readings set him by his tutor Pomerius, Caesarius was horrified to see in his dream a dragon eating away at his arm which lay across the volume he was reading. Caesarius was so concerned about the message of this dream that he consulted the then bishop of Arles, Aeonius who responded by consecrating the eighteen year old first as a deacon and then as a priest.[V.Caes.10] The role of the dragon conveys well the conflict that was then taking place in Gaul between two different types of knowledge and piety. That of Caesarius' tutor Pomerius on the one hand who was of the old school, conversant with the philosophy of the East even if he himself could not read Greek, and Caesarius on the other who rejected wordly learning for the divine wisdom of the unlettered Anthony, in which monastic discipline, biblical study and interior examination was the basis of a Christian education.

Conclusion

Although their number was not great in comparison with the literary production of succeeding centuries, the influence of this handful of Gallic Lives was such that together with the Vita Antonii they served as the literary archetypes for saints' Lives for centuries to come. Dreams and visions were introduced into these hagiographies in such a way as to promote

their importance as an indicator of the saint's spiritual maturity and as important means by which theological views and conflicts could be expressed. Both a saint's association with certain ideas, and his or her disassociation from them could be fixed through dream images. Visual images of conflict together with verbal disputes with the devil enabled the vision's author to endow religious or doctrinal positions with positive or negative spiritual values. The factious times during which Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini was written established in Gaul a tradition in which vision stories became scarcely disguised vehicles for commentary on theological and political issues. In the case of the Vita Martini the views expounded were those which heightened the reputation of monasticism and asceticism, contrasting it with the worldliness of ecclesiatical establishment. In the following centuries, however, especially in the writings of Gregory of Tours, dreams and visions were used as a very effective way of promoting the values and spiritual purity of the episcopate.

The church's acceptance of the dream-vision medium as a means of expressing its own values, rather than seeing in them largely a source of possible heterodoxy, marks an important change in the value of the visionary experience from antiquity to the early middle ages. How did this change in perspective come about?

The answer must to a significant extent be related to the nature of the threat which visions had traditionally posed. Many orthodox discussions of visionary issues were written in direct response to the perceived threat of the claims of heterodox or schismatic visionaries. Irenaeus of Lyons disputed the visionary claims of the Gnostics. Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram was a revised version of two earlier works which had been directed specifically against the Manichees. Both the Valentinian Gnostics and the Manichees laid great store by personal revelations in the forms of visions. By contrast,the ecclesiastical crack-down on Priscillianism in the fourth century, with its condemnation of severe asceticism and sorcery did not bring in its wake any treatises on the subject of dreams and visions. The heretical movement which most concerned church leaders in Gaul, Italy and the Iberian peninsula in the fifth century was a Christological dispute; Arianism.[42] The Arian position on the nature of Christ was a dispute centred on scripture, not personal revelation. The heresy was handled as a case of ecclesiastical and political subversion, rather than as a theological

dispute. Pelagianism, like Arianism, did not bring the vision issue into prominence.[43] In fact the only testimonies we find to Gallic concern for auguries, soothsaying and other claims to supernatural knowledge are to be found in episcopal condemnations of the deep rooted superstitions which were the vestiges of Roman paganism, and of the indigenous Gallic religion.[44] By the fifth century the eradication of such beliefs were more a concern at the local level than an issue for theological discussion. The absence of an heretical movement which gave prominence to visionary revelations in their claims to spiritual authority was an undoubted factor in the church's willingness to promote dreams and visions as conveyers of spiritual and doctrinal truth. And it is because of the often pragmatic focus of the vision accounts in this period, these texts offer to the historian an important historical source for the social and cultural history of the times.

Chapter 3. VISIONS IN THE 'DIALOGUES' OF GREGORY THE GREAT

Although destined to be an administrator for much of his adult life, first in a secular capacity as Prefect of the city of Rome and then as Pope, Gregory was by vocation, monk, theologian, pastor, missionary and contemplative.[1] He was also the author of exegetical and pastoral works and numerous letters. Of his numerous works, Gregory's Dialogues was amongst the most widely read by later generations. In it he employed vision accounts drawn from literature and hearsay to illustrate and prove the Christian belief that the soul lives after death. In their turn, the Gregorian corpus of vision accounts became the inspiration for hagiographers of a later period, and the influence of the Dialogues is especially evident in Frankish hagiography from the seventh century onwards. In its theoretical aspect, the Dialogues reiterated to a large extent Gregory's vision thinking as expounded in his Moralia, although often in a more accessible form. The writings of Gregory the Great are the first since the time of Augustine to address visions of the afterlife and their theological implications as a central concern.[2]

It is not possible to examine Gregory's vision thinking here in any depth, but insofar as he was a near contemporary of Gregory of Tours, and reference will be made to his work in later chapters on Gallic hagiography, it is important to sketch briefly his attitude towards dreams and visions.

The Dialogues can be dated fairly precisely to 593-4 on the basis of internal evidence.[3] Of the four books which comprise the Dialogues, books I and III are devoted to short hagiographic cameos which support Gregory's claim that there have been and still are miracle-workers in Italy. Book II is a hagiographic account of the life of St.Benedict of Nursia. Book IV purports to comprise "proofs from reason" that the soul continues to live on after death, which are supported and illustrated by dream-vision accounts.

i. Gregory on vision authority: between Augustine and Plato.

We have seen how the church Fathers often examined the vision issue in the context of Genesis. In what seems almost a perfunctory obeisance to this tradition Gregory likewise opened book IV of the Dialogues with a summary of

the account of the Fall from Genesis. If one examines his use of Genesis, however, one finds that Gregory had his own particular contribution to make.

Augustine's cosmographic approach led him to focus on the principle of creation in the Genesis story. In his De Paradiso, Ambrose focused on the loss of spiritual vision occasioned by the Fall and its reattainment in Paul's rapture to the third heaven. Yet both Ambrose and Augustine identified the New Testament account of Paul's rapture to the third heaven as the companion passage to the Creation and Fall.[4] The Pauline passage has greatest relevance in a philosophic context, for it is not the content of the vision which is important (nor is it reported, for Paul was not permitted to reveal its details) but rather its information concerning the means by which the vision experience was experienced, the celestial journey and Paul's uncertainty about whether he experienced it within or out of the body. The linkage of the loss of spiritual sight with Paul's rapture suggested philosophical and cosmographic questions in relation to the visionary experience.

Gregory does not balance the Genesis account with Paul's rapture but with the coming of Christ and his sending the Holy Spirit to the hearts of the faithful.[5] The holy Spirit imparts spiritual vision to the faithful and substitutes for the lost memory of paradise a new experiential knowledge (scire experimento) of the invisible world through the agency of the holy Spirit. [Dial IV.1.4] Gregory's juxtaposition of the Creation and subsequent loss of spiritual vision, with the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, shows his interest in spiritual vision as a universal charism, rather than in analysing the celestial path by which the soul will attain that vision.

The opening dialogue of book IV also focuses on the two foundations for belief: experiential knowledge and external authority. Gregory drew on two sources for his arguments. The first of these sources is Augustine's De fide rerum invisibilium and the second is a modified version of an allegory from Plato's Republic which was popular in antiquity.[6] Augustine's treatise had appealed to the universal human belief and experience of real but invisible social and familial ties such as the bonds of love and friendship, to show how we all believe in things we cannot see. To this appeal based on human experience Gregory now added the allegory which focused on belief based on authority. In Gregory's variation, a pregnant woman cast into a dungeon without light gives birth to a child who, because of the darkness, has never

experienced sight. On hearing its mother describe things she had seen before her confinement, the child might doubt that the things she described were real since he had no experience of them. Gregory concludes that humanity is born into a like darkness, a spiritual darkness, requiring belief in the experiential knowledge of the other world furnished by its spiritual parents.

Where Augustine had appealed to his readers' own knowledge of their society and emotions, Gregory addresses those who are not confident in their faith, that they, like the little boy should put their trust in the superior knowledge of their elders, maiores, who have experience through the Holy Spirit.[Dial IV.1.5] It would be interesting to know the identity of the maiores Gregory identified with the mother in the story, for in their word rests the ultimate authority on the realm of the invisible. Perhaps they were the biblical holy men, the doctors and saints of the early church, or the Mother Church itself. G.Cracco argues that the maiores are those in the present world who are imbued with the spirit and who, with spiritual vision testify to the invisible world around us.[7] A.de Vogüé prefers that the mother in the story represents the faith of humanity which transmits the memory of primaeval happiness and the community of the church, that is, the saints who testify to the future life by means of the Holy Spirit.[8] The maiores are "ceux qui nous précèdent par le temps et par le savoir." [9] In support of this view de Vogüé points out that most of Gregory's visionaries are not saints or holy men and so this could not have been Gregory's intended meaning.[10] But de Vogüé is surely wrong in limiting Gregory's maiores to historical figures who testify to the past and future life. Gregory's use of Plato's allegory referred just as clearly to the invisible world which was contemporaneous with the present life, but which because of mankind's spiritual blindness cannot be seen. Augustine's treatise De fide rerum invisibilium which Gregory used alongside Plato, stressed precisely this issue as well as its relevance to the afterlife. As for the prominence of lay visionaries in the Dialogues, this fact merely reinforces the universalist element in Gregory vision understanding.[11] Spiritual sight was one of the charisms enjoyed by those of the spirit, whether they be historical or contemporary figures. Gregory writes that those of us who have received the spirit do not doubt the existence of the invisible life.[12] It must be concluded then that Gregory intended to set up a base of authority which could be stretched to include the experiential knowledge through the

spirit of contemporary saints and holy men and pious individuals whose experiences he recounts in the Dialogues.

ii. Did Gregory know Augustine's De Genesi ad Litteram?

Perhaps the most pervasive authorial debt in the Dialogues, as in all of Gregory's theological works, is to Augustine. In book IV Gregory has Peter raise many theological issues which are specifically addressed in Augustine's writings. They are too many to be listed here, but to give some idea of the range of subjects they include: the three kinds of living spirit (angels, the human spirit, animals) and man's midway position between the angels and the beasts, having something in common with the lowest and the highest spiritual forms [IV.3]; the invisible, incorporeal and immortal nature of the soul and its power of vision [IV.5]; the existence of purgatory [IV.26]; the physical fires of hell with powers to torture incorporeal souls [IV.29]; the location of hell and the imperishability of the soul in the eternal fires of hell [IV.44-7]. At the same time Gregory explicitly avows certain beliefs which Augustine rejected such as the belief, common among Neoplatonists, in a cleansing fire after death which purged the soul. [IV.40-1]

Gregory's debt to Augustine is not confined to theological issues which Augustine addressed most volubly, but it is evident also in anecdotal material which is not accurately attributed. Gregory relates the vision of a blacksmith named Stephen who died and was called to heaven by mistake. Augustine relates the same story of a blacksmith named Curma. Since Gregory vouches for the accuracy of his account historians have been left to explain how such an incident could occur.[13] Gregory's familiarity with a substantial corpus of Augustinian literature is therefore not in doubt, nor is his tendency to follow the precepts contained therein. In view of Gregory's deep underlying debt to Augustine's teachings on almost all of the theological issues he raises, it is important to consider whether Gregory knew Augustine's vision treatise at the end of his De Genesi ad litteram, or at least the opinions found in it. [IV.50-1]

The question of Gregory's knowledge of Augustine's vision treatise is not easily resolved. In discussing dream categories (Mor.VIII.42; Dial.IV.50) he chose a categorisation other than that put forward by Augustine. Although Gregory addresses issues that Augustine addressed in the vision treatise, much of the information can also be found also in

Augustine's Civ.Dei which Gregory used extensively. Where Augustine changed his ideas between the two works, such as the corporeality of hell, Gregory follows the City of God. Yet there are also indications that Gregory might have been familiar with Augustine's treatise.

The first indication is Gregory's use of the account of the Fall from Genesis to open a doctrinal discussion where dreams and visions play a prominent part. But here too we have seen that Gregory's approach is essentially different from Augustine's and has nothing to do with the exegetical process undertaken by Augustine. Nevertheless the use of Genesis as an introduction to a discussion of dreams and visions was clearly following in a tradition of vision writing established by Philo and Augustine. Gregory's adherence to this scheme could have been influenced by Ambrose's De Paradiso or by an intermediary source such as the kind of synthesis which we have seen was a popular disseminator of Augustine's vision thinking.

The second echo of Augustine's vision treatise is Gregory's assertion that the Devil will often instigate truthful revelation in order to deceive a hapless victim into putting his or her trust in later visions which turn out to be false. Augustine discussed this danger in the De Genesi ad litteram but echoes can be found elsewhere.

Finally, as R.A.Markus has shown, Gregory, in his commentary on Job distinguished the visionary from the prophet, as Augustine had done, even using the same examples of Pharoah and King Balthazar.[14] Gregory's knowledge of De Gen.ad litt. XII is thus clear, although whether the treatise was known to him in its original, entire form or indirectly cannot be ascertained. His decision to focus on a different type of categorisation may reflect his own interest in the contrast between the interior and exterior, as has been suggested.[15]

In his dream categorisation, Gregory shows himself to have been familiar with an oneirological tradition other than that represented by Augustine. Gregory identifies six types of dream: Those which result from full stomach (somnia ventris plenitudine), or an empty stomach (ventris inanitate), from illusion (illusione) and the combination of thoughts and illusion (cogitatione et inlusione), or from revelation (revelatione) and the combination of thought with revelation (cogitatione et revelatione).[Dial.IV.50] The six types can clearly be paired to form three

general categories which distinguish dreams that are physiologically induced, from illusion (whether from the Devil or from the cares of the human condition) and again from revelation (direct and through the allegorical use of daytime images for the purpose of spiritual illumination). These three categories are basically those expounded by Tertullian and familiar to many Christian writers thereafter. They comprise dreams originating in the soul, demonic delusions and revelations from God. It is highly likely that Gregory's categories originate directly or indirectly from this source.[16] Cassian knew of this distinction which he applied more generally to the things of the world: Tria sunt omnia quae in hoc mundo sunt, id est bonum, malum, medium, and Gregory was very familiar with Cassian's works. We may never know the precise origin of Gregory's information on the dream categories, whether it was an intermediary text between Tertullian and Gregory, or another oneirological text. Gregory's answer to Peter's question on 'noctural visions' by use of 'dream' categories, and his total reliance on biblical examples when describing the categories, also suggests that Gregory was relying on an older tradition than Ambrose, or Augustine who prefer to use the term 'vision' because of its cosmological use in the New Testament account of Paul's visionary ascent.

Gregory's attitude to the value of the imaged vision is also very different from Augustine's. For Augustine 'spiritual' or 'imaged' visions were subordinate to the 'intellectual vision' and their use as a vehicle for divine communication was hedged around with qualifications. Gregory reverted to an earlier paradigm in which categorisation was made within the realm of the imaged vision. In his discussion of the afterlife in the Dialogues Gregory relied almost entirely on imaged visions. (Almost, because as will be discussed in the next section, St.Benedict is portrayed as attaining an intellectual vision in the Augustinian sense.) As for the vision of God, Gregory does not discuss it in the Dialogues in any meaningful way. However, he discusses it at length in his other works, especially the opening chapters of the Moralia in Job.[18] In the Moralia Gregory does not admit of the possibility of the vision of God in the present life and is at pains to reconcile opposing biblical passages on the subject but he does not waver from this position.[19] Nevertheless his terminology and his ideas are strongly Neoplatonic and Augustinian, including a remarkable passage in which he describes how, for an instant the spirit of grace which infuses us, raises

the soul above all carnal thoughts and transitory things, forcing itself to look upon the limitless light, but it cannot look upon it and it fails. [Mor.10.13] Where Augustine through a similar process touched that divine light for an instant, Gregory relates that the soul cannot attain it, and in its infirmity is repulsed (repulsus) by the light. This failure engenders love and desire for the unattainable.

The theological sophistication of the Moralia when compared with the Dialogues is such that it is difficult to judge them by the same standards, nevertheless it is evident that in separating his discussion of the vision of God from the imaged visions categorised in the Dialogues Gregory was reinforcing a theological position in which the two were not part of an integrated schema. Consequently, imaged visions as a means of knowledge of the divine in the present life assumed a primary position, just as it had done for Tertullian.

In terms of conveying doctrine, Gregory's interest in dreams and visions in the Dialogues was conceptually far removed from Augustine's intentions in book XII of the De Genesi ad litteram to establish a structure of cosmological thinking. But like Augustine and concerned churchmen before him, Gregory was concerned to establish a framework of authority for the visionary experience, as his allegory borrowed from Plato illustrates. But rather than seeking to limit this authority to scripture and that rare flash of insight, in his Dialogues Gregory sought the authority for vision accounts in the holy Spirit, which resided in men of great holiness whose virtuous lives were a guarantee for their accounts.

iii. Dream and vision causation in the "Dialogues."

Like his pagan and Christian predecessors, Gregory considered the soul to be the sentient principle operating behind the inanimate shell of the body, vivifying it and bestowing it warmth and movement. It was the soul behind the corporeal eyes that gave humankind the power of vision for nulla visibilia nisi per invisibilia videntur. Ecce enim cuncta corporea oculis tui corporis aspicit, nec tamen ipse corporeus oculus aliquid corporeum videret, nisi hunc res incorporea ad videndum acueret. [IV.5.6] It is also the soul, in a state of exceptional purity that is able to see spiritual things invisible to ordinary sight. [IV.7]

Gregory explains the three ways by which the soul may be able to

experience this spiritual vision: The first is when the soul sees the future by a subtle power of its own (vis subtilitate sua), the second is the revelation seen through the soul's journeying, and the third is through divine inspiration by which the dying have a vision of heavenly secrets by means of the incorporeal eye of their mind (incorporeum oculum mentis).[20] His belief that the soul had an innate ability to foresee the future was a fundamental belief of Neoplatonism. In this theology the soul was considered to participate in some measure in divine powers such as spiritual vision, for the human soul was naturally good, remembered its higher state and would return to it once released from the constraints of the physical body. Augustine strenuously argued against the idea that the soul possessed spiritual powers independent of its creator, and that it could achieve union with God without the historical mediation of Christ. The human soul had chosen complicity with the flesh and only God could redeem it. Yet despite his adherence to the concept of the soul's natural power of divination, Gregory rejects the notion that the soul remembered its former state, for he comments at the beginning of book IV that with the death of Adam, mankind had lost the memory of paradise. Adam in exile still remembered what he had seen primo parenti nostro...quoniam viderat, recolebat [IV.1.2] but the rest of mankind was born without this innate memory. According to Neoplatonic philosophy, without this memory the soul could not find its own way back to God, nor could it act independently to attain spiritual vision. Gregory's views on the natural divination of the soul are not entirely consistent with this philosophy.

Gregory's belief that the soul left the body and travelled while the body still lived, was another area where he appears to have absorbed ideas which were rejected by theologians before him. Both Tertullian and Augustine were adamant that the soul could not escape from the body without death.[21] Gregory, however, recounts how revelations of the future are seen by the soul outside of the body.[IV.27.1] St.Benedict while still alive, for example, appeared to two monks in a dream to instruct them where to build a monastery. Peter asked how Benedict could travel such a distance. Gregory returns with a good Neoplatonic answer: "Everyone knows that the soul is far more agile in nature than the body."! Liquet profecto quia mobilioris naturae est spiritus quam corpus. [II.22.4] According to Gregory, therefore, Benedict's soul left his body (presumably during ecstasy or sleep) and travelled a great distance

to infiltrate the monks' dreams in situ. In this, even more clearly than in the potentially extenuating circumstances of the death-bed, Gregory shows an adherence to an idea which had been continuously rejected by Christian theologians since antiquity.

Gregory is capable of being very vague in his use of vision terminology. In many cases he uses the terms 'vision' and 'dream' interchangeably, adjusting to the context of the narrative. When Peter asks if one should take night visions (nocturnas visiones) seriously, Gregory launches into a discussion of dreams (imagines somniorum). [IV.50] Yet on a couple of occasions, Gregory chooses to be very precise about the type of experience he is relating. The first case which illustrates this concerns Benedict's encounter with the Devil at Cassino. [II.8] Enraged by Benedict's destruction of a pagan religious site there, the Devil accosted him, non occulte vel per somnium, sed aperta visione eiusdem patris se oculis ingerebat [II.8.12] Gregory is making a distinction here between enigmatic and theorematic dream images, a distinction made by the ancients including Artemidorus. Artemidorus, however, regarded only enigmatic dreams as divinely inspired; Gregory, however, is suggesting that such a vision is more impressive by its immediacy for the Devil is seen 'as he is.'

On another occasion in the Dialogues Gregory clearly distinguishes between the dream-visions commonly received by the dying, and a vision of reality glimpsed with the spiritual sight of the afterlife : possunt etiam mysteria caelestia non per somnium, sed vigilando praelibere.[IV.27.9]

Gregory also describes visions seen in ecstasy, like Benedict's cosmic vision, but he uses the terminology once in the Dialogues. He informs Peter that there are two ways, or two directions in which we can leave ourselves: ...aut per cogitationis lapsum sub nosmetipsos recidimus, aut per contemplationis gratiam super nosmetipsos levamur... [II.3.9] What he describes is a two-way ecstasy, above and below the self, an idea which he first expounded in the Moralia 23.41.

iv. St.Benedict's cosmic vision.

The supreme example of the holy man in Gregory's writings is, of course, St.Benedict to whom he devotes the second book of the Dialogues. In Gregory's portrayal Benedict emerges as a fully rounded model of the ascetic monk. Leaving his studies and the temptations associated with them behind

him Benedict set off for Subiaco and a remote cave near a monastery where for three years he fought the devil and the temptations of the flesh. Having once become master of his own soul he became the teacher of others. Soon disciples flocked to obey his teaching and in time twelve monasteries were established. [II.3]

In addition to being a miracle worker of great diversity, St.Benedict was also a prophet and a visionary. He began to foretell the future and to relate to those present things which were done in his absence. [II.11.3] He knew when a monk murmured against him [II.20] and when a monk had received a present of handkerchiefs. [II.19] There was no trespass too small to escape Benedict's attention. Peter asked Gregory at one point whether Benedict was always filled by the spirit of prophecy or whether it came upon him occasionally. Gregory replied that the prophetic spirit does not always fill the mind of prophets but that this limitation is for their own spiritual good, so that they always retain humility. [II.21.3-4] On another occasion Peter asked if those who are at one with God know God's thoughts. Gregory answers that they do, but only to the extent to which God wishes them to be revealed. [II.16]

Despite these restrictions, Benedict appears to have had extraordinary powers in relation to visions and dreams. For example he was apparently able to appear at will in the dreams of two monks in order to instruct them where they were to build a monastery. [II.22] He was also able to impart spiritual vision to another monk temporarily in order to save him from going astray.[II.25.2]

Benedict's prophetic powers, while impressive in the almost God-like impression of ubiquity that they gave to the monks, are trifles when compared to Benedict's personal visionary experience as related by Gregory. The account of Benedict's cosmic vision while at prayer at the open window of his tower is unlike any other vision account in the Dialogues, and both its content and Gregory's description of it has stimulated substantial research.[22]

The vision follows a structure which is very close to Augustine's vision at Ostia. Benedict is standing at an open and elevated window in prayer. Although alone, he quickly called his friend Servandus to his side who caught only a glimpse of the retreating rays of light. Before the vision he and Servandus had been engaged in holy conversation, and in the chapter before

that Benedict had spent the night talking of the joys of heaven with his sister Scholastica before her death, (she who had had "the greater love".)

In the vision Benedict saw the world caught up before his eyes as if in a single ray of light. The details are sparse but Gregory's commentary is long. Gregory points out in the commentary that it was not because the world became smaller that Benedict was able to see it as if from above, but by his soul's elevation as it contemplated God. At the same time Benedict saw the soul of Germanus, bishop of Capua being carried up to heaven by angels in a ball of fire. [II.35.3]

The spiritual conversations which set the stage for the vision are very reminiscent of Augustine's discussion with Monica before her death about the joys of heaven. The mental retreat from the world and all it involves through an image of ascent and distance is to be found in the vision of Ostia, as in a large corpus of mystical literature.

The rather more conventional conclusion in which the soul of Germanus is seen to ascend to heaven detracts from the harmony of the vision event described. This disjunction and anticlimax derives from the mixture of two vision types. In reaching out to comprehend God Benedict's soul was made aware of the insignificance of the earth seen in a God-like perspective, beyond the confines of normal human understanding. Benedict's vision of Germanus by contrast is a spiritual vision of the kind related often in the Dialogues and not centred on the enlightenment development of the visionary.

Gregory's description of Benedict's vision owes much to literary precedents including Augustine's Confessions, Macrobius' Comm.Somn.Scip. and possibly Boethius' Consolation.[23] But it shows little understanding of the type of visionary experience which the incident represented. There are also some significant differences in the vision account from Augustine and Monica's. Benedict's vision occurs at night intempesta noctis while the vision at Ostia occurred during the daytime. The precise time of the night, the very dead of the night, emphasizes the unexpected nature of the event. The intempesta noctis as Isidore was later to describe, was that part of the night when nothing moves and sleep is quiet. [Etym.V.31.9] Stillness was considered a divine attribute, for whereas the soul was always in motion, God is motionless and unchanging. Benedict's vision of the world in this stillness of the night is therefore a view of an eternal, unchanging divinity and reality. The vision occurs as Benedict touches that permanence.

v. Visions as proof for doctrine

Hagiographic accounts were rarely doctrinally motivated. More often they introduced questionable theological concepts subliminally and unintentionally. The miracles performed by the holy person during their lifetime and by their relics after their death was the highest confirmation of divine approval. This divine approval reflected not only on the piety of their lives and their good works, but it extended also to their doctrinal orthodoxy. Their visions were no more questionable in this regard than any other element of their holy lives. Augustine himself had come up against this dilemma as he wrote to Paulinus of Nola on the subject of vision accounts: Haec si falsa esse responderimus, contra quorumdam scripta fidelium, et contra eorum sensus qui talia sibi accidisse confirmant, impudenter venire videbimur. [De Cura X (12)] Gregory shows no inclination whatsoever to question the accounts of holy men. When two monks did not respond immediately to a vision in which they received instructions from Benedict, Gregory faults them for not carrying out the orders. He evidently felt quite comfortable employing vision accounts both as support for, and as promotion of certain theological positions.

This is most evident in his belief in the efficacy of Masses said for the dead. Gregory moves from accounts in which a living person was saved from death by a timely Mass offered for them [IV.59], to the supposition that the deceased may also be availed of this protection. [IV.59] This protection was not unqualified; Gregory joined with earlier theologians in his belief that salvation was open only to those whose sins are not mortal sins and whose salvation was predestined.[24]

The sacraments were powerful nevertheless, and could save a man from damnation. In one case a saintly priest tarried too long in his vineyard so that he arrived too late to administer the last rites to a dying man. Overwhelmed by guilt that he was responsible for the man's damnation, the dead man was miraculously returned to life long enough to repent and benefit from the priest's services. [I.12] Gregory himself was able to release a monk from perdition by offering the holy sacrifice for his soul for thirty days. When Bishop Felix attended the public baths he was asked by a spirit, the former owner of the baths, to intercede on his behalf. Felix did so and the spirit was not seen again. [IV.57]

On another occasion Benedict was approached by the nurse of two nuns who had died. The nuns had been threatened with excommunication by Benedict for their sharp tongues. They died unrepentant and from that time on whenever their old nurse attended mass, she saw the nuns rise from their tombs and leave the church when the deacon announced that the non-communicants should leave. The nurse besought the help of Benedict who sent her an oblation to offer up at communion. Thenceforth the nuns rested in their tombs. [II.23] Peter asked Gregory how it can be that a mortal man had the power to pardon those who had already been condemned. Gregory's answer was that all those who govern the church in matters of faith and morals exercise the same powers of binding and loosing that the apostle Peter had received.

The visions described above were seen to provide evidence that the souls of the dead might benefit from those services which the church had to offer. They also underscored the power of churchmen to bind and loose for they controlled access to the sacraments, even after death. Whether the visions were acceptable because they supported an ecclesiastical practise which was becoming increasingly common, or whether they suggested a relationship between the ecclesiastical powers and God's judgement which extended to the afterlife, the role of visions as proof of doctrinal issues is plain in the Dialogues. The celebration of holy communion was an important time for the resolution of salvation and damnation issues for like death, communion was a brief intermingling of two worlds: Quis enim fidelium habere dubium possit ipsa immolationis hora ad sacerdotis vocem caelos aperiri, in illo Iesu Christo mysterio angelorum choros adesse, summis ima sociari, terram caelestibus iungi, unum quid ex visibilibus atque invisibilibus fieri? [IV.60.3] The visions involving expulsion from and readmittance to communion enhanced the popular awe of the sacrament and emphasised the decisive role of the church and its servants.

vi. Visions in sleep and death.

The most common attitude towards sleep associated with the middle ages is one of mistrust and fear. The Christian had ever before him the memory of Christ's sorrow that his disciples had slept while he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane.[Mt.26.40-6;Mk.14.37-42;Lk.22.45-6] Gregory of Tours had justified the theft of the relics of St.Martin from Candes by the men of Tours because it was done as the men of Poitiers had slept. [HF I.48] The

relics required a perpetual vigil. Hagiographic accounts are full of remarkable feats of sleep deprivation practised by holy men in the name of virtue. But there was also a tradition in which sleep was seen as an important image of death, and it had a substantial bearing on the value placed on dreams and night visions.

From the earliest times sleep and death were equated as parallel states. From a purely superficial standpoint, the sleeper appeared to be in a state which resembled death; the body was immobile, and the activity of the soul in dreams, was not apparent. Some pagans believed that the soul travelled externally from the body during sleep, thus making the resemblance between death and sleep even closer. Christian theologians tended to reject the idea that the soul engaged in external travel during sleep. The kind of story which was circulating when Tertullian was writing his De anima, and which he lost no time in dismissing, was one in which a man's soul was said to have travelled so far in sleep that on returning to his body found that he was too late, for in his absence his body had been burned by his wife.

As an image of death, however, sleep and its images (dreams) attained a greater respect.[25] One of those who delves deep into the meaning behind this cliché is Tertullian; Gregory is another.

The fear of sleep as an unnatural imposition on the body which made it vulnerable to demons and to natural temptations, was a common concern in this period, but Tertullian argued for its wholesome qualities in the De anima. Sleep, he argued, is necessary for the health of the body and cannot be considered irrational or unnatural. [43.7] Likewise dreams are requisite for soundness of mind [45.6], and hence no soul is naturally free of dreams: Dum ne animae aliqua natura credatur immunis somniorum. [49.3] But even Tertullian regretted the lack of control of the emotions which sleep imposed on the sleeper. The fear or joy with which the beholder encountered his dreams fell short of the stoic ideal of impassivity. [45.4]

Much of Tertullian's dream theology was influenced substantively by Stoic philosophy, with whose definition of sleep as the quieting of the body and senses but not of the soul (which is always in motion), he openly agreed. [43.5] There are also traditional elements in his attitude such as his acceptance that inspired dreams are more likely to occur in the early hours of the morning rather than in the first sleep. This ancient idea was based on the belief that the soul was less encumbered by the body's need for sleep

at this time, thereby allowing better access for divine intervention and revelation.[26] Tertullian looks favourably on the Stoic idea that dreams were a gift from God to be added to naturalis oraculi, or foresight. [46.11] To a great extent studies such as Tertullian's were forced to rely heavily on non-Christian works and ideas, whose tradition tended to promote the value of dreams as a means of divine communication.[27] Tertullian's De anima called to witness the weighty oneiromantic literature of the pagans and the positive views of most of the pagan philosophers whose responses to dreams he surveyed. [46.10-11] But Tertullian also found support for the idea that visions were intended by God to be a means of communication with man, in his study of the scriptures. This biblical anchor for his views is a very important contribution.

Gregory, on the other hand, says nothing about the recuperative virtues of sleep per se, and he is careful to repeat the traditional caution against putting one's trust in dreams. But his attitude towards the dream and vision stories he relates is rooted in an understanding of their significance to Christian history as recorded in the bible. From this base, Gregory develops a high regard for the relevance of vision information to the attainment of spiritual truths. The historical and social framework within which Gregory views his visions owes much to Tertullian's kind of exegetical thinking on the book of Genesis.

In Genesis 2.21 it is written that in the garden of Eden, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and while he slept He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh and made it into a woman. Tertullian, reading from the Septuagint version, identified sleep combined with ecstasy as the natural form of dreams: Sic et in primordio somnus cum ecstasi dedicatus: "et misit deus ecstasin in Adam et dormiit." somnus enim corpori provenit in quietam, ecstasis animae accessit adversus quietam, et inde iam forma somnum ecstasi miscens et natura de forma. [45.3]

The precedent from primeval times for God subjecting man to an ecstatic sleep was therefore an important argument in favour of the spiritual value of dreams and visions. Tertullian did not speculate on the content of Adam's dream as Augustine later did, but drew from it various levels of interpretation.[28] Adam's sleep symbolizes Christ's death: Si enim Adam de Christo figuram dabat, somnus Adae mors erat Christi dormituri in mortem. [43.10] from which he awoke, as Christ was resurrected. Tertullian also

traced in this story the lot of Everyman, for mankind experiences daily sleeping and waking which is a microcosm of his lifespan, of his beginning and end. Tertulllian felt this was a divine mystery which was a gift of God. Voluit enim deus, et alias nihil sine exemplaribus in sua dispositione molitus...humani vel maxime initii ac finis lineas cotidie agere nobiscum... [43.11]

For Tertullian then, God intended sleep to fulfill a special role for humanity, one which was primarily instructive. Adam's sleep foreshadowed, and was a prophecy of Christ's death and resurrection. On the level of the individual, the superficial appearance of the body in its corporeal inactivity provided a daily reminder of the beginning and end of the human life cycle. On every level sleep appeared and was intended to be the mirror image of death. In Tertullian's interpretation scripture upheld his views on the universal relevance of sleep and its attendant dreams; as a foreshadowing of death, the images of sleep had a particular relevance to knowledge of the former.

Like Tertullian, Gregory saw dreams in the context of Christian history and destiny. This is the case even when, influenced by the strictures of the Fathers on the subject of dreams, Gregory is ready to give Peter the 'by the book' answer to the question, "should we take night visions seriously?." Dreams are not to be trusted, he avows; too often they are used by demons to lure the believer into error (although he excepts the saints from this caution because they can distinguish between revelation and illusion intimo sapore, by an 'inner 'taste' or 'sense.') [IV.50]

Gregory's official reluctance to believe in dreams aside, it is hard to encounter anywhere in the Dialogues an occasion where dreams and visions are not given the greatest weight and authority. Nor does he confine his genuinely inspired dreams to the experience of the saints, for as becomes clear in a survey of the Dialogues as a whole, visions are received by laymen, minor clergy or monks in significantly high numbers. In this way, Gregory shows himself to be the champion of a concept of extended visionary access which, in its similarity to Tertullian's ideas, shows how far removed his thinking is from Augustine's.

In his historical understanding of the place of dreams and visions Gregory's views were no less pronounced than Tertullian's. Gregory did not so much look retrospectively to the beginning of human life in Genesis, as he

looked forward to the end of the world as described in the Apocalypse. The millenarian atmosphere which flared up periodically in Italy as elsewhere in response to political and national crises, directly influenced Gregory's attitude towards the vision experience. [IV.43] Visions, especially in large numbers came to have a collective value as a sign or portent of historical forces. Reflecting upon Redemptus' apocalyptic vision described at the close of book III, with its signs that the things of the earth are slipping from man's grasp, Gregory saw mankind's duty clearly; to seek after the things of heaven with a new urgency. [III.38] He endorses the view that many truths about the life of the soul had been revealed in recent years, and that the spiritual world was moving closer as is manifested through dreams and visions.

Gregory explains the approaching end of the world and the death of human society by employing the metaphor which we have already seen. Death is comparable to sleep and the diurnal cycle. Gregory describes how the Spanish monk Peter dies and then awakes from the sleep of eternal death: ab aeternae mortis somno evigilans. [IV.37.4] In his description of the death of society he reaches for a similar idea. He explains to Peter that if the present life is like a dark night, and the life to come is the approaching day, there is a period before dawn, a 'transitional hour' when darkness is blended into light. Sed quemadmodum cum nox finiri et dies incipit oriri, ante solis ortum simul aliquo modo tenebrae cum luce conmixtae sunt. [IV.43.2] This morning twilight provides the image for the blending of the end of the present world with the beginning of the future world which is even now occurring. ...ita ut huius mundi finis iam cum futuri saeculi exordio permiscetur... [IV.43.2]

The image works not only because of the ancient simile in which sleep is the image and a kind of anticipation of death, but because it also complies with the traditional idea concerning the optimal hour for experiencing a divinely inspired vision. Gregory may have been aware of this traditional belief which so aptly explained why as the things of the earth slipped away, revelationary dreams and visions were becoming such a rich and regular source of information on the nature of the life to come.

The positive attitude towards sleep displayed by Gregory and Tertullian in which the daily physical experience of sleeping and waking stimulated a daily contemplation on the end of human life and the resurrection to follow

is striking. It is surely no coincidence that the work of these two authors, who choose to take up this theme with conviction, should also be marked by a correspondingly high regard for the spiritual importance of dreams.

vii. Gregory on deathbed visions: fear and consolation.

Deathbed visions account for the largest number of visionary experiences related in the Dialogues. In part this is due to the premise of book IV which is to prove that the soul lives on after the death of the body. In part it is undoubtedly due also to the custom of attending and observing the dying, which was encouraged by such a belief.[29] The many examples of this kind of vision, often accompanied by Gregory's own comments and observations, allow us an intimate view of his attitude towards the value of visions, the value of the process of dying, and the spiritual value of both.

Death, like the drowsiness of sleep brought about a fleeting convergence of the two worlds of the visible and the invisible. This convergence was not necessarily a pinpoint collision of two hermetically sealed worlds, but rather on occasion there was a discernable overlap, a haziness in which the soul began to transfer to faculties of the other world while being still attached to the body. The soul would begin to see the invisible with spiritual sight, and to recognise another dimension which was not apparent before. This new sight or vision often led the dying to cry aloud with joy or to scream in terror at the fate approaching them.

Gregory was acutely sensitive to the changing spiritual needs of those facing death, whether their own or that of a loved one. In his stories it is evident that he thought that God shared a similar concern, as time and time again the dying were shielded from undue fear or pain through the consolation of a vision.

Gregory informs Peter that there have been cases where the fear of death could spur a sinner to a timely realization for the need of repentence. Such an opportunity should not be treated lightly and Gregory abused severely the corpse of one of his monks who confessed only at the last moment. But for those whose salvation might seem to be hindered only by minor sins, Gregory believed that the fear of death was itself a purifying process.[30]

Visions of the dying could do one of two things. They could console the sufferer and diminish the fear of death, or they could do much to increase it. Gregory's belief in a beneficial aspect to the fear itself ensured that

visions which increased that fear found a prominent place in his work. The visionary was not always the beneficiary of the harrowing experience. Visions which anticipated the horrors of damnation could serve a community-wide purpose, instilling a fear of death and judgement. But for many their dream and visionary experiences came too late to do more than confirm in the eyes of the world their wretchedness. For the saints and pious who had no spiritual need of such a fear, the vision of their heavenly rewards was an affirmation to the individual as well as to the community that a good life had its reward. Ultimately, Gregory's greatest hope for the dying was a death of great peace and joy.[31] The holy usually attained this estimable state. In keeping the elect from an unnecessary fear of death, a vision could bestow on their last earthly moments the dignity which only security about their fate could ensure.

In order better to encourage virtue, and in time a happy death, the Dialogues addresses a number of popular concerns about the nature of the afterlife. For example, Peter, like Evodius two centuries before, wanted to know if the souls of the blessed would recognise each other on meeting in heaven. Using the example of Dives and Lazarus [Luke 16.19-28] Gregory illustrates how the good recognize the good, the wicked recognize the wicked, and the good and wicked each other. [IV.34]

The promise of recognizing their loved ones in heaven was a comfort to all who like Evodius had a very human idea of the joys of heaven. The descriptions of paradise with its locus amoenus and its mansions offered a world which because it was familiar in form did not seem so awesome and distant. But Gregory had a theological reason for determining that recognition was part of God's plan, for he states: In qua videlicet cognitione utiusque partis cumulus retributionis excrescit, et ut boni amplius gaudeant, qui secum eos laetari conspiciunt quos amaverunt, et mali, dum cum eis torquentur quos in hoc mundo despecto Deo dilexerunt, eos non solum sua, sed etiam eorum poena consumat. [IV.34.4] What Gregory describes is a heaven filled with human emotions, and for the damned a psychological hell. Recognition was for Gregory a fundamental part of the passage to the other world. Where Augustine strove towards an intellectual understanding of God's omnipotence which seemed so inaccessible to human life, Gregory saw heaven in familiar terms where God operates justly according to a human system of justice and a human type of happiness. Where Augustine had

struggled with an existential trauma, Gregory put his faith in a good life, a peaceful and happy death, and a heaven which was not beyond his understanding.

Conclusion.

Gregory's Dialogues show his desire to accomodate the visionary experience for a didactic purpose. With the end of the world approaching, it was a foolish man who did not heed the signs which were meant to educate, warn and console Christians in the face of society's demise. The visions occasioned by the approaching end of the world served a role in the instruction of society as a whole, akin to the visions experienced by those nearing death, the demise of the present world being attended by the same convulsions. Augustine's caution and steadier adherence to the biblical injunction 'You shall not divine nor observe dreams' [Sirach 34.7; Lev. 19.26; quoted by Greg IV.50] did not speak to the exigencies of Gregory's times. Despite Augustine's great reputation as a theologian, his vision thinking did not travel well at this time. Gregory differed significantly from Augustine also in his religious understanding of the phenomenon of death. Whereas Evodius received short shrift from Augustine for his anxious musings on the qualities of the afterlife, Gregory would have had many stories with which to hearten him. Gregory understood well the human fear of death, and harnessed its energy to the spiritual profit of the sufferer. Where Augustine might have emphasised the inconsequence of death in the journey of the soul to God, Gregory saw an opening for spiritual good.

viii. Vision interpretation in the Dialogues.

A popular type of vision account is that which suggests a dimension of the spiritual vision where mental image and reality combine. According to Gregory a devout monk named Merulus received a night vision in which a garland of white flowers came down from heaven and settled on his head. Shortly after the vision he died. Fourteen years later when the abbot wanted to prepare his grave next to Merulus', he noticed a sweet fragrance of flowers. [IV.49.4-5] Gregory's analysis is that this miracle proved that the vision of the flowers was "real", i.e. not simply a divinely inspired image: Ex qua re manifeste patuit, quam verum fuerit quod per nocturnam visionem vidit.

If Gregory seems very literal in his understanding of some of the visionary phenomena he records, he also made, and considered important, distinctions concerning the role of images, allegory and their interpretation in dreams and vision accounts. In a number of cases Gregory eschews the obvious, literal understanding of the vision and proposes a careful interpretation of the events he describes. In other places he combines a literal with an interpretative understanding, not as different coincidental levels of understanding but rather sequentially.

A soldier, struck down by an arrow, died and was brought back to life. On returning to life he described an amazing journey. [IV.37.7ff] At first he saw a dark and fetid river over which there was a bridge with pleasant meadows beyond, teeming with white robed people, each with his own mansion. In one place a mansion was still under construction with bricks made of gold and there were houses which being too close to the riverfront had absorbed the stench of the river; others were not affected. The fate of each soul was decided on this bridge, the sinner falling into the dark waters, the saint crossing unimpeded by sin to the other side. The soldier saw the unhappy fate of an overseer of Gregory's church, and witnessed also the ongoing struggle for the soul of a certain Stephen who had received a vision of hell before his death but who had not fully reformed his life in consequence of it.

When Peter questioned the need for precious metals like gold in the afterlife, Gregory corrected his literal-mindedness: What person of common sense will understand it thus? Quis hoc, si sanum sapit, intellegat? [IV.36.16] And when Peter asks what the meaning is of the river, the bridge over it and the houses contaminated by proximity with it, Gregory answers that these images allow us to understand the purpose of the things seen. Ex rerum, Petre, imaginibus pensamus merita causarum. [IV.38.3] And so the props of the story, such as the river, the bridge, the bricks of gold and the tug of war for Stephen's soul are intended to represent spiritual impulses rather than literal events and Gregory gives the meanings of each of these. And yet despite Gregory's apparent rejection of the literal interpretation, the circumstances of the visionary's soul during the experience, (which is that physical death has occurred and the soul has travelled outside the body) suggests that there is also a dimension of physical reality to the soul's journey and therefore to the vision seen. The vision image therefore

represents both a reality and an image requiring an interpretation which is in harmony with that reality.

Gregory knew of a certain young man named Eumorphius, who on his death bed sent his servant to a military adjutant named Stephen who lived not far away with the message that Stephen should hurry for their ship was ready to take them to Sicily. [IV.36] Their death, it was calculated, had occurred at the same instant. Peter then asks Gregory the obvious question. Why did the dying man see a vision of a ship, and why was it going to Sicily? To the first part of this question Gregory immediately rejects the literal understanding of the image by stating that the soul has no need of conveyance, and that the ship should not be understood therefore to be a real one. He goes on to say that it is not suprising that the ship appeared real to a corporeal man who was accustomed to corporeal sight although by it it was meant to be understood that the soul travelled spiritually: sed mirum non est si adhuc homini in corpore posito illus apparuit, quod per corpus adsueverat videre, ut per hoc daretur intellegi, quo eius anima spiritualiter duci potuisset. [IV.36] The vision offered a recognizable image (a ship) in order to communicate the idea of travel. In answer to the second part of the question, why the ship was bound for Sicily, the allegorical nature of Gregory's interpretation breaks down. In Sicily, Gregory informs us, there are many open pits burning with the fires of hell through whose openings (dilating as the end of the world draws near) the souls of the damned will be thrown. These fiery pits were put there by God so that unbelievers might see the 'realms of torture' with their own eyes. The imaginary ship was therefore destined for a physical port, and the souls of Eumorphius and Stephen were to travel to a geographical location where the entrances to hell were reputed to be. Gregory's precision about the allegorical way in which the vision was to be understood in the first instance was scuttled in the second instance by his belief in hell as a geographic location with corporeal fires to which souls travelled in terms of human ideas of space and distance.

ix. The identity of the visionary.

Gregory opened book IV of his Dialogues by stressing the authority of the Holy Spirit by which the maiores saw their visions. Further on, Gregory tells Peter that those who have been granted such visions have seen them

under special circumstances: spiritual vision, purified by pure faith and abundant prayers. Nam multi nostrorum, mentis oculum fide pura et uberi oratione mundantes, egredientes e carne animas frequenter viderunt. [IV.27.1] So who are these people who Gregory cites as having visions which were the result of spiritual vision?

There are fifty-nine vision accounts in the Dialogues. Most of them were experienced by a single individual although there were seven cases reported where a supernatural phenomenon was experienced by many people at once. An overview of the visionary identities reported by Gregory reveals a surprisingly high number of lay people of various ranks and occupations. Nineteen lay adults ranging from a Vandal king, to the son of a next door neighbour, are represented in Gregory's stories.[32] Most were engaged in secular affairs at the time of the prophetic dream or vision. Balancing this we find a substantial body of people involved directly in the religious life. Of these the most frequent contributors to vision accounts were ordinary monks (and one nun) who account for fifteen out of twenty-eight visions recorded to those in religious orders. Three visions experienced by St.Benedict are the only ones recorded of an abbot, and in general the higher clergy is less well represented than the lower ranks. There are four dream or vision accounts attributed to a bishop, three to a priest and only one case of a pope receiving a vision. Only one visionary is identified as a hermit and only one, apart from St.Benedict, is identified as a saint.

The relatively high proportion of monks among the vision accounts from those of the religious profession, can be attributed in large measure to the fact that Gregory drew many of his stories from monks he had known during his years at the monastery of St.Andrew. Monks also account for a significant portion of Gregory's informants on visionary occurrences.

Second to the monks in numbers, are the church sacristans who appear to have been important sources for information on supernatural events occurring within the church precincts. Sacristans tended to the church early in the morning or late at night when the church was empty and therefore more congenial for two apostles to conduct a private conversation, or for the devil and his demons to conspire. Added to this, the sacristan was probably encouraged to be on the look out for strange goings on, and if there was some disturbance, they found in the monks a ready audience for their accounts.

Although there were times in the human life cycle when visions were more

prevalent than at others, such as at the point of death, and places where they were more likely to be observed such as in church or at the deathbed of a holy man, the identity of the visionary in Gregory's world was as likely to be a lay person as a religious, and as likely to be a poor person as a noble and wealthy one. He gives credence to visionaries from all walks of life and from all spiritual ranks. There is no suggestion in his examples of prophetic dreams and visions that this is an experience confined to a small spiritual élite. Indeed if one considers the significant number of lay people who are admitted as reliable witnesses, often people who are recorded as being still actively involved in their secular professions and pursuits, and if one adds to them Gregory's unabashed reliance on the testimony of children we come close to an idea of universal access to the spiritual world traditionally associated with Tertullian in his Montanist years. Although an exclusionist attitude is explicit in Gregory's admonition to Peter that only certain spiritually developed individuals attain spiritual vision, once again Gregory's official pronouncements are at variance with the material he presents, and his attitude towards visions is more accurately expressed when he explains how visions are becoming more frequent as the end of the world approaches.

x. Identity of the apparition.

Gregory's visionaries were rarely in any doubt about who had visited them. Often the apparition identified itself in the early stages of the vision, or was recognizable by the clothing or artifacts associated with the personage. Just as frequently no indication is given in the vision narratives as to how the apparition was identified. This did not bother readers unduly since it was believed that by means of the spirit, holy men recognised even those who they had never met before, just as they would do in heaven. [IV.34]

The individuals seen in the apparitions related in the Dialogues are notable for their diversity. In five cases the apparition is clearly that of an angel [I.4;I.12;II.35;IV.20;IV.27], in other cases only a voice or an intense light are recorded. [I.8;IV.16]

Saints, martyrs and holy men form a substantial percentage of those seen. They are all saints with cults in Italy, the majority local saints of the recent past; the martyr Faustinus, the monk Justus, St.Juticus, and

Saints Juvenal and Eleutherius. The other major group to appear in dreams and visions are biblical figures of the Old and New Testaments. St.Peter appears four times, testimony to his importance as founder apostle of the Roman See. Surprisingly Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saint Paul are mentioned only once apiece as vision protagonists. [IV.17;IV.18;IV.12] Old Testament prophets were always popular vision figures and Gregory records one vision in which three appear at once: Jonas, Ezechiel and Daniel. Senior ecclesiastics do not often feature as vision protagonists, and there is only one pope who does so, Pope Felix.

The single most reported vision is of the soul, usually described in the guise of a dove. [II.34;II.35;IV.9;IV.10;IV.11] The prominence of this vision type in the Dialogues is partly attributable to Peter's question regarding the departure of the soul at death; a number of the visions of souls are in direct answer to it. Nevertheless deathbed visions of the soul are a popular feature in late antique sources and in hagiography. The spirits of the dead, unable to rest in their tombs until readmitted to communion are often observed almost casually as they go about their private tormented duties. [II.23] The devil makes three appearances, once as a blackbird, once as a dragon leading a monk astray and once without disguise. His demons are seen plotting the downfall of a bishop, and they haunt a deserted house. Two of the three devil apparitions appear to tempt Benedict. Otherwise the devil and his satellites do not feature strongly in the visions related by Gregory.

And finally, a group not sizeably represented in vision accounts are women. Of the four visions involving women, only one is saintly; the virgin Mary. The other three are garrulous nuns, two who leave their tombs during communion, and one who is seen cut in half at the church altar, while the upper, offending, portion of her body is burned. It is hardly a positive picture of women as teachers and models of asceticism!

Conclusion.

While influenced by Neoplatonic and patristic writers, Gregory's visionary theology is more than the sum of the traditional elements for which he is sometimes the mouthpiece. By setting aside those traditional theoretical elements which he avows overtly, from the underlying principles at work in his narratives, we discover a vision mentality which is purely

Gregory's.

Gregory understood the spiritual benefit of the vision, especially that which concerned the individual's impending death. He recognised the two compulsions by which most people were inspired to approach God: fear of death and eternal punishment, and on a higher spiritual plane the love of God and the desire for union with Him. Gregory shows himself in the Moralia to be motivated by the higher stimulus, but he never failed to neglect the value of the lower. Death was fearful and was feared because God intended it to be so. Most significant in its departure from centuries of church practise, Gregory allowed vision narratives to colour the understanding of doctrinal issues, however intentioned or unintentioned this was. In the Dialogues there is no sense that the value of visions should be kept separate and subordinate to scripture, even when their content did not conflict. Gregory is convinced of the didactic merits of vision accounts; their stimulus to personal introspection, and the desire to embrace the religious life under the direction of church-sanctioned professionals. This spirit of didacticism which pervades the Dialogues [33], and which was accessible to a wide audience, is notably lacking in Augustine's vision treatise.

Gregory combined ancient concerns and ideas with the needs of his own Christian society in its own unique historical situation. In many respects his attitude towards visions displays continuity with beliefs which were ever present undercurrents in the pagan and Christian religions. In his reliance on the spirit to guide the church and the faithful in times of crises, Gregory approached the positive attitude of the very early church before it sought to restrict and control these manifestations of the spirit in the name of orthodoxy.

Chapter 4. VISION THINKING IN THE WORKS OF GREGORY OF TOURS.

Sixth century Gaul experienced what amounted to a literary revolution. After a modest but seminal corpus of hagiographic works penned in the late fourth and fifth centuries, there was a sudden explosion in hagiographic compositions in the sixth. Recording and reading the virtuous and miracle-filled lives of the saints became the predominant medium of learning and creative expression on spiritual matters by the literate clergy. This is not to say that treatise writing and theological disputation evaporated entirely (we do come across instances of theological differences being aired, if not settled, by exhortations and debate), but it is perhaps significant that the single most productive Gallic author of this period, Gregory of Tours (534-94), has left us no sermons or homilies.

Gregory's writings, which largely feature collections of saintly biographies, furnish us with an approach on visionary matters which in their emphasis on the practical as opposed to the theoretical is substantially different from the vision theoreticians examined for the earlier period. In his writings we see how belief in the spiritual value of dreams and visions had permeated all aspects of religious life, and all social and intellectual niveaux. We also see a relatively new appreciation of their value to the higher clergy, (traditionally the sceptical balance to popular credulity), in pursuing the religious and political goals of the church. Gregory's self-identity above all else was that of a bishop, and it is as a true representative of sixth century episcopal spirituality in Gaul, that he expressed the concerns and the enthusiasms of the institutionalised church through the dream-vision experience. It is in this context especially that Gregory of Tours is an important contributer to, and reflection of the vision thinking of his time.

I. Personal experience in Gregory's vision thinking.

Gregory, bishop of Tours (573-c.594) was born into a distinguished Gallic family of the senatorial aristocracy around the year 539.[1] He was educated by his paternal uncle Gallus, bishop and saint of Clermont, and by Gallus' archdeacon and successor, Avitus, of whom he wrote that it was he qui me post Davitici carminis cannas ad illa evangelicae praedicationis dicta

atque apostolicae virtutis historias epistolasque perduxit. [VP 2] Although Gregory lived his adult life in Tours, he retained strong connections with his Clermont relatives and with the cults they propagated there for the rest of his life. Relatives on both sides of his family had occupied prominent Gallic bishoprics and their tenure of the bishopric of Tours was a virtual monopoly: praeter quinque episcopos reliqui omnes, qui sacerdotium Turonicam susceperunt, parentum nostrorum prosapiae sunt coniuncti.[HF V.49] A significant number of Gregory's male relatives were already venerated as saints during Gregory's life-time, and Gregory's own accounts of their lives and deeds helped perpetuate and broaden the basis for their veneration. The familial aspect of Gregory's relationship to the saints and his writings on them has long been recognized important to our understanding of the sixth century cult of saints.[2] It is not surprising therefore to find that Gregory's personal experience of visions and those related of his family members constitute an important element in his vision thinking.

Gregory learned to put his trust in the power of dreams and visions early on. He relates his first visionary experience as occurring when he was in infantia.[3] Gregory's father often suffered from fevers and pains and one night Gregory had a vision in which a 'person' asked him if he had read the book of Joshua, the son of Nun. Gregory replied with a child's answer that he had only learned the letters of the alphabet so far and did not even know of the existence of such a book! The 'person' then instructed him to break a splinter from a piece of wood (hastulam parvulam ex ligno), to write Joshua's name on it, and to place it beneath his father's pillow as a protection. The following morning Gregory related to his mother the content of his dream, and she instructed that the directions be carried out.[GC 39] The remedy worked and Gregory's father regained his health for another year until he succumbed once again to the affliction. Once again the apparition appeared to Gregory, this time asking if he had read the book of Tobit. Once again Gregory had to acknowledge that he had not. The apparition instructed him to do what Tobit's son had done for him, namely catch a fish and burn its entrails in front of his father.[4] Gregory related this second vision to his mother and the instructions were carried out as before with the same success.[GC 39]

Gregory's earliest experience of dream-visions was thus connected with a time of crisis and the subsequent relief of his father's condition.

Important elements in the story are the faithful implementation of his vision's instructions by his mother, and the almost magical quality of the written word both as a talisman, and in the yet to be discovered riches of the scriptures. Gregory discovered for himself that visions were important for effecting cures with divine help, and perhaps as a result, the thaumaturgical vision experience is among the most common in Gregory's corpus of vision narratives. Other childhood experiences echoed the importance of visions to the family's well-being on an intimate and personal level. When the plague arrived in Gaul in 543 Gregory was probably no more than four years old, yet the devastation and fear it caused was remembered long afterwards. Gregory's uncle Gallus had prayed fervently that his city of Clermont-Ferrand not be touched. An angel appeared to Gallus telling him that his prayers had been heard and that his city would be spared. Gallus instituted rogations setting out in procession to the church of St.Julian of Brioude sixty-five miles away and the inhabitants were spared.[HF IV.5] Gregory would have learned this account from Gallus himself as he was growing up in his household, learning at the same time the expected role of a bishop in time of crisis; girding up his flock, dissipating fear by confronting the horror with purposeful action, and expecting a sign or vision as being an appropriate divine response.[5]

Gregory's mother too had her story to tell of those terrible times. As the plague approached Clermont signs and marks appeared on the homes and churches of the area.[6] Armentaria had a vision one night in which it seemed as if the wine in their cellars had been turned to blood. In her dream she wept believing that they were to be victims of the plague. An apparition promised her that if she kept the vigils of St.Benignus whose feastday was on the morrow, she would be spared. Armentaria carried out the instructions of the vision and Gregory recalls that whereas neighbouring homes were marked, theirs remained unmarked.[7]

As another crisis loomed in his life in his mid-twenties, it is not surprising to find that Gregory chose to rely on the advice and encouragement of a vision of his mother. Despite his pride in the illustriousness of his family Gregory was conscious of the "rusticity" of his writing style, even beyond the convention of humility. His voluminous works show the drive of a vocational writer, but one senses that he was always looking over his shoulder for criticism from his friend Venantius Fortunatus whose poetry

combined artistic talent with the benefits of a sound education at Ravenna. Where Gregory wrote a prose account of the modern miracles of St.Martin of Tours, Fortunatus wrote a life of the saint in verse. It seems that even when he addresses his successors to the bishopric of Tours at the conclusion of his History with the plea that future readers not amend or make extracts from it, we may discern the shadow of Fortunatus, for it should not be changed even by someone educated in the works of the grammarian Martianus Capella himself, although they might versify it if they wished.[8] The conflict of his determination to record the miracles of the saints which he believed to be God's will, with his self-acknowleged unpolished literary style produced in the young man a crisis of self-doubt and desire which he describes in terms of both grief and fear: Maeroris, cur tantae vitutes, quae sub antecessoribus nostris factae sunt, non sunt scriptae; terroris, ut agrediar opus egregium rusticanus.[VM I.praef.] Approaching the subject of St.Martin, to which these comments were a preface, was a daunting task indeed, since Gregory was following in the footsteps of Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus of Périgeux. The resolution of this tension, and his justification to his reader, was resolved finally by means of a dream-vision. In his dream he was in the basilica of St.Martin.[9] While observing the cures taking place at noon-time, his mother asked him why he was so slow to write down what he saw. Gregory responded that since he was not learned in literature it would be shameful of him to attempt such a project; would that Severus, Paulinus, or even Fortunatus were there to describe those events! His mother then both encouraged and chided him in the dream; his language is more easily understood by the people than that of the learned, she insists, and should he fail to record the events, it will be a divine charge against him. Gregory took the dream very seriously for in approaching the work he states: Quod non praesumerem, nisi bis et tertio admonitus fuissem per visum.[10]

In his own life, then, Gregory celebrated the value of the dream-vision for mitigating both corporeal and mental distress, and the importance of carrying out their instructions. The role of Gregory's mother in his attitude towards visions was evidently a formative one, but not one in conflict with his own propensity towards belief. Gregory and Armentaria were not Augustine and Monica. There is no crisis of belief in Gregory's work, no conflict of the will. Not only was he born into a society more homogeneously Christian than Augustine's, but socially his self-identity was clearly bound

to the Gallic Christian tradition in which his family had played so prominent a part.

This is not to say, of course, that Gregory believed every vision account brought to his notice. Gregory could be discriminating if circumstances warranted it; if the content of the prophecy was suspect or the beneficiary clearly did not deserve his or her good fortune. Duke Guntram Boso, for instance, seemed not a figure destined to be the subject of divine intervention. Boso was one of those opportunistic and frequently cruel military men who flourished under the Merovingian kingships. As King Sigibert's military commander he had been responsible for the death of Theudebert, King Chilperic's son.[HF IV.50] He took refuge at the tomb of St.Martin where Gregory vigorously protected his right of asylum, more out of respect for St.Martin than solicitude for Duke Boso.[HF V.4] Restless concerning his fate, Boso consulted a woman reputed to have the power of prophecy who communicated to him four pieces of information: that Chilperic would die that very year, that Merovech would succeed Chilperic and exclude his brothers, that Boso would become Merovech's military leader, and finally that in the sixth year of Merovech's reign Boso would become bishop of Tours. What reaction Boso anticipated in telling Gregory this prophecy. Was it an attempt to wrest some respect from the bishop? Was it a veiled threat? What is interesting is Gregory's reaction to the scoundrel's aspirations to his bishopric. He tells us he had a hearty good laugh at Boso's stupidity (stulticia). He then told Boso that he should put no reliance on the devil's promises.[HF V 14] But what of the prophecy? In fact Gregory himself had a dream shortly afterwards in which an angel, flying through the air, communicated much the same message to him; that God will strike Chilperic and all his sons, and that none of them will survive to rule his kingdom. Now Gregory was very receptive to prophecies of political doom; he gave prominent place in his History to St.Salvius who apart from being a very holy man confided to Gregory the unhappy destiny of Chilperic's royal line.[HF V.50] Gregory's spontaneous ridicule of Boso's claims was not a reaction to its political message. More precisely it was the fact that Boso believed he would one day become bishop of Tours. That such a man should gain such a preferment and that this would be communicated by means of a veridical prophecy, must have seemed preposterous to Gregory. Putting aside the content of the prophecy, there was also the question of the prophecy's

origin. Boso had consulted a woman habentem spiritum phitonis, unidentified but assuredly not a holy woman. Boso's account had nothing to commend it, and although Gregory tells Boso that he is being deluded by the devil, there is a refreshingly secular humour in Gregory's dismissal of his claims: valde inridebam hominem, qui talia credi putabat.[HF V.14]

Over the years Gregory had occasion to harbour many unsavoury characters at the church of St.Martin. One of the most violent was Eberulf, formerly Chilperic's Treasurer. Fredegund accused Eberulf of her husband's murder and King Guntram swore to avenge his brother's death down to the ninth generation ut...ne reges amplius interficerentur.[HF VII.21] Eberulf and his followers desecrated St.Martin's, he killed people inside the church, and had one priest beaten up so badly that he almost died. Above all he and his servants did not show proper reverence for their surroundings. Matters reached a climax when Eberulf disrupted an evening service shouting that Gregory had cut off his access to the fringes around St.Martin's tomb. At this point Gregory tells us that he had a vision which he related to Eberulf. The vision was essentially a projection of what might happen in the event that King Guntram entered the sanctuary to kill Eberulf. Gregory would try to restrain the king and would shout to Eberulf to hold on to the fringes at the tomb, but each time he looked, Eberulf's grasp on the fringes was weak. Gregory completes his narrative by telling Eberulf that he awoke not knowing the meaning of the vision leaving Eberulf to supply its interpretation himself, for he explains that it was his intent to hold on to the fringes with one hand while wielding his sword with another, killing all who came near including Gregory and his clergy! Gregory tells us how astonished he was to hear this and that he believed that it was the Devil speaking.

This case has its interest in that it is possible that Gregory may have had a more conscious intent than the dream story implies. Gregory evidently wanted to warn Eberulf of the dangers of lacking respect for St.Martin, and the use of a dream to convey the gravity of his situation might be expected to be more effective than reasoning with a man who had already shown himself to be deaf to reason. De Nie has suggested that Gregory may not have related the vision to Eberulf exactly as he himself had experienced it.[11] It is certainly clear that Gregory's vision addresses the very concerns he had voiced earlier on. It is possible, however, that Gregory was also making the vision serve a psychological function in recreating a scenario which could

possibly transpire. (Eberulf was eventually murdered within the church precincts and abandoned by St.Martin, but not exactly as Gregory envisaged it.)[HF VII.29] In so doing he may have hoped to prompt Eberulf to reveal his intentions should such a case arise. His vision would therefore be in the nature of a visual, imaginary projection; role playing, not prophecy. As it was, thus forewarned of the Duke's intentions, Gregory was on an estate thirty miles away when Eberulf met his fate.

It appears from the Eberulf case that Gregory was capable of a sophisticated understanding of the use of the dream-vision medium to convey a hypothetical scenario through images in the imagination. This being the case we can expect that Gregory distinguished in his mind, if not in writing, between the imaged vision as a mystical phenomenon and the dream-vision as figure of speech or mental visualisation. In another case described by Gregory this differentiation does not appear so clearly.

Gregory had enormous respect for the wisdom and holiness of St.Salvius, bishop of Albi. One day at Berny-Rivière when Gregory and St.Salvius of Albi were conversing out of doors, Salvius asked Gregory to look up at the roof of the king's residence and tell him what he saw. Gregory replied prosaically that he can only see the new roof tiling put up on the orders of the king. Then in a rare moment of doubt Gregory candidly admits that he thought Salvius might be making fun of him since Salvius was staring and Gregory could see nothing. Then Salvius pronounced the following: "I see the naked sword of the wrath of God hanging over that house" (Video ego evaginatum irae divinae gladio super domum hanc dependentem). These words proved to be prophetic, Gregory tells us, for twenty days later Chilperic's two sons died of the plague.[HF V.50]

It is impossible not to wonder whether Gregory really understood what was going on. His first instinct, that Salvius might be making fun of him, is extreme, but this is speedily replaced by earnest belief. That Salvius might have been speaking metaphorically, does not seem to have occurred to him. Salvius was speaking seriously and Gregory trusted him, so that when Salvius' prediction turned out to be true Gregory readily attributed it to a mystical vision. Gregory does not appear to come to grips with a distinction between a mystical vision which is there in reality but which only Salvius can see, and that mental vision of a thought personal to Salvius expressed in visual language. Gregory must either consider Salvius' statement a joke or

treat it as a mystical experience; there is nothing in between. Even if Salvius had stated that he was speaking figuratively, Gregory would not have recognized any difference in its divine inspiration.

However one interprets Gregory's personal attitude in selecting, believing or disbelieving the visions cited above, one cannot avoid the weighty message of Gregory's writings on the subject of dreams; they are to be taken seriously. In those cases where the vision recipient or the one for whom the visionary message is intended, fails to believe in the vision or carry out its intructions, Gregory is ready to point to that person's wicked contrariness. Those who were not appropriately reverential towards the saints were apt not to believe in them or pay close attention when they appeared before them, hence Gregory's comment about one such man: Ille quoque parvi pendens visionem, nihil de his, ut habet rusticitas, quae admonitus fuerat retractavit.[GM 47] One recent historian has suggested that since there are many cases in which poor lay people do not readily believe in visions, belief in visions in the sixth century may have been imposed on them from above, ie. by the higher clergy.[12] I find this argument debatable in so far as Gregory relates numerous cases of peasant belief in visions, just as there are numerous cases in which the sceptics are clergy. For example St.Nicetius was very concerned at the actions of Priscus, his episcopal successor who in conjunction with his priest Martin was despoiling the church. Nicetius appeared to a certain man in a dream with a message for Priscus that he mend his wicked ways. The recipient of the dream told the deacon, but the deacon failed to pass the message on. That night Nicetius appeared to the deacon and hit him on the throat. The deacon then told the bishop and his priest, but they did not take it seriously.[HF IV.36] The death of the priest not long after serves to confirm the tale in Gregory's eyes, but the bishop did not reform. In the meantime disapproval of the bishop evidently fomented among the townpeople, from whom this dream report came, and the lower clergy who identified the integrity of their city not with Priscus but with its previous bishop Nicetius.

Finally, Gregory believed in the very real power of supernatural phenomena which rested in the control of the church's enemies. The ploys of the devil will be examined elsewhere, but Gregory also demonstrates his willingness to believe that alien peoples marshalled powers which could project visions on to the unwary. When the Huns invaded Gaul, and King

Sigibert marched out against them, the two sides were about to close in battle when the Huns, equipped with magic arts diversas eis fantasias ostendunt.[HF IV.29] Sigibert's forces were defeated at this engagement. Gregory calls these false images fantasias, a term traditionally used to denote demonically inspired dreams. Gregory, who was a fervent admirer of Sigibert, could well believe that only demonic arts provided a satisfactory explanation for his defeat.

These examples of Gregory's attitude towards visions, while they may point to some discretion on Gregory's part, hardly provide a basis for determining the extent of his credulity or scepticism, nor could they even if there were more of them. Neither scepticism nor credulity is a constant state of mind. Nor can we penetrate Gregory's selection process since he is almost consistently our sole source for the events he describes. Even those occasions when Gregory insists on the reliability of his sources (already a hagiographic topos) or that he has seen some miracle with his own eyes, we are still seeing the world only as Gregory shows it. All we can ascertain is that Gregory was willing to trust accounts of visions which supported his own views on divine behaviour and justice. Within this framework Gregory shows a consistency of purpose, even of mission.

Returning to Gregory's own environment, it is clear that the family orientated world to which he belonged with its prestigious record of service to the church, and his extended family of saints in heaven, encouraged Gregory's belief that the rupture between his earthly life and the heavens was minimal. It is not surprising therefore to find that Gregory was attracted to vision accounts which demonstrated how truly close and intimately the saints operated in relation to the mortal world, and how holy bishops were their truest allies.

II. Vision theory in Gregory's Writings.

Gregory shows no knowledge in his writings of a formalized vision theory. Technical terms such as 'visio intellectualis' or 'ecstasis' are notably absent from his writings. There is no indication whatsoever that he was familiar with Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram book XII, nor does he show any familiarity with Macrobius' Commentary beyond the unavoidable shared use of such common terms as somnium, visio, oraculum and fantasma (fantasma being a spectre or malevolent being for both authors). Gregory did not

distinguish or place a hierarchical value on the terms 'dream' and 'vision', and in many cases he uses the terms interchangeably.[13] All Macrobius' veridical forms of vision are represented in Gregory's work, but so they are in most hagiographic accounts of the period. Nevertheless Gregory had absorbed through common usage or from literature the means of expressing or imaging mystical phenomena in terms which are recognizably Stoic and Neoplatonic, such as the association of the soul with fire. In this Gregory shares with the early Fathers the language of Christianized Stoicism and Neoplatonism.[14] Likewise the kind of information generally conveyed in vision narratives such as the time and place of the dream or vision is usually provided by him. Gregory's understanding of veridical dreams and visions may therefore be approached by examining the process by which visions were thought to be seen and the setting of the event which provides the structure of Gregory's vision narratives.

i. The process by which visions are seen.

Gregory rarely allows us to glimpse how he and his contemporaries understood the functioning of their visionary experiences. Sometimes stray comments can elucidate if not a coherent system of understanding, then at least an attempt to document and explain the process at work.

Looking first at Gregory's phraseology we find that there are cases where he hints at differing layers of perception. In many cases he states quite bluntly that a figure was seen in a vision (vidit in visio) or appeared to the recipient (apparet ad eo). Equally commonly we learn that the sight seemed to appear, so that, for example, when St.Venantius needed help reading the office he saw "as if" (quasi) at one window of the apse a ladder down which "seemed to descend" (quasi descendentem) a venerable old man who blessed the offering.[VP XVI.2] Nicetius had a dream one time at sea in which, he related: Vidi enim me quasi per universum orbem retia ad capiendum extendere...[VP XVII.5] Why Gregory should choose to make such a distinction in some places but not in others is unclear.[15] It may be that he reported the story as he remembered it being told, or it may be that he was trying to convey in his own words the sense that the vision was different from others in its symbolic value. St.Venantius' vision is very similar in its understanding of the importance of communion to the view expressed in Pope Gregory's Dialogues IV.60. Venantius clearly realized that the old priest

blessing the bread was a sign that communion joined two worlds and that priests were constantly listened to and helped in their clerical duties. St.Nicetius knew that his dream about casting nets was symbolic of his saving his congregation at the divine office, as Gregory suggested, but it may also have referred to the miracle which follows in the text in which a Christian on a ship filled with pagans called upon Nicetius' name in a storm showing his power over the elements which the pagan gods had been unable to calm.

It is a notable aspect of Gregory's vision narratives that he never uses the term "ecstasy." As we have seen, the visionary's sensation or perception of standing outside of the self during the event, and the bystander's observation of that suspended state, was considered an important indicator of the validity of the report as being divinely inspired.[16] Furthermore, the Greek term "ecstasis", in Latin exstasis, is a familiar one in hagiographic accounts of the later Merovingian period. This omission in Gregory's narrative prompts two questions. Firstly, was Gregory unfamiliar with the Augustinian literature in which this term was used? And secondly, regardless of his terminological preference, did Gregory understand the concept by which the seer experiences the sensation of being "rapt up" to an extent that it can be observed externally?

To the first question the answer is difficult to ascertain. We cannot be certain of the medium through which Gregory knew the works to which he sometimes referred. Those with which he was most familiar, Gallic sources such as Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini did not describe dream-visions as occurring in exstasi. The early sixth century Life of Eugendus in the Vita Patrum Jurensium, which does employ the term, appears not to have been known to Gregory. The term only enters general usage in Merovingian hagiographic literature in the seventh century.[17] Augustine employed the term, of course, but we do not know the nature of Gregory's contact with his works. There is no evidence that Gregory knew the De Genesi ad litteram.

As to the second question, whether the concept of "ecstasy" if not the term itself is present in Gregory's works, it is clear that it is, both in its internal and its external manifestation. (That is to say in the visionary's personal understanding of the experience and in its observable outward form.) St.Salvius of Albi reported that he was carried up to the heights of heaven by two angels: adpraehensus a duobus angelos in caelorum excelsa sublatus sum. His journey took him through the portals of light and

he returned through them on his return.[HF VII.1] The abbot Brachio saw himself in a vision being led into the presence of God: vidit in visum...ductum se in praesentiam Domini [VP XII.3], and Sunniulf was led to the fiery river in his dream-vision: Ductum se per visum ad quoddam flumen igneum.[HF IV.33] The seer's sense of removal from their sleeping or inanimate body, even if it is recognised as being a spiritual travelling only, conforms to classic descriptions of ecstasy. Externally too the concentration of contemplation is understood to produce a state in which the seer ignores his or her immediate environment. St.Salvius' case is special in that he was believed to have died and revived during the experience, but on his return he showed his alienation from his environment in his not needing bodily sustenance; he fed for three days on the lingering sweet odour of heaven.[HF VII.I] St.Venantius was returning from his prayers and the basilica of the saints when in the middle of the forecourt of the church, erectis auribus oculisque ad caelum diutissime adtentis, stetit immobilis.[VP XVI.2] This static pose, held for a long time is the closest we get in Gregory's works to the description of an ecstatic trance. When Venantius broke free of it he is described as taking a few steps forward and groaning. The bystanders were well aware of what was happening for one of them asked him what it was and if he had seen some divine thing. Venantius had been hearing mass being sung in heaven.

If the idea of an ecstatic state is not unfamiliar to Gregory, it is certainly not common. The vast majority of descriptions state quite simply that the seer saw a nocturnal or daytime vision or saw a dream-vision. There is, however, a type of visionary experience which Gregory makes his own; that of the inadvertent witnessing of the operations of the other world obtained by means of a kind of "tresspass" on its privacy. This type of experience is the ultimate in unstructured viewing. That is to say that the transition from the mortal world to the divine world occurs to all intents and purposes without the crossing of boundaries through the medium of a dream or ecstasy. This form of vision will be examined further on.

ii. Time and place in Gregory's vision narratives.

Certain types of information was commonly provided in visionary literature to describe the place, time and circumstances of the visionary event.[18] These details provided the structure of the story, and as a

raconteur Gregory had a keen sense of dramatic scene setting. The inclusion of such information does not necessarily mean that it was regarded as being significant beyond its compositional function.

The time of day at which the dream or vision is received does not appear to influence Gregory's judgement of its validity. Most visions are described as being nocturnal, or more precisely "at about midnight" [VP XII.3], but there are examples of daytime experiences including Gregory's own vision of his mother in a "dream at noon." [Virt.Mart.I praef.; see also VP XVII.3]. More significant is the use of liturgical time for some experiences. St.Venantius was celebrating Mass when his eyes were covered by darkness, and he asked that another priest perform the service in his stead. As the priest proceeded with the service, Venantius saw an aged clergyman descend from a window in the apse by means of a ladder and bless the sacrifice. This was the moment when ut sanctum munus iuxta morem catholicum, signo crucis superposito, benediceretur. [VP XVI.2] The Mass was considered a propitious moment for a mystical experience. Not only was it the culmination of the service, but was that moment when heaven and earth were thought to join.

The duration of the experience in Gregory's stories, when he mentions it at all, is almost always "for a very long time" (diutissime). St.Venantius, who saw that the mass was already in progress in heaven, was observed by bystanders; erectis auribus oculisque ad caelum diutissime adtentis, stetit inmobilis.[VP XVI.2] By contrast the miraculous appearance of signs to observers were seen to appear "suddenly" on the walls of houses.[HF IV.5] The passage of time was an important element in the visionary experience. Visions showed that the correct observance of time for conducting the liturgy was a concern of the saints. In one vision St.Stephen was seen to apologise to the other saints assembled in a church for his delayed arrival; he had been saving a ship and its crew from disaster.[GM 33] In another vision, seen by Gregory himself in his sleep, an apparition admonished him three times telling him to wake up and return to the cathedral to observe the Christmas Eve vigil there. By this experience Gregory was warned that the Christmas Eve vigil was not the right time to take a nap.[GM 86]

There were many places where a vision could be received. The most common was at what might be described as the 'workplace.' For clergymen the environs of the church or tomb was often cited as the venue. The recipient of the vision might be attending Mass, or else be in the forecourt (atrium)

of the church on their way to Mass. [VP XVI.2] Bishop Trojanus of Saintes was walking around the holy shrines per obscuram noctem when he saw a ball of light , and Gregory missed a chance of a vision at an oratory dedicated to the virgin Mary at Marsat while on his way to keep a vigil there. [GM 8] Recluses often had their experiences in their cell, military commanders had theirs on the field of battle, or outside a city under siege, the sick and dying experienced theirs on their sickbed or in church, close to a saint's tomb.

With reference to visions associated with a tomb, it should be noted that in Gregory's writings there are no clear-cut examples of incubation at a saint's tomb for the expressed purpose of receiving a dream or vision revelation. In St.Martin's at Tours the sick were accustomed to lie between the tomb and the altar, but their recovery was due to imbibing a draft containing dust from his tomb, not from pleading for a revelation.[19] Nevertheless dream-visions did offer cures around altars, and there is a fine line between petitioning aid at a tomb and sleeping there, and incubation. The only case where a person is described as asking directly for a revelation, and that is when Eberigisilus prayed that it be revealed to him where the martyr Mallosus' relics were to be found.[GM 62]

iii. The seer and the seen; theological implications.

a. The person of the visionary.

Bishop saints, martyrs and to a lesser extent lower ranks of clergymen account for the greatest number of both visionaries and apparitions in Gregory's works. This is in direct contrast to the visionaries and celestial visitants of Gregory the Great's Dialogues which is overwhelmingly monastic and secular. Gregory of Tours' History and the greater part of his saintly biographies centre on the spiritual and administrative activities of the Gallic clergy, and so the visions narrated issue from this milieu and reflect their values. (This will be discussed at greater length in section III). Like Pope Gregory's Dialogues, however, Gregory of Tours relies heavily on visions and miracles which involve apparitions and visionaries close to home; those which are foreign tend to be those culled from Christian history and literature.

Not everyone was admitted to the vision of an apparition even when it took place in their presence. Gregory, in common with most vision recorders

noted when a vision was seen by all present at the site, or more commonly when it was seen only by one. The seer was selected based on criteria of worthiness and necessity. When St.Venantius saw his vision of a cleric descending from a ladder during Mass, Gregory notes quod nullus videre meruit nisi ipse tantum; reliqui vero cur non viderint, ignoramus.[VP XVI.2] Although Gregory claims he doesn't know why the others present did not see the vision, he surely provides his own answer here: only St.Venantius merited the vision. Bishop Severinus of Cologne, vir honestae vitae et per cuncta laudabilis, heard choirs singing in heaven at the very hour of St.Martin's death, but his archdeacon could not hear them. Gregory comments, Sed credo, eum non fuisse aequalis meriti, a quo haec non merebantur audiri. [Virt.Mart I.4] On another occasion when Gregory tried to enter a church to see a celestial gathering which he believed to be the cause of the light emanating from it, he found the church dark inside. He knew the reason why he did not see a vision: credo a caligine peccatorum meorum.[GM 8]

Even those ordained to see an apparition might not be privy to the whole vision. Builders engaged in raising a church in honour of St.Benignus saw an old woman dressed in black with hair as white as a swan's and a 'glorious' face who encouraged them in their work. She addressed them, conluding Nam si permitteretur, ut vestrorum oculorum acies contemplaret, nempe videbatis vobis operantibus sanctum praeire Benignum.[GM 50; GC 42] The builders took the old woman for an apparition of the nun Paschasia who was venerated at a neighbouring church. Why the builders believed they could see Paschasia but not Benignus is not disclosed, nor does Gregory elucidate the difference between that vision which enabled the builders to see Paschasia, and that "keenness" of vision which would enable them to see Benignus. In any case it illustrates an interesting understanding of varying levels of visionary sight even within the context of a single vision experience.[20]

Access to a visionary experience did not depend on physical abilities, and so Gregory shared with Augustine the belief that the blind could have a mystical vision. He tells how a certain blind man had a dream in which appeared a man who told him to pray before the altar of St.Nicetius. There he would receive his sight.[VP VIII.8] On another occasion the blessed Monegund appeared in a dream to a blind man and cured one of his eyes of its blindness. The other would be cured by St.Martin of Tours.[VP XIX.4] Gregory does not try to elucidate the kind of vision whereby the blind saw

their dream-images.

b. The identity of the vision seen.

The visionary figures who populate vision narratives in Gregory's works, like the visionary recipients, are overwhelmingly saints of clerical and episcopal status. In part this is due to the ecclesiastical bias in Gregory's works, but in part it is likely that the increase in vision reports involving saints, episcopal or otherwise, was a direct result of the expansion of the cult of saints, especially at the local level.[21] In this period we see the increasing development of intercessory portfolios for particular saints, so that for example St.Martin became renowned for eye-cures, and the martyrs Polyeuctus and Prancatius supervised oaths and punished those who committed perjury.[GM 102; GM 38] Such association of certain saints with certain benefits, and their increasing number in every diocese was responsible for the explosion of local saints into the arena of the visionary phenomenon. Even though Gregory's foremost concern was to promote the cult of St.Martin on a national level (and most unusual happenings witnessed by Gregory himself were attributed to Martin's agency) Gregory is the single most active propagator of the cult of local saints and of the visionary accounts associated with them.

The sixth century was a time of economic misery. Bad harvests, the result of unfavourable climactic conditions recorded, bred disease and susceptibility to imported epidemics. These problems were compounded by the internecine warring of the Merovingian kings, chronic social violence, and punitive taxes.[22] More than ever before the sick and dispossessed gathered at the altars and tombs of Gallic churches hoping for miraculous solutions to the legacy of these social ills. Their numbers must have encouraged a mood of general expectation which made them receptive to evidence of miraculous intervention, even if only in their dreams. Gregory's own experiences and those of the clergy he records testify to the fact that clergy no less than lay petitioners were infected by this expectation.

Apparitions of bishop saints demonstrated that even beyond the grave the episcopate remained the people's truest ally, exercising its authority over worldly powers and helping the afflicted, whether it was on an individual basis as in the cure of an ailment, or on a more monumental scale in averting the destruction of a city by a plague, or by a hostile or marauding army.

The spiritual or vocational character of bishop-saints who appeared to supplicants did not really change from what it had been in life; they simply became even more effective at carrying out their episcopal and pastoral duties.

No Christian author prior to Gregory features the efficacy of saints in visions in such numbers. Those accounts in Gregory's writings fundamentally strengthened their importance to the church as intercessory powers. Not only were the numbers of effective saints large, but they were growing with every unearthed tomb. And with every saintly bishop who made an appearance in the dreams or visions of the faithful, the more the example of the clergy became imprinted in the mind both as an example of piety and as a political and social force.

Gregory's predilection for recording deeds of the higher clergy had one consequence which is not shared by the hagiographic writings which followed, and that is the almost exclusively male character of the effective visions. The exception to this are two visions of the virgin Mary [GM 8,9], whose cult Gregory was instrumental in promoting in Gaul in this period. The few remaining cases are confined to virgins seeking proper burial [GC 18], or identifying the terms for their veneration.[GC 5] The nun Pascasia appears to workmen only to inform them that if they could see keenly they could see St.Benignus helping them; she apparently is not lending her aid in any practical way. Female apparitions are not projected as being particularly effective in wielding authority in heaven on behalf of supplicants. Vitalina, for example, granted favours by means of visions but only after St.Martin interceded for her with heaven; her miracles were interpreted by Gregory as a sign of Martin's blessed state.[GC 5] When St.Monegund appeared in a dream to a blind supplicant at her tomb, she only cured one eye, instructing the man to pray to St.Martin in order to receive sight in the other.[VP XIX.4]

A feature of Gregory's visionary pantheon which is not shared by later hagiography is the rarity with which Christ appears in a vision. The proliferation of intermediary deities in the form of saints allowed the vision of God and of heaven to recede into the background of Gregory's celestial world. St.Salvius of Albi is the only saint recorded as having seen and visited Christ in his heavenly glory, and only after physical death.[HF VII.1] St.Brachio had a dream in which he was taken up to heaven

in praesentiam Domini; he says nothing of heaven or God, except that he saw the seraphim who shadowed the divine majesty, and the prophet Isaiah proclaiming from a book.[VP XII.3; Isaiah 6,2] Brachio, we are told, analysed the dream carefully (attente discutiens), and concluded that the dream meant that he would die soon. On what grounds he made this interpretation is not clear, but the static, tableaux appearance of the dream required interpretation, unlike St,Salvius' true travelling of the spirit to the vision of heaven itself which required none. In another case, St.Nicetius saw in a dream a tower so high that it almost reached heaven. While angels watched through its windows and the Lord stood at the top, one of the angels read from a great book prophesying how many years each king would live.[VP XVII.5] In this case the prophetic element of this dream is its entire raison d'être; Nicetius's person plays no role whatsoever. A nun at Radegund's convent in Poitiers was given a bejewelled robe by her abbess which was said to have been a gift from her spiritual husband Christ, but Christ himself does not make an appearance.[HF VI.29] Christ did not appear at the deathbeds of the faithful but sent angelic messengers to receive the departed's soul. Disciola, St.Salvius' niece who was also at Radegund's convent, was fetched to heaven by the Archangel Michael.[HF VI.29] St.Nicetius was invited to eternal rest by SS.Paul and John the Baptist.[VP XVII.6]

There is only one vision of hell in Gregory's works, but it is an interesting one insofar as it echoes the same themes present in Gregory the Great's description of the soldiers' vision in the Dialogues IV.37. Both draw on ancient vision literature for their motifs.[23] Abbot Sunniulf was a pious abbot but was lenient with his monks. In his vision he was shown a fiery river, consuming those who rushed into it, and a white mansion on the opposite shore. The only way across was a narrow bridge, and he was told that from it those slothful in enforcing discipline would fall. The abbot awoke from the dream-vision and was more strict from that time on.[HF IV.33] As in Pope Gregory's description it is unclear, intentionally so perhaps, whether the vision is of the real aspect of the division between heaven and hell, or whether the sight was representative in image form of a decision-making necessity and its consequences.

The devil and his demons serve the same nefarious ends in Gregory's works as in hagiographic literature at large.[24] They are the special

torment of hermits who battle them valiantly [VP IX], although they might succumb temporarily as in the case of the deacon Secundellus.[VP X] Often the devil and his demons are seen in animal form, such as St.Venantius' encounter with rams [VP XVI.3] or St.Caluppa's ordeal with dragons.[VP XI.1] Sometimes there is no indication regarding the criteria for identification. It might be that no details are known, so when St.Venantius returned to his cell one night to find it full of demons we are only told that he dispersed them, or in other cases their invisible presence is attested only externally in the girations of the possessed man and his excretion of bodily fluids on being rid of it.[GC 9] The zoomorphic descriptions of demons are particularly difficult for us to penetrate since Gregory does not explain whether the demons are dragons and rams, whether they inhabit otherwise innocent beasts the way they possess a man, or alternatively, whether the demons are seen and battled with in the form of a dragon, snake or other evil looking creature. Gregory was well aware that the devil took on disguises to deceive man. But to what extent is the form of a dragon truly a disguise? How can it truly deceive? Perhaps the form was meant to compound the holy person's fear, but the one description of the auctor criminis is even more frightful. For to St.Nicetius there appeared umbra teterrima, statu procera, crassitudine valida, colore tetra, oculorum scintillantium inmensitate in modum tauri petulantis habebat, ore patulo quasi ad deglutiendum virum Dei parata.[VP XVII.3] A dragon, let alone a ram, can hardly compete with such a description!

Of greatest concern to the church were those occasions when the devil came disguised as a saint, or more rarely, as Christ, perhaps convincing the visionary to change the course of his life [VP X.2] or demanding obedience and worship. [Severus, VM 24.4] The devil had once appeared in the guise of St.Martin, prompting Gregory to observe alongside so many Christian writers that Transfigurat enim se saepe diabolus in angelum lucis, ut hac fraude decipiat innocentes.[VP IX.2; 2 Cor 11,14]

One is struck by the informality of demons in their approach to man. Sometimes they appear in a "vision" or "dream", but just as often they are walking in the same dimension as man. By contrast, saints in hagiography before Gregory appear in hagiophanies. The dream and vision structure was perhaps a more respectful medium for the saints' contact with mortals since it implied a spiritual gulf, both in terms of spiritual status and in terms

of power and authority. This changes in Gregory's writings.

c. Inadvertent witnesses to another world.

In Gregory's writings we suddenly come across a whole category of visual contacts with the saints which seem to do without the dream-vision medium, without the state of ecstasy, without any attached concept of merit and even without 'need to know' status. These are those sightings which may be termed the 'inadvertent trespass' on the spiritual world, triggered simply by entering a church or a cemetery at an appropriate or inappropriate moment.

In most of the vision accounts we have encountered thus far, there has been an idea of a spatial or conceptual distance involved in the vision experience. The use of terminology such as 'dream', 'vision' or 'ecstasy' conveys the idea that the observation is effected through a mental or spiritual vehicle. The terminology serves to distance the experience from everyday reality, ie. to make its mystical or miraculous nature clear. Even when such terminology is omitted as in those cases when the narrative reports simply that he or she saw 'vidit' a person or thing, the suddenness of the observation or the content of the description makes it clear that a dream or vision is what is intended to be understood. In the cases of inadvertent witnessing of the other world described by Gregory it is clear that no such moderating spiritual state is being alluded to. The scenes which are observed by such 'trespassers' are those of an existence both parallel to and confluent with Gregory's own world.

There were two places in a Gallic city where one was most likely to stumble upon the inhabitants of this parallel world; the cemetery and the basilica. In Autun for instance, there was a cemetery where mystical phenomena was often reported. For two local inhabitants walking through the cemetery at night there appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary; they were intending to visit shrines when they heard singing from the church of St.Stephen at the edge of the cemetery. The singing was sweet so they decided to join in the vigils. After kneeling in prayer for a long time they looked up to see a choir among whom they saw no one they recognised. They were 'stunned' and 'struck by astonishment' at this fact. (An indication of how tightly knit a community even a city like Autun could be). Then they were approached by one of the psalmists who said to them: "Exsecrabilem rem fecistis, ut nobis arcana orationum Deo reddentibus adesse praesumeretis."

They were told to leave. One of the two left immediately and survived the experience but the other did not and he died soon after. [GC 72]

The description of this event is very clear; the two witnesses were not dreaming nor were they aware until some time into the experience that their observation and hearing was anything but normal, and only because they did not recognize the people assembled. Their vision was to their minds normal, ocular vision; what Augustine had called 'corporeal vision.' But where Augustine saw in corporeal vision the simple but profound evidence of God's creation, Gregory perceived in it and the world it views the possibility of a miraculous or mystical event.

Spiritual merit or demerit does not enter into Gregory's account. His inquisitive protagonists are not holy men with the power of discernment; rather they are intruders into the private life of the saints by virtue of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. They are pious men who show reverence in their desire to worship and yet they are reproached for their "accursed" deed. There is a cold savagery here in the attitude of the saints which reminds one of Greek tragedy in which an individual's destiny rather than his or her will leads to their condemnation for hubris. The spiritual neutrality of the two men also deprives the narrative of any clear spiritual lesson, or moral.

In another case reported by Gregory the scenario is similar but with a more evident agenda. Cautinus, who was a deacon at the time but later became the bishop of Clermont (551-71), was lying in bed one night when he heard chanting issuing from the church. He went to his window which looked down on the church and noticed it shining with a bright light. Inside the church there was a crowd of people dressed in white, holding candles and chanting psalms around the tomb of Stremonius (the first and hitherto neglected bishop of Clermont). He watched the spectacle for a long time, and at dawn Cautinus ordered that the tomb of Stremonius be surrounded by a railing and white shrouds, and that it be venerated.[GC 29]

It is clear that Cautinus was permitted to witness this spectacle in order that he institute a cult at the sight of the tomb. In this case there may also have been a political agenda. Cautinus' elevation to the bishopric was not supported initially by the clergy of Clermont as Gregory records elsewhere. [HF IV.5-7] They had elected instead a certain priest named Cato (who receives a bad press in Gregory's work). Cautinus was King Theudebald's

choice and he was duly installed. One historian has suggested, rightly I think, that the institution of the cult of the first bishop of the city and the story of the miraculous event in the church was an effort by Cautinus to show respect for his new city and reconcile the clergy to his episcopacy.[25] It may noted in addition to this that Gregory's support for Cautinus against Cato may have been rooted in his own sensitivity about his election to the episcopate which was a royal appointment. Returning to the story itself we find in Cautinus as with the inhabitants of Autun, the unsuspecting observer, except that in this case he was an intended one. Cautinus was to be the promoter of Stremonius' cult. As simply a means toward this end the spectacle was not the most economical method of conveying this message. A personal vision to Cautinus by the saint or an angel directing him to institute the cult would surely have worked just as well. But would it? Resuscitating a long dormant veneration or cult was not as simple as declaring its importance. There were all the messy questions such as, why had the saint not protested before, how it could have been so long ignored if the cult were valid? In a word, how could the city adjust to the hiatus? The spectacle obviously addressed this issue directly. Rather than focusing on the city's neglect (hardly the right message for an incoming bishop to make) the event emphasized the continuity in the tomb's veneration by saints and angels, a very important concept in the promotion of a cult.[26] Stremonius was honoured in the other world by uninterrupted observance and the time had come for this to be extended to earth. The choice of neutral observation rather than a personal vision, was an important aspect to the story's acceptance.

The immediacy of the other world and its inhabitants' concern to promote respect and veneration for their own number is evident in other accounts recorded by Gregory. One particularly interesting example of this involves a vision only indirectly. On St.Albinus' feastday a paralysed man was told in a vision that if he wanted to be cured he should go to Albinus' church at the third hour. At that time St.Martin will enter the church with saint Albinus, and after offering a prayer there will proceed to his own festival at Tours.[GC 94] The man did as he was told and was cured of his paralysis. Although he was present at that hour he did not see the two saints, but he had been assured of their attendance. He might well have expected St.Albinus to have been present on that day since it was often recorded that saints were

particulary effective on their feast day, but it is interesting that Albinus had a guest for the occasion. Saints were evidently believed to courteously attend each others festival days in the other world, just as they might have done when they were alive. The saints shared friendship and respect with each other setting an example in ecclesiastical etiquette. The final comment of the vision, that St.Martin was there on his way to Tours for his own festival (11th November) also shows a spatial understanding of the journeying of saints across the land.[27]

d. Personal and moral implication of the visionary experience.

In Gregory's writings on the saints, as we have seen, there is a down-to- earth quality about the favours asked and received in dreams and visions. Visions were useful in supplying information or intimidating besieging armies, but what of the personal benefits reaped from such experiences? And what were their implications for personal responsability for salvation?

Gregory the Great related a number of visions in which a sick or dying individual received a vision in which his unpleasant future fate was shown should he continue on his present course. The vision of hell gave the recipient two alternatives; to change his ways, or to continue as before and suffer the consequences. The implication here was that the individual could change their life-course and avoid eternal punishment. The same is true of the visions in which an individual, already dead, was seen in a vision to be the centre of a tug of war between angels and demons; the implication is that prayers and masses might tilt the balance between salvation and damnation.

In the writings of Gregory of Tours, however, this was not the ordinary layman's experience. Visions appear to men already singled out for their piety and they occur at a juncture when a substantial portion of life remained to them. St.Patroclus, a hermit of long standing was tempted by the Devil to leave the desert. An angel appeared to him in a dream and presented him with a column from the top of which he could see the evils of the world, its crimes and its sins. Patroclus returned to the desert and resumed his ascetic life, a worthy beneficiary of divine intervention.[VP IX.2] In the only vision of hell described by Gregory the saintly abbot Sunniulf was admonished by it to be stricter with his monks. The abbot's saintly credentials were not in doubt, in Gregory's mind, but his responsability was not only for his own personal salvation but that of his monks.[28] Sunniulf

was stricter with his monks thereafter and so lived out a holy and irreprehensible life.

The sick, when they were cured by saintly intervention, lived the rest of their lives in veneration for their saintly patron, promoting the saint's reputation as a living witness. But whereas the sick often benefit from miraculous cures accompanied by dreams and visions in Gregory's works, the dying rarely do. In my opinion, the explanation for this is to be found in Gregory's attitude towards death and the responsability of the living.

Gregory's attitude towards death is of interest. In his works only the saintly are visited by a vision at the moment of death. The terrifying visions which seared the minds of the wicked as death approached, so striking in the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, are entirely absent in Gregory of Tours. The wicked experience undignified and bloody deaths in keeping with their earthly crimes, but seem untouched by belated conscience or remorse. Even when they demonstrated remorse Gregory did not believe it made any difference. The referendary Mark who had misappropriated taxes to his own profit was tonsured and confessed his sins before death, but Gregory comments that in death he took nothing with him except the eternal damnation of his soul.[HF VI.28] The fear of death which Pope Gregory intimated to have purgative value is not an aspect of Gregory of Tours' understanding of the relation of the individual to his or her death, or the church's attitude toward it. Outward allegiance to Gregory's church and to the saints is what determines salvation, not necessarily the individual's ethical or moral profile. Death is a passageway to one's ultimate destiny, not a process of self-awareness. Fear of death is never the stated motive for a change of spiritual direction, for in Gregory's works it is the quality of life which determines salvation. When the devil tempted St.Patroclus to leave the 'desert' and return to the world, Patroclus made the right life-decision and returned to the desert. It was the wicked life of the referendary Mark who had spent a life indulging his greed for gold that determined his fate, not his last minute repentance.

Visions of any psychological depth such as visions of consolation are rare in Gregory's writings. Only one vision recorded by Gregory truly penetrates the human condition without obviating it through a miracle, and it is consequently the most moving visionary experience in his repertoire.

A certain woman dedicated her only son as an oblate to the monastery of

Saint-Maurice-D'Agaune. After some time he died of a fever and his mother was inconsolable. Every day she cried over the tomb of her son, until one night she was visited by St.Mauricius in a vision who asked her why she kept mourning. She replied: "The days of my life are not sufficient for this grief, but so long as I am alive I will always weep for my only son. Tears will never soothe me, until the death that is my destiny closes the eyes of my body." Mauricius said to her: "Do not mourn as if your son is dead; instead compose yourself. Know that he is living with us and is enjoying the habitation of eternal life in our company. And so that you may believe with more certainty that I speak the truth, rise for matins tomorrow. You will hear his voice among the chorus of monks who are chanting the psalms. And not only tomorrow but also every day of your life when you attend you will hear his voice in the chanting of psalms. Do not weep, because it is proper that you rejoice rather than grieve." [GM 75 transl.Van Dam.] In contrast to so many of the vision tales in Gregory's writing where a saint heals or restores the dead to life, this vision story tries to come to terms with the mortal condition, accepting death instead of expecting a miracle, and teaching the grieving woman to put her trust and faith in the promise of eternal life to which she had come close in choosing the monastic profession for her son.

e. Some theological implications.

Gregory is entirely consistent with Merovingian hagiography and the writings of Gregory the Great in his acceptance of the idea that the living can appear in veridical dreams or visions. Such visions bring to the surface questions about the nature of a dream apparition, as Augustine had realised. For how can the apparition be of the person himself if meanwhile the protagonist is unaware that it is happening?

Gregory records the case of St.Nicetius who was called upon by a man in distress at sea. Nicetius who was unaware of the aid he had afforded the voyager, asked him to tell him how the miracle occurred, ...nam virtus mea nulli iuvare potest.[VP XVII.5] When Gregory's mother Armentaria appeared in his noon-time vision she was living at the time and Gregory placed enormous weight on the divine inspiration of this dream as we have already seen.

Like Pope Gregory in the Dialogues, Gregory of Tours believed that the journey to heaven is only attained through the passageway of death. Visions

of heaven are not numerous in Gregory's works and all but one are dream-visions such as that of Brachio [VP XII.3] and Nicetius [VP XVII.5], which were recognised as symbolic travelling and needed interpretation. The only vision in Gregory's writings which is intended to be understood as a true vision of heaven as it is, and of God in his glory, is that of St.Salvius of Albi whose vision was a result of experiencing death and then being returned to life on the Lord's command. His vision is not a dream but a post mortem journey: adpraehensus a duobus angelis in caelorum excelsa sublatus sum.[HF VII.1] The description of his death and preparation for burial is an important element in Gregory's understanding of the significance of this vision. St.Salvius' is not a "seeming death" as one historian has recently called it, for that is to miss the point of Gregory's perception of it.[29] For Gregory the death is a real one; his cell is shaken and filled with a great light (a hagiographic topos often associated with death) and he dies a physical death, (spiritum exalavit). Moreover his revival is a genuine return to life (corpus movere coepit in feretro). Colour returned to his body as if awakened from a deep sleep, quasi de gravi somno suscitatus, (a common reference to death).

It was the experience of only a minority of Gregory's visionaries that they travel in spirit or in the mind to a landscape, symbolic or otherwise, which is alien to earthly life. Most were recipients of visions in which the saint appeared to them in their cell, or at the tomb of the parish or episcopal church. In such cases the distance between the eternal and the mortal world was traversed by the apparition figure. In so doing, the saints experienced spatial distance and earthly conceptions of time. The saints and angels of the visionary world show command of space, time and distance, but somehow they are still bound by earthly understanding of such limitations. St.Stephen, who was late at a gathering of saints in the church of St.Peter at Bordeaux revealed he had been rescuing an imperiled ship. "Et ut ipsi probetis esse vera quae loquor, vestimentum, quod indutus sum, adhuc guttis stillantibus marinis, fluctibus cernitur umectatum" [GM 33] The story rests on the belief that for saints the distance from ship to shore was no different than it was for a mortal, and that it took time for a saint to go from one place to another. Beyond even this, the saint was wearing physical garments which could be touched by physical waves. This is the ultimate humanization of the saintly apparition, demonstrating how Gregory and his

contemporaries understood the workings of the other world to be analagous to the earthly world.

To conlude, then, we see that in Gregory's view the saints and angels had a very special role to play in the spiritual and social behaviour in Man. It is they who in their human aspect, in their continued identification with their historical personae and in their confinement still to the restrictions of earthly time and space, who were the natural communicators between the two worlds. In many ways Gregory's angelology is not very different from Augustine's, except in his attribution to departed souls of a similar role. For Augustine, the departed were no longer afflicted by worldly cares whereas for Gregory, the saints, especially those with episcopal training, formed the natural link of mutual interest with their congregations. Saints were concerned that their cults be recognised and developed, and episcopal saints especially could not wrench themselves free from their pastoral and social concerns for their flock.

Apart from Gregory's retelling of St.Martin's visitation by Christ, no accounts related by Gregory involve Christ's appearance to a visionary. For Gregory, St.Martin must have been a special case. Gregory's God is a distant figure, shadowed by the wings of the seraphim [VP XII.3], speaking from a luminous cloud [HF VII.1], or seated at the summit of a very great tower.[VP XVII.5] Only in the vision of a nun at the Holy Cross convent in Poitiers is Christ referred to as a bridegroom, but even here he does not appear personally.[HF IV.29]

The vision of God or Christ is not the expectation of the ordinary humble supplicant of Gregory's world. Most needed special favours which even Gregory's pragmatic understanding of the business of the other world, conceded might be below the attention of God himself. The saints are more approachable for aid with the afflictions of the world, like bureaucratic delegates of God.

iv. The intellectual vision and the mysteries of heaven.

Although it is clear that Gregory was unfamiliar with Augustine's vision theory, it is worth asking whether one can distinguish in his writings the "intellectual" vision in its various aspects.

Augustine described his first, Neoplatonically inspired vision as a vision of "the Light": Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra

eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem... Nec ita erat supra mentem meam, sicut oleum super aquam nec sicut caelum super terram, sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea...clamasti de longinquo...et audivi, sicut auditur in corde...[Conf.VII.10] There are two important elements to this description; first there is the vision of the creator Light, and second there is the interiority of the experience, the entering into the soul, the mental illumination and the voice that speaks to the heart. The second aspect, the entering into the soul, is difficult to trace in visionary descriptions in Gregory's works, or in those of most of his contemporaries. Contemplation of God and prayer are often described as precursors to the vision, but the hagiographer does not penetrate beyond the exterior events of the visions described. There is no stated indication in the vision accounts themselves that through interior examination, God and understanding will be found within the depths of the individual's own soul. Manifestations of light which pervade countless visionary accounts in hagiography, Gregory's included, are also described as exterior phenomena rather than being associated directly with intellectual enlightenment.[30]

Augustine's second visionary experience at Ostia accompanied by his mother represents a type of mystical experience more common to hagiography of all ages. Augustine described a spiritual ascent in which each skein of existence is left behind: ...erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in id ipsum perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram. Et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingerimus regionem ubertatis indeficientis... [Conf.IX.10] Gregory's vision narratives do give us glimpses of this kind of visionary experience from his own times, most prominent among them the vision of St.Salvius of Albi. Salvius was raised up by two angels ita ut non solum hunc squalidum saeculum, verum etiam solem ac lunam, nubes et sidera sub pedibus habere putarem.[HF VII.1] The journey through the layers of the firmament shares with Augustine the idea of removal from the world, but whereas Augustine and Monica climbed beyond their souls, Salvius' soul journeyed and reached a destination still experienced through the senses. There are other differences too. Augustine and Monica were rapt up by a burning love, not by angels conveying their souls. Salvius' vision-journey

takes place because he has died physically. In heaven Salvius encounters multitudes of people, so great that his guiding angels had to push through them to secure a path for him. Augustine's experience is not peopled because it is a journey into the self and beyond the crowd. Salvius' heaven assaulted the senses; so much to see, the pressure of bodies, the wafts of sweet perfume, in contrast to Augustine's reach beyond the senses. For Salvius there is a message from the voice issuing from the cloud. Augustine expects that a man's whole self will fall silent, the heavens too, except that God's voice alone will be heard but with no further need of a message.

The differences between the two accounts are stressed only because Salvius' vision is the closest we get to an Augustinian type of vision in Gregory's works. Their similarities are striking. The insistence on Salvius' mother's presence (although not sharing the experience) suggests that Augustine's experience was remembered in its telling. Both accounts share the idea of removal from earthly things, beyond created matter, and in heaven Salvius has no need of bodily sustenance. Both in their different ways stress the insignificance of the material world when compared to heavenly things. Augustine and Monica began their experience by agreeing that no bodily pleasures could compare with those of the saints. Salvius' first communication to his fellow monks on his return to mortal life was "Audite, o dilectissimi, et intelligite, quia nihil est, quod cernitis in hoc mundo...Omnia vanitas.[31]

Finally for both Augustine and Salvius, it was the personal act of experiencing which was the true impact of the vision, not its visual aspect or even its relevance for anyone else. For both their visions of God are truly intimate and personal revelations. And so, although in many ways Salvius' vision of heaven differs from Augustine's, his intellectual understanding of the insignificance of his life and the present world in the larger context of divine destiny, is evidence that even in the flattened dimensions of sixth century visions, philosophic self-understanding could still be expressed through the visionary medium.

The idea that the physical world cannot approach the understanding of the heavenly is often expressed in Gregory's vision accounts by the observation that the experience is beyond human linguistic ability to express. A nun at Radegund's convent in Poitiers had a vision in which she was given a queenly robe quae tanta luce auroque et munilibus refulgebat, ut

vix possit intendi [HF VI.29] Salvius' crowds in heaven were so great ut longitudo ac latitudo catervae prorsus pervidere non possit and fixed his gaze on a cloud omne luce lucidior. [HF VII.1] Inability to give linguistic definition to a concept was an expression of its divine nature.

Augustine had touched Wisdom in his vision, and in his writings on the intellectual vision he underscored the dimension of understanding and inspired interpretation which was the church's inheritance in its direction of the faithful. In Salvius' vision, the voice from the cloud told him that he had to return to the world because the church had need of him.[HF VII.1] Salvius did become bishop of Albi at a later date and according to all of Gregory's accounts he was a saint of exceptional wisdom, purity and understanding. Many vision accounts of this period mention divinely inspired knowledge as being the essence of a saint's special status, but its expression is often a perfunctory obeisance to hagiographic convention. Visionary intellectual enlightenment is reduced to access to unspecified secrets. St.Venantius was a saint cui etiam dignatus est arcanorum secreta caelestium revelare [VP XVI.2] and such references are common. In many cases the relevance of this knowledge is strictly personal, such as the date of the recipient's death. On rarer occasions visionary information is of wider historical import such as the royal dynastic succession.[VP XVII.5]

Gregory himself often takes up the challenge to interpret visions, miraculous phenomena, and even historical events. His interpretations tend to focus on the visions' significance to contemporary events rather than to deductions concerning mystical or theological truths, although for a brief time he appears to have been prepared to see a more universal relevance to certain portents and prophecies.[32] On other occasions Gregory admitted that he could not offer an interpretation of the events he describes. When he relates how fire was seen to extend from a monk's lips and hair during prayer, Gregory admitted that he did not have the power to explain it: tenebrae sensus mei eum intellegere non queunt, qualiter lumen tantum praebet nec quemquam aduret. [GC 38]

If Gregory does not always know the full significance of every phenomenon he records, he does know a mystical event when he is confronted with one. Abbot Brachio was keeping a vigil over some saintly relics in the church of St.Martin in Tours when he saw a great globe of fire (globum ignis immensi) leave the relics and rise to the church's roof with great light.

Quod non est dubium aliquid fuisse divinum, comments Gregory. [VP XII.3] In the case cited above in which fire was seen to rise from a monks' mouth and hair during prayer without causing harm, Gregory offers the opinion Mysticum, ut opinor, hic ignis contenit sacramentum [GC 38] and cites other such cases reported of just men; Moses' vision of the burning bush and Sulpicius Severus' account of St.Martin.[33]

Conclusion.

Gregory of Tours is above all else a narrator par excellence of the virtuous and miracle-filled lives of the saints. He is not a theoretician, nor does he attempt to place his narratives into a philosophic or theological framework beyond his short introductions to the various Lives. Gregory's mind is not one which seeks to synthesize material on any level; his lack of theoretical interest in the vision accounts probably goes beyond the unavailability of the particular theoretical sources we have been examining. Gregory's strengths lie in other areas. He demonstrates attention to detail relating to the visual content of the vision and its verbal messages, that is to say to the vision content and not the vision process. He valued the relationship of the visions to past and future events and savoured their historical implications and insights. Like Gregory the Great, Gregory of Tours was aware of an historical progression punctured by visions and other phenomena which were significant reminders of the divine historical impulse. He understood the value of visions to society, to the church and to the promotion of the veneration of the saints. He was also committed to the value of his type of literary endeavour, having received divine sanction in a dream. He was possessed by devotion to the social and religious values which dreams and visions so often confirmed, but is rarely concerned to account for or explain the theological implications of the events he is describing. There appears to be no hierarchy in the type of vision experienced beyond its derivation or originator. Gregory's visionary understanding is earthbound and pragmatic, consumed by the need for practical answers to practical questions. The closest to theology Gregory gets through his vision accounts is a conviction that there is a moral basis for the reception of the visionary experience; that the wicked are punished, that the righteous have been promised heaven in the afterlife, and that in the meantime one should honour God's power on earth through the medium of his saints. But even here,

as in the inadvertent witnesses to the other world, Gregory sometimes looses the moral edge to the narrative, and slides into a simple chronicle of the miraculous.

III. Visions and the episcopal order.

If we turn now from the internal, personal forces which shaped Gregory's attitude towards dream-visions to examine his external, public identity we find repeated examples in his vision accounts (as in the other aspects of his works) of the central importance of the episcopate to his thinking.

In Gregory's day, as in the preceding period, the episcopate played a role which was not confined to spiritual affairs.[34] Over centuries of political and social disruption, the church and its most prominent leaders formed the most stable and enduring element in the fabric of society. Bishops were expected to represent forcefully the religious and social concerns of their diocese to the secular authorities, which often led to negotiation or confrontation with political leaders to preserve their cities from spoliation or sacrilege. They were also expected to represent and protect the interests of the saints and martyrs who were associated with their cities. In return for this devotion bishops assumed a virtual monopoly to serve as mouthpieces for, and as intercessors with the saints. By this means the Gallic church had earned an authority in secular affairs which was highly developed. This was only reinforced by the fact that the church, and especially its predominantly aristocratic bishops, represented a continuity of learning and Roman culture which was admired by barbarian and Roman alike; an increasingly thin thread connecting Gaul with its imperial past. Gregory had learned all these duties and concerns by means of the example of his relatives, and he took on the bishopric of Tours determined to continue these responsabilities. He well deserves one historian's description of him as a man "predestined" to be bishop of Tours.[35]

The high-profile of the episcopate in secular affairs, especially in prominent bishoprics such as Tours, brought to the surface questions of territorial and spiritual authority which often led Gregory into open dispute with the Frankish princes and their officials. As often as the church's authority was represented to secular powers as being ordained in scripture, its authority was represented as the fulfillment of the wishes of a particular saint. And so in their striving for spiritual and secular

authority in Gallic society, Gregory and his peers found a powerful ally in the visionary experience.

i. Protecting the reputation of the episcopate.

In the focus of his writings Gregory was a bishop's bishop. The minor clergy are only fitfully represented in his works, and often they emerge as malcontents, plotting to oust or replace bishops and abusing their relatively secure economic position to slide into gluttony and licentiousness. A few saintly priests and abbots are documented in Gregory's writings but they are relatively few, and often on their path to becoming bishops themselves. The reputation of the episcopate as providing a near solid wall of righteousness with which to confront the secular powers was Gregory's enduring concern, and this is reflected in his vision narratives.[36]

Clerical celibacy which was not enforced (although it was recommended) for minor clergy, was expected of bishops and was an important part of their moral high ground. Venantius Fortunatus, in his poem Ad Felicem episcopum Namneticum in laude praised the vow of chastity taken by Felix of Nantes (bp.549-82) which underscored his commitment to the church: nupsisti ecclesiae, felicia vota iugasti.[37] Bishops, like Felix of Nantes, had often married and even had offspring before their elevation to the episcopate, and their wives were expected to take a vow of continence alongside their husbands so that their relationship would be that of brother and sister as required by conciliar legislation.[38] These bishops' wives (episcopae) had a recognised social and religious status, and were expected to serve as models for the community.[39] The husband's acceptance of episcopal rank was usually a unilateral decision, however, without consideration of his wife's attitude towards the change. Sometimes frustrated wives tried to implore or seduce their husbands into resuming their conjugal state. The wife's position was well supported by scripture as one of the wives maintained: Cur obduratis auribus Pauli praecepta non audis? Scripsit enim, "Revertimini ad alterutrum, ne temptet vos Satanas". [40] But the injunction to episcopal celibacy was based on canon law and on catholic custom, not on St.Paul's concession to human weakness: quam canonum decreta non admittebant. Gregory relates how one seduction attempt was foiled by a vision. The presumptuous wife entered the bishop's chamber while he was sleeping and as she approached his bed vidit agnum inmensae claritatis super

pectus eius quiescentem.[GC 77] She was terrified by the the vision and left her husband to sleep in peace. Gregory's interest in this story can well be imagined; the vision confirmed catholic practice to be divinely sanctioned even against the rather tolerant message of scripture. The lamb symbolised the bishop's innocence, and Christ's protection of his vow. Episcopal celibacy was to be protected as a state pleasing to God, and its protection by a divine apparition emphasized the bishop's special status among the clergy.

As for the professionally celibate, monks and nuns, there are relatively few vision accounts associated with them, except those monks and abbots who later became bishops. One pious abbot Sunniulf was warned in a dream that he was too lenient with his monks.[HF IV.33] His fault, in failing to provide adequate discipline and spiritual authority, was most acutely apparent to bishops like Gregory for whom such abilities must have been a particular ideal. Those monks and abbots who find their way into Gregory's works as examples of piety and purity, are those with a strong eremitic bent. St.Caluppa was a monk at the monastery of Meallat where his severe abstinence often incapacitated him for work, much to the chagrin of the archdeacon.[41] Abbot Martius was one of those blessed with visions: sciebat enim, et angelicae sibi visitationis consolationem adesse, si se ab humanis aspectibus longius amovisset.[VP XIV.1]

Hermits have a certain attractive gloss in Gregory's works. They were Gaul's answer to the heroic feats of the Eastern ascetics, examples of abnegation and holiness no longer suspect in the eyes of the Gallic church.[42] A prominent interest in Gregory's works is to show how this eremitical ideal could be encompassed within the episcopate, an ideal that had found fruition in St.Martin of Tours. He described Gregory, bishop of Langres' abstinence and prayerfulness as so deep ut in medio mundi positus, novus effulgeret heremita.[VP VII.2] The hermit did not have the same authority as the bishop in Gregory's eyes, however, and episcopal control over the activities of monks and recluses were jealously guarded.[43] And so of the two states, the episcopate was considered by Gregory to be the real challenge, being a combination of both states. Of St.Quintianus' elevation to the episcopate Gregory declared In quo episcopatu ampliatis adhuc virtutibus.[VP IV.1] Episcopal duties were onerous; as St.Nicetius ascended the episcopal chair he felt a weight press on his neck and understood it to

be the burden of episcopal duties.[VP XVII.1]

ii. Visions and the cult of saints.

a. Cult information and initiation.

Visions to saints and featuring saints account for the vast majority of vision narratives recorded by Gregory. Of these most are bishop-saints and most involve the promotion of cult observation or even cult initiation. Through their dreams and visions the clergy in Gaul were impressed by the need to provide appropriate lodging and organized veneration for their ecclesiastical predecessors and for miracle-effective relics of holy men and women.[44] From the vision recipient all that was required was obedience and industry, for the saintly apparition was itself the prime organizer in the business of his or her own cult. Information that was lacking could be provided speedily and effortlessly by visionary means.

The first requirement for the establishment of a cult was ascertaining the location of the saint's relics, or the identification of unidentified relics. Relics came in various degrees of contiguity with the saint, but in Gregory's writings it was usually necessary that the saints' bones be at issue in order for the saint to appear in a vision. St.Genesius of Clermont made known the whereabouts of his tomb to a poor man who had lost his oxen; the tomb had become uncovered and St.Genesius wanted the marble lid to be replaced. He took the time to explain that he had left the present world a martyr. Persuaded by a miracle and reports of cures, bishop Avitus of Clermont built a church over the remains and ordered that a festival (festivitatem) be celebrated there. [45] Variations on this vision narrative account for most examples of tardy cult initiation and veneration in Gregory's writings. [for example GM 50,48,62; GC 17,79] In some cases the request is for no more than a suitable covering for a tomb broken or exposed to the elements.[GM 64; GC 18,34,103] In others the bishop himself was at fault. Bishop Gregorius of Langres and Dijon failed to recognise in a popular cult the true veneration of the martyr Benignus until he was advised of his mistake in a vision by the martyr himself.[GM 50]

The invention of relics and the cult initiation associated with them could bring to the fore sensitive issues relating to episcopal authority, and the need for diplomacy and etiquette. One case recorded by Gregory deserves special attention in this regard. The long dead bishop of Bourges, Ursinus

appeared one night to the abbot of St.Symphorian, Agustus, telling him to dig up his bones. In the vision Ursinus lead Agustus by the hand to the very spot where he was buried. Agustus related this vision to his bishop Probianus who promptly dismissed it. Then bishop Germanus of Paris arrived in Bourges and experienced the same vision as Agustus. Between them they decided to follow the instructions of the vision at night. They discovered the tomb and replaced the lid. The next day they informed Probianus of their discovery and on hearing this Probianus had the tomb raised in order that it be venerated.[GC 70]

This story reveals the sometimes sensitive and complex issues involved in the discovery of ancient relics. It may appear at first sight, for example, that Agustus and Germanus did not have total confidence in the truth of their visions because they did their excavations at night, only willing to confront the bishop once they had proof. Their actions may be better explained in terms of the importance of episcopal sanction when mining the spiritual resources of a diocese. The directions they received in the vision had to be handled with discretion, in a manner sensitive to church politics. Germanus and Agustus acknowledge by their precautions that the bishop of the see should be associated with the invention of relics within his episcopal territory. Germanus recognised that he was a guest in Probianus' district. Had they exhumed the body in broad daylight, they would have created a conflict of authority which would not augur well for the fledgling cult. So on their discovery they confronted the bishop with the news so that Probianus' place as leader in fostering the cult could be secured. Gregory's account of the beginnings of this particular cult thus highlights the sensitive issues which could surround visions touching episcopal authority.

Apparitions normally made their appearance to clarify procedures for a cult well established or for the purpose of cult initiation. Ancient proscriptions against active divination dictated a passive role for the clergy or for other vision recipients in their communication with the divine. Vision sollicitation was not unknown, however, and specific cult information could be sought by this means. In one case a church was built in clear and open anticipation of a vision of this type. The bishop of Cologne, Eberigisilus, learned of the martyr Mallosus who was reported to have been martyred in Birten but the whereabouts of whose relics were unknown. Undeterred, the bishop first built a church in the martyr's honour, ut

scilicet, cum aliquid revelationis de martyre acciperet, in ea beatos artus, Domino annuente, transferret. ...praestolans Domini misericordiam, quid iuberet de martyre revelari. Soon after, a deacon at Metz learned by means of a vision the whereabouts of the martyr's remains, and guided by the vision's instructions was able to point out the burial place.[GM 62]

Once the identification or discovery of relics had been accomplished, useful information for the establishment of a cult such as the date of the saint's death (feastday) was an important contribution sometimes made by the apparition. The vision of Vitalina is a good example of this: Post haec multis per visum virgo ostensa est et beneficia petita praebuit et diem obitus sui, in quo commemoratio eius celebraretur, edixit.[GC 5] Once the saint's tomb was covered and the cult established saints could be counted on to protect their remains from theft [GM 41,47,89,91] and their dedicated churches from war, for example, St.Stephen was seen in a vision appealing to SS.Peter and Paul to preserve his oratory in Metz which contained his relics from destruction by the Huns.[HF II.6] Saints were even known to intervene to keep the site of their remains clean. [GC 90; GM 32] Most importantly as far as the public weal was concerned, saints were known to protect their cities from military attack through visionary means. As besieging Hunnic forces encircled the city of Bazas, the bishop prayed to the Lord for his city's deliverance. One night, Gregory tells us, a vision appeared to the king in which he saw what appeared to be (quasi) men dressed in white, chanting psalms, burning candles and walking around the city walls. On another night the king saw a great ball of fire which was seen to descend over the city. He expected to see signs of a conflagration in the city from the ball of fire, but when nothing happened and he had ascertained that none of the city's inhabitants could explain the significance of the signs or had even seen them, he concluded that God was helping them and left the area.[GM 12] A similar occurrence was reported at Nantes where after sixty days of siege the army under the command of Chillo witnessed a group of man clad in white, carrying candles issue from the church of SS. Rogatianus and Donatus. Another group proceeded from the church of St.Similinus. The two choruses joined up, exchanged greetings, prostrated themselves in prayer and then returned to their respective churches.[GM 59]

One may see in these accounts of ecclesiastical and ritual performance by men dressed in white not the ghostly figures of a vision but the

perseverance of the clergy in organizing processions under the noses of the besieging army, perhaps already disheartened and ready to leave. The historical inaccuracies in the account further suggest that the story had undergone modifications and embellishments in the intervening period so that a procession became remembered as a vision.[46]

The saints were also on hand to offer advice on how to subdue a fever, remove paralysis or perform some other bodily healing through visions. SS.Cosmas and Damian, doctors in their life-times were reputed to be particularly helpful in this respect: Referunt etiam plerique, apparere eos per visum languentibus et quid faciant indicare; quod cum fecerent, sani discedunt.[GM 97] Other thaumaturgically minded saints bestowed their healing powers conditionally, 'curing' the spirit while curing the body. The martyr Domitius was known to heal illnesses of the hip. On one occasion he appeared in a vision to a Jew who had prayed to the saint that he remove both his corporeal illness and the illness of his unbelief: ..sed nunc ad te confugio et supplex tuam misericordiam posco, ut, aversa prius infirmitate corporea, languorem incredulitatis avellas. Christians similarly awaiting cures complained to the saint that the Jew had been healed while they had not, and they began to shatter the lights in the church in their frustration.[GM 99] The saint was diplomatic and the Christians were also healed.

b. The introduction of cult themes: the Marian cult.

Visions could introduce and familiarise audiences with emergent cult themes. We have seen how cults were often initiated by apparitions at grave sites. In the case of established cults the value of a vision could be more nuanced. The cult of the virgin Mary, for example, began to take shape in the West in the later sixth century, and Gregory and Venantius Fortunatus are often credited with being active promoters of this movement.[47] By comparing the iconography of Marian apparitions described in Gregory's works with iconographic innovations being introduced and promoted in contemporary literature, we are presented with an opportunity to examine the transmission rate of visual and mental concepts of a saint into the unconscious as it emerges in dreams and visions.

It is in Gregory's Vita Patrum that we read for the first time in the West an account of the Virgin's assumption into heaven. This new element in

Mary's story is intimately connected with the emergence of her status as "Queen of Heaven", as the work of Averil Cameron has shown, and Venantius Fortunatus, like Corippus describes her in precisely these terms.[48] But if this is clear in the written sources of the period, is it also clear in the Marian visions reported?

Reviewing the apparitions attributed to the Virgin Mary in Gregory's works, we find only two, and neither of these correspond to the image of a heavenly queen. In the first, Mary appears to the architect of a church being built and dedicated to her by the Emperor Constantine. In the vision she instructs the architect how to overcome his engineering difficulties: Et ostendit ei, quae aptarentur machinae, qualiter suspenderentur trocleae atque funes, extenderentur officia, illud addens...[GM 8] With the sole aid of three boys the architect was then able to complete his commission. Gregory does not give us any information about the visual appearance of the apparition, nor the basis for her identification. The Virgin's pragmatic knowledge concerning contruction engineering does not convey an impression of queenly dignity.

In the second apparition, which will be discussed at greater length below (II.iii.b) a young Jewish boy was thrown into a furnace by his father after taking holy communion, and was protected by the cloak of the woman he had seen in the basilica seated on a throne with a boy on her lap. The seated Virgin and child has a long iconographic history, of course, and this story provides an interesting confirmation of a long accepted observation, that the outward appearance of visionary apparitions are often found to correspond to artistic representations found in churches in the visionary's area.[49] The virgin is seated on a throne in this vision, but it is as a mother and protectress that she is portrayed, and not as queenly intercessor with her adult son in his role as Judge.

It must be noted, of course, that both Marian visions described by Gregory took place in the East at a considerably earlier date, and Gregory's knowledge of them is very indirect. The mental picture of the Virgin as portrayed in the visions reflected earlier artistic and theological conventions, but even if this were not the case, one might expect image associations such as occur in visions to be subject to a time-lag, following considerably behind literature in the assimilation of new cult themes.

iii. Conservation of orthodoxy.

Protection of doctrinal purity was, and still is, a perennial concern of catholic Christianity. Catholic treatises and sermons refuting heresies, paganism and Judaism, abound for the late antique period and continued in a steady stream throughout the middle ages, and in many cases their authors saved their most colourful and vituperative language for these endeavours. This literature of confrontation diminuished somewhat in quantity if not in scope in sixth century Gaul as catholic Christianity became more securely established.

The choice of tactic against the enemies of Christianity was left to episcopal discretion for the most part, some bishops being more renowned than others in the active pursuit of religious homogeneity within their communities. Gregory of Tours, although friendly with bishops active in this field, and very enthusiastic about their accomplishments, was not himself at the forefront of this movement. This may have had something to do with the religious demography of Tours as opposed to that of Clermont or Marseilles, although the religious or ethnic composition of an authors' place of residence cannot be said to influence decisively the extent to which he engaged actively in the refutation of non-conformist ideas. Gregory does repeat conversations and public disputations he had with Arians and Jews who passed through Tours or whom he met at the royal court at Soissons. He was also familiar with Christian literature on the subject; he tells us, for example, that he had read a work by Prudentius against the Jews.[50]

Neither treatise writing nor forcible conversion was Gregory's approach to confronting unorthodox beliefs; rather he related miracle-filled stories in which Christian beliefs were shown to be true, with either a moral or a conversion to round it off. Vision accounts form an important element in this anecdotal material.

In this section I hope to show how vision narratives were in fact particularly well suited to addressing these religious concerns, especially for a bishop intent on maintaining the cohesiveness of his community.

a. Arianism.

In Gregory's time the vestiges of visigothic Septimania still made its impact on the religious geography of Gaul, and not far away the Visigoths in Spain carried on their political struggles against the backdrop of

intermittent religious persecution against the catholic Christians there.[51] Gregory felt he knew their measure: Est enim populus ille hereticus: qui videns haec magnalia, non conpungitur ad credendum, sed semper callide divinorum praeceptionum sacramenta nequissimis interpretationum garrulationibus non desinit inpugnare; sed virtus Domini diversam partem distruit et confundit.[GM 25]

Arianism was essentially a "foreign" heresy for Gregory; we do not get the impression from Gregory's writings that in his time Arianism posed an internal threat to Gallic catholicism. Gregory sympathised with the catholic Christians of Spain, he knew the work of Prudentius and St.Martin of Braga and had some information on the pilgrimage sites there which he believed to be shamefully neglected by the local population. Gregory's personal contact with the Arian doctrine was predominantly through disputes with Arian envoys who stopped in at Tours on their way to the royal court. The religious differences between Gaul and Spain did not prevent dynastic marriages taking place, thus providing a constant source of information and irritation to the bishop.[52] When the visigothic king Leuvigild's envoy Agilan met with Gregory, what started out as a theological dispute on the nature of the Trinity rapidly disintegrated into a shouting match in which Gregory appears the less sympathetic character. Not only does he tell us that Agilan was a man nulli ingenii aut dispositionis ratione, but when the dispute heated up Gregory resorted to underhand tactics, reminding the envoy of the undignified manner of Arius' death.[HF V.43] In this, as in his other disputations, Gregory showed himself to be an inferior theologian who allowed personal animosity and frustration to take over when he had exhausted reasoning. But it is with genuine concern that he asked Chilperic's ambassadors, returned from Spain in 582, for news of how the catholics there were holding out, and with grief that he learned that a new heretical argument was gaining credence there, namely that the Holy Spirit was now considered the inferior element in the Trinity.[HF VI.18] When the visigothic envoy Oppila stopped at Tours, Gregory asked him if he was a catholic, to which the envoy diplomatically replied that he believed what catholics believed. Gregory then invited him to attend mass at his cathedral, but observed him carefully, and when he did not take communion, was ready to ferret out Oppila's heretical views. The disputation which follows is singularly uninspired, although Gregory at least refrained from insulting him.[HF VI.40] Gregory at Tours stood like an

orthodox sentinel on the Arian diplomats' path to the Frankish court. No envoy appears to have made the journey twice!

Gregory's interest in proofs against Arianism is very clear from his writings, but his disputations with Arians were frustrating and ineffectual.[53] One may imagine that Gregory especially welcomed miracles and visions which provided divine proof of the truth of the catholic doctrine and refuted Arian affronts to Nicene trinitarianism.

The greater part of Gregory's miraculous proofs against Arianism are historical accounts, referring to a time when visigothic and vandal invaders stood outside Gallic cities. At Bazas, as the barbarians abandoned their seige [54] a miracle was seen to occur in the cathedral; three drops (tres guttas), like crystal but brighter, were seen by the stunned congregation to fall from the vault. The priest, Peter, had the presence of mind to catch the drops which joined together to make one very beautiful gem. The gem appeared clear (apparet clara) to those who were pure, and dark (videtur obscura) to those who had sinned. This fusion of the three gems into one Gregory saw as a divine refutation of Arianism: ...patuitque evidenti ratione, contra iniquam et Deo obibilem Arrianam heresim, quae eo tempore pullulabat, haec acta.[GM 12] Gregory relates other miracles, such as a disputation between a catholic deacon and an Arian priest which was eventually decided by a contest to see who could plunge their arm into scalding water and retrieve a gold ring placed there without coming to harm.[GM 80] On another occasion an Arian priest was punished for insulting a catholic priest by his swallowing a piping hot omelette and dying as a result.[GM 79]

Considering Gregory's obvious interest in Arianism, is interesting to note that there are no accounts directed at refuting Arianism in dreams or visions dating from Gregory's time. The three drops seen to fall from the vault of the cathedral at Bazas, was properly a miracle, not a vision. And so although Gregory was careful to preface his History with a declaration of catholic trinitarian faith, an important indicator that catholic orthodoxy could not be assumed, still the everyday issues of church business which were often resolved by visionary experiences did not include visionary reassurance on the question of the nature of the Trinity. The doctrinal threat of Arianism was too far removed to penetrate the dreams of Gregory and his flock.

b. Judaism.

Judaism was a much more familiar non-Christian element in Gallic life than was Arianism in Gregory's time.[55] Jewish settlement in southern Gaul was concentrated in and around the port of Marseilles, where in common with the rest of the empire, they enjoyed certain basic rights as Roman citizens. They were permitted to live according to Jewish law, and were entitled to seek compensation if their property was destroyed as a result of Christian destruction. Up until the third quarter of the sixth century they lived, first under the Visigoths and then under the Franks in relatively peaceful although restricted coexistence with the Christian population. The prohibitions spelled out by the Council of Agathe (506) were typical; Jews and Christians could not intermarry, nor could they eat together, and should they desire to convert to catholicism, they needed eight months of preparation before baptism.[56] Nevertheless Jews and Christians were often acquainted; Sidonius Apollinaris in the fifth century, for example, was friendly with a Jew whose learning he greatly respected.[57]

Gregory records the worsening of the atmosphere between the two religious groups in the sixth century, including his own frustrations. When Gregory wanted to defame the character of a bishop, he often commented that the bishop consorted with or did business with the Jews.[58] The role played by such accusations in the ecclesiastical politics of the period has been explored in a number of important works.[59] Gregory was also an enthusiastic reporter on the forced conversion of over five hundred Jews initiated by his one-time teacher Avitus of Clermont. He also records the civil unrest caused by the 'obstinacy' of a faction of the Jews who resisted the attempted conversion, going so far as to attack one of their number who did convert.[HF V.11; VI.17] In addition to his account in the History, Gregory hurredly commissioned Venantius Fortunatus to put into verse the news of mass conversions arriving from Clermont, perhaps, as has been suggested, to be read publicly in Clermont to bolster Avitus' support in the community.[60]

Gregory also records his own experience with a prominent Jew named Priscus who was on friendly terms with King Chilperic. Seeing Priscus' favour with the king, Gregory engaged the Jew in a theological debate before the King.[HF VI.5] Although Gregory tells us that he got the better of the debate, he also tells us that he was unable to sway Priscus, who prudently

took refuge in silence. Gregory had discovered for himself the futility of disputing scripture with the Jews; it did not further his ends. It is not difficult to see the economy coercion represented for Christian clergy intent on promoting religious homogeneity in their cities. Even here, however, ecclesiastical control over the forced conversion process was paramount to its legitimacy. Walter Goffart had rightly emphasised the fundamental difference in Gregory's attitude towards Avitus of Clermont's episcopal initiative and the short-term and disruptive consequences of King Chilperic's attempts at the mass conversion of the Jews.[HF VI.17]

Gregory's personal interest in the conversion of Jews is thus only too evident in his works. The lack of success in converting Jews by theological disputation and the social unrest triggered off by forced conversions was only too evident. The tense atmosphere in certain parts of Gaul in the 580s would favour any story which involved the conversion of a Jew by miraculous or visionary means. Gregory provides such stories in his books of miracles which post date the events of 576 in Clermont.

There are three accounts in Gregory's writings which feature Jewish protagonists, two of which concern the conversion of Jews by visions. In the first of these Gregory relates how in the East the son of a Jewish glass-worker who was taking lessons with Christian boys, took communion with them. When his father found out he threw the child into his furnace. The mother's cries brought Christians to the rescue, and on beating back the fire the boy was found to be unharmed and reclining as if on soft feathers (quasi super plumas mollissimas). When asked how he had escaped harm, the boy replied that the woman he had seen in the basilica with an infant on her knee (the virgin Mary) had covered him with her cloak and protected him from the fire. The boy's father was thrown into the furnace and burned to death. The boy and his mother were baptized and, Gregory tells us, many Jews were converted by this example.[61] An intercessor, in this case the Virgin Mary, is thus shown to protect a Jew who had made the first step towards Christianity, even if it was only a child who followed what his class mates were doing. (Perhaps the innocence of children and an idea that they have a natural tendency towards goodness, gave this story its particular appeal.) The protection afforded by the Virgin was thus clearly directed against the revenge of the Jewish community, and is included by Gregory perhaps as a direct comment on the violence surrounding the case of the converted Jew at

Clermont mentioned above.[HF V.11] The Virgin was the protector of Christianized Hebrew boy, just as once a man "like a son of the gods" (often interpreted as Christ) had once protected Daniel and the other Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace.[Daniel 3.25] The similarity with the Old Testament story has its cogency in the idea that Christians were the true children of God through the spirit, rather than the Jews who were heirs only in the flesh. The important aspects of the story for Gregory and his contemporaries were the demonstration through miraculous means that Christianity is the true religion, and that the Virgin is a powerful protector and Christian mother-figure for the child. The conversion of his mother and the other Jews provides a more generalised Christian ending for the story.

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of a vision being responsible for the conversion of a Jew is the story in which the martyr Domitius appeared in a dream to a supplicant Jew and healed both his hip and his unbelief.[GM 99] In this case the Jew took the first step, not only in requesting bodily healing but spiritual remedy also. His prayers were answered by the martyr in order to convert the man and also to demonstrate the power of the Christian God. The Christians who were irate that a Jew was cured while they were not are appeased by the saint in an act of general healing.

Gregory's writings are an important record of the rising interest displayed by the church in the later sixth century in turning their attention to the conversion of the often prominent and wealthy Jews within their cities. From the muted and often perfunctory references to Jews in fifth and early sixth century hagiography, Gregory's stories highlight a change in ecclesiastical focus. Of the various conversion methods detailed by Gregory, the vision narratives stand apart. For it is perhaps the recognition by Gregory and future writers [62] that visions and other miraculous events could be a useful and undisruptive medium to influence religious opinion that was the most far reaching consequence of the struggles of the year 576.

c. Eastern controversies.

In recent years there have been a number of studies reassessing what was generally believed to be Gregory's unreliable grasp of political events outside Gaul and especially in the East. It is certainly the case that Gregory shows himself to be misinformed about certain key issues, for example he relates a scandalous biography of Amalasuntha, daughter of king Theodoric

of Italy which is a total fabrication. This and other inaccuracies have been routinely noted by historians.[62] The contribution of recent studies, especially those of Averil Cameron, have shown that Gregory may have relied on written sources which reflected conflicting traditions on these issues in addition to the diverse reports of travellers.[63] This new appreciation notwithstanding, it is still fair to say that Gregory shows almost no interest in the theological disputes between Rome and Constantinople, even though other Gallic bishops did involve themselves in such disputes. Avitus of Vienne at an earlier date, for example, wrote two books against the Eutychian heresy and was au courant with developments in the Acacian Schism. Venantius Fortunatus who later became bishop of Poitiers was careful to identify himself with Rome and Chalcedon in the wake of the Three Chapters controversy and to praise Justin II's upholding of the Council of Chalcedon.[64] In common with many sixth century writers Gregory was careful to make clear his own adherence to the Nicene creed [HF I Praef] but otherwise, apart from occasional reports on political events in the East, Gregory shows himself to be far more concerned with religious differences closer to home. There is one vision account, however, which it is argued, does reflect a sensitivity towards theological fashions in the East, and it concerns the portrayal of Christ in devotional art. This is the well known case of the crucifixion scene at Narbonne.[65]

Gregory relates that in the cathedral at Narbonne there was an icon of Christ wearing only a loincloth. On three occasions a persona terribilis appeared in a vision to the priest Basileus stating that whereas the congregation were all clothed, he was left naked, adding that he should be covered with a curtain. After the priest failed to obey the vision the first time, and the second, the apparition struck him with blows and threatened him with death should he fail again. The priest, Gregory tells us, had failed to understand the vision: non intellegens visionem. On reporting the vision to his bishop the picture was covered.[GM 22]

The priest's vision indicates a sensitivity towards both the respect due to the Christ figure (the terrible person of the vision points to the congregation who are better and more respectably clothed) and also to the changing christological attitudes which now made such a representation of Christ undesirable. One has only to refer to the Ravenna mosaics in the Arian and Cathedral baptistries in which Christ is often shown devoid even of

a loincloth to witness the change.[66] The exposure of the body in the painting represented Christ's humanity, but the vision seems to indicate that acknowledgement of Christ's divinity had suffered as a result. Popular devotion to icons such as that recorded by Gregory had brought to Gaul the same concerns raised in the East. Reverence for the figure represented in the picture could be tantamount to worship of the picture itself, and certainly one iconoclastic bishop, Serenus of Marseilles, is known in Gaul at a very early date. Even Gregory's own preface to the story "reads like a half-apology, half-justification of something still a little suspect" as one historian has remarked.[67]

Once again we should note how in the case of doctrinal divergence, a visionary experience is used to justify a change in the church's policy, and to effect it with as little disruption and debate as possible. In this particular case, it has been suggested that the Greek name of the priest, Basileus, might be suggestive of the quarter from which this new sensibilty arose.[68] If this is indeed the case, then recounting the apparition's outrage was one way an outsider could share his reservations about a painting, perhaps present in the church for a considerable period, and clarify its inappropriate nature without calling the bishop's orthodoxy into question.

d. Gallic paganism.

Gallic paganism was of three kinds in Gregory's time: the ancient religion of the indigenous Gallic population, the official religion of the Roman empire, and the Frankish gods who were still venerated in places despite the official conversion of the Frankish ruling house to Christianity. One of the problems in identifying and distinguishing one group from another in the written sources is the inclusive nature of the terminology used to describe them. The use of the terms paganus and rusticus and the extent to which they are interchangeable in this period, for example, has been examined at length.[69] Since these were the terms used to describe all non-Christian worshippers, identification can be problematic. In addition to this it was the custom in Latin texts to refer to the gods of the indigenous population by the names of Roman gods with whose functions they most nearly corresponded. Thus it is often difficult or impossible to determine if an operative pagan shrine or altar (usually described in the texts as being

destroyed) is Gallic, Roman or Frankish.

Nonetheless whoever these pagan gods were, they were the prime target for Christian polemic and widespread eradication in the Christianization of Gaul. Episcopal sermons and church councils inveighed against superstition, augury and false worship, although often Christian practises came close to them.[70] The ambitious monk or clergyman did not have to look far to find an ancient shrine to destroy or its adherents to convert. Gregory's uncle St.Gallus accompanied King Theuderic to Cologne as a young deacon, and there, in company with another cleric, burned down a barbarian temple, fleeing from the fury of the worshippers to the royal palace.[VP VI.2] Miracles were often told to explain how the saint, who risked martyrdom in this endeavour, not only evaded the fury of the people but converted them too. St.Gallus relied on the protection of the king for his actions and no conversions are recorded as having resulted from them, although Gallus we are told, later wished that he had suffered martyrdom at that time. It is significant that very few incendiary or demolitionist martyrs of this type are known. Often when questioned about the pagan site, the local inhabitants would answer that they did not know the identity of the god or person venerated there. If they identified a pagan god the place would be destroyed. Popular 'ignorance' meant that at worst the shrine was Christianized by means of a dream revelation. Such were the politics of survival.

Perhaps the best example of this in Gregory's work is his account of his great-grandfather Gregory of Langres' response to just such a situation.

In Dijon there was a huge sarcophagus which was thought by the bishop to be a pagan burial place. The rustici were accustomed to make petitions there which were speedily answered. In one case a young boy tried to steal a candle left on the tomb but it was guarded by a huge serpent. Gregory was informed of these miracles, but refused to believe them and strenuously urged his flock to cease from their worship there. The martyr of God revealed himself to the blessed confessor and said: Quid, inquit, agis? Non solum quod tu despicis, verum etiam honorantes me spernis. Ne facias, quaeso, sed tegmen super me velocius praepara. Gregory was shaken (concussus) by this vision, went to the tomb and wept for a long time praying for God's indulgence for his ignorance.[GM 50]

This story illustrates the problems bishops had in dealing with popular veneration at non church-sanctioned sites, especially when they were reported

to be very successful. Gregory (d.540) had evidently tried to prevent devotion at this site by means of persuasion, telling his flock that they should not worship at the tomb. Having taken this stance on behalf of the church, the volte-face involved in assimilating the site into the church's orbit was best facilitated by means of a vision. In identifying himself to Gregory in the vision, the martyr Benignus conveyed the responsibility for the cult to the bishop and the church, thus ensuring ecclesiastical control of this powerful site.

Dreams and visions thus had an important role in the church's response to territorially established Gallic paganism. In Gregory's narratives the dream-visions do not confront theological or philosophical issues. Their content like Gregory's own concerns are far more tied to the land; they justified and encouraged the founding of churches and oratories, the beating of paths through the countryside in processions, and the wholesale eradication of rival temples and grottos in the countryside. Through revelations such as Gregory of Langres', the limitless supply of hitherto unknown Christian saints and martyrs helped to inhabit the ancient shrines.

In Gregory's works, as we have seen, dreams and visions, often associated with miracles, played an important role in the expansion of Christianity, in protecting the interests of the church and its episcopal representatives, and in its struggle to eradicate non-catholic worship. The visionary experience, so long suspect and circumscribed in the thought and writings of theologians and theorists, had become fully assimilated into the church tradition. No longer were visions seen as a potential danger to the social and religious order in Gregory's time, nor were they seen as a threat to the church's traditional role as interpreter of divine knowledge through the scriptures. The church had incorporated this sensitive aspect of individual spirituality into its artillery as a powerful weapon for expansion and authority against the non-Christian forces which surrounded it.

In this section I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which the visionary experience could be employed successfully by the church and especially the episcopate to resolve everyday concerns within the Christian community, and to promote catholic orthodoxy. Looking at visions in the context of non-Christian communities, we find that although they were often employed to confront the prevalence of pagan, and to a lesser extent Jewish

practises in Gregory's time, Arianism and other doctrinal disputes were rarely the subject of orthodox visions. In fact, none of Gregory's vision accounts are in any sense theologically profound. Repudiation of non-Christians in visions centred on questions of allegiance, custom and lifestyle, not on details of doctrinal difference.

In the early Christian period, the dangers of heretical revelations which challenged the church's orthodoxy was a restraint on open acceptance of the theoretically universal accessability to the faithful of the veridical visionary experience through the spirit. In Gregory's day the challenge of heretical groups was not expressed in claims of divine revelation, and the reconciliation of the visionary experience within the framework of church spirituality was aided by the non-revelationary nature of the heresies which confronted the church in the West in this period. Judaism was a familiar religious minority which had forsaken its revelationary past [71], and had no real political or territorial power. Arianism had never been a heresy which relied on revelations in opposition to the scriptures or the traditional authority in the church. As a doctrinal dispute centred on scriptural interpretation, the basis of the conflict remained rooted in the written word. Other controversies spawned in the tension between Rome and Constantinople were likewise hermeneutical. Priscillianism, the most virulent theological dispute to afflict Gaul in recent memory, and which had disrupted the Gallic episcopate until the second decade of the fifth century, had long settled down by Gregory's day.[72] And just as the extreme asceticism which had been so suspect in the fourth century had become a fashionable attribute of the pious in Gregory's day, so the distrust expressed in some quarters of Severus' portrayal of St.Martin as speaking with angels vanished in the new atmosphere of episcopal cooperation with the divine through their visions. In contrast to heresy, the pervasiveness of indigenous paganism in Gaul offered both challenge and potential for Christianization. They were a people ripe for conversion and without having encountered Christianity in its aberrant forms. Visions were used to justify the destruction of their local cults or approved their Christianization and integration; as such they were often a powerful instrument in smoothing the process of cult syncretism.

Conclusion.

Dreams and visions were a central aspect of Gregory's thought-world. His vision narratives are shot through with the enthusiasm of conviction. Nothing in Gregory's own experience or that of his influential family suggested that dreams and visions were not an integral and vital part of religious life. Gregory the Great, who had access to select oneiromantic literature cited its warnings that dreams should not be believed, and yet went on to expand greatly on the importance of visionary phenomena to his world and its historical destiny. Gregory of Tours, who appears to have had no such contact with a written vision theory does not even have to make such formulaic statements. Visions were a normal and regular means by which divine wishes were conveyed to Mankind. Gregory knew that dreams and visions were vulnerable to demonic delusion, but in most cases they are simply an extension of the other world in to Gregory's own. Preparedness to see miraculous and mystical phenomena in his society undoubtedly influenced Gregory's often monotone, literal understanding of the vision accounts related to him. Occasionally there is some indication that manoeuverability was possible within these limits, as in the case of Eberulf, but it was rare.

Although Gregory was not familiar with either Augustine's vision theory or Macrobius' or any other written system of dream categorisation as far as we know, we should not lose sight of the fact that theoretical assumptions underlie all vision narratives whether formally known or not. A rudimentary, or even a sophisticated understanding of visionary states could be prominent in vision narratives without familiarity with technical terminology; observation and traditional literary descriptions in hagiography could just as clearly define different types of visionary experiences as could the traditional learning on the subject (itself based in large measure on observation and reports). Where Gregory departs from the past is when he appears to dispense altogether with the formality of dream or vision as a distancing medium for the experience. The inadvertent trespass into the other world is a visionary experience which Gregory makes his own.

The strong episcopal emphasis which permeates Gregory's writings, both in terms of his chosen subject matter and in his identification of spiritual authority is an important contribution both in terms of the scope of vision applicability and to the nature of Gallic spirituality. Gregory of Tours

recognized the importance of, and the need for visions in all dimensions of the bishop's responsibilities. The bishop had a duty to be above reproach morally, in his private life and in his public dealings. Corporeal purity and doctrinal orthodoxy could be protected by visionary means. In times of crisis the bishop was responsible for maintaining the morale of his flock, which he often did, strengthened by dreams and visions. In his role as the prime Christianizing agent in his diocese, the initiation and maintenance of saintly cults was under the bishop's control. Fellow bishops recognized the need for tact and political sensitivity when they became involved with a religious issue such as cult observance, in his diocese. Criticism of a bishop was also an extremely sensitive issue and was often expressed in the language of dreams, percolating up from the lower ranks of the clergy. Finally, when the bishop or pious hermit was in danger of making a change in their life styles, or were despoiling the church's property placed in their stewardship, any act in fact that would jeopardize their salvation, it was highly likely that they would be reproached in a vision so that they would have time to mend their ways. Gregory does not appear to admit that any secular person was forewarned in this way or that belated repentance afforded divine mercy. For the bishop, there was a special relationship to the divine through the means of visions and apparitions; they could expect visionary assistance, whether it was in keeping the church services running on time or assistance in saying the Mass.

When we consider Gregory's sense of the moral implication of the visionary experience, we are confronted with conflicting messages. On the one hand, Gregory is sure that certain types of vision are reserved for those whose faith and purity truly deserve this distinction. This type of vision is the vision of celestial mysteries, the ability to see a Mass in progress in heaven, or to see the sword of God hanging over the king's palace. Gregory is also concerned throughout his works, his <u>History</u> in particular, to demonstrate the connection between divinely inspired phenomena and historical events. The signs pointed to a system of divine justice, a moral connection between the vision and its recipient. On the other hand there are numerous cases in Gregory's writings where there appears to be no known reason or special merit involved. The recipient could be a drunken man, or two pilgrims on their way to visit a shrine. The consequences of their vision could be disastrous or there could be no consequence at all. Gregory's

understanding of the workings of divine justice in the world can show little coherence.

Gregory can also be called to witness regarding aspects of visionary experience which for him would have held little interest. It is interesting for us, for example, to examine at what stage new visual or graphic information about the appearance of a saint entered the unconscious to be reproduced in dreams and visions.

Finally, there is an aspect of Gregory's vision thinking characteristic of Gallic vision writing in general which can only be fully assessed by reference to the late Roman period. That is its essential pragmatism. Gregory's vision tales represent a weighty percentage of sixth century vision narratives. His own proclivities and those of his immediate milieu are, in major part, what we think of when we examine sixth century spirituality. The low-profile setting, one might add normalcy, of so many of Gregory's vision narratives are an expression of the sense of continuity between the world of Gregory's family and friends and the miraculous world of the saints. One recent historian of Gregory's thought has emphasized the dream-world nature of Gregory's understanding of reality.[73] I would rather stress a different aspect of this osmotic process, namely the awesome mundanity of Gregory's dream and vision world. For in drawing on the miraculous and mystical within the scope of reality, imbuing it with the colour and interest of the other world, Gregory bled dry the mystique of the visionary experience. God in heaven remained suitably removed from this process, while his saints performed their mission with the angels to regulate life on earth. The vision of God was experienced only after death, and there was no attempt to break through the army of intercessory saints to touch the untouchable.[74] Taken as a whole, Gregory's writings record what amounts to the socialization of the mystical experience.

Chapter 5. VISIONS IN MEROVINGIAN HAGIOGRAPHY.

In this chapter I shall examine the place of visions in the hagiographic literature of the Merovingian period as a whole. Most of the Lives of the saints to be discussed date from the seventh and eighth centuries although reference will also be made to hagiographic works of the earlier period. Most are anonymous compositions, sometimes recorded at a date considerably later than the events they describe and usually without personal knowledge of the saint. The majority of the seventh and eighth century Vitae are of episcopal and monastic saints who lived in the Neustrian and Austrasian kingdoms of northern and eastern Gaul, or who settled there, attracted by the vitality and challenge of pursuing an ascetic life on the frontiers of the Frankish kingdom.

This brings us to the question of authenticity, which is a thorny issue for Merovingian Lives. Most hagiographies of Merovingian saints have been preserved in Carolingian manuscripts, and in the past this led to their often being attributed to that later age, most notably by Bruno Krusch who edited many of the Merovingian texts for the Monumenta edition. Many of these Lives have since been reassigned by scholars to the Merovingian era based on their orthography, and a more complex understanding of the way texts were handled by posterity. Some Lives, it is clear, are Carolingian fabrications, but many are revised versions of older Lives which have been lost, or else they incorporate into newer renditions sections of older Vitae or other documents, for example miracle lists. Supplemental information such as land grants or tax immunities can often be detected as later interpolations.

It is my contention that the kernal of many of these Lives, even those which are known to us only in Carolingian revisions, are Merovingian in origin, and that because revisions were often motivated by political and proprietal concerns, vision accounts which dealt solely with the spiritual life of the saint were the kind of material that was least vulnerable to later tinkering. Such is my argument for the earliest Lives of St.Aldegund of Maubeuge which I examine in the next chapter. The Life of St.Anstrudis of Laon cited in this chapter provides another example in which layers of composition can be detected.

For the purpose of this hagiographic overview I have avoided those

compositions which are patently Carolingian fabrications, selecting those texts which are considered to be Merovingian compositions. (The exception is the Life of St.Consortia which gives no reliable indication of its being composed close to the time in which it is set.) The probable Merovingian origin of these texts is, of course, no reflection on their intrinsic historical value. There is no way of gauging, even in those cases when the authors are known to us, whether the dreams and visions described were actually experienced by the person to whom they were attributed, or even whether they were experienced in the way they are described in the text. What we have before us are documents which have more to do with the mentality and religious understanding of their authors than they have to do with the spiritual experience of the saint. And herein lies their very strength as documents for the mentalité of the Merovingian period.

I. Individual hagiographies versus collections and histories.

At the outset there may seem little to differentiate the individual hagiographic accounts which proliferated in the Merovingian period, from those collections of self-contained saintly biographies penned by Gregory of Tours. On one level there is no difference between them; in both cases the visionary's life is sculpted to appeal to certain religious and ascetic ideals of sanctity, their texts are equally influenced by hagiographic antecedents, and the non-autobiographical nature of the accounts are always influenced by their author's own interests. Hagiographic collections, however, often reveal an agenda, more or less clearly expressed, which derives its impact from the multiplicity of the accounts contained within them and their often larger historical canvass. Gregory of Tours related visions in which the clergy, especially the higher clergy, featured predominantly. The vision accounts of Gregory the Great, by contrast, show a distinct monastic bias which has much to do with his own desires to recapture the contemplative life. Collections paint a total environment, an immersion in a particular thought-world, and a view of society operating on a larger and more universal scale than the individual accounts. Such written sources thus become powerful vehicles for the promotion of ideas which are universal in scope. In Gregory the Great's Dialogues the sense that history is coursing rapidly towards an apocalyptic end is quite explicit. Gregory of Tours' works share such concerns only intermittently, preferring to

concentrate on divine signs and prodigies which are more securely based in the contemporary struggle between secular and religious powers, between the powers of good and evil. For both, their personal morality imprinted on the larger canvass of history and mankind's spiritual destiny.

A further difference is that in Gregory the Great's Dialogues and to a lesser extent in the work of Gregory of Tours, the dream-vision accounts are not confined to the religious community; they embrace experiences of religious and impious laypeople, and survey a wide social and economic spectrum. Individual hagiographies, especially monastic productions, are much more limited in terms of their social base. On the other hand, individual hagiographic compositions do offer a greater scope for diversity in their expression of ideas than in the single author work. Within the hagiographic tradition it is possible to find all sorts of variations in subject, content and means by which visions were thought to occur, often reflecting different traditions within the church. To take one example, the vision of Christ is described in many guises in hagiographic texts; he appears as a youth, as an adult, as a king and as a pauper. In the single author collections image inconsistencies are generally avoided. This is not to say that differing visual images of Christ were theologically inconsistent, but the need for reconciliation of information which was such a prominent part of medieval exegetical methodology must have influenced individuals to reconcile varying images also. By selecting which details to relate variant images could then be made to conform with their own personal perspective on that aspect of Christ's persona spoke to them, whether it was Christ as shepherd or Christ as king. Needless to say selection need not have been conscious; recording oral information some time after the event lent itself to aberrations of memory in which what the compiler believed he heard was not the same as what he heard, but what he believed he heard was accordance with what he wanted to hear.

Finally, while visions recorded in individual Vitae generally form part of a psychological and spiritual history which might have no wider significance than its impact on the vision recipient him or herself, Vitae themselves, especially the monastic productions, focused on a paradox; the sanctification of the individual within the orbit of the community, promoting the ideal of the monachus within the coenobium. Visionary experiences in monastic hagiographies looked both inward and outward, focusing on visions as

the expression of divine approval and sanction for the spiritual merit of the individual, and extending it to include the spiritual merit of the saint's chosen life-style.

II. Visions in Merovingian hagiography.

As far as it is documented in the extant Merovingian hagiography, it is evident that visionary experience was neither a required charism for sanctity nor even the usual experience of the saints. Whereas miracles were almost universally noted in the Vitae, both during the saint's lifetime and posthumously, visions never attained such universality. Not all saints expressed their spirituality in the language of dreams and visions, and one can only estimate the proportion of saints who reported visionary experiences; they comprise roughly one third of the extant Vitae whose protagonists lived, or were said to have lived in the Merovingian period. Of those who were said to have had visions, by far the greater part were reported as prophecies concerning their own death. The regularity with which it is reported without an accompanying description indicates that it had become a hagiographic topos. Nevertheless there were a select number of vision recipients and visionaries whose experiences were sufficiently particular to have merited special attention in the Vitae, and thus greater care in their documentation. Within certain limits, one might suggest that the less the vision narrative conforms to the visionary topos, the more likely it may be believed that the experiences reflect the true experiences of the saint. In those rare cases too, it is possible that the vision narrative itself was modified less than other elements in the Life by later recensionists, an issue I shall discuss at greater length with regard to the Life of St.Aldegund of Maubeuge. For the most part, however, dreams and visions tended to gravitate around specific junctures of a saint's life, with a frequency and sameness to make it impossible to distinguish historical likelihood from topos. Even if one has to dismiss the majority of visions recorded in saints' Lives as topoi they are significant nevertheless for what they tell us about the mentality of the period towards the place and power of the dream-vision in the guidance and regulation of religious life.

Those visionary experiences whose descriptions have survived in the hagiographic literature in this period can be seen to operate in the wide arena of Merovingian religious life. They encompassed the birth, life and

death of the saint. They also played a significant role in promoting the monastic vocation and the divine mission of the founder-saint. In many respects the place of vision in the saint's life did not change in the period under review with the exception of visions concerned with death and the possibility of salvation. In this section I shall look at the way in which saints and their hagiographers focused visionary experiences around certain pivotal issues. In the first part I shall identify briefly the junctures in the saint's biography that attracted the adornment of visions. Then I shall look in greater detail at how visions were used to promote particular aspects of religious society, in particular the benefits of the monastic life.

i. Visions in the Life of the Saints.

Birth.

The hagiographers of Merovingian saints subscribed to the idea that the saint, as true imitator of Christ's life, was predestined to sanctity. The biological parents of the saint, however, were not always so well informed. Any attempts to sabotage God's intentions were speedily dealt with. The events surrounding the birth of saint Germanus of Paris (d.576) are perhaps the best known in this respect; Germanus' mother Eusebia, wishing to avoid having a child so soon after a previous birth, took a potion in an attempt to abort the foetus. Erat ergo pugna inter mulierem et viscera. Eusebia suffered some damage from the experience but the baby was unharmed. Erat hinc futura praenoscere ante fecisse virtutem quam nasci contigerit. [V.F. V.Germ.Paris. 2-4] Other mothers were better informed, like Columbanus' pregnant mother who had a vision in which she saw sun rays shining from her bosom. [Jonas, V.Columbani I.i] Similarly the pregnant mother of Praeiectus of Clermont (d.676) saw her son leave her body from her side and he was followed and drenched by a wave of blood. [Passio Praeiecti 1] Both women sought advice on their visions; Columbanus' mother turned to her neighbours and Eusebia consulted with a saintly archpriest named Peladius, who interpreted the vision as signalling Praeiectus' future martyrdom. [1]

Conversion to the religious life.

The next stage of the saint's life to be ushered in by visionary experiences was the decision to make a profession of the religious life. For men this decision involved making a choice between an ecclesiastical or a

monastic career. (Hermits, who might seem to fall outside these categories, usually found themselves channeled into one of these two areas of medieval religious life during the course of their lifetimes). In the seventh century, these two areas of life appear to have been less oppositional than they had been in the sixth. St.Amandus (625-75) was both missionary and bishop, with a flair for encouraging and participating in the monastic movement of the period. Amandus had started his religious life as a priest in Aquitaine, but yearned for a wider arena in which to show his dedication to God. It is not surprising therefore that the great missionary should have been portrayed in his Life as having undertaken his mission on the prompting of a vision. Amandus was quite unsure as to the religious path he should take, but took the first step towards finding out by leaving Aquitaine to go to Rome. There, as he sat on the steps of St.Peter's, St.Peter himself appeared to him and told him to return to Gaul to preach. Amandus was overjoyed at the command and after gaining papal blessing returned to Gaul to start his mission. [V.Amandi 7]

Women did not have the same options for religious service, and so their struggles tended to centre on their choice of the monastic life over their family and social obligations. In the case of well-born women especially, additional pressures to marry could stem from political interests, often, according to the hagiographers, on the orders of the king himself. The Vitae usually stress that these were times of urgent prayer. The virgin Glodesind of Metz (d.circa 608) first rebuffed the attempts by King Childeric to marry her off, and then those of her father who wanted to take her with him to his sister Rotlinde in Trier in the hope that a woman's persuasion could convince Glodesinde to marry. Instead Glodesind fled to Metz where she took refuge in the church of St.Stephen. For six days she prayed there without eating or drinking until on the seventh day, which was also a Sunday, an unknown man with the face of an angel came to her and veiled her. [V.Glodesindis 1] Consecration did not always settle the matter for wealthy virgins. Another saint, Consortia (6th c), was courted both before and after her consecration. Consortia's Vita is full of visions. While she was still young, her dead sister Tulla appeared to her mother in a dream and stated, among other things, that Consortia would remain a virgin although only after many trials. This did not stop a suitor and his family from trying to persuade her from her course. Eventually the matter was settled by using the Bible as an

oracle (the sortes biblicae) and on her parents' death Consortia built a church on her land named Matton Vicus in honour of St.Stephen protomartyr and a xenodochium. She then went to court to ask permission from King Chlothar I to live out her life in virginity. While she was on her way the king had a vision in which he was told that Consortia would cure his daughter, who was gravely ill. Consortia succeeded in curing the princess and was granted her wish.

On Chlothar's death however, Sigebert sent a nobleman named Hecca to govern the area of Marseilles. This Hecca heard about the rich and single Consortia and ordered that she appear before him. He was so taken with her beauty that he rushed to the King for permission to marry her. Consortia resorted to prayer to save her from enforced marriage and her prayers were answered with a vision of an angel who told her that she would not be forced to marry but that she should prepare as if for a wedding but to also prepare a grave. Returning from the royal court, Hecca made his way back to the monastery by boat and as he approached the riverbank he spied the preparations in progress for the wedding. In his eagerness to claim his bride Hecca slipped as he tried to get out of the boat, impaling himself on his lance. The prepared grave was waiting for him. [V.Consortiae 6-9, 12-18]

The visions in this account clearly contribute to good story-telling, but it was often the case, especially for female saints, that their decision to eschew their biological and social role found legitimacy through dreams and visions. Psychologically too, it is not surprising that confrontation and conflict over social and dynastic obligations should surface in the dreams and visions of those members of society who were otherwise powerless to express their views.

Spirituality.

Conveying to a reader the spirituality of the saint was probably the most challenging task that the hagiographer had to face. How could the author reach into the inner life of a separate person, especially when distanced from the saint historically? The solution, such as it was, was to observe the external manifestations of the saint's internal life and report them. These included tears and groans, solitary prayer and contemplation. The hagiographer always found it significant that the saint spent long hours alone in his or her cell at prayer, mortifying and exhausting the body with

fasts, vigils and physical discomforts. In different ways vision accounts added another dimension to these attempts to describe the saint's special relationship with God.

The external aspect of the vision informed outsiders of the saint's special spiritual status. The state of ecstasy as a removal from wordly sensation was an obvious expression of the visionary's special if brief union with the divine. Yet removal from the material world did not require an ecstatic vision, because prayer and contemplation could also produce a state of removal. It is reported that St.Audoenus (Ouen) of Rouen (d.683) so poured himself out in prayer and contemplation to God, that when he contemplated God his disciples saw a light radiating around him. [V.Audoini 8] The enveloping sheath of light bespoke not only the privileged bond between himself and God, but also his isolation from those around him. The visible radiance of light, like the cell walls of the solitary suggested a barrier, an intimacy of experience, to which the outside observer could never be a true witness.

The content of the visionary experience itself could offer insight into the relationship of the saint to God. The most patent example was the female visionary's connubial relationship with Christ. The saint was the bride of Christ, beloved by him and awaited by him. Such a relationship of love, such a union was only possible if a saint had truly surrended herself to God's will. Male saints were more likely to see Christ in the role of friend and protector, coming to their aid in times of trouble, guiding them in their service to God, and promising them celestial rewards. But for both male and female saints, visions were a consolation for a life of service and obedience. It has been noted recently by a scholar of the visionary experience in the middle ages, that vision recipients can be divided into two categories: those for whom the vision appeared suddenly, spontaneously and without expectation of the event, and those for whom the vision was the culmination of much time and prayer. As examples of the first category he mentions only male visionaries, whereas in the second some men, but above all women, have their visions preceded by long periods of prayerful and tearful supplication. [2] To a certain extent this experiential pattern is evident already in the Merovingian period. St.Amandus saw his vision of St.Peter subito as did Barontus his dream-vision. [V.Amandi 7; Visio Baronti 3] It is rare to find such examples in female Lives in which visions are expressly

said to have appeared suddenly, although it is not unknown. Columbanus' mother's dream-vision of the future of her unborn child came to her in a sudden sleep.[V.Columbani I.i] What is the significance of the sudden vision over the protracted wait for a vision? Why should a sudden vision be so rarely reported for female visionaries? Insofar as some saints experienced both sudden visions and long-awaited visions, the distinction may have less to do with the visionary himself than with the context in which the vision is received. One would expect a miracle-vision to appear suddenly, in answer to a particular circumstance. As St.Wandrille arrived at the royal palace in answer to Dagobert's summons, his clothes soiled from helping a poor man with his cart, an angel suddenly appeared statim apparuit to clean his clothes for him. [V.Wandregiseli 7] Barontus was conducted on a tour of heaven and hell unexpectedly, but he was a sinner who did not relish his experience. Sudden appearances were more likely to be experienced by men because men were more active in the community and there was greater scope for a miracle-vision, but they do occur also at convents, like the nun's vision of St.Aldegund at Maubeuge taking communion. As for the type of vision in which tours were made of heaven and hell, no tours of hell are reported to have been experienced by women. Women whose visionary experiences were recorded in literature were saints (unlike Barontus) and they were in no need of such salutary reminders of the consequences of sin.

Just as often as was the case for women, visions were the reward of the male saint for his lifetime of protracted yearning, an intimate vision concerning the fate of the saint's soul. For men just as for women, strong emotions of love coursed beneath the surface of everyday life, an undercurrent always ready to burst forth in silent moments. St.Nivardus of Rheims, a bishop who had a number of visions was Dominus diurnus et nocturnis vigiliis deditus. [V.Nivardi 3] Descriptions of St.Wandrille of Fontanelle's ascetic practises portray a man prostrated by his love of God. In addition to sleep deprivation and submergence in icy water, he shed many tears cotidiae gemitus, cotidiae lacrimas. And further in a direct reference to the tears and ministrations of Mary Magdalene to Christ, we are told that mens eius ad Iesum iacebat, pedes rigabat et crine tergebat. [V.Wandregiseli 8] His vision of an angel telling him that his place was reserved in heaven came to him cum in oratione devotissime ...perdurarit. [V.Wandregiseli 12] St.Wandrille, as he approached death cried out O Iesu boni, libera me, quia

multum desidero videre te. [V.Wandregiseli 18] Similar sentiments were expressed by St.Nivardus of Rheims, according to his hagiographer, who on his death bed toto desiderio cupiens in caelestibus esse, cum maximo affectu cordis loquebatur: "O domine Deus meus omnipotens, lumen verum et perhenne gaudium, eripe me de convalle lacrimarum et dono gratie tue ad tuum fac desiderabilem pervenire conspectum." [V.Nivardi ep. Remensis 11] By contrast, St.Aldegund of Maubeuge who was perhaps the most prolific Merovingian visionary, seemed to come by her experiences almost effortlessly.

The yearning for a vision of God in the present life and the hope of the vision of God in the next was thus both the spur to contemplation and prayer and a concrete manifestation of the relationship between the visionary and God forged through total dedication.

Death.

As death approached, just as with any Neoplatonic philosopher, Merovingian saints looked to death for their ultimate union with God and their souls' release from the captivity of the body.[3] Venantius Fortunatus noted that at his death Germanus of Paris' soul was raptus corporeo vinculo. [V.Germani Paris. 205] Likewise Balthild's hagiographer recorded that raising her eyes and hands to heaven, sancta illa anima a corporis vinculo in pace soluta est. [V.Balthildis 14] Some hagiographers recorded the saints' death cries in the same terms. Wandrille of Fontanelle cried out on his death bed "O Iesu boni, libera me." On a more solidly biblical note, Nivardus of Rheims saw the mortal condition as the prison of the soul: "O domine Deus ... eripe me de convalle lacrimarum." [V.Nivardi Rem. 11] Another Christian gloss on the image of the captive prisoner gaining release is that in which the soul in the world is likened to the Israelites in exile in Egypt. It was a popular allusion in works of this period.[4] St.Audoenus, it is recorded, prayed on his deathbed that his soul might be liberated from his body, saepius Dominum deprecabat, ut eum iam de corpore liberaret, and on his death his hagiographer commented: Igitur rediens versus Israhel de Aegypto, anima sancta deportata ab angelis volavit ad Dominum.[V.Audoini 15]

The most common types of vision to stem from ideas about how the soul was transported to heaven at death were based on traditional images such as the soul as dove, winging its way heavenward, and, very popular in

Merovingian texts, the spirit's reception by a ball of fire hovering over the dying person's cell, commonly thought to represent Christ or his angels awaiting to transport the soul. Ancient cosmological ideas such as the ladder connecting earth with heaven was a motif which found its way into premonitory visions of death. Balthild saw such a ladder whose top touched the heavens in front of the altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and she saw herself ascending it as if accompanied by angels.[V.Balthildis 13] The idea of the scala paradiso and its variants was an ancient one which sought to convey in tangible terms the link between earth and heaven, and how the soul was able to travel from one place to another.[5] It was also postulated that the dying person's friends would be present at death to facilitate the soul's reception into heaven. St.Balthild's hagiographer mused on the possibility that her soul was received by her almoner, friend and supporter Genesius.[6]

Having discarded the chains of the body, and having negotiated the treacherous journey heavenward, the soul achieved union with God. So while the monks around Wandrille's deathbed poured out their tears for the separation of the flesh, angeli exultant pro iunctionem anime. [V.Wandregiseli 20] Death brought the ultimate union.

The saints and those who followed them had no reason to fear death. Others were not so fortunate. As we move into the seventh century and beyond, the state of the soul at death and the church ritual centering on the time of the soul's passage to the other world becomes suddenly more evident in hagiography and in the kind of visions recorded there. This change can without doubt be attributed to the expansion of ideas given shape by Gregory the Great in his Dialogues.

Looking first at the importance of death rites from the seventh century onwards, we find that miracles and visions were sometimes required to ensure the saint's proper fulfillment of church ritual. St.Odilia of Hohenburg, for example, was said to have died without the viaticum. The nuns became very fearful for her and poured out prayers to God asking him to order the holy angels to return her soul to her body! In answer to these prayers Odilia revived, animaque repente in corpus recepta. Odilia told them that she had been enjoying the company of St.Lucy and inexpressible joy, but she took the communion offered anyway, with her own hands, before giving up the spirit once more.[7] St.Aldegund of Maubeuge, as is discussed below, was seen in a

vision taking communion during her final illness since she was too weak to take it herself. [V.Ald I.25]

Another important influence that Gregory's Dialogues exerted on the beliefs of later Merovingian saints and hagiographers was in the breaking down of the impenetrability of death in securing salvation. Gregory's propagation of the idea that salvation could be secured for the impure soul even after it had passed to the next world, begins to appear in hagiographic literature also. The Life of St.Odilia which is impregnated with Gregorian influence, told of a case which could have come straight from the Dialogues. Odilia was born blind, and convinced that it was a divine judgement on him for his wrongdoing her father wanted to have her killed. Odilia's mother, however, unable to dissuade her husband, had the child sent into hiding. So it showed particular filial devotion when Odilia, learning through saintly revelations that her dead father was languishing in poenali loco gave herself up to prayer on his behalf with vigils and fasts. And then, while at prayer, the skies opened filling her cell with celestial light and she heard a voice saying, "Odilia Deo dilecta, iam angores afflictionis a te conpesce, quia remissionem peccatorum patri tuo a Domino impetrasti; et ecce! ab inferno liberatus, in choro patriarcharum collocandus ab angelis ducitur." [V.Odiliae 12] Through no merit of his own Odilia's father had gained salvation through the intercession of his saintly daughter.

Another work which was plainly influenced by Gregory's Dialogues was the Visio Baronti, the account of the monk Barontus' visionary experience in which a dispute raged over the fate of his soul. Barontus had not yet died, and was in fact, returned to his body, but he experienced the precarious balance in which his soul was placed should he have died at that moment. Barontus was given the opportunity to set right his wrongs, due to the prayers of the righteous, in this case his fellow monks, and his membership of a respected monastic community.

ii. Visions and the monastic community.

Once the decision had been made to enter God's service, the saints' next task was to secure the best way to fulfill their divine mission. For most in the seventh century the spiritual life was almost synonymous with monasticism. The saint usually founded a monastic community and provided it with a rule to supplement the saint's own spiritual direction. Visions were

often cited as the reason for the decision to build in one place rather than another. St.Odilia of Hohenburg, for example, was instructed by St.John the Baptist in a vision concerning the site upon which she was to erect a church in his honour. [V.Odiliae 17] St.Eparchius of Angouleme (6th c), looking for a secluded spot to settle, walked outside the monastery walls of St.Cyran and lay down to sleep. Christ's voice spoke to him as he slept: "Eparchi hic permane, iam amplius noli vagare." [V.Eparchii Ecolismensis 8] St.Nivardus, bishop of Rheims was likewise given divine aid in choosing the site for his foundation Hautvilliers. [V.Nivardi 7] In this latter case the saint was sitting under a great oak tree when he saw a sight which he interpreted to be mystical. An angel in the form of a white dove threw out three of its feathers which then circled the intended area. The dove finally came to rest in the upper branches of the tree and when the monastery was built, a church dedicated to St.Peter and all the apostles was constructed over the tree and its trunk was incorporated into the altar. [V.Nivardi 8]

Finding a monastic rule which was appropriate for the founder's needs was a more difficult undertaking. There were many rules circulating in this period, the most widespread being those of St.Benedict and Columbanus, although older rules such as those of Caesarius, the so-called Rule of Augustine, and the anonymous Regula cuisdam Patris sometimes surfaced to be used in conjunction with another Rule as a regula mixta.[8] The rule of Donatus, for example, brings together many elements of the Caesarian, Benedictine and to a lesser extent Columbanian rule. It is often difficult to know by which rule or collection of rules a monastery was governed in this period, although some Vitae do oblige us with such information. The Vita Nivardi tells us, for example, that at Hautvilliers they followed both the Benedictine and Columbanian rules. [V.Nivardi 3]

In the case of St.Wandrille of Fontanelle, the search for a monastic system which was right for him, involved him in a lifetime of travelling. His personal quest began when he received an angelic vision: translatus est in spiritu ab angelo sancto, ductus est in monasterio qui vocatur Bobius, in regione Langobardorum qui dicitur Italia, ostendens ei omnis habitacionis eius, quomodo aut qualiter adessent. [V.Wandregiseli 9] On the strength of this vision Wandrille left everything behind him, and set off for Bobbio taking with him only three young men and an ass. In a passage which anticipates the enormous influence Irish monasticism was to have on him, his

hagiographer described his travels: exibit de terra sua et di cognatione sua et de domu (sic) patris sui et ambulabat, nesciens qua viaticum ducerit; sed Dominus per suum angelum demonstrabat ei, qua via pergere deberit. At last he arrived at Bobbio and recognised it instantly as the place he had seen in his ecstatic vision. He stayed there a number of years and it was at this juncture that he considered walking to Ireland (which he never did). The ascetic practises he undertook at this time, like mortification by immersion in icy water, are witness to his training in Insular ascetic practises.

From Bobbio, Wandrille moved on the Romainmoutier in the Jura, governed by its own rule, and after a lengthy stay there returned to northern Gaul to establish a monastery in the forest of Jumièges. Unfortunately we do not know which rule Wandrille chose for his foundation, but it seems likely that like Nivardus he used both the Benedictine and Columbanian rules.[9] His vision of Bobbio before his travels there perhaps reflects the excited state of mind and the fervent imagination which tales of the Irish monastic movement evidently inspired in the Frankish people, and caused them to flock in droves to the Irish foundations in search of a new path towards God.

In the early days of their foundation, monasteries were often vulnerable to economic hardship and to divisiveness. Many communities disbanded and regrouped on the death of the founder who had been the focus for his or her disciples. As is well documented, guarding the reputation and person of the saint after death by writing their Lives and guarding their relics was a powerful cohesive force in the perpetuation of these potentially unstable institutions. Alert to the dangers of disintegration, saints and their hagiographers could strengthen the appeal of the monastic institution in question by emphasizing the divine recognition of the community itself and its divine guarantee of corporate salvation. St.Wandrille was in ecstasy for three days before his death. Just before he died, he addressed the monks assembled around his bed thus: "Cercius cognuscatis (sic), quod si permanseritis in sermonibus meis et custodieritis, quod ego predixi vobis, ut in unitate atque karitate seu et humilitate fundati sitis, ut inter vos nulla sit dissensio, condicio vestra manere habit in perpetuo recti, et Dominus vobis erit omnibus necessitatibus aderit." [V.Wandregiseli 18] Having just emerged from an ecstatic vision in which he was told many celestial secrets and mysteries, he evidently spoke with divine authority when he promised his monks that should they maintain and obey his pastoral direction, God would

always be with them and would help them in their times of need. Wandrille was pointing out to his disciples in his final words that following his lifetime example was their best security for salvation, and it followed that his example was most clearly exemplified in the community he had established.

In another case a similar message with a clearly pro-monastic bent was made within a vision narrative itself. Barontus only newly arrived at the monastery of St.Peter's of Saint-Cyran-en-Brenne had a dream-vision (written c.679) in which his soul was about to be claimed by two terrible demons when the archangel Raphael came to his aid bringing the dispute before St.Peter. Barontus had not led a blameless life before his entry into the monastery and the demons calculated that he should be theirs. The vision relates his progression through the various layers of the heavenly realms and also through hell, being given advice and visual instruction along the way. The importance of belonging to a well-reputed monastery is the single most powerful message of the vision.

As Barontus' soul rose over the woods surrounding the monastery, the church bell tolled for vespers and his fellow monks began to pray for him. The angel Raphael turned to the demons saying "...iam non potestis nocere ad istam animolam, dum signum sonavit super ipsam ecclesiam, quia fratres congregantur, ut orarent pro illam." [V.Baronti 5] The demons were able to resist Raphael's command, striking at Barontus' shoes. The incident was the first of many in the course of the vision narrative in which the power of the monastic institution and monastic prayer was used as a weapon against the will of the demons.

The first thing Barontus saw as he passed through the first door of heaven was an assembly of monks from his own monastery: plures vidimus ex fratribus monasterii nostri qui erant congregati praestolantes diem iudicii, ubi gaudia aeterna plenissimam recipiant. On seeing him, they asked him from which monastery he came, and he told them that he came from St.Peter's. They at once began to grieve at seeing their fellow monk in danger: gemere coeperunt et dicere quod numquam diabulus (sic) de eodem monasterio laqueare praesumpsit ullam animam. [Visio Baronti 8] According to Barontus' vision, therefore, St.Peter's of Langres had never lost a single soul to the devil. Furthermore the questioning of Barontus in the vision suggested that an individual like Barontus was identified in heaven by his monastic membership,

and that in heaven those monks from his monastery would congregate together to await the day when they would enjoy eternal bliss.

The importance of membership of a reputable monastery was made even clearer when Barontus was brought before St.Peter himself. There Barontus was made to confess that he had had three wives before entering the monastic life. Against the arguments of the demons that he should be punished for his sin, St.Peter judged that his entrance to the monastic life, and his confession and submission to penance erased his faults accrued in the world: "et sua peccata sacerdotibus est confessus et paenitentiam ex ipsa peccata aegit et insuper sua coma in meo monasterio deposuit et omnia propta Deum dereliquit et semet ipsum in servitio Christi tradidit." [Visio Baronti 12] It was a view not uncommonly promoted in hagiographic texts that entry into the monastic life, like baptism, absolved sins accumulated up to that point. St.Peter's judgement is reminiscent of St.Anthony's vision in which, while being carried aloft by certain beings, he encountered loathsome demons who in seeking to halt his progress started to list his sins from the time of his birth. His angelic guides intervened: "As for the things dating from his birth, the Lord has erased them; but as for the time since he became a monk and promised himself to God, you can take account." [10] Barontus had also sinned after entry to the monastic life however, in failing to dispose of all his goods. When brought to account on this matter, Barontus was given the opportunity to return to his monastery and dissipate his resources.

Finally there was the tour of hell. St.Peter had commanded that the angels take him back to the first door of paradise and that from there he should visit hell. One of the members of his monastery there had to be chosen for the unpleasant task. They talked among themselves and then approached a certain Framnoaldus with a proposition. In return for being escorted to hell, Barontus would have to promise that Framnoaldus' tomb would be cleaned every Sunday. [V.Baronti 14] Barontus agreed. And so at the close of the vision monastic obligations and privileges were brought once more to the fore.

The predominant message of Barontus' vision, then, was that entrance into the monastic life and submission to ecclesiastical ritual could be advanced as an important step towards salvation and that membership of a community like St.Peter's which, according to the vision, had never lost a soul to the devil, was an even better guarantee. Not all ecclesiastical

institutions could claim as much, as Barontus' vision makes clear, for in hell he saw two bishops, numerous churchmen and some foolish virgins. [V.Baronti 17] Thus for Barontus, so newly arrived in his community, feeling guilt at having held back his resources from his monastery, the vision was both a plea for personal clemency and an expression of gratitude to the community which had accepted him.

Perpetuity of the monastic foundation did not depend on the reputation of its founder alone, but must often have rested very heavily on the character and diplomacy of the second leader of the community. The second leader is often less well documented in the sources and yet he or she must often have been the most important link to the monastery's future. Election was the means by which abbots and abbesses were ideally chosen and most monastic rules included specific reference to this aspect of the community's governance. There were always cases, however, in which the incumbent holy person wanted to make sure that he or she was succeeded by someone who would govern the community in accordance with their wishes. The founder's preference might then find divine approval in a well directed vision. St.Wandrille's Life, for example, makes the succession clear. In a vision, Wandrille was told by an angel that Godo, his nephew, would be his eventual successor. [V.Wandregiseli 12] In view of the interest which this issue must have aroused, the only wonder is that not more such cases were reported.

III. Vision theory and theology in hagiography.

Merovingian hagiographic vision accounts encompass a full range of vision vocabulary: somnium, visio, revelatio, ostensio, apparitio. The use of these words is purely descriptive in the hagiographic context, however, with no apparent distinction between the terms. Certainly there is no formal categorisation based on them. Often the terms are used interchangeably, appearing within the same vision narrative.

In some cases the choice of terminology seems to be solely a matter of the hagiographer's personal preference. The author of the Vita Anstrudis, for example, consistently related that the miracle visions of Anstrudis' supplicants occurred during sleep. In common with most hagiographic accounts these sleeping experiences are faithfully recorded as that mystical sleep in which sleep suddenly oppresses and weighs down on the spirit; sopore depressa vidit in somnis Dei famulam Anstrudem, statim somno suavissimo detenta, vidit

...in somnis etc. [V.Anstrudis 24, 28, 32] The only occasion when the term visio is used in the Vita Anstrudis is in that part of the text which actually describes Anstrudis' own life (late 7th c). All references to dream-visions occur in the miracles which followed her death. It could be suggested that the vision was considered more appropriate to the saint, and the dreams more appropriate to her supplicants. Terminological usage in hagiographic literature as a whole in this period would not bear this out. The division between the two uses, I would propose, is sufficiently distinct to suggest that the change in terminology betrays a change in author. The list-like manner in which the saint's posthumous miracles are recorded suggests that they could have been a later addition to the Life. The change in vision terminology would support this view. W.Levison, who edited the Vita and treated it as a single author text, judged the Vita to have been written long after Anstrudis' death. He based his view on a passage towards the end of the text (ch.31) in which the author notes the manner in which the saint's feast day was celebrated secundum morem.[11] This passage appears in what I would suggest to be a later addition to the Life, and therefore not relevant for dating the biographic content of the Life.

In another case, the fluidity of terminology is very apparent. Baudonivia described Radegund's vision of Christ simply as a vision. Hildebert of Lavardin who essentially synthesized the two Lives of St.Radegund into a single text, reported Radegund's Christ vision as an ecstatic dream. The choice of vision terminology, then, could be arbitrary or a reflection of a particular author's own choice.

This is not to say, of course, that the difference between the possible vision states went totally unheeded. There are occasions when hagiographers inched their way towards identifying some experiential significance behind the terms. What this significance might be is never clear. A late example, the ninth century third version of the Life of St.Aldegund, related that Aldegund modo vigilans, modo per somnium, divina sibi gratia revelante, coepit multa visionum genera percipere...puella...frequentibus sanctorum angelorum visionibus, seu vigilans, seu dormiens, pascebatur and further a Domino meruit sublimari, ut non solis in somnis, aut per ecstasim frequenter, sed etiam vigilanti manifeste angelus appareret. [V.Aldegundis III.5,6] What these different forms contributed to the saint's experience of the vision is not related, if it was ever known, but the author was sensitive to the

possibility at least that there might be a difference.

Both dreams and visions are described as having been received in extasis in the seventh century. Only occasionally is the term used in conjunction with a description of the out of body experience which it signified.[12] The only text to genuinely attempt to dissect the process of ecstasy as experienced by the viewer, is the Visio Baronti, a work which was profoundly influenced by Gregory the Great's Dialogues and the apocalyptic texts behind it.

As the dispute raged over the fate of Barontus' soul, the archangel Raphael told the demons that although he would take Barontus' soul before the heavenly tribunal he would leave his spirit in his body. This is the only reference I have found in Merovingian hagiography to a distinction between the soul and the spirit. The distinction was discussed by Jerome and Augustine, but in this case a far more interesting parallel is the separation of the spirit from the soul at the time of judgement described in the Visio Pauli. And it is the light of this latter text that I accept Henschenius' rendering of spm by spiritus against Levison's spem. [13]

Barontus felt his soul leave his body, statim sensi animam meam evulsam a corpore meo, and then he saw his soul which he described thus: similitudinem de parvitatem haberet ut pullus aviculae, quando de ovo egreditur. [Visio Baronti 4] Like St.Anthony, Barontus felt his soul soar heavenward, beleagered by the demons of the air as he went. [V.Baronti 5,7; V.Antonii 28,65] And finally, returning to his body, Barontus' soul was helped along on his way by a divine wind until it re-entered his body through his mouth: inmensa Dei clementia misit ventum, qui me levavit in altum et in ictu oculi portavit me usque super ipsum tectum, ubi corpus meum iacebat motuum ...Et iterum vento flante, intravi per os meum in corpus meum.... [V.Baronti 19]

Bystanders' descriptions of the saint in ecstatic state furnished the hagiographer with another dimension to describe. The duration of the ecstatic state is noted with interest but never exceeds three days and nights. In the later middle ages lengthier durations were regularly reported, although the progression is not quite as clear as has been recently proposed.[14] In many cases ecstasy was preceded by a light illness. St.Salvius of Albi as described by Gregory of Tours had been taken by a light fever before slipping into a state which the monks considered to be that of

death. [HF VII.1] In the case of Barontus' ecstatic vision, his illness was violent, exacerbated by the demons fighting on his chest. The monks saw him struggle, crying out for his son Aglioald, and then grasping his own throat until giving in to a death-like state. It was clear to the monks, however, that he was not dead, a circumstance which was explained in the text by the fact that his spirit remained in his body even though his soul had left it. [V.Baronti 1]

Often the bystanders were witnesses to select aspects of the vision, but not to the message and meaning of the vision itself. St.Consortia was advised by an angel how she could avoid marriage, and after awaking from the dream she asked her servant if she had seen anyone talking to her. The servant replied: "Vidi...hominem incognitum, vestibus albis indutum, cuius vox tecum loquentis non motis labiis, meis auribus sonuit, sed eum nullatenus intellexi." [V.Consortiae 18] This type of corroborative testimony is often reported in hagiography but the full extent of the experience was revealed only to its intended recipient, and usually the understanding of it also. Incidental witnesses either saw the sight but couldn't hear the message, or vice versa. Only the intended visionary had full use of the senses within the orbit of the manifestation.

The interpreter of the experience, as in the earlier period, was not necessarily the vision recipient. Enigmatic visions could be referred to a cleric or holy man. St.Praeiectus's mother had a vision regarding her unborn child which she did not understand, and so she consulted her brother the archpriest Peladius as to its meaning. [Passio Praeiecti 1] In other cases, the vision message was intended for another person and only that other person would know how to interpret it. St.Anstrudis appeared in a dream to one of the nuns at Laon in the church of St.John the Baptist. She instructed the nun to tell the abbess Adalsinda that a bed (lectum) should be built on the spot where she appeared in the apparition. The nun related the vision to the abbess, who, cum audisset, intellexit, lectum illum significare velle altare. [V.Anstrudis 33] The altar was duly built. The basis of the abbess' interpretation of the bed to mean an altar was not revealed. The correspondence of bed to altar does not conform to any dream-interpretation manuals that we know. [15] Yet the reader could be sure that the dream had been interpreted correctly for in this case that which was an enigma to the vision recipient was clear to the person for whom the vision was intended.

In some cases the hagiographer included both the interpretation of the vision as the recipient at that time understood it, and at the same time provided an explanation for the benefit of the reader. Queen Balthild's earliest hagiographer explained that her vision of a ladder to heaven revealed the future reward for her many merits: ex hac revelatione patenter daretur intellegi, eo quod sublimia eius merita, patienta et humilitas, eam ad celsitudinem aeterni Regis et ad premii coronam citius exaltandam perducerent. Yet for Balthild the vision had a slightly different significance, for she believed that it presaged her death: Qua etiam ipsa domna visione comperta cognovit, se quantotius e corpore esse migraturam et illuc, ubi iam olim thesaurum obtimum reconderat, perventuram. [V.Balthildis 13] The interpretations do not conflict but Balthild's case does point to the existence of multiple layers of meaning which may have been understood but which do not usually find their way into the hagiographic literature. In almost every case there must have been a difference between what the vision meant to the recipient personally and its significance in a wider cult context, but rarely is it expressed clearly.

Although in practical terms it is rarely possible to distinguish the hagiographer's interpretation of a vision from the saint's own, the distinction should still be made. The hagiographer recorded the interpretation common at the time, but in addition might offer an explanation (explanatio) of his or her own to further clarify its significance. In those cases where the hagiographer was revising works already in written form, the process could become hermeneutical. Inspired understanding was the true key to interpretation, and it was still operated by those who occupied a respected position in religious society. Praeiectus' mother's vision was understood by her brother who is described as a sanctus Dei. The abbess at Laon who knew that the nun's vision of a bed signified an altar was also the natural adviser for any other vision received by her nuns.

The intellectual vision was not often stressed in the writings on Merovingian saints. The enriched understanding of the saint may only be hinted at. For St.Wandrille, for example, many circumstances were disclosed to him through his inward eye: plures condiciones ibidem per introspectivo oculo patefecit. [V.Wandregiseli 11] St.Aldegund of Maubeuge, whose visions will be examined at greater length below, reached a moment of illumination when like scales falling from her eyes she began to see more clearly: coepit

clarius videre. [V.Aldegundis I.5] Often the saint's insights, the divinely revealed secrets, were unexposed to view, and it was popular for the hagiographer to hint at caelestia arcana without any explanation of what these might be. St.Wandrille of Fontanelle related to the monks around his deathbed plurima misteria secreta et absconsa which were the fruits of an ecstatic vision but they are not discussed. [V.Wandregiseli 18] In many cases the hagiographer stressed that the secrets were indeed kept secret, even from the monks and nuns of the community. Finally, prophecy of one's own death or of other events indicated the saint's connection to divine knowledge, but the process is far more frequently referred to than it is explored in the literature.

Although hagiographic literature was not directed towards theological speculation, there are reminiscences in the Vitae Sanctorum of continuing concern, and continuing orthodoxy, on matters such as the dichotomy of faith and sight, and the purity required to have access to such divine favours. St.Wandrille, we are told, quisquam eum oculis corporeis non vidisset, fiducia magna habebat. [V.Wandregiseli 16] And St.Ouen's hagiographer was careful to remind his readers that it was Ouen's purity that enabled him to see God, his heart untouched by the world. [V.Audoini 8]

Certain cosmological conceptions popular among Christian and pagan philosophers and especially Stoic ideas, do find faint voice in this period. The heavens are often referred to as the regna siderea. [V.Nivardi 3; V.Columbani I.i and many others.] Christ, his saints, and the holy spirit were often thought to appear in the form of a fiery ball: sphaera flammea, globus igneus, illuminantus orbus; an association of fire or spark with the spirit which was a remnant of Stoic ideas which found a secure place in Christian usage. As was noted in the context of Gregory of Tours, linguistic patterns are probably more significant here than intentional allusion. Furthermore, interpretations of the phenomenon of fiery spheres was more haphazard than most. If the fiery orb appeared over the cell where the dying saint lay, it was usually interpreted as Christ or an angel arriving to take the soul. It could equally find an arbitrary identification in an anonymous shout from the crowd of assembled witnesses.[16]

Other traces of ancient ideas about how dreams and visions occurred do appear from time to time in the sources. The oppression of divine sleep for the purposes of communicating a dream message, is almost always referred to

in connection with a dream-vision. That heavy sleep, pregnant with divine news, often occured during the day, while the saint was engaged upon other business. As St.Nivardus of Rheims was walking in the area of Hautvillers during the day he could continue no further because divinitus somno irruente cepit opprimi. The rushing in of divine sleep, the divine possession was a feature of late antique pagan and Christian vision thinking.[17] There are exceptions, however: St.Radegund of Poitiers's Christ vision was received during a parvus sopor.[V.Rad.II.16]

Finally, it was in the seventh century that visionary tours of heaven and hell and sometimes purgatory too, attained widespread popularity. The description of the soldier's vision in Gregory's Dialogues was without a doubt the major reason for this, earlier precedents notwithstanding.[18] The experience of Barontus was clearly modeled on the Dialogues, as was the vision of Fursey.[19] Although there were precedents in the early Christian apocalypses and in the premonitory vision of Abbot Sunniulf of Randan, the dual visitation genre did not take hold in hagiographic literature until the seventh century. The earlier pattern in Franco-Gallic hagiography was to concentrate on visions of heaven alone. In these earlier texts, visions of heaven were the rewards and consolation of the holy and a foretaste of pleasures to come. The later journeys through heaven and hell served a distinct didactic function. In establishing a clearly defined polarisation of the consequences of virtue and sin, and especially in dwelling on the tortures of hell, morality in the present life could be promoted through fear. Visions which relied on the idea of a heavenly tribunal had a long history, but the consequences of an unfavourable judgement were not set out in the hagiographic texts.

Once it took hold, the hagiographic medium proved to be a powerful means of promoting such ideas. The saint was shown to be a successful intercessor. Through their visions the saint had a window on the other world, not solely as it was thought to be in purely existential terms, but also on the precise struggle and dilemma of a particular soul as it was being experienced at that very moment.

As a general rule in the sixth century, and still predominantly in the seventh, saints were recorded as having visions of heaven alone. These visions reflected the saint's spiritual status as it was at that time, and as it would be for eternity. The vision of heaven as described in hagiographic

literature can be divided into two types. The first was a pastoral heaven, like a new Eden, in the form of a delightful garden or meadow. The second was that of the heavenly city of Jerusalem. The third type was the cosmic vision of heaven.

The vision of heaven as garden was the most popular form in Merovingian hagiography, but could also be combined with the city motif. St.Sadalberga was said to have had a vision of heaven in which she was carried over a river in ecstasy, to a very delightful meadow where many different kinds of flowers and fragrances gave out their scent, and among the shining lilies and ruddy roses she saw a great crowd of children dressed in white and with wreathes on their heads. In the garden Sadalberga was approached by Bishop Ansericus of Soissons who took her to the portals of paradise where she saw God's city and the seats of the twelve apostles glowing red with gold and jewels.[20] The anonymous nun at Radegund's Holy Cross convent drank from a spring whose water shone like gold and was surrounded by grass which shone as if with jewels. [HF VI.29] The pastoral scene in the language of precious gems was an image which was also favoured in the ecclesiastical art of the time and contemplated by the saints. [21]

The vision of heaven as a city-scape was also popular.[22] St.Germanus of Grandval, at the moment of martyrdom addressed God as a Good Shepherd, and praised him. Then a voice came from the sky: "Veni, fidelis dispensator, aperti sunt tibi caeli; congaudent tibi angeli mei et perducent te in caelestem Hierusalem." [V.Germanus Grandvallensis. 12] St.Nivardus saw before his death, in his mind, the glorious city of Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem as described in the Book of Revelation, whose streets were strewn with gold that appeared like glass. In that place there was no night, and its light was the lamb and its people were God's people and he would remain with them for eternity.[23] In an early vision, Aldegund of Maubeuge saw a heavenly mansion prepared for her in God's kingdom, with seven columns with signs upon it, wafted by the fragrence of Christ.[24]

Barontus' vision of heaven was even more elaborate than Nivardus'. Rather than being focused on landscape, however, Barontus' progress through heaven was punctuated by the different categories of people he met. His journey took him through four doors until he reached St.Peter, and behind each door was a different group of the blessed.[25] Behind the first he met the members of his own monastery awaiting the day of judgement. [V.Baronti 8]

The second door of paradise led to a crowd of children dressed in white praising God in unison, and a multitude of virgins to left and right. [V.Baronti 9] The third door of paradise was like glass and within was a crowd of crowned saints in their little mansions which were gold like those described in Gregory's Dialogues, as the hagiographer notes. There Barontus saw the mansion of the monastery's present abbot Francardus being built, and the many martyrs. [V.Baronti 10] Beyond the fourth door Barontus met St.Peter and there his case was judged. [V.Baronti 11 ff.]

Barontus' vision as a tour of heaven and hell differed from those of Nivardus and Sadalberga and others like them, whose visions were scenes which reflected the saint's spiritual state at that time. Visions of hell, while known in apocalyptic literature, were practically unknown in hagiography before Gregory's Dialogues popularised the idea that the wicked or endangered souls, or their saintly relatives, could have divinely inspired visions reflecting their wretched plight.[26] The iconography of hell did not have to depend on familiarity with apocalyptic literature alone, since church paintings are known to have depicted the victorious Christ treading on the Pit.[27]

Barontus' vision of hell shared many elements with the descriptions in the Vision Pauli , Gregory's Dialogues and the Book of Revelation. The souls of the damned were chained and tortured and Barontus saw there all manner of people from murderers and perjurers to foolish virgins and prominent churchmen. Elaborations on the theme are already evident in Barontus' vision, however, for there the damned were made to sit on leaden seats (presumably hot).[28]

Conclusion.

Although not a required saintly charism, prophetic, instructional and consolationary dreams and visions were a popular means of illustrating the saint's special relationship with God. Visions foretold the greatness of the saint, directed the saint in a path of service to God, assured the saint of God's personal love and eased the passage into death. In the wake of Gregory's Dialogues saints whose duties once focused on personal salvation and teaching it to their disciples, now began in addition to address a new responsibility for the salvation of others beyond death. Sinners might, if they were fortunate, find a saintly champion to reveal to the world the

soul's plight and pray for its release. The other world, through visionary tours of hell, opened up a fresh arena for missionary work, and one particularly suited to the enclosed lifestyle.

Vision narratives in this period often reflected the dedication of the monastic community to monasticism itself as a preferred means of obtaining salvation. Membership, and obedience to the rules of a well reputed monastery was portrayed as a kind of insurance against the danger of damnation. The prayers of one's fellow monks could mitigate the harshness of the final judgement. The cinematic quality of the accounts of the journeyings to the other world lent an immediacy, a impression of an ongoing struggle and ongoing judgement, to traditional beliefs about the consequences of God's final judgement.

The monastic texts while concentrating on the failings of Christians, did little to address questions of religious orthodoxy. Even the hagiographic accounts of bishops and missionaries focused on the monastic life as the natural direction of spiritual endeavour. The memory of Arianism and the doctrinal disputes between East and West receded in the face of the Christian's own failings. The shift from urban centre to landed estates isolated the monastic community and the authors of their written records from the fray of secular life where a man might have three wives and order the death of his own children. The continuators of Gregory of Tours' History, "Fredegar" and others, no longer saw in dreams and visions God's agency in history. Even the astronomical portents so central to Gregory of Tours' work peter out very quickly in favour of dry annalistic entries. [29]

In other respects the vision accounts in hagiographic texts do not differ greatly from those related by Gregory of Tours. Dream-visions were still a powerful means of illustrating divine wishes concerning the placement of cultic and ecclesiastical sites within the landscape. They remained a means of discovering the wishes of a long dead saint, and retaining the founder saint's blessing for new projects.

From the point of view of the church, allegorical or enigmatic visionary experiences were still interpreted by someone with religious authority. As for those visions not immediately understood by a saint, the interpretation was likely to be resolved within the framework of the vision itself, with an angelic helper to stimulate the saint's heightened understanding. The use of a ritualised dialogue was one of the primary means by which this was done.

In this chapter I have sought to show how the visionary experience within hagiographic literature often conformed to a set pattern. Many of the dreams and visions described were probably little more than aids to story-telling or simply representative of the divine approval behind decisions which were made in other ways. For some saints, however, visionary experience was integral to their spiritual life and to their hagiographic claims to sanctity. I shall examine two important saints in this context.

Chapter 6. TWO CASE HISTORIES: ST.RADEGUND OF POITIERS AND ST.ALDEGUND OF MAUBEUGE

In examining visions in monastic hagiographic literature, it is useful to study how the visions fit in to the experience of the individual. To this end I have chosen to look at two case histories. The first visionary to be examined is Radegund of Poitiers, a sixth century queen of the Franks who retired from public life to found and enter a convent in Poitiers. She is the best known Merovingian queen-saint by virtue of the comparatively ample sources for her life, and the vitality of her cult, up to the present day. It is surprising, therefore, that the visions attributed to her have received so little scholarly attention.[1] The second is Aldegund of Maubeuge, a seventh century nun whose whole life was determined by her almost daily visionary experience.[2]

The choice of two female saints is not intended to suggest that male saints did not have visions which made important contributions to the development of visionary hagiographic literature. I have drawn on the visions of male saints extensively for the purpose of examining visions in the context of the saints' lives and especially the monastic movement. Radegund and Aldegund are useful cases to study because they tell us important things about how the visionary experience was treated through the hagiographic medium. In the case of Radegund's second Vita her Christ vision advanced a formula of interaction between saint and heavenly bridegroom which was to find many imitators in medieval texts on bridal mysticism. Aldegund of Maubeuge was a saint whose sanctity was almost exclusively defined in terms of her visions, at least in the earliest versions of her Life. In addition to the fertile visionary world described in her Vita, the existence of a long history of modified versions of her Life offers an opportunity to examine the way in which a saint's exceptionally well-documented visionary character competed with an opposing tendency in revisionist hagiography to pare down that which distinguished a saint from those around her, in favour of promoting what unified a saint with her saintly peers.

I. St.Radegund of Poitiers (c.521-587).

Radegund was a princess of the Thuringian royal house who was captured by Chlothar as booty of his war against the Thuringians in 531, and was

subsequently married to him.[HF III.7] At the royal palace at Athies, as she was growing up, Radegund was groomed for her future position as queen and was educated in letters. From her first Vita written by Venantius Fortunatus, it is clear that church ritual was an important element in her early years, and that this influence only intensified during her unhappy marriage.[3] After about six years of infertile marriage to Chlothar, and after the death of her younger brother, probably on her husband's orders, Radegund fled the court and was consecrated as deaconess by Medard of Noyon.[4] For about a year she lived at Saix, caring for sick women, progressing on to Tours and the protection of St.Martin's tomb on the news that her husband wished to take her back to wife. St.Germanus of Paris was able to convince Chlothar to relinquish his claims and she retired to Poitiers were she established a convent endowed by the king. In 569 the convent received a relic of the True Cross and was renamed Holy Cross, and c.573 her convent adopted Caesarius of Arles' Regula ad Virgines.[5] She lived at the convent for the remainder of her life, observing the strict claustration provided by the rule.

Two hagiographic accounts of her life survive. The first was written by her close friend Venantius Fortunatus some time after her death in 587. The second was written c.605 by a nun at her convent, Baudonivia. It is only in the second Life that Radegund's visionary experience is recorded, and so it is only Baudonivia's text which concerns us here.[6]

According to Baudonivia, Radegund had three visions. The first vision dated to the first year of her 'conversion', that is to say to her consecration to the religious life c.552. Baudonivia relates that Radegund's second vision occurred during her time at Saix, which was also in the first year after her conversion. The final vision was received by her in 586, one year before her death. Visions therefore marked the beginning of Radegund's religious career and its end. Both were important junctures of her life to be thus marked; the earliest visions consecrate her conversion to the monastic life, and the last confirms the blessedness of her life and secures her place in heaven. Baudonivia's care to secure the visions within the framework of Radegund's life suggests that for Baudonivia and her audience, the time-frame was an important element in the significance of the experiences.

Of the two visions at the beginning of her religious life at Saix, one is unexceptional in its theme. A priest named Magnus arrived at Saix

bringing to the queen relics of St.Andrew and other unspecified relics. He placed them on the altar, leaving Radegund to keep a vigil for them overnight. As she prayed she was overcome by a light sleep (parvus sopor [7]) when she heard the lord saying to her, "Know this, blessed one: not only are the relics which Magnus brought assembled here, but also those which you collected at Athies." When she opened her eyes she saw a very shiningly brilliant man (vidit virum splendidissimum) who announced this to her.[VR II.13]

Baudonivia relates this story immediately prior to her description of Radegund's initiative to acquire a relic of St.Mammas of Caesarea in Jerusalem. The vision emphasizes the importance of relic acquisition to Radegund's life and divine approval for her relic collecting. The virum splendidissimum is not clearly identified, although her prayers to God which precede the vision might suggest that it was either Christ or an angel. It is notable that Radegund was not described as seeing the splendid figure in her sleep but as she opened her eyes (unless she dreamed that she opened her eyes), but was aware of the voice in her sleep announcing the message. It is an unusual variant on the typical dream vision description in which both sight and sound are communicated within the boundaries of the dream itself.

The second vision at Saix is more sophisticated, and more reliant on traditional symbolic images. Baudonivia describes the vision as follows: ...in primo anno conversionis suae, vidit in visu navem in hominis specie, et in totis membris eius sedentes homines, se vero in eius genu sedentem; qui dixit ei: "Modo in genu sedes, adhuc in pectore meo sessionem habebis." Ostendebatur ei gratia, qua fruitura erat.[VR II.3]

This vision combines two important images which have a long history in patristic literature. The first is of a ship, often associated with Christ or the church, sailing over the stormy sea of the world and its snares. The ship protects the faithful and ensures their salvation. [8] Like the animals saved in Noah's ark from the perils of the flood, so Christians are saved by the ark of Christ and his church. Radegund finds herself inside the ship, and so is saved by her monastic profession. The other image employed here is that of the mystical body of Christ. [9] Radegund is seated at the knee of the Christ-ship, but is told that later she will be seated in the Christ-ship's chest. Radegund had found salvation from the perils of her worldly existence in her refuge in the church. Her place at the knees of the Christ-

ship undoubtedly refers to the penitential life she will lead henceforth, as she starts on her journey as a nun. A more exalted position awaits her as a reward for this penitential life-style.

This vision of the Christ-ship on the sea, can usefully be compared with another passage in Baudonivia's life which deals with the miraculous salvation of Radegund's emissaries who were in danger of shipwreck on their return to Gaul.[VR II.17] Once again a ship is at sea, this time clearly foundering. The emissaries cry out to Radegund to save them, since they are engaged on her holy business. At that moment a dove appeared to their craft in the middle of the ocean, and circled it "three times in the name of the Trinity" (tertia vice in nomine Trinitatis). One of Radegund's men, Banisaios, extended his hand upwards and three feathers fell from the dove's tail onto the water "and a great calm came over the high sea."[10] Radegund's servants had been brought back to the world of the living from the portal of death (mortis ianua).

There are a number of elements in this story which suggest that the hazardous sea journey back to Gaul, and their miraculous salvation, was later crafted and interpreted in the light of the biblical story of Noah and the ark. First there is the storm itself which lasted forty days and forty nights, like the rain that fed the flood.[Gen 7.4,12] Then there is the story of the dove. Just as the dove brought to the ark evidence of divine clemency in the receding flood, so did the dove appear to the beleaguered ship to calm the sea and bring them safely to land.[11] The dove is also the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and its circling, we are told, was in the name of the Trinity, "which the saint always loved in her heart." But there is another aspect of the Noah story which also takes us back to Radegund's vision of the Christ-ship on the sea. That is the fact that Noah's ark was also interpreted as Christ's body in patristic exegetical writings.[12] Quodvultdeus' commentary on the seventh promise of book one of his Liber Promissionem brings together all the elements in Baudonivia's two accounts.[13] The passage concerns the Flood, and the ark which signifies the church. The Word of God (i.e. Christ) suspensus in cruce nostrum omne pretium ex suo latere, tamquam per ostium arcae, pretiosum sanguinem fuderit: ex quo columba ecclesia tanto sanguine dotata processit. Per quod et corvuus haereticus exiens humani cadaveris cupiditate naufragus ad arcam ecclesiam redire noluit. Christ is like the ark, and from the wound in his side issues

the blood of salvation, just as from the port of the ark the dove issued forth and returned (unlike the heretical crow which did not). In Quodvultdeus' passage we encounter all the motifs mentioned; the ship, the swelling sea, the redemptive figure of Christ in the form of an ark, and finally the significance of the dove. It would be too much to suggest that Baudonivia was familiar with Quodvultdeus' commentary in particular, but she was certainly aware of the symbolic elements in her tale.[14]

In conclusion it should be noted that Radegund's vision of the Christ-ship defines an image of spiritual progress which is different from the more familiar image of cosmic ascent. Radegund is advised of the level of her spiritual attainment on entering the religious life, and her need for penitence, but there is the promise of a much more exalted recognition should she continue on her course. The scene is thus set for Radegund's final vision, in which this promise is fulfilled.

Radegund's final vision of Christ as related by Baudonivia must surely be given a special place in the history of brautmystik. This place must reflect both the important elements within the vision which are developed in the narrative, and the considerable influence of both the Lives of Radegund on later hagiographic literature.

Baudonivia describes the vision: Ante annum transitus sui, vidit in visu locum sibi paratum. Venit ad eam iuvenis praedives, pulcherrimus, et quasi iuvenilem habens aetatem, qui suavi tactu blandoque conloquio dum cum ea loqueretur, illa de se zelans, blandiciam ipsam respuebat. Qui dixit ei: "Quid me desiderio accensa cum tantis lacrimis rogas, gemens requiris, fusis precibus poscis, pro me tanto cruciatu affligis, qui semper tibi assisto? Tu, gemma preciosa, noveris, te in diademate capitis mei primam esse gemmam." Nulli dubium est, quod ipse eam visitavit, cui se tota devotione tradidit vivens in corpore, et gloriam, qua fruitura erat, ei ostendit. [VR II.20]

There are significant features in this Christ vision. First there is the visual information on his external appearance presented: the youth of the Christ figure, his beauty, and his clothing. How did this appearance fit in to the late antique theological and hagiographic tradition, and what did Baudonivia's description intend to convey to the reader in terms of Christ's persona and Radegund's relationship to him?

Radegund's Christ is a beautiful and youthful figure, iuvenis praedives, pulcherrimus, et quasi iuvenilem habens aetatem. This description is fully

in keeping with a longstanding tradition which described Christ in the language of physical beauty. Christ was the spiritual bridegroom yearned for by the saints and by the church: "My beloved is all radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand... His speech is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."[Song of Songs 5.10, 5.16] Christ embodied all virtues, was the summation of all essence, life, wisdom, light and beauty; the summum bonum.

Alongside this aesthetic of Christ's beauty ran a counter tradition which emphasized the ugliness of Christ.[15] In Isaiah Christian writers discovered the "Man of Sorrows" whose appearance was "marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men."[Is 52,14] As in the case of prophets, and not a few saints, the embodiment of the conflict between the ways of God and the ways of the world, set up a figure to be rejected by his own generation. This view emphasized Christ's alienation from the aesthetic principles of the world: he had "no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." [Is 53.2]

In the absence of concrete documentation on Christ's physical appearance, and the ambiguity in Old Testament texts which were believed to foreshadow Christ's ministry, Christ's appearance was representative of, and determined by prevailing theological views. Radegund's Christ-vision thereby conformed to a particular tradition regarding the appearance of Christ, and one which predominates in the vision accounts of the Merovingian period as well as in the art of the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. [16]

In the Gallic context there is an interesting aspect to this choice of Christological representation. Christ visions are mentioned in early Gallic hagiographic literature, but they are often mentioned fleetingly and without specific information. The most famous Gallic Christ visions are those described in Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini, which adhered strongly to the tradition expressed in Isaiah.

Christ appeared to St.Martin on one occasion. At Amiens Christ appeared to Martin in the guise of the beggar with whom Martin had shared his cloak.[V.Mart 3] However, Martin was also visited in his cell by a vision which only purported to be Christ. A figure swathed in bright light appeared to him, gloriously attired: ...veste etiam regia indutus, diademate ex gemmis

auroque redimitus, calceis auro inlitis, sereno ore, laeta facie...[ibid. 24] Martin is at first silent in front of the apparition, but then prompted by the Holy Spirit to discern the true nature of the apparition, he countered, "The Lord Jesus did not foretell that he would come clothed in purple, and with a shining diadem; I shall not believe Christ has come unless he comes in the dress and appearance of his passion, showing the marks of the cross."[17] Thus Martin exposed the vision for what it was while roundly condemning the regal form in which the vision came. Christ would come bearing the signs of his humility, not in pomp and pride.

Radegund's Christ vision, however, is in the very image of the demonic figure which Martin rejected so strenuously. Christ is described there as being praedives, and tells Radegund that she will be the most precious jewel in his crown (diademate). The reversal is particularly striking insofar as the Life of St.Martin was the most influential Gallic Vita of the period, and was itself the model for the first V.Radegundis. One might ask how Radegund could be shown putting her trust in a vision the form of which St.Martin had condemned. But it is also important to question the nature of St.Martin's condemnation. Was it universal, or confined to that particular occasion?

It seems clear from Severus' account that St.Martin was reacting only to the particular vision. St.Martin justifies his rejection of the vision based on the outward dress and appearance of the figure, but it is not the external appearance which informs Martin; his powers of discernment come to him through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Martin needs the power of discernment precisely because the vision conforms to an accepted depiction of Christ. As Severus informs us, the vision had the appearance of anything but the devil (...ut nihil minus quam diabolus putaretur).[V.Mart 24] The V.Martini did not therefore dismiss one conception of the physical appearance of Christ in favour of another, but St.Martin is seen to use one tradition against another in his confrontation with the apparition.

Beauty as an attribute of divinity and hence of sanctity pervades Gallic and Merovingian hagiographic literature, even when a saint follows St.Martin in being unkempt in appearance. A certain woman who did not receive the dishevelled pilgrim Sigiramnus into her home later regretted her decision, as she noted to her husband, for although his clothes were contemptible, "facies tamen eius ac vultus ceu facies angeli resplendebat exterius." [V.Sigiramni abb. Long. 25] The authors of the second Life of Caesarius of Arles recalled

that just as his life was holy, so was his appearance pure and sweet, Resplendat cum anima vultus eius...ut non inmerito extrinsecus appararet, quod intrinsecus gerebatur.[V.Caes II.35] Such examples are overwhelmingly numerous, and they reflect the belief that purity and beauty are indivisible even at a superficial level.[18]

Perhaps one of the most intriguing attributes of Radegund's Christ is Baudonivia's explicit statement regarding his manly youth: iuvenis...quasi iuvenilem habens aetatem. The intention appears to be to describe a Christ figure, beautiful with the almost feminine beauty of youth.[19] It is a very different image from that common in the Eastern and Western Mediterranean art of the period. Christ is usually depicted in paintings, mosaics, coins and funeral art as the mature bearded Christ, as teacher and King of Heaven. Alternatively he is depicted as a child on his mother's knee.[20] The youthful age of the Christ vision should be seen in the context of the vision itself, and this brings us to the particular dynamics of Radegund's vision. What is Christ's rôle in the vision and how was it appropriate to Radegund's situation?

Radegund's Christ vision came to her as a bridegroom. He approached her speaking softly and gently caressing her. Radegund first reaction was one of modesty; she rejected the overtures of the apparition which she took for blandicia.[21] Her actions acknowledged the potential of sin from giving into the demands of the apparition too readily. Christ then identifies himself more clearly, gently chiding her in husbandly manner for her many tears: "Quid me desiderio accensa cum tantis lacrimis rogas, gemens requiris, fusis precibus poscis, pro me tanto cruciatu affligis, qui semper tibi assisto?" He then tells her of her very special place: "Tu, gemma preciosa, noveris, te in diademate capitis mei primam esse gemmam." Her place as the finest jewel in his crown refers back to her earlier vision of the Christ-boat in which she sat at his knees but was promised a better place. Although in this case Radegund's place is said to be in Christ's crown, Christ's amorous manner, caressing her and talking gently to her, leaves one in no doubt that his earlier promise had been fulfilled. The second Christ vision therefore complements the first, for although Christ is present in person, he refers also to his body in its figurative and mystical form.

Radegund's experience of Christ through this vision was one of unparalleled intimacy. It was an experience very different from most earlier

visions in which Christ or God was represented as being distant figure, surrounded by ranks of angels, awesome and shielded from view. In Saturus' vision in the Passio SS Perpetuae et Felicitatis Christ caresses their faces, but he is still a distant figure. By contrast with such visions, there is almost a mundanity in the cosy little scene in Radegund's cell. Christ's visitation is a private assurance of love for Radegund herself, hardly cataclysmic and hardly an event of historic importance, but nearer to the desire of the ascetic than a more flamboyant supernatural experience. As she accepts Christ for who he is, Radegund's modesty must vanish in the warmth of her spiritual husband's presence, and his caresses now fall within the permitted scope of their intimacy.

Returning to the youthful and beautiful form in which Christ appeared, the appropriate nature of this particular manifestation for such an intimate scene can be appreciated. It would not have been becoming for Christ to appear unkempt when he came as a bridegroom. Radegund was also a queen who had given up her station in life and her royal husband to be devoted to her spiritual husband. It was only fitting that her spiritual husband should come in the form of a king.

How did Radegund's visions fit into her personal history and how did they serve her spiritual development? What significance did this have for the monastic community which strove to perpetuate her memory?

As far as Radegund's life story is concerned, the visions confirmed the decision she had taken to leave the court, abandon her husband against the laws of the church, embrace the religious life without his permission, and thwart the king's authority in favour of divine authority. Both hagiographers of St.Radegund were sensitive to this issue. Both stressed her dedication and fidelity to her spiritual husband Christ rather than to her earthly husband (plus participate Christo, quam sociata coniugio).[V.Rad I.3] Radegund's first hagiographer Fortunatus took particular care to justify her actions, which he did by adjusting the focus away from her infidelity to her social obligations to focus on her fulfillment of her spiritual ones. In Fortunatus' work she is shown trying to escape her nuptials, and even when forced into marriage is shown to remain aloof from normal married life. At the royal palace at Athies she gathered together sick women, caring for them and feeding them. She would excuse herself from the dinner table to sing psalms and give food to the poor. She would leave the marriage-bed to pray,

to the point where Chlothar was told that he had a nun rather than a queen as his wife, de qua regi dicebatur, habere se potius iugalem monacham quam reginam. [V.Rad I.5] When Radegund finally leaves court it is as if her earthly marriage was but a brief interlude in a life of continuous religious devotion. Radegund's unilateral decision to dissolve her marriage and seek consecration to the religious life was thus placed in a favourable light. Writing at a slightly later date, Baudonivia was able to circumvent the issue by claiming that Radegund initially assumed the religious life with her husband's full permission [V.Rad II.3] and explained that it was the king who, at a later date, changed his mind and set off in pursuit of her.[V.Rad II.4] To these modifications, Baudonivia was able to add divine approval of the queen's move through the use of visions. Radegund's vision of the Christ-ship occurred after Radegund's initial removal from court, but before Chlothar's attempt to regain her. The queen's first Christ vision was designed to show that her decision to enter the religious life was divinely intended. The second was then a confirmation that she was more truly married to Christ than she had been to her husband.

For Radegund's monastic community, the visions had a clear message. Baudonivia placed the visions at the beginning of Radegund's dedication to God and at the end of her monastic career, thereby defining the boundaries of her consecrated life. The value of the consecrated life needed particular promotion after the revolt at the convent two years after Radegund's death. The scandalous and licentious behaviour of some of the nuns broke who their vow of claustration and consorted with vagabonds, was an unfortunate sequel to the fine beginnings of the saint's foundation.[22] For the monastic community for whom the Vita was intended, Radegund's visions underscored the importance of the monastic life to salvation, and as a foil to the criticsms leveled at her during the disturbances, the visions emphasized her own special status within that community.

As I have shown, Baudonivia's vision descriptions are carefully aligned with the exegetical image associations prevalent in Christian writings. Beyond these, however, Baudonivia's narratives do show more immediate influences, culled from more recent literature which we know to have been available to her, and with which Radegund herself was probably familiar.

First I will look at a single passage which has been identified to date as having inspired certain characteristics of her Christ-vision. Then I

shall turn to some of my own.

In the Vita Iuliani written by Gregory of Tours it is recorded that a paralysed woman named Fedamia had a vision of St.Julian of Brioude and was cured. A recent historian has noted the similarities between the episode described there, the vision of an anonymous nun at Ste.Croix and Radegund's vision of Christ.[23] The noteworthy part of Fedamia's story is the description which she gives of the apparition who is identified with St.Julian. Dicebat, eum statura esse procerum, veste nitidum, elegantia eximium, vultu hilarem, flava caesariae, inmixtis canis, incessu expeditum, voce liberum, allocutione blandissimum, candoremque cutis illius ultra lilii nitorem fulgere, ita ut de multis milibus hominum, quae saepe vidisset, nullum similem conspicaret.[V.Iul 9] De Nie remarks on the visions' common elements of the idealised spiritual bridegroom, his manly refinement and kindness which brings the visionary to her "inner centre" which is "the essence of all bridal mysticism."[24]

Just as important, however, is the noble quality of this spiritual ideal. The prominence of the noble in the Romano-Gallic and Merovingian saintly ideal need not be repeated here; the literature on this subject is extensive.[25] Nevertheless, in reference to these visions, it is interesting to note how the noble manly ideal described here is consistent with both secular concepts of beauty and with the ideal of feminine beauty. The proposed bride for St.Hilary of Poitiers was a noblewoman of exceptional beauty as described by Venantius Fortunatus: cuius nobilitas caelos ascenderet, pulchritudo rosarum et lilii comparationem praecederet...sapientia incomprehensibilis emineret, dulcedo favi mella postponeret, pudicitia incontaminata persisteret, odor suavitate flagraret, thesauri sine defectione constarent." [VF V.Hilarii 19] This could be the description of a saint, and a male saint to boot. Hilary himself is described by Fortunatus as a iuvenis nobilissimus praedives pulcherrimus. [V.Hilarii 18] The inspiration for the physical appearance of Radegund's vision, and for Baudonivia's description is not necessarily to be found in any one source, but rather draws on the androgenous ideals of noble beauty prevalent in the literature of the time.

The vision of an anonymous nun at the Holy Cross convent as described by Gregory of Tours in his Historia Francorum provides an obvious Frankish precedent for the connubial relationship between Christ and the visionary.

Although Christ does not make a personal appearance in the vision, he sends a gift to the nun of a "queenly robe" covered with light, gold and jewels. "It is your husband who sends you this gift." [HF VI.29] The nun was so affected by her experience that she asked to be walled up inside her cell. Her request was granted and Radegund led her to the cell by the hand. Another nun, Disciola, who was the niece of the prominent visionary St.Salvius of Albi, was visited three times by the Archangel Michael on the day of her death. The nuns at Holy Cross convent were evidently accustomed to the idea of celestial visions. What was special about the monastic atmosphere at this convent which explains the prominence of such accounts from this convent?

About the year 573, Radegund adopted Caesarius of Arles' Regula ad Virgines for her convent. Caesarius had written the rule as a guide for his sister Caesaria's convent at St.Jean, Arles. Its prologue gives clear expression to the language of bridal mysticism: Iugiter in monasterii cellula residentes visitationem Filii Dei assiduis orationibus implorate, ut postea cum fiducia possuis dicere "Invenimus quem quaesivit anima nostra" ... orante pro me sanctimonia vestra, ut inter pretiosissimas Ecclesiae gemmas micantem favor divinus et praesentibus repleat bonis, et dignum reddat aeternis.[26] The importance of these words is clear when one considers that the convent's rule would be the single most familiar text to the nuns apart from the Bible. Not that Caesarius expected or encouraged the nuns to expect visions, but his insistence that they fix their gaze on a connubial image of Christ during contemplation, must be considered a contributory influence on the currency of these ideas at the convent. No visions of Christ to women in this period reflect the image of Christ crucified, even though artistically this representation was beginning to take hold.

Finally, Baudonivia's hagiographic methodology which relied heavily on piecing together borrowed phrases from earlier hagiographic writings, allows us to trace her own devotional reading and its influence on her description of the visions. We have already noted Fortunatus' description of Hilary of Poitiers as a iuvenis nobilissimus praedives pulcherrimus which is very close to Baudonivia's description of Christ. (The rest of Baudonivia's work shows similar reminiscences from Fortunatus' Life of Hilary of Poitiers.) Baudonivia was also very impressed by Gregory of Tours' work. St.Julian's allocutione blandissimum has already been noted. Even closer to Baudonivia's description than Fedamia's vision is Gregory of Tours' description of Brachio

qui erat suavis colloquio et blandus affectu. [Vitae Patrum XII.3] This example alerts us to look beyond other vision narratives for direct influence on the vision experience described; often, inspiration for ideas and phrasing came from material not connected with the subject in hand.

There is interest and value in seeking out verbal reminiscences of these and other vision narratives, as long as it does not detract from what is positive and new in the material. Intense verbal borrowings are endemic to hagiographic writing in this period and served a valuable purpose. Rather in the manner of footnotes today, verbal reminiscences stimulated cross-referencing across the literary corpus, setting up associations between saints and their models of sanctity. Baudonivia's borrowings were as blatant as any, but that should not blind us to the importance of her vision narratives in exploring the saint's relationship with God. The level of personal intimacy in Radegund's Christ vision has a freshness and creativeness which transcends its sources.

II. St.Aldegund of Maubeuge (c.635-c.684).

The complexion of Frankish monasticism was very different in the seventh century from what it had been in the sixth. St.Radegund had been a pioneer in the female monastic movement within the Frankish orbit. Her convent at Poitiers made the monastic vocation for women popular and respectable for the Frankish nobility. Her royal status and her introduction of the strict claustration which was a feature of the foundation of Caesarius of Arles undoubtedly helped in achieving this end. Aquitaine was also the place to be in the sixth century. Poitiers being fairly close to Tours and to St.Martin's tomb there, placed Radegund's foundation at the geographical centre of Gallic spirituality.

The seventh century saw the blossoming of the monastic movement among the Frankish nobility, creating pioneers of a different type.[27] Columbanus and other Irish missionaries infused the Frankish church and people with a new ascetic vigour, and their influence was felt both directly in their recruitment of Frankish nobles to their own monastic foundations, and indirectly in the counter initiative from the Gallo-Frankish clergy. Unprecedented numbers of nobles, court officials, and their families founded, endowed and embraced the ascetic life during these years, but the focus of their endeavours was no longer the Touraine. The most important foundations

of the seventh century were concentrated geographically around the Neustrian court at Paris and on the vast estates of Austrasia in southern Belgium. Instead of joining distant communities, albeit royal ones, the landed nobility established monasteries and convents on their own estates. Rather than seeing their lands alienated through the marriage of daughters, families kept their patrimonies within the family, adding a spiritual dimension to their economic and political power.

Aldegund, and the experience of her family, was in many ways typical of this ascetic movement among the nobility.[28] Two of her uncles held important offices at the court of Dagobert I (629-39); Gundelandus and Landeric were king's warriors (bellatores) and both became mayors of the palace.[29] Aldegund's father Waldebert had been a domesticus at Chlothar II's court but retired to devote the remainder of his life to the religious life.[30] Aldegund's elder sister Waldetrude married a nobleman named Vicentius Madelgarius, and both soon established and headed monastic communities of their own, Waldetrude's at Mons (Altus Mons) and Castrilocus (castrorum locus), her husband retiring to Hautmont and, according to his later Vita, founding Soignies. Aldegund, avoided marriage altogether, but not without first having to overcome some pressure from her mother.[31] She founded a convent at Maubeuge (coenobium Malbodiense) and after the death of her parents, congregated twelve nuns at the site of their tomb, at their villa Cousolre (Curtissolra).[32] Aldegund was herself buried there with her parents and sister until her relics were translated to the convent of Maubeuge, in the ninth century. Aldegund and Waldetrude maintained a close relationship from within their convents, visiting each other periodically. At least one, if not more of Waldetrude's daughters was educated at Maubeuge under Aldegund's care.[33]

Beyond the external conventionality of her monastic milieu, Aldegund was an extraordinary saint. There is nothing conventional in her frequent visions, nor in the apparent fidelity and attention to detail with which they were recorded. Her visionary experience was clearly an important element in her spiritual reputation. Moreover, her visions were not confined to her personal spiritual maturation. They also spoke to her on issues of wider ecclesiastical interest, claiming for her an authority in external affairs which was unusual for female visionaries in this period, or in any other period. Simply put, Aldegund is the most important female visionary of the

Merovingian age to be recorded in the hagiographic literature. And so although it is often difficult to penetrate the hagiographic membranes which veil her experiences from us, in Aldegund's case it is a worthwhile and rewarding endeavour. The complexities of the hagiographic record can, furthermore, add insight into the place of the visionary experience within the saintly ideal of successive generations.

I shall examine Aldegund's visions in four stages. The first of these concerns the visions as they related to her own spiritual life. The second will examine the operation of the visionary experiences in the context of the vision theories outlined in previous chapters. The third will consider the significance of her experiences for the church and for her own monastic community. Finally I shall trace the history of the hagiographic literature on St.Aldegund, and consider the place of vision narratives in hagiographic literature as a whole.[34]

i. Visions and personal spiritual maturation.

Aldegund's visions began early in life, at her parents' house. The early visions centred on the importance of her eschewing marriage for the consecrated life. Her mother Bertilia was opposed to her designs and put pressure on her to accept a husband. Meanwhile her sister Waldetrude supported her resolve against that of her mother. In this atmosphere of personal and familial tension the youthful Aldegund's visions cut through the objections by signalling the divine imperative behind her wishes.

Her early visions concentrated on the heavenly rewards of a life of virginity. So, for example, in a vision she heard that she would be housed in riches. Not understanding the meaning of the vision at first, she had another vision in which she saw a mansion with seven columns ornamented with images and steeped in Christ's sweet odour.[35] In another vision she heard an angelic voice telling her "You will have no husband other than the Lord Christ." [36] Then in a vision she saw Christ in the form of a very beautiful boy offering her a precious robe, with a palm in one hand and in the other a crown of woven gold and jewels, not made by human hands but shaped by God alone.[37]

These visions are very explicit in their focus; at this time of decision Aldegund must not vacillate, but take only Christ as her husband. These visions were a spiritual strength to her at a time when her corporeal

defences were not strong (presumably on account of her youth). [38] For whosoever sets out firm in faith and perseveres in charity, her second hagiographer maintains, begins to contemplate greater things.

Most of Aldegund's later visions maintained the focus of her earlier experiences on her interior life. Again and again she was assured of her place in heaven if she persevered on her chosen path. Like the early visions, the later visions continued the theme of her heavenly rewards, assuring her that her name was written in the book of life, even in the face of demonic temptations.[39] Her last visions comforted her with the promise of her union with the heavenly bridegroom, advising her of her imminent death.

Throughout her life she received her visions with great spiritual emotion. On being comforted by an angel after her temptation by the devil she sang psalms continuously with tears of joy. She prayed to God saying that willingly she would sacrifice to him and acknowledge his name. When would he come to her? [V.Ald I.8] Every day, we are told, she strove for and claimed the victory in the spiritual race, every day she prayed, usually alone, and fasted. [V.Ald I.10,6,16]

There is such uniformity in the personal vision messages that excepting the order in which they are presentd and later allusions to her imminent death, it is difficult to distinguish those which were early and those which were late. With a few but important exceptions, Aldegund's visions were for herself alone, sketching a lonely inner landscape of personal desires and fears and her emotional desire for these experiences reveal a need for constant reassurance and consolation. Yet at the same time her visions teemed with spiritual figures, and through it all she had the constant companionship of the angel of the Lord.

Visions of God's Angel.

The angelus Domini was perhaps the most familiar figure to appear in visions in hagiographic literature. When a visionary figure was not otherwise identified but appeared bathed in light, he was generally considered to be an angel. It was the angel who conveyed the divine will and through whose agency visions themselves were often thought to be manifested. On the whole, however, accounts of angelic visions do not attempt to establish a connection in the identity of the angel across the various

experiences. One of the striking features of Aldegund's visionary life, however, is that much of it was communicated by a single angel who acted as her guide through much of what she experienced.

The angel appeared to Aldegund many times, answering her questions and explaining her visions with spiritualia verba. [V.Ald I.6] He consoled her after her temptation by the devil and exhorted her to remain a virgin. [V.Ald I.8] He explained to her that the Holy Spirit had come upon her in the form of the rays of the sun and moon. Then as the angel held out to her her bridal clothes Aldegund thought ask him his name, and he replied "My name is glorious." [V.Ald I.13] Finally he appeared to her to tell her that she would soon receive her heavenly rewards. [V.Ald I.16] From the beginning of her visionary experiences to her death the angel served as her spiritual eyes on the spiritual world. The second version of Aldegund's Life made the connection of identity even clearer. The author noted that Aldegund asked the angel his name out of sheer familiarity with him. [40] Again and again, he writes, the angel of the Lord appeared to her advising her on heavenly things. [V.Ald II.9] And finally it was the angel who informed her of many things concerning certain clerics. [V.Ald II.9]

For Aldegund, then, the angel was her most constant visionary companion, exhorting her, consoling her, informing her. Aldegund's visions of other figures were not always very clear to her, for instance, at first she thought her vision of Christ was a vision of an angel. [V.Ald I.7] The visions might come in symbolic form, such as the vision of the Holy Spirit, and this too would need deciphering. But the angel appeared always in recognizable form, was with her as she experienced her other visions, and was her medium and teacher through whom she could understand them. The angel was Aldegund's indispensable guide to her visionary world.

Visions of Christ.

The night after Aldegund was warned by the angel to take no other husband but Christ, she had a vision on returning from Matins. In it she was dressed in a very precious robe, unlike any earthly garb, standing in the presence of Christ in the form of a young and beautiful boy. He told her that the garment which He would give her would shine like the sun and the moon in His kingdom. After speaking with the angel who identified the vision as Christ, Aldegund saw Christ again holding in his hands a palm and a crown

made of gold and gems woven in heaven by God. [V.Ald I.7]

The youthful Christ vision here described bears obvious parallels with St.Radegund's vision, and the precious robe given to Aldegund reminds us of the vision of an anonymous nun at Radegund's convent.[G of T. HF VI.29] The comparison of the robe's brilliance with the sun and the moon reminds us of Aldegund's vision of the Holy Spirit as she prayed at her window.[41] The Spirit came upon her in the form of the rays of the sun and moon, spiritus sanctus per insertas fenestras radios ad similitudinem solis et lunae emittebat super eam, the sun's rays representing Christ, and those of the moon the rewards of the righteous. [V.Ald I.11] The identification of Christ with the sun, was of course a very ancient one. [42] The moon's gentler light served as the sun's paler companion, a fitting image for redeemed humanity.

It is indicative of Aldegund's type of visionary experience that despite her seemingly constant communication with the divine will, she saw Christ only in one vision (although apparently twice within the same vision). Yet for Aldegund, her connubial relationship to Christ was ever to the forefront of her experiences. Again and again through intermediaries she was reminded of her special status, of her place reserved for her in heaven. Her visions are crowded places, full of new sights, sounds and fragrances. She saw her heavenly mansion, was visited by the angel, by a young girl sent to her by the Virgin Mary, by the Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter and the devil. Even her vision of Christ was interrupted by the angel making sure that she understood who it was that she saw. When he appeared to her, Christ came bearing his cosmic appurtenances. In this Aldegund's visions were very different from Radegund's Christ vision which was by constrast a very private affair, very confined in its reach, and very homely. Yet insofar as the visions spoke to the inner life of the saint alone and not to the wider community, they were also very similar.

Visions of the Devil.

Saintly decisions to lead a life devoted to God were generally depicted as arousing the particular fury of the devil and his minions. Aldegund's earliest hagiographer noted that among her early visions, Aldegund had a confrontation with the devil, a confrontation repeated by her second hagiographer with a different slant.

The first hagiographer related a confrontation which is typical of early Christian hagiography; the malevolent devil taunts the stalwart Christian. The devil's frustration and powerlessness as depicted in the V.Antonii and echoed in hagiographic literature drove him to try to tempt the saints with carnal temptations, to pelt them with stones and blast them with an infernal din, to frighten them with gruesome phantoms, and to deceive them in cunning guises. [43] In such confrontations, saints prevailed over the devil by relying on prayer and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. St.Anthony had taught his followers that the demons need not be feared if they confronted them with faith, and it was in confrontation that their fear was overcome. Aldegund saw the devil in the form of a rapacious wolf, roaring like a lion, gnashing his teeth; it is a description very close to that recorded in the V.Antonii. [44] The confrontation which ensues is along traditional lines. The devil impudently complained that the kingdom he had lost would be given to Aldegund. "I hate your virginity very much, and I tried to snatch it away from you, but to no avail." But Aldegund, lashed back angrily at him saying that the Lord had cast him down at his feet, and now he rages at God's image, mankind. With immense energy and authority she concluded her tirade: "Apostata, praecipio tibi in nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui te exsuperato in caelis triumphat cum Patre, ad inferni claustra descendere." [V.Ald I.8] In a typical manner the devil was said to vanish in confusion.

In contrast to this classic confrontation scene, which is also an exorcism, Aldegund's second hagiographer depicted a gentler visionary encounter. Aldegund was shown the devil in a vision, who was very sad. She asked him with concern (sollicite requisivit) why he was so stubbornly against the human race, and what profit it was to him that he should take so many thousands down to hell with him. He spitefully replied that he was envious of the sons of Adam who took his place in heaven while he and his accomplices were ejected. The hagiographer's use of the word 'concern' here indicates clearly what otherwise might not be clear from the dialogue alone, and that is the lack of aggression. Aldegund's concern was evinced in two ways. In the first place her concern was a response to the devil's sadness. In this she showed love and compassion, and a desire to comprehend the psychology of evil, to plumb the depths of the devil's antagonism. Her concern is thus directed towards the devil and his miserable plight. Her concern was also directed towards herself and the human race as is clear in

the substance of her question; the devil threatens their salvation. Unfortunately the scene has no resolution except in its reiteration of the traditional explanation for the cause of the devil's malice. Nevertheless the saint's approach is important in its focus on compassion.

The contrast between the two early versions of this vision reflect alternative faces of the female saintly ideal. Aldegund's righteous fury and her active denunciation of the devil conforms to the traditional confrontation between the ascetic and his tempter.[45] It is a duel between two individuals and a test of their wills, with Aldegund's virginity the chosen battlefield. The second brings Aldegund's compassionate qualities to bear on the source of evil, and the confrontation centres on the universal theme of good versus evil, with mankind caught between salvation and damnation. The confrontation is no longer a test of individual's will but rather a theological excursus on a cosmic theme.

The distance between these two interpretations is not that of time. St.Anthony had also encountered a forlorn, questioning devil.[V.Antonii 41] Nor is it the product of conflicting ideals of female sanctity. Both the virago motif and the compassionate female motif insofar as they were ever exclusionary categories, coexisted within the hagiographic literature in the Merovingian period (witness the ongoing debate on the types of sanctity portrayed in the Life of St.Radegund) although it is possible too that the latter interpretation was more favourable to the spiritual climate of the ninth century when it was produced. [46]

The devil also appeared to Aldegund in connection with her severe illness. After a night of fever and great thirst she saw the devil who admitted that he was constrained in his activities by the threats of angels for daring to impose the illness on her after having to beat a shame-faced retreat from her so many times already. In the first Life the devil's role in Aldegund's sickness is permitted by God so that she would be tested like gold in a furnace. The devil is powerless against her however, since she has angelic help. In the second also, her illness and encounter with the devil is described, but instead of relying on supernatural aid, the no longer compassionate Aldegund valiantly defies the devil. In the second Life too the devil's taunts are more personal; Aldegund's life will be a hard and narrow road, he declares.

Confrontations with the devil were thus demonstrated to be an important

part of Aldegund's life. They both tested her resolve and they indicated to the reader the battle ground for the defiance of evil: virginity and the consecrated life.

ii. Theoretical aspects of Aldegund's visions.

In view of the fact that the earliest extant manuscript of the Vita Aldegundis dates to two hundred years after her death, it would be difficult to argue that through it we can approach Aldegund's own expression and understanding of her visions. The ninth century manuscript does retain much of its original Merovingian orthography, however, and the text claims to use the written description of her visions compiled by abbot Sobinus of Nivelles. As I will argue further on, I believe that the vision texts probably underwent less intrusive editorial change than other parts of the Vita.

Aldegund's experiences are all described as visions or apparitions, usually occurring during times of prayer or fast, with the exception of her vision of St.Amandus which she received in a sleeping state. Most visions were direct messages rather than spiritual representations of reality. The messages were delivered by trusted figures, such as the pale-faced messenger girl from the Virgin Mary, an angel standing mid-air, or St.Peter approaching her on the road. Most were received at night during or after the morning office. [V.Ald I.7,13]

In one case it is clear that an ecstatic state is being described: Aldegund as if raised from the earth saw a man (angel) standing next to her. [V.Ald I.6] The term "ecstasy" is not used in the first Vita. By contrast the term or equivalents are more often used to describe different visionary events in the second Life: there Aldegund saw early visions quasi in sublime raperetur, and Waldetrude was in ecstasi rapta when she saw someone in her dream-vision approach from heaven to reveal matters concerning Aldegund. In neither versions of the Life do the visions described in these terms differ significantly from those not so described. Aldegund saw Christ and the Virgin Mary's messenger girl without ecstasy being specified as the means to her vision.

In a number of cases visionary experience is signalled as being different in quality from 'reality.' In the first version of the Life Aldegund saw herself quasi elevata a terra.[V.Ald I.5] The second Vita uses the phrase more often. Aldegund was shown a vision "as if" Amandus was going

to heaven. Aldegund also saw an orb of fire coming "as it were" from heaven. [V.Ald II.8,12] Aldegund's hagiographer wanted to suggest that her vision of Amandus was a true representation of a spiritual but not material reality. The use of quasi must surely be read in terms of a traditional vocabulary denoting visionary experience rather than an attempt to qualify the experience.[47]

If it is not always easy to determine at what point the vision narrative reflects the experience of the saint rather than the interpretation or 'clarification' of the hagiographer, there are indications in the narrative that a process of coming to terms with the vision experience was explored at the time they occurred.

In her youth Aldegund had problems understanding her visions. Her first recorded vision was of a great riches, but she did not understand its meaning. Her hagiographer attributed her interpretative difficulties to the fact that she was not yet accustomed to visions. Cuius visionis ostensionem insolitam mens puellaris supra quam credi potest admirans, quidnam vellet visio aenigmatica ignorabat.[48] It was only on seeing the mansion with seven ornamented columns and smelling the aromatic fragrance therein that we are told she began to understand that she was being promised celestial gifts. As her hagiographer, or perhaps Aldegund explained, she began at that point to see more clearly, the scales having fallen from her eyes: coepit clarius videre iam solutis squamis ab oculis. [V.Ald I.5]

This was evidently a crucial juncture in Aldegund's development as a visionary, for it was at that moment that she realised the divine origin and spiritual meaning of the images presented to her. The transition in thinking from literal understanding to spiritual understanding was the watershed for Augustine too. For Aldegund such a realisation enabled her to trust the authorship of her visions and to put her trust in their promises.

This newly found understanding did not mean that Aldegund always understood the significance of her visions thereafter; what she understood was their divine nature. It was still important to seek an interpretation of the events from an angelic bystander, especially when dealing with a symbolic vision, visio aenigmatica.[V.Ald I.5] On one occasion Aldegund did not know the meaning of the vision (although she knew it to be a friendly vision, non dubitat esse benivolum) and asked that the angel tell what he saw. The angel replied with spiritualia verba that he saw letters encircling her head, a

branch reaching up to heaven from her head, and heard a voice from Jerusalem saying that she would be a nun. In answer to further prayers Aldegund was told she must accept no husband other than Christ, to which she replied that she would do as God wished. Aldegund evidently understood the spiritual message of this vision simply in terms of a life of dedication to God.

Quite apart from Aldegund's own uncertainty concerning such visions as the boy-Christ or the rays of the sun and the moon, the search for an explanation within the vision itself was not to the detriment of the saint's reputation. Such a splendid example of divine honour was probably best not identified by Aldegund herself; the angelic confirmation of the vision's meaning protected Aldegund's humility. Interpretations worked out within the framework of the vision experience also eliminated the need for an external, that is to say clerical, interpreter of the vision. A much later version of Aldegund's Life could not resist having Aldegund seek out the hermit Gislanus for an interpretation of her important vision of St.Amandus, but the earliest Lives do not suggest that she had to resort to this course of action.[V.Ald III.25] Thus Aldegund's understanding was illuminated by divine beings when she was in doubt of the vision's meaning, but otherwise the Holy Spirit which enabled her to see the visions enabled her also to understand them. Nuns at Aldegund's convent were granted visions which further enriched the reputation of the saint, but they were not in a position to understand the experiences for themselves. It was the combination of seeing with understanding which separated the saint from those around her.

Finally one incident in Aldegund's Life throws a rare light on how the visionary experience could have an extrinsic value independent of its intrinsic worth. A mortally sick young boy (puer prope iam mortuus) was brought to Aldegund. She ordered that he be placed before the altar in that place where she had spoken with the Lord (ante cornu altaris, loco in quo locutus fuerat ei Dominus).[V.Ald I.17] The boy was cured and Aldegund disclaimed any credit for the healing, but is interesting that the place was noted as being the place where she had earlier received a vision. It suggests that the place of a vision was considered to retain some divine quality and thus become a relic, as it were, of a supernatural event.[49] This is the only case noted in the Life where Aldegund's visions were of direct benefit to her monastic community.

iii. Visions concerning the church.

In previous chapters we have observed the multiform ways in which visions both supported and challenged the church in its endeavours and its claims to supreme earthly authority in religious affairs. Compilations of miracle and vision stories by prominent ecclesiastics like Gregory of Tours or Gregory the Great could make the correlation between visionary experiences and course of church politics seem very apparent. However, the relationship between the individual and the church as revealed in hagiography could be a very sensitive one. In Aldegund's case we do not know the precise nature of her relationship with the ecclesiastics of her day. It is unclear for example whether the vision list compiled under the aegis of Abbot Sobinus resulted from a pastoral concern to oversee the reports of so many visionary experiences, or whether there was a more organised investigation underway. The reference in the Vita to Aldegund's strength and consolation when malicious voices were raised against her might suggest that her visionary experiences did not gain immediate acceptance.[50] Nevertheless Aldegund's Life records visions which were very explicit in making claims for her authority on certain matters of ecclesiastical interest.

There are two distinct strands in the relationship of her visions to the church. The first is the use of, and reference to, ecclesiastical ritual in some of her visions. Such visions essentially drew on all that the church represented, its distinctive ritual and its traditional authority, to add weight to her personal spiritual authority. The second strand concerns the claims of her visions to support certain aspects of ecclesiastical activity against others, and to promote the reputation of their leaders. Both aspects represent avenues of spiritual validation by which Aldegund's visionary experiences were bound to the church politics of her day.

a. Aldegund and ecclesiastical ritual.

Aldegund's association with the society of the saints through her visions, her relationship with a particular angel, and the numerous instances in which she was acknowledged to be the bride of Christ, all these cases were important mainstays of her authority as a saint; as being someone who had reached a special degree of spiritual maturity. The visions of Christ record in images Aldegund's relationship to Christ which is eternal and unchanging. Her visionary relationship with a particular angel is more fluid, and the

angel is active in conveying the divine will for her personal life. But neither of these sources bestow greater authority in the world other than their commendation of her chosen life as a path towards salvation for herself and for others. Aldegund's spiritual authority in ecclesiastical affairs did not come from such visions, but rather it stemmed directly from the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps Aldegund's most important vision in terms of her personal spiritual authority is that described above in which the Holy Spirit radiated upon her. The importance of this vision in relating to the reader the intimate nature of Aldegund's relationship with the Holy Spirit cannot be overestimated. The Holy Spirit was the authority by which the church governed the faithful, and its descent on Jesus at his baptism marked the beginning of his ministry. Even more clearly the scene recalls the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at Pentecost in the upper room, also through a window. The vision would seem to indicate a departure in Aldegund's life, the beginning of a spiritual mission, perhaps directed towards setting up a convent.[51]

The connection between the descent of the spirit and clerical authority is clear in the Vita Aldegundis. Aldegund's visions are often associated with clerical ritual, but what is especially notable are those occasions when she is seen in visions to assume a clerical role not permitted to her sex at this time, [52] or alternatively is shown not to be reliant on the clergy for receipt of communion.

Both first and second versions of Aldegund's Vita refer to visions she had in which she spoke to the Lord in front of the altar. The first Life relates this only in the context of a miracle performed there, but the second version offers two occasions when this happened. After her final temptation by the devil, Aldegund was consoled by a vision of someone standing in front of the altar in priestly garb who she recognised to be the Lord. She approached to adore him and to ask that she might remain sheltered by his love to the end (ut in amore tuo permaneam usque in finem).[V.Ald II.10] On another occasion someone came to her and told her that she had seen the Lord talking to Aldegund before the altar.[V.Ald II.13] The vision of Christ before the altar was important because Aldegund was permitted to realize in visible form the God to whom every petitioner prayed at the altar. The saints' vision experience of Christ in their cell or in their dreams expected

to demonstrate the intimate level of the visionary's relationship with God, a relationship which bypassed the channels normally open to the faithful. However, visions of Christ in front of the altar imbued the experience with a different dimension, an additional layer of meaning: Aldegund herself did not necessarily require a priest to intercede with God. The church altar was sacred, the place where God was present and the mystical rite of communion was celebrated. The healing of a mortally sick boy at the very spot of the vision underlies its sacred character.

In another vision recorded in the second version of her Life but only alluded to in the first, Aldegund had a vision in which she saw a gleaming figure, St.Peter the Apostle, and she received white (communion) bread from his hands.[53] We are not told whether this vision took place in the church, but once again there are the two elements outlined above, for Aldegund receives communion directly from heaven, yet at the same time, the vision underscores the importance of the institutionalised church through the tradition of St.Peter.

Perhaps the most clear cut example of Aldegund's circumvention of the ritual provided by the earthly church is in the description of a miracle-vision recorded to have taken place during her final illness. As Aldegund lay dying, one of the nuns had a vision in which she saw Aldegund standing in front of the altar in loco Sacerdotis! There she was seen to break the Mass offering [54] (the Host) into a chalice, and turning to the nun told her to inform the priest that he should sing the mass over the chalice, because due to her illness she had been unable to take communion the day before and but on that very day she would do so.[55] As day broke and the priest sang Mass, the chalice was seen to rise from its place, and be suspended in the air and then settle back down in its place. When Aldegund was told of the vision and the miracle, she kept quiet knowing that it presaged her impending death.

In many respects this miracle-vision is typical of the deathbed miracles of the saints, but there are aspects which are quite extraordinary. In the first place, Aldegund is standing in the priest's place before the altar, when it was often the case in this period that female religious were not permitted even to approach the altar, let alone touch sacred vessels.[56] Secondly Aldegund crumbles the Host into the chalice with her own hands and will later receive communion from it supernaturally even while the priest is conducting a service. Aldegund essentially dispenses communion to herself

with divine aid, by-passing the offices of the cleric in charge. Not only does she do this, but she also handles the Eucharist in the face of conciliar legislation which sought to prevent women from touching the communion bread. The priestly functions which Aldegund was seen to perform in this vision may be indicative of a thaw in the seventh century recognised by some historians, during which women appeared to have been ofttimes permitted a more active role in church services than had earlier been the case.[57] What is perhaps remarkable is that this story survived the Carolingian age in which the church once again took firmer measures to exclude women from such a role to find its way into the eleventh century recensions of her first and second Vitae.

In these visions, which operate within the framework of ecclesiastical ritual, especially those centering on the Eucharist, it is evident how important church ritual was in conveying ideas of spiritual authority to the readers of the Vita. The ritual of the church, and the clerical performance of it was in itself a symbol of religious and spiritual authority. Whereas spiritual authority was claimed for female saints, religious or rather ecclesiastical authority was not. Aldegund's visions did not impart to her real authority in the arena in which her visions took place, that is to say that they did not provide her, or any who came after her, with the authority to perform the specifically male clerical functions that she assumed in the visions. The importance of her acts in connection with ecclesisatical ritual was symbolic of her special status and her spiritual authority.

b. Aldegund's visions and seventh century Kirchenpolitik.

The seventh and eighth centuries saw the apogee of the Merovingian monastic movement, both in terms of its expansion and its vibrancy, infused as it was by the example and challenge of Insular asceticism. It was a time when the Frankish missionary movement into the northern territories of the Merovingian empire was stretching the boundaries of Austrasia and Christianity ever eastwards. But it was also a time when the Frankish church was reforming itself, when the monastic movement was consolidating its hold on the more ancient spiritual centres of the Neustrian kingdom, especially in the environs of Paris. It was to the north of the Frankish kingdom that the most promising Aquitainian-born ecclesiastics and would-be missionaries directed their attention, and it was from these ranks that the "apostle to

the Belgians", St.Amandus, came.[58] Aldegund and her circle identified their own endeavours with this missionary saint and one of Aldegund's most important visions from the point of view of the church concerned Amandus.

The missionary activity of St.Amandus (625-75) spread precisely from that area where Aldegund and her family founded their monastic establishments. Aldegund was bound to him, we are told, by ties of spiritual friendship: amicitia spirituali familiaritate adnexus.[V.Ald I.14] Her second hagiographer who felt the need to provide a short historical introduction to a vision so important to the flourishing cult of St.Amandus, described him as a man qui plurimas per cercuitum nationes praedicationis verbo et vitae meritis ad Christianitatis perduxerat titulum: multaque monachorum coenobia, et Canonicorum collegia, puellarumque congregationes, ad summus provexerat honores.[59] According to a later Vita, Aldegund took the initiative to receive consecration on hearing that Amandus, bishop of Tongres-Maestricht (bishop from before 656) and Autberthus, bishop of Arras and Cambrai (third quarter seventh century), were on their way to visit her sister's foundation at Mons.[V.Ald III.13] Waldetrude had been consecrated by Autberthus.[V.Ald I.4] It was on the day of Amandus' death that Aldegund was shown a vision of the missionary, ascending to heaven.

In her dream-vision Aldegund saw Amandus being crowned by the Lord, surrounded by a large company of souls. Angels explained that this was the reward for preaching, and Aldegund was happy to see the salvation of her friend.[V.Ald.I.14] This all too brief description was supplemented modestly in the second version of the Life, with its meaning more carefully spelled out. In this second version Amandus was seen ascending to heaven and Aldegund saw herself in that retinue. Amandus then received a crown in keeping with the many people he had brought to Christ, just as, the hagiographer comments, Aldegund would herself deserve for the many women she brought to her spiritual husband.[V.Ald II.8]

Aldegund's vision of St.Amandus entering heaven was an important contribution to Amandus' cult. The vision not only claimed his immediate entrance to the society of the saints, but it also endorsed his missionary activity by showing him to be worthy of a particularly exalted status in heaven. The suggestion in the second Life that spiritual merit accumulated according to the number of people one brought to the Christian fold was not new; a similar idea is to be found in the 5th century Gallic Life of

St.Honoratus.[60] Missionary activity on the scale projected and carried out by missionaries like Amandus, however, was new. Aldegund's vision was important to the legitimization of this activity which was a far cry from the introspection and stabilitas which was the Benedictine ideal. Aldegund saw herself in the vision, we are told, as part of the company who followed Amandus. This would suggest that Aldegund and those connected with her identified themselves forcefully with Amandus and his activities. It should be remembered here that Aldegund herself travelled around, between her convent at Maubeuge, her foundation at the site of her parents' tomb and her sister's convent at Mons. Hers was not the cloistered life that Radegund had chosen.[61] It is not inappropriate, therefore, that the second hagiographer, perhaps echoing the sentiment of the convent, interpreted Aldegund's place in Amandus' retinue as a real association of mission. Through her monastic foundations Aldegund had indeed brought many women to Christ, and no doubt saw her efforts as a real mission for the salvation of women.[62] It is interesting to note that whereas her second hagiographer was willing to note Aldegund's place in the vision as indicating a comparison between the saint's achievements and that of Amandus, her later hagiographers did not accept this interpretation. According to Aldegund's third hagiographer, the hermit Gisladus provided the vision with the interpretation according to which Aldegund's place in the retinue indicated her own imminent death. [V.Ald III.25] This interpretation only makes sense in the third Vita where the account of Amandus' death comes at the end of the work, shortly before Aldegund's own. In the first two Lives, however, the vision of Amandus is described relatively early in the narrative, and in fact Amandus died nine years earlier than the date generally ascribed to Aldegund's own death.[63]

If Aldegund's vision reflected the increasing importance of the missionary ideal to the claims to sanctity, so her visions and her own foundations mirrored the warming of relations between the Frankish church and the papacy.

Church dedications are often useful to trace cultic fashions which are themselves expressions of new religious and sacral allegiances. The expansion of the cult of St.Martin in the fifth and sixth centuries could be traced in the proliferation of churches and altars dedicated to his worship.[64] In the seventh century, especially in the northeast regions of

the Merovingian empire, there was an explosion of dedications to St.Peter.[65] This pattern of cultic dedication can also be traced in visions.

St.Peter makes his appearance to Aldegund in visions in both early Vitae. In them his role is both pastoral and clerical. In the first Life Aldegund is told that she is counted among the blessed and that she should not fear; Peter is he who has the power to bind and loose, ligandi atque solvendi habens potestatem.[V.Ald I.10] In the second Life St.Peter warns her about the kingdom of God, and then later she accepts communion from him.[V.Ald II.6,10] Visions of St.Peter are not common in hagiographic literature before the seventh century. The most common visions, like the most common church dedications, were of St.Martin or other local saints. The role played by St.Peter in Aldegund's visions, therefore, reflects the cultic patterns of her day, and especially a more vigorous association of salvation and absolution with St.Peter, and by extension, with his representative on earth, the Pope.

We know that Waldetrude's convent church was dedicated to St.Peter, for it is the site of a miracle for the two sisters.[66] On going to the church to pray, the sisters found the doors locked against them. The doors then miraculously opened and they were able to say their prayers.[67] The miracle was appropriate to St.Peter's role as doorkeeper of heaven, and as a reference to his miraculous escape from captivity related in the New Testament. [Acts 12,10] Another miracle took place at another church dedicated to St.Peter, that at Nivelles. On the day of Aldegund's death, a great light was seen to enter that church where St.Gertrude was buried.[V.Ald I.29;II.24]

In her visions of St.Amandus and St.Peter, Aldegund showed herself to be a saint who was involved and influenced by the major monastic and clerical forces of her day. However they chose to interpret Aldegund's role in her vision of St.Amandus, all the versions of her life record it, and in view of the fact that her later hagiographers came from Amandine foundations, her vision of the missionary saint probably explains the popularity of her own Vita. As for her visions of St.Peter, who was the rock upon which the church and the papal tradition was founded, they underscored the importance of the church's role in keeping the promise of heaven before the eyes of its flock and the place of communion in maintaining the link between heaven and earth.

It was one thing to have visions which bolstered the reputations of established male saints; it was quite another to claim access to divine knowledge and revelation on matters of church importance, especially that potentially critical of the church. Interestingly the first hint that Aldegund possessed such authority came not from the earliest Life, but from the second version, suggesting that the second hagiographer did indeed refer back to an original independent source.[68] Through her communication of the Holy Spirit, we are told, Aldegund knew not only the fate of those close to her but also that of ecclesiastics: Insuper et de quibusdam suis propinquis intimatum erat Virgini Christi, qualiter unus et qualiter alter haberet: quem poena constringebat, et quem gloria decorabat. Nec non de viris Ecclesiasticis multa detulerat sibi Angelus. [V.Ald I.9]

One can imagine the impact such a claim could have on the well-connected society to which she belonged. By such claims Aldegund effectively reached beyond her monastic community to enter into the ecclesiastical politics of her day. It is a pity that the vision list of Abbot Sobinus has not survived. It is possible that her pronouncements were more explicit there. Her claim to such knowledge was obviously a very sensitive issue. Both early Vitae refer, as we have seen, to the malicious voices arraigned against the saint.[69] It is very likely that the unspecified criticisms of the saint centred on her visionary experiences and particularly her claimed access to divine information. She is comforted by the angel who often appeared to her, with a vision of her exalted place in heaven and the infernal punishment that awaited her detractors.[V.Ald I.8] The words of her detractors tortured her soul, we are told, and from the nature of her consolatory vision one might suggest that the voices raised against her were very harsh indeed. Moreover, this particular claim to knowledge about the fate of churchmen is excised from the later versions of her life. As we shall see, the text of Aldegund's visions as a whole suffered from similar concerns, and provide a further indication of the close relationship of hagiographic models of sanctity with the church politics of the day.

iv. Visions in the texts of "Vita Aldegundis".

There are a number of extant versions of the Vita Aldegundis all of which derive more or less from the earliest or intermediary accounts of her life, and the written description of her visions compiled by Sobinus of

Nivelles. The earliest Vita which has come down to us in a ninth century manuscript was probably written soon after the saint's death, possibly by the early eighth century.[70] Its author claims various sources including his personal experience for some of the events described in addition to the testimony of reliable witnesses: iuxta id quod vidimus, aut per idoneos testes audivimus.[V.Ald I.18] For the visions themselves he used Abbot Sobinus' list: Supradicta famula Dei Aldegunda de visionibus atque revelationibus spiritualibus quas Christus sponsus eius revelavit, cuidam viro religioso Subino Abbati de Nivialensi Monasterio narravit ordinanter, et scribendo tradidit. [V.Ald I.18]

It is an unfortunate circumstance that the editors of the Monumenta edition of the Life chose not to include Aldegund's visions as related in the earliest manuscripts. For the purpose of this study I, like others, have relied on the text of Aldegund's visions as they appear in Mabillon's edition.[71]

I also consider the second version of the Life to have value independent of the first, although to a large extent it relies on the earlier text. This second Vita is to be found in the Bollandist Acta Sanctorum (30 Ian. pp.649-65).

The AASS edition also supplies two other, later, versions which have little independent merit and which serve only for longterm comparisons. The first of these was attributed questionably to Hucbald (d.930).[72] Finally the AASS edited another anonymous text preserved in a manuscript from the monastery of St.Ghislain but in which Aldegund's visions are almost entirely excised with the exception of her vision of St.Amandus.

Despite their late date, the survival of alternative versions of the Life is useful for approaching vision narratives as they are transmitted through the hagiographic medium. They allow us to trace the importance of the visionary experience to the saint's hagiographic persona, and they throw into relief differences in the context and interpretation of the vision narrative within the body of the text. They also throw light on the vested interests of the communities which produced the expanded, abbreviated or otherwise modified texts. The structure of four of the six Lives and the point at which they diverge will now be examined. I shall then trace a few key visions through the three earliest texts to determine what modifications were made to the visions and what light this throws on the long term church

attitude towards Aldegund's visionary experiences.

a. The structure of the 'Vitae Aldegundis' and their visions.

Vita Aldegundis I.

This Vita was a commissioned work, (petitionibus vestris obediens scribere conabor), probably written by a monk at Nivelles. [V.Ald I.18] We do not know for which community the Life was intended, whether for Maubeuge or Nivelles.[73]

The Vita is composed of very distinct blocks of subject matter. The first four chapters describe Aldegund's highborn family, her parents' piety and the resistance to her decision to eschew marriage for a consecrated life. They also relate the decision of Waldetrude and her husband to establish and enter monastic foundations. Chapters 5 to 17 are exclusively concerned with Aldegund's visions. They are reeled off one after the other with no pause for any other type of narrative. In chapter 18 the author relates that he has used the information provided by Abbot Sobinus of Nivelles, that is, the written description dictated by Aldegund herself. Chapters 19 to 29 address Aldegund's recorded miracles, her final illness and the visions and miracles concerning Aldegund which nuns at the convent, Waldetrude, an officiating priest and the author himself witnessed. It is clear therefore that the block of visions in which Aldegund was the visionary was incorporated intact into the Life. This argues strongly for the author's reliance on a text whose integrity was considered worthy of preservation. We should therefore believe the author's contention that he relied on Sobinus' text for the visions related. We should also note at this point however, that the author of the first Vita did not transcribe the whole text, but rather selected a few choice visions: nam si per ordinem ea replicentur quae per ora fidelium tertio audivimus, antea clara finietur dies vespere clauso olympo, quam textus lectionis expliceretur a nobis.[74] This will be important in our consideration of the second version of the Life.

Vita Aldegundis II.

This second version of Aldegund's Life and the visions related in it are generally bypassed in favour of the earlier Vita described above. It is my belief, however, that this Life had a value for Aldegund's visions which is independent of the first, and which should not be entirely neglected when

examining Aldegund's visions.

The anonymous author of this ninth century text wrote his Life of the saint for the convent of Maubeuge. We know this because he addresses the members of the community towards the end of the work: Gaude et exulta coenobium Malbodiense ...Laetare in Domino habens beatam Virginem Aldegundem Deo dilectissimam oratricem pro tuis criminibus, et reconciliatricem pro tuis sceleribus. [V.Ald II.26]

The author relates his primary sources for the work, as explained here: Nunc veniendum est ad visiones...quas ipsa descripserat, et tradiderat cuidam religioso Abbati, nomen Sobino, de monasterio Nivellensi, et alteri Fratri, cuius nomen ignoramus; quique scripsit visiones eius et vitam... [V.Ald II.5]

It is clear from this that the author used the first Vita and in addition resorted to an independent examination of Sobinus' vision text. But did the author of the second Life really have access to the original list of visions dictated by Aldegund and handed down in written form by Sobinus as he claimed? Van der Essen considered this question and decided that it was more likely that the second hagiographer's imagination accounted for the additional visions in the work, making the second Life no more than an amplification of the first.[75] E.de Moreau, citing the work of P.Stracke, did not discount the possibility that the second Life had some independent value, but did not elaborate.[76] I would propose that there are good reasons why one should not discount the second version summarily.

In the first place the second Life was evidently prepared for Aldegund's own community at Maubeuge. It may not be expecting too much of the author's historical sense that he should seek out and have access to the community's documents (always supposing they were still extant) especially in the light of the first Vita's identification of the prime source. The author used other sources which are not used in the first, such as Maubeuge's charter of foundation. [V.Ald II.27] It is not to be excluded that the author sought out additional documentation on the visions. Even if Sobinus' vision list existed only in one copy, at Nivelles rather than at Maubeuge, the most likely candidate for the second Life's authorship is in any case a monk of Nivelles.

The second consideration must be the visions themselves as they appear in the two texts. In those cases where the two texts relate the same visions, neither the order in which the visions appear in the text, nor the

substance of the visions themselves is violated, although ancillary details may vary and sometimes the author's interpretation (often no more than musing in a moralistic way) is slightly different. In many cases the visions are rewritten verbatim or simply rephrased. There are a number of occasions when the second Vita summarises a vision which received more extensive coverage in the first. Those summaries tend to be accurate within the limitations of brevity. The second Life then goes into greater detail concerning visions alluded to in the first Life, or else not mentioned at all. Far from being fanciful accretions, however, these additional vision texts are notable for their sobriety. The first Life had claimed to offer a selection of Aldegund's visions, and not a full text. The second Life did not repeat visions from the first Life exactly unless they were of particular importance, such as Aldegund's vision of St.Amandus ascending to heaven.

The structure of the first Life with its list of visions in a block is also retained in the second Life. The accommodation of the visions in an integral section distorted the natural flow of the Vita. Chapters 1-4 introduce the saint and her family up to the time she was ready to eschew marriage for Christ. 5-13 record uninterrupted a description of all the recorded visions she received during her lifetime, (not just those received at her parents' house as the hagiographer indicates). Chapters 14-16 return to her struggles with her mother concerning her monastic vocation. 17-19 record miracles and other details of her life in the convent. 20-27 record visions of Aldegund received by the priest, a novice, a senior nun, and Waldetrude presaging her death and glorious afterlife, her death and the translation of her remains. It is clear from this disection of the primary elements in the text that the later hagiographer brought together documents or descriptions without dismantling their order. This led to the narrative thread being shuttled back and forth. There was no attempt to do what later versions of the Life were to do, and that is to rearrange the visions to comply with a supposed chronolgy of the saint's Life. The second Life thus follows the pattern of the first.

The second Life makes certain claims for Aldegund's authority in spiritual matters vis a vis the church which one would not expect to find their way into a Life simply out of the author's imagination. The second Vita claims that Aldegund knew the eternal destiny not only of those close to her but also of ecclesiastics. As I examined in the section on Aldegund and

the church, such claims were potentially disruptive, and there may be a reference to opposition voiced during her lifetime. Churchmen did not feel comfortable when female mystics started becoming involved, even if only in their dreams and visions, with church politics. The second Life, however, retains those powerful images of the first, such as the descent of the Holy Spirit on Aldegund and the favourable interpretation of Aldegund's place in her vision of St.Amandus.

Finally one has to consider the whole spectrum of recensions of the Life. One finds that visions are not the material which is expanded in later Lives. In fact visions are progressively omitted as the versions go later into the middle ages. Other parts of the Life are greatly expanded, but they centre on those areas which are common to most Vitae, not those parts which are peculiar to this particular saint. So, for example, in later versions, especially that of Hucbald, the parental opposition to Aldegund's desire to become a nun alluded to briefly in the first Life, becomes a great conflict from which Aldegund eventually flees, taking flight from her home, crossing the river Sambre by walking on water and living as a hermit on the monastic territory of Nivelles.[77] The second Life does not indulge in such fantasies.

The fact that visions were more likely to be removed than expanded in the later versions of Aldegund's Life, says something for the place of the visionary experience in hagiography as a whole. Firstly it says that visions per se were not terribly important to the female saintly ideal. Visionary experience is recorded in probably less than a third of the Merovingian Lives. Prophesying one's own death and miracles were almost universal, by contrast. Secondly it seems to suggest that readers of saints' Lives were more interested in other elements in the saint's life, such as the saint's heroic feats and the rewards of a life of virtue. The didactic value of the visionary experience could often be very slim. They did not provide suitable material for emulation, and although they might speak to the deep spiritual desires of monks and nuns, they did not reflect the reality of everyday monastic piety. The value of the visionary experience lay primarily in the reputation of the saint as a holy person, acting as a divine imprimatur on the saint's religious and spiritual achievements.

Vita Aldegundis III

This ninth or early tenth century composition commonly attributed to a monk at St.Amand, Hucbald (died 930) shows an concern to provide a narrative in which the disparate elements are more closely knit.[78] Consequently some of the visions have been inserted at other junctures of the biographic narrative. Aldegund's vision of St.Amandus finds its place towards the end of the life, in accordance with its interpretation as presaging her death.[79] Her vision and questioning of the devil, her temptation by the devil and her consolation visions of Christ are also introduced at this later stage of the narrative. Most importantly certain key visions are modified, mostly by omission of information pertinent to the experience, and will be addressed in the next section.

The author of this later text attempted to do more than simply coordinate the visions with their real or imagined chronology; he supplied greater information concerning Aldegund's family history [80] and about the saint's place within the missionary period, identifying more clearly her connection with certain key figures, most notably the hermit Gislenus.[81] Hucbald was also concerned to remain faithful to the parent document (V.Aldegundis II); he explains that he will not repeat all the visions and refers the reader to the earlier life. He makes clear his intention to supply additional information on other aspects of her history to the record. Finally he shows an understanding of the sensitivities which centre on modifications to the hagiographic record. To illustrate this latter point it is useful to refer to the dedicatory letter which accompanies the Life. In it Hucbald explained that he has had a difficult task to undertake the commission: Cruda massa non facile modico potest igne purgari. He anticipated that there may be those who would be displeased that he will not only embellish the life but that he will also remove veils or rags.[82] He assures his reader that he will not leave his subject denuded, as a girl might leave uncovered the limbs of a doll, but rather present the woman's firm heart and manly soul as a model to be emulated.

V,Aldegundis IV

Aldegund's visionary character is almost entirely excised from this version of the Life. The early part of the life is significantly different from the other versions examined here. Aldegund's virtuous character is the

subject of lengthy ruminations, all of which owe their substance to hagiographic topoi. We are told not only that Aldegund was beautiful and honest but that to her corporeal beauty was added modesty of mind. She had studied the Pythagorian bivium among other indications of great learning.[83] The earlier versions of the Life are remarkably restrained in their reliance on such formulae. The author also averrs that Aldegund's convent was a cloistered establishment which it clearly was not. The only vision described in the life is Aldegund's vision of St.Amandus' soul ascending to heaven. Aldegund's life is depicted in this version as being almost entirely devoid of visionary experience. This aspect of her life is replaced by enthusiastic descriptions of her domestic virtues and abilities. The Aldegund portrayed in this version wills her cancer upon herself, pleading as St.Paul, and St.Peter's daughter Petronilla was said to have done, for an infirmity to stimulate the flesh. Cloistered and psychically self-mutilating, she bears little resemblance to the determined visionary of the earliest Lives who believed herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit and inspired to challenge the reputation of the clergy.

b. Visions across the texts.

There are two ways in which the later versions of the Aldegund's Vita diverge from the first two compositions in their coverage of her visionary experiences: modification and omission.

In the first two Lives, Aldegund's authority as a visionary came to her through the Holy Spirit. Not only did she often speak with the Holy Spirit but the Spirit came upon her in the form of the rays of the sun and moon, or alternatively in the form of a dove.[V.Ald I.11; II.12] In Hucbald's version of the Life, this vision is largely omitted by the author. In its place are two visions which approximate to it. The first is a more elaborate version of her consecration to the monastic life by SS. Amandus and Autberthus (St.Omer) in which the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove, and lifting up the veil with its feet and beak, placed it on the saint's head.[V.Ald III.14] The difference between the two versions of the event concern the religious role sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. In the first version (V.Ald I and II), the vision echoes the coming of the spirit on Jesus' disciples, and with Christ's baptism and the beginning of his active ministry and authority. In the description of the miracle-vision in the second version (V.Ald III) it is

Aldegund's consecration as a nun, especially her veiling, which is endorsed by the Holy Spirit.

There is a second vision account in V.Aldegundis III which draws on this material and reproduces part of the original vision verbatim; it concerns the orb of fire described in V.Aldegundis II.12 which descended upon Aldegund and interpreted to be the holy spirit. In Hucbald's Vita the orb is not identified by the author, nor does Aldegund ask angelic bystanders in her vision the significance of the sight.[V.Ald II.30] In addition to this, the second version places this vision within the framework of a cure for a sick boy, thus diminuishing its focus on Aldegund's own spiritual development.

Aldegund's vision of St.Amandus and the modification it underwent in the later versions of the life have already been discussed above. It is worth noting here, nevertheless, that the description in the latest version of the Life is an independent modification of the earlier description, and owes nothing to that of Hucbald.[84] So whereas Hucbald's version interprets Aldegund's place in the vision as signifying her imminent death, the fourth version follows the text of the earlier versions carefully, although leaving Aldegund out entirely, offering its own interpretation; God wanted to show the saint how precious the saints are in His sight. Aldegund's place in her own vision is thus progressively expunged.

A number of visions described in the earlier Lives are omitted by Hucbald. They include those in which Aldegund's authority in ecclesiastical matters is most clearly set out. The assertion of the second Vita that Aldegund knew who would be saved and who would not, including churchmen, does not appear there. Likewise Aldegund's vision of two men in heaven, only one of whom receives a crown is omitted, perhaps because it is a vision indicating selection in salvation. [V.Ald II.6] The mention of her detractors and the promise of their eventual punishment also disappears. Another vision to be excised is that in which she conversed with the devil, asking him why he was so much against the human race. Such theological ruminations did not find their natural place in the Life of a female saint, and offered no lesson for imitation.

It is true, of course, that Hucbald indicated clearly that he was offering a selection of her visions only, and referred the reader back to the first Life for the full complement of visions.[85] This does not alter the fact that the author made his choice in a particular manner which favoured

some visions over others. It is also the case that the hagiographer's task lay in assembling fragments of information to craft a hagiographic persona which would inspire his readers and influence their profile of sanctity. In so far as his reworking of material is an act of literary creation (and the author was well aware of his responsability to his material as he states in his dedicatory letter), then omissions in the Life are important signposts to the later evaluation of Aldegund's visions.

Tracing visions across the various versions of Aldegund's Life helps to illustrate those aspects of the visionary's life which were most vulnerable to modification and omission, and which aspects of her life were considered interesting to elaborate. Briefly one can summarise them as follows. Those aspects of Aldegund's visions most likely to suffer were those in which claims were made for her own spiritual authority, especially any suggestion that she was empowered to comment on matters of ecclesiastical import. The most resilient vision in Aldegund's repertoire was that concerning Amandus' soul ascending to heaven, although here too Aldegund's own place in the vision and even her own ability to interpret its meaning was gradually obliterated. In the place of her many visions later hagiographers sought to amplify those elements in her life which had didactic potential, stressing her personal virtue and her personal trials until her visionary character disappeared almost entirely.

CONCLUSION.

From the fourth century to the eighth centuries there were important changes in the way the church viewed the visionary experience as having a role in the christian life. Visions, so often used in antiquity to resolve personal, psychological and even literary difficulties, were given limited authority by the early church in religious affairs. Yet in sixth century Gaul they found an important place in the works of Gregory of Tours for the resolution of social, political and religious tensions.

In Gallic hagiography, vision accounts were an important means by which ideas about spiritual identity and spiritual authority could be expressed. Sulpicius Severus used dream and vision accounts to promote St.Martin and his ascetic lifestyle as a model of spirituality, but in the sixth century, vision accounts became a popular means for the higher clergy to promote the moral and spiritual values of the episcopate. The pastoral responsibility of the latter brought into the hagiographic arena tales of social and religious reconciliation which visions were particularly effective in addressing. Unencumbered by serious doctrinal disputes, Gregory's Gaul enjoyed visions in which Jews and Arians were converted or destroyed, employing against heretics the very revelationary medium for which they were once feared.

Like Tertullian, but unlike most churchmen of antiquity, both Gregory the Great and Gregory of Tours, while avowedly reserving true manifestations of the Holy Spirit to holy men and women, approached a position of universal access to the veridical visionary experience. Although clergy and ascetics were at the forefront of the visionaries described in both their works, lay people of every rank feature as vision recipients in the works of the two authors.

Yet between Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great there were important differences in the way they read into dreams and visions of the afterlife the moral responsibility of the vision recipient. Where Gregory the Great, on the strength of vision accounts, promoted the value of church sacraments for the mortally sick and even for the dead, seeing in dreams and visions a stimulus to introspection, Gregory of Tours' accounts reflect the value of visions for change during the vision recipient's lifetime. Where Gregory the Great's mystical attitude towards the place of visions in the christian life

was coloured by his conviction that the present world was drawing to a close, the pragmatic intellectual interests of the Gallic intelligensia is evident even in Gregory's vision and miracle filled world, for they remained very much tied to social, political and cultic concerns.

In hagiographic literature of the Merovingian period, visions regularly punctuated the spiritual progress of the saints. Both saints and their hagiographers were sensitive to the way in which such experiences framed their lives, signalling divine guidance and validation. Dreams and visions revealed the spirituality of the saint, their 'otherness' from those around them, and the exclusivity of their contact with the spiritual world, invisible to most. At the same time, in important ways, their visions stressed their connectedness to the other world expressed through the channels open to the ordinary Christian. Hence the significance of a nun's vision of St.Aldegund partaking in the Eucharist at the altar while the priest officiated.

The prominence of visions as literary topoi is only too evident in most of these works. Yet the Merovingian period also produced the mystic Aldegund of Maubeuge, whose visions were preserved in not one, but two important texts. However, the dismemberment of her visionary character in later recensions of her Lives provides testimony to the anxiety displayed by the church from the Carolingian period onwards to regulate the visionary experience, especially where it pertained to the reputation of the church.

While the fourth to eighth centuries saw important changes in the authority given to dreams and visions in religious affairs, there are also important continuities. Christians throughout this period desired to see consolation or warning in their dreams. Augustine's friend Evodius, bishop of Uzalis, wanted to believe that imaged visions promised a view of the after-life as it would be. And churchmen before Gregory of Tours saw the value of visions in promoting the aims of the church. Yet it was the popularity of the works of Gregory the Great and Gregory of Tours which gave prominence to vision accounts, which furnished the Middle Ages with its most potent attitude towards the visionary experience.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACW----------Ancient Christian Writers.

AASS----------Acta Sanctorum. (Bollandus).

AASS.O.S.B.--------Acta Sanctorum.Ord.S.Bened. (Mabillon).

BAR----------British Archaeological Reports.

CC (ser.lat.)------Corpus Christianorum, series latina.

CD----------Augustine, De Civitate Dei.

CSEL----------Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum.

DACL----------Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et Liturgie.

DGL----------Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram.

EHR----------English Historical Review.

HTR----------Harvard Theological Review.

JMH----------Journal of Medieval History.

JTS----------Journal of Theological Studies.

MIÖG----------Mitteilungen des Institüts fur Oesterreichische Geschichte.

PL----------J.P.Migne, Patrologia latina.

REA----------Revue des Études Augustiniennes.

REL----------Revue des Études Latines.

Rev.Bén.----------Revue Bénédictine.

RHE----------Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique.

SCH----------Studies in Church History.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION.

1. Aeschylus, Prometheus bound. Genesis 2.21.
2. J.Amat has taken this approach in her impressive Songes et Visions (1985).
3. For example, E.Benz, Die Vision: Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt (1969) and P.Dinzelbacher, Vision und Visionliteratur im Mittelalter (1981).

Chapter 1. VISIONARY EXPERIENCE FROM ANTIQUITY TO ST.AUGUSTINE.

There is a substantial bibliography on dream-vision beliefs in the ancient world up to the time of Augustine. Two recent studies on early Christian belief in dreams and visions are particularly important: Jacqueline Amat's Songes et visions. L'au-dela dans la litterature latine tardive (1985) and Martine Dulaey, Le rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin (1973). Also useful are: J.S.Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman world and early Christianity" Aufstieg und Niedergang 2.23.2. (1980) pp.1395-1427; A.F.Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity and their Environment" Aufstieg und Niedergang 2.23.2. (1980) pp.1333-1394; G.Bjorck, "Onar idein. De la perception du rêve chez les anciens" Eranos Jahrbuch 44 (1946) pp.306-14; F.Neiske, "Vision und Totengedenken", Frühmittelalterliche Studien 20 (1986) pp.137-85; J.B.Stearns, Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama (1927) and K.E.Kirk, The Vision of God (1931).

1. Artemidorus, The Interpretation of Dreams; Oneirocritica transl. R.J.White (1975).

2. The personal dream involved oneself, the alien involved others, common dreams involved both the dreamer and others. The public dream referred to events in the public arena including the fate of the city, and the cosmic dream centred on cosmic events such as eclipses and earthquakes. For Artemidorus, dreams were significant for all people but the type of dream was limited according to the dreamer's own experience. It followed then that a public dream dealing with the fate of the city was the preserve of the king or ruler.

3. See the analysis of M.Foucault, The History of Sexuality vol.3 (The Care of the Soul) pp.1-36 transl. R.Hurley (1986).

4. Artemidorus, Oneirocritica I.Preface, transl. R.J.White.

5. Augustine discusses at great length the Roman religious tradition in the first half of his City of God. On the importance of the pagan Roman oracular tradition for Christianity, see Bernard McGinn's "Teste David cum Sibylla: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages" in Kirschner and Wemple (eds) Women of the Medieval World (1985) pp.7-35. Also, Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians (1986). Augustine, as other church Fathers, recognized that dreams and visions could result from physical or mental illness. [De Gen.Litt XII.12] There have been modern attempts to

identify clinically known psychological disturbance in historical accounts of medieval visions: J.Kroll and B.Bachrach, "Visions and Psychopathology in the Middle Ages", Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease. (1982) 170 pp.41-49. E.Benz, Die Vision (1969) pp.17-34.

6. Cicero, De Divinatione ed. W.Ax (1938)

7. On Roman divination see M.Dulaey, Le rêve pp.15-31. She also notes, pp.16-18, that Roman visions are most commonly epiphanies and visions of the souls of the dead.

8. Plato De republica IX.3 Penguin Classics 2nd ed.repr.(1987).

9. Virgil, Aeneid VI. As Aeneas emerged from Hades he saw the twin gates of sleep, the first of horn from which true dreams emerge, the second white ivory from which depart false dreams. Attempts have been made to explain why the dreams issue from horn and ivory. Horn has a certain transparency possibly indicating the clarity of theorematic dreams whereas the impenetrability of ivory suggests obscure, enigmatic dreams which were considered by some in this period to indicate a physiological rather than divine origin.

10. Plato, De republica I.1.

11. Augustine, De cura pro mortuis gerenda [PL 40, cols.698-708] explicitly mentions Aeneas' popularly known travels in the underworld as perpetuating ideas that were erroneous about visions and the world of the dead.

12. The practice of incubation in Italy is not amply documented before the 3rd century B.C. and may have been a Greek import. The practice is recorded of Greeks, Egyptian, Semitic and Indo-European cultures: M.Dulaey, Le reve pp.24-8.

13. M.Dulaey lists biblical dreams in Le rêve pp.231-3, discussion pp.33-6.

14. The question whether or not the souls of the dead visited the living was regularly discussed by early Christian writers, and by Augustine in the De cura. The tenacity of the belief in Christian circles was rooted in pagan superstition like reverence for manes. Ultimately, the prevalence of such ideas was rooted, as Augustine was aware, in the psychological needs of the bereaved and the influence of the conscience upon the imagination.

15. This distinction between Christ's corporeal 'appearance' to the disciples rather than in a vision, was considered important evidence for the doctrine of Christ's bodily resurrection, and a battle-ground in the early centuries with Gnostic teachings. Apparitio then, was the usual term to describe the Pentecostal sightings. Ambrose's commentary on I Cor.15,7 [CSEL 81.ii p.166] makes this point: Deinde apparuit Iacobo. Singulari Iacobo apparuit et Petro. Quod ideo puto factum, ut multifaria adparentia fidem resurrectionis firmaret.

16. M.Dulaey Le rêve p.34. Direct, theorematic dreams are those whose

meaning is evident without the need of an interpreter.

17. R.L.Bensley, The Fourth Book of Ezra (1895). See also M.E.Stone, "The Metamorphosis of Ezra..." JTS n.s.33 (1982) pp.1-18.

18. The Apocryphal New Testament, ed. M.R.James (1924); Visio sancti Pauli, ed. T.Silverstein (1935) [Studies and Documents, ed.K.and S.Lake vol.IV]

19. The Shepherd of Hermas, translation and introduction G.F.Snyder (1968) [The Apostolic Fathers vol. 6]; also transl. Kirsopp Lake (1976) [Loeb Classical Library 25]. The 'four visions' section was probably appended at a slightly later date. The term 'imaged revelations' is used by J.Amat, Songes, p.10 who strongly argues the influence of the work on the Donatist Passions.

20. See the important E.Pagels, "Visions, Appearances and Apostolic Authority: Gnostic and Orthodox Traditions" in Gnosis. Festschrift für Hans Jonas ed.B.Aland (1978) pp.415-430.

21. Corp.Gnost.VIII,2:132 (Letter of Peter to Philip). E.Pagels, Op.cit. p.421.

22. Nag Hammadi Library (1988) p.251. E.Pagels, Op.cit. p.422, Corp.Gnost. III,5:135-7. Mary Magdalene (Miriam in this text) is often accorded a prominent position as the foremost of the disciples, and as such comes into conflict with Peter, who is portrayed as a dim-witted boor.

23. E.Pagels, Op.cit. p.422

24. E.Pagels and substantial literature on the corporeal resurrection of Christ in this context.

25. E.Pagels, Op.cit. p.416-17. H.F.von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power (1969).

26. Tertullian, De Praescriptione Haereticorum 21.5 CC 1 (1954) ed. R.F.Refoule pp.186-224.

27. On Mani and Manichaeism, see P.Brown, Augustine of Hippo (1967) pp.45-60; W.H.C.Frend, "The Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition in Roman North Africa", in Jnl.Eccles.Hist. IV (1953) pp.13-26; S.Lieu, Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire (1985). The Manichees followed the teachings of their founder Mani, a visionary executed by the Persian government in 276 AD. He claimed to be an 'apostle' of Christ who had received direct revelation concerning the nature of God, and Man, and the division of the cosmos into Good and Evil, Light and Darkness. Although revatively little is known about the secrets of the Manichees, their dualism was inspired by a post-apostolic revelation which ran contrary to the teachings of the orthodox church. On Priscillianism, see the second chapter of this thesis.

28. A legendary figure to whom many religious and philosophical works were ascribed in the 2nd.century, A.J.Festugière, La révélation d'Hermès Trimégiste. IV (1954)

29. Apuleius of Maudaurus (born c.123) was professor of rhetoric and philosophy at Carthage, but he is best known for his Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass) in which an episode, the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, has fueled modern interest in Apuleius' visionary ideas. Augustine's interest in him centred on his demonology, especially his De Deo Socratis. Augustine on Apuleius, Civ.Dei VII.14-22; IX.1-3, 7-13, 18-20, 23. On Apuleius' visionary ideas cf. J.Amat, Songes, pp.25-39. Augustine was contemptuous of Apuleius' writings for having introduced, under the banner of Neoplatonism, many distortions.

30. Justin the Philosopher, Dialogues.

31. T.Hopko, "The Trinity in the Cappadocians" in Christian Spirituality (1986) pp.260-275. See also, E.Baert, La vision béatifique du Nouveau Testament aux pères cappadocians (1965).

32. J.H.Waszink ed., Tertulliani, De anima (1947), repr. CC 2 (1954) pp.780-869. On Tertullian, see T.D.Barnes, Tertullian (2nd.ed. 1985); J.Amat, Songes (1985) pp.93-104; M.Colish, Stoic Tradition (1985) pp.9-29; M.Dulaey, Le reve (1973) pp.55-6.

33. Philo of Alexandria, De somniis (1987) [Loeb 275]. On Philo's own search for God, see K.E.Kirk, The Vision of God. pp.38-46. J.H.Waszink, Op.cit., finds no evidence that Tertullian knew Philo's work itself unless through intermediary sources p.14. See also J.Amat, Songes p.115 on Tertullian and Philo.

34. Tertullian's anti-Gnostic and anti-heretical compositions include Adversus Valentinianos and Adversus Marcionem. Although Tertullian often had recourse to pagan examples for his vision accounts in the De anima, more so indeed than his biblical examples (J.Amat, Songes p.39), he addressed a pagan audience whose erroneous views prompted his refutation [De anima 3.1].

35. On Montanus, Eusebius, History of the Church V.16; On Montanism, R.Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians (1986) pp.405-10; T.D.Barnes, Tertullian (1985) pp.42-8, 77-84, 130--42, 329. P.Labriolle, La Crise Montaniste (1913). H.von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical authority (1960) pp.178-212. Montanus flourished c.170 with two female prophetesses named Maximilla and Priscilla.

36. De anima 43.10 This interpretation, derived from John 19.34 is also taken up briefly by Augustine, CD XXII.17.

37. I have relied on J.Amat, Songes pp.199-210 for this overview of the vision thinking of Cyprian, Arnobius and Lactantius.

38. J.H.Waszink found no trace of De anima's influence on Lactantius, but J.Amat, Songes pp.212-13 and Dulaey, Le rêve pp.66-8 disagree.

39. Dulaey, Op.cit. p.66

40. J.Amat, Songes p.212 on Ambrose In Apoc.,i,v.10

41. Ambrose, De excessu fratris sui Satyri I.72-3, PL 16. Quod si in quiete nocturna vinculis adhuc corporeis inhaerentes, et quasi inter carceraria religatae claustra membrorum; possunt tamen animae altiora et discreta perspicere: quanto magis spectant haec, cum iam puro aethereoque sensu nulla corporeae labis impedimenta patiuntur! Meritoque mihi conquerenti, vergente quodam iam in occasum die, quod non reviseres quiescentem, totus omni tempore individuus adfuisti; ita ut illo perfusus sopore membrorum, cum ego vigilarem tibi, tu viveres mihi, dicerem: Quid est mors, frater?... Quas ederetis cruces, nisi se offunderet imago praesentis, nisi visiones animi repraesentarent, quem species corporis denegaret! See J.Amat, Songes p.213-14, Dulaey, Le rêve p.66-67.

42. A letter purportedly by Ambrose suggested that the two saints had appeared to him in corporeal form,(Ep.2, PL 17.c.743) This letter is now considered apocryphal, having been composed most probably in Ravenna at the end of the 5th century, cf. M.Aubineau in AB.90 (1972)pp.1-14. J.Amat makes the point that the fabrication of such a letter was made necessary precisely by Ambrose's discretion concerning the episode. Augustine on Ambrose, Conf. IX,7; Civ.Dei. XXII,8; Serm. 286,318.

43. J.Amat, Songes pp.217-22.

44. Jerome, Ep.22.

45. J.Amat, Songes p.222-9.

46. J.Amat ibid. p.223.

47. Prudentius, Apotheosis ll.23-7. CC 126 (1966) pp.77-8.

48. H.I.Marrou argues that the decision to write on oneirology was sometimes politically expedient, since it comprised to some extent, religiously neutral ground. This point is made in reference to the Christian Synesius of Syrene who operated in a pagan milieu, "Synesius of Syrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism", in The Conflict, ed. A.Momigliano (1963) pp.126-150.

49. Macrobius, Commentary on a Dream of Scipio, transl. W.H.Stahl (1952) On the popularity of this work in the middle ages, cf. P.Courcelle, "La posterité chrétienne du songe de Scipion." R.E.L. 36 (1958) p.205-234. See also P.Courcelle, "Anti-Christian arguments and Christian Platonism: from Arnobius to St.Ambrose" in The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth century. ed. A.Momigliano (1963) pp.151 ff. See also on Macrobius, Amat, Songes, p.28.

50. Alan Cameron, "The date and identity of Macrobius" Journal of Roman Studies 56 (1966) pp.25-28. P.Courcelle's claim that Ambrose knew Macrobius' commentary when he wrote his Hexaemeron (written 386-7) cannot be substantiated. Both the work of M.Fuhrman, Philologus 107 (1963) pp.301ff and Alan Cameron's case for later date for Macrobius' floruit argue against it. Cameron, Op.cit. p.27.

51. The literature on the Passio SS Perpetuae et Felicitatis is considerable. H.Shewring, The Passion of SS.Perpetua and Felicity, (1931).

For a literary and psychological study of Perpetua's visions Peter Dronke, Women Writers of the Middle Ages. A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (d.203) to Marguerite Porete (d.1310) (1983). See also H.Leclerq, DACL XIV(i) (1939).

52. The Martyrdom of Polycarp 5,9 transl. Kirsopp Lake (2nd ed. 1976). [Loeb 25].

53. English translation, R.T.Meyer, ACW 10 (1950). Athanasius was particularly involved in disputes with the Meletians who joined with the Arians at the Council of Tyre in 335 at which Athanasius was condemned. H.Chadwick, The Early Church (1967) pp.124, 134-5.

54. Astrology comprised an important element in Manichaean theology. W.H.C.Frend, "The Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition..." JEH 4 (1953) pp.13-26 discusses Augustine's association with this north African tradition.

55. Leo Charles Ferrari, "The Dreams of Monica in Augustine's Confessions" in Augustinian Studies 10 (1979) pp.3-17 discusses the similarities between Monica's dream during a storm at sea on her way to Rome, and that of St.Paul. M.Dulaey, Le rêve, (1973) pp.158-165 while admitting the literary polish of the accounts and the popularity of conversion dreams in this period, maintains a conviction in their historical validity. This is a view with which I concur.

56. De Genesi ad litteram libri XII. PL.34 col.245-486 (1861); CSEL.28 pp.3-435 ed.Zycha (1894); English translation with notes by J.H.Taylor, Ancient Christian Writers 41, 42 (1982). Also J.H.Taylor, "The Text of Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram." Speculum 25 (1950) pp.87-93.

57. Conf IX.10 Augustine's reference to 'spiritual first-fruits' is from Romans.8.23 The return to the sound of their own voices in which each word has a beginning and an end, recalls Augustine's comments on the divine Word, the syllables of which shaped history, and which derive their meaning not simply from their content individually but in toto. Returning to the beginnings and ends of words was a return to the spiritual realm where time permits speech. On the vision at Ostia, P.Henry, La vision d'Ostie (1938), and on Augustine's conversion and vision at Ostia, C.Bennet "The Conversion of Virgil: The Aeneid in Augustine's 'Confessions'." REA 34 (1988) pp.47-69.

58. Even in the afterlife, at the happy union of the visions, now all equally impervious to deception, Augustine clings to his favourite theme, averring that more joy will be had in the intellectual than in the corporeal vision of heaven. DGL.36.

59. Spiritual ascent through the Cosmos is a feature common to many religions, not just Platonic philosophy, but Augustine's thinking here corresponds most clearly to Plotinus' three hypostases as elucidated in the Enneads. Both spiritual ascent and the Platonic idea of purification of the senses is to be found in the works of Christian Neoplatonists like Gregory of Nyssa and Origen. On heavenly ascent note the recent article by A.F.Segal, "Heavenly Ascent..." Aufstieg u.Niedergang (1980) pp.1333-94.

60. Conf. X. On the Neoplatonic idea of the purification of the senses

see CD. X.23-24.

61. On the cult of the dead in north Africa, G.Charles Picard, Les religions de l'Afrique antique... (1954).

62. M.Dulaey, Le rêve p.144.

63. Augustine often mentions the shrine of St.Stephen established by Evodius at Uzalis. Evodius commissioned a record of the miracles there, De miraculis sancti Stephani protomartyris PL 41, 833-54. The miraculous occurences there had a profound affect on Augustine's later thinking. In the last chapters of the City of God, he deplores the lack of public recognition new miracles receive, and related how he has started a libellus miraculorum in his diocese. On Evodius, M.A.McNamara, Friendship in St.Augustine (1958).

64. Evodius, Ep.158, PL 33. Evodius had been with Augustine in Italy and converted to Christianity just before him. He and Augustine established a monastic community in Thagaste on their return to north Africa until each in turn was called to episcopal office. Correspondence between Evodius and Augustine on subjects other than dream-visions survive and attest to their fraternal friendship.

65. On the vision of the widow of Uzalis, see M.Dulaey, Le rêve, pp.210-25.

66. Ep. 159 In duodecim autem libro eorum quo de genesi scripsi, versatur haec quaestio vehementer et multis exemplis rerum expertarum atque credibiliter auditarum disputatio illa silvescit.

67. In his Dialogues, Gregory the Great related the visionary experiences which came to his notice as a means of illustrating the life of the soul after death.

68. Augustine mentions that he is replying to Paulinus' letter at the end of the treatise, contra P.Brown, Aug., who writes that it was unsolicited. Augustine signals Paulinus' own interest in visionary matters (ch.16) when he mentions Paulinus' great devotion to St.Felix cuius inquilinatum pie diligis, for Felix had appeared to the inhabitants of Nola in a vision as the barbarians attacked. Such a vision, Augustine argued, came from God, as did all those in which martyrs were seen to lend their aid to their suppliants.

69. De cura pro mortuis gerenda. 11(13) PL. 40

70. Augustine evinced a keen interest in later life in pursuing rumors of miraculous events which occured as a result of dreams. In the case of one prominent woman, Innocentia, who had incurable breast cancer and was instructed in its cure by a dream, Augustine was horrified to learn that she had not made the incident publically known. He admonished her severely and even went so far as to make inqiries of her intimate friends to verify her story.[C.D. XXII.8]

Chapter 2. VISIONS IN GALLIC HAGIOGRAPHY TO THE SIXTH CENTURY

1. The literature on St.Martin of Tours and his Vita is enormous, but there have been a number of recent works which have shed much light on the Vita Martini as a literary text in addition to St.Martin as an historical figure: J.Fontaine, ed. and comm., Sulpice Sévère, Vie de Saint Martin. SC 133-5. 3 vols. (1967-9), C.Stancliffe, St.Martin and his Hagiographer (1983), P.Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian (1978) and F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965) pp.19-46. See also, E.-C.Babut, S.Martin de Tours (1912), and on the wider context of clerical factionalism, Ralph Mathiesen, Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth Century Gaul (1989).

Severus' Life of St.Martin was written in 396, a year before the saint's death, C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.71ff. His Chronicle dates from 403-6 and his Dialogues c.404-6, C.Stancliffe, St.Martin., pp.80ff. The text of the Vita Martini and Severus' three letters on St.Martin are to be found in the Sources chrétiennes edition cited above. Sulpicius Severus' full works are located in the CSEL I ed. C.Halm (1866).

2. On oriental monasticism and the ascetic tradition as a background to Martin's ascetic life and its portrayal in the Life, see C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.233-41 and P.Rousseau, Ascetics pp.143-65.

3. J.Fontaine, Vie III p.1191ff.

4. J.Fontaine, Vie III.1191 comments on the Roman aspect of Martin's appearance, in his white toga like a candidate for consulship. It is a shrewd observation since, although it is not a theme of Severus' Martinian writings, Venantius Fortunatus in his versification of the Life of St.Martin, made much of Martin's prestigious company in the court of heaven, a theme perhaps suggested by this vision: V.Fortunatus, Vita Martini III ll.446-67.

5. Fontaine, Vie III pp.1195-6.

6. I agree here with Fontaine's assessment, Vie III pp.1204-5.

7. Fontaine, Vie I pp.194-5. Also, C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.194-6.

8. Brictius's comment on Martin was that he per inanes superstitiones et fantasmata visionum ridicula prorsus inter deliramenta senuisse. Dial III 15.

9. R.Mathiesen, Eccles.Factionalism p.20.

10. VM 22. See Fontaine, Vie III p.970ff and C.Stancliffe St.Martin pp.194-5. St.Martin's boast that he could save the Devil if he repented shows the influence of Origenist thinking which was popular among ascetics in the East. By the time Severus wrote his Dialogues he was aware that this view had been condemned, and he retracted his position.

11. J.Fontaine, Vie III p.972. Councils such as that at Valence (374) excommunicated those guilty of mortal crimes. Conc.Valentinium 4, Conc.Galliae A.314-506 ed. C.Munier (1963) pp.35-42.

12. Severus addresses Martin's role in the Prisciallianist affair in his Dialogues III.11-13, and in his Chronicle II.46-51. On the Priscillianist affair and its impact on the fourth century church, see H.Chadwick, Priscillian of Avila (1976), C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.278-96, and R.Mathiesen, Eccles.Factionalism pp.11-18.

13. Priscillian actually denounced Manichaeism and Gnosticism but the labels was often used as an umbrella term for heresies, especially heresies not yet given a name. Severus terms the heresy Gnosticism. Chron II.46. On the association of Priscillianism with Manicheism, see R.Mathiesen, Eccles. Factionalism pp.13-14.

14. C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.278, 282-3.

15. Severus' attributes to Martin an Origenist attitude towards evil (VM 23), and Millenarian views (Dial II.14), both positions officially condemned.

16. C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.282-3.

17. VM 3,3."Martin, who is still only a catechumen, has clothed me with this garment."

18. VM 23.7 "The Lord Jesus did not say that he would come in a purple robe and wearing a shining diadem; I will not believe that Christ has come unless he appears in the garments of his passion, bearing the wounds of the Cross."

19. These would include the connection between the form of this apparition and Severus' millenarian beliefs, and Martin's ability to discern the devil's agency behind it.

20. C.Stancliffe, St.Martin p.240 n.65 draws attention to the possible parallel between this demonic imperial figure and Hilary of Poitiers' Contra Constantium Imperatorem 5, SC 334 ed.A Rocher (1987). Also on the devil's imperial appearance, J.Fontaine, Vie III pp.1022-8.

21. Dial I.21. "but if he become one of the clergy, he will not wait to be eminent for either works or spiritual powers before he broadens his fringes, ... he will reject coarse clothing and desire soft garments... "

22. The Dialogues which are the most outspoken in their criticism of the clergy, and the Chronicle which records the schism, were both written after the official termination of the Felician dispute at the Synod of Turin in 398. C.Stancliffe, St.Martin p.290.

23. On the Rhone valley communities and especially Lerins as the "Pflanzstätte" of Gallic and Merovingian bishops, see F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum pp.47 ff. esp.59-62.

24. Vigilantius' attack is known through its rebuttal by Jerome, Contra Vigilantium PL 23, cols. 339-52. C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.288-9 cites evidence of persistent hostility between clerical factions well into the second decade of the fifth century which seem to align themselves to pro-

and anti-ascetic parties.

25. Constantius, V.Germani ep. Autissiodorensis 6, SC 112 (1965) ed.R.Borius.

26. There is a substantial bibliography on the cult of St.Martin and on his tomb as a pilgrimage site. E.Ewig, "Der Martinskult im Frühmittelalter" Francia 3.3 (1979) pp.371-92, H.Delehaye, "Saint Martin et Sulpice Sévère" AB 38 (1920) pp.5-136, esp. 115-36, E.Delaruelle, "La spiritualité..." in Pellegrinaggi e Culto (1963) pp.192-243, F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965) pp.22-46, and C.Stancliffe, St.Martin pp.359-62. Also, Luce Pietri, La ville de Tours (1983) pp.521-99.

27. Paulinus of Périgueux, De vita Martini CSEL 16 (1888) ed. M.Petschenig pp.16-159. A.Hurd Chase, "The metrical Lives.." Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 43 (1932) pp.52ff dated Paulinus' version to the 470s, but R.Van Dam has revised the evidence to suggest the earlier date, "Paulinus of Perigueux and Perpetuus of Tours" Beihefte der Francia 14 (1986) pp.567-73.

28. R.Van Dam, "Paulinus..." pp.567-73.

29. Van Dam, "Paulinus..." p.571.

30. A.Hurd Chase, "The metrical Lives..." lists the major omissions in Paulinus' and Fortunatus' texts when set alongside Severus' Vita. F.Châtillon notes Paulinus' shared phraseology with three of Sidonius Apollinaris' panegyrics on Anthemius, Majorian and Avitus, Ep 2, 5, and 7, "Paulinus of Périgueux, auteur de la Vita Martini, et Sidoine Apollinaire panégyriste des empereurs" Revue du moyen âge latin 23 (1967) pp.5-12.

31. V.Fortunatus, Vita S.Martini. libri IV MGH AA IV.1 ed.F.Leo (1881) pp.293-370. Fortunatus appears to have used a different manuscript version of the Life than did Paulinus, A.Hurd Chase, "The metrical Lives...".

32. V.Germani ep. Autiss. 16. This angelic visitation reminds us of the occasion when Martin fell down some stairs and was healed by angelic hands, V.Martini 19.4.

33. V.Honorati 38.3 SC 235 ed. M-D.Valentin (1977).

34. Vita Patrum Jurensium SC 142 ed.F.Martine (1968). In keeping with the trend in twentieth century scholarship on the subject, Professor Martine addressed the question of authenticity of the VPJ in his introduction pp.14-44, refuting B.Krusch's contention that the work was a Carolingian fabrication, MGH SRM III (1896). (See also F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965) p.67 n.124) Based on internal evidence and supporting documentary material Martine accepts the author's own contention that he was a contemporary of Eugendus and dates the composition of the work to a decade after Eugendus' death in 512/14, so c.520. (pp.53-7).

There are a number of monastic foundations associated with Romanus and Lupicinus: Condat, La Balme (for their sister), Lauconnum (St.Lupicien) and Romainmoutier.

35. The devil assumes a similar guise in V.Antonii 4.

36. VPJ 121. Drawing on Genesis 15,5.

37. Eugendus' predecessor as abbot is not named in the VPJ but in a later abbatial list, the Catalogue of the Abbots of Saint-Oyend, he is named as Minausius. F.Martine, SC 142 pp.75-6.

38. A similar vision is experienced by Aldegund of Maubeuge whose visionary life will be examined below.

39. The Jura monasteries were profoundly influenced by oriental monasticism as relayed by Cassian's writings and by the monastic practice of Lerins, Marseilles and the Rhône valley monasteries, especially those in the Lyons diocese where Romanus lived for a time (either at Insula Barbara or Ainay). See F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum pp.68-9. The Jura monasteries were also marked by their veneration of St.Martin, as is evident in the VPJ and the primitive organization of Condat reflects the eremitic ideal espoused by St.Martin, whom we know to have been an ascetic model for Romanus alongside St.Anthony.

40. Gregory of Tours, Vita Patrum 1. Gregory's knowledge of the founding abbots was patchy and it is likely that he did not have before him the version of the Lives known as the VPJ. It is possible that he knew of Romanus and Lupicinus from a primitive version of the texts. Martine, SC 142, p.73. He does not appear to have known the Life of Eugendus.

41. Vita Caesarii ep. Arelatense I.9 MGH SRM III (1896) ed E. Dümmler pp.433-501.

42. On Arian writings, see the Scripta Arriana Latina CC ser.lat.87 ed.R.Gryson (1982). The only Arian work which remains intact is a collection of homilies and treatises in the capitulary library of Verona.

43. On Pelagius and Pelagianism, E.A.Thompson, St.Germanus of Auxerre (1984); R.A.Markus, "Pelagianism: Britain and the Continent" JEH 37 (1986) pp.191-204.

44. Caesarius' sermons 50-54. CC ser.lat. 103 ed.G.Morin (1953). Sermo 54 admonishes those who consult magicians (caraios), soothsayers (divinos) and those who consult forbidden writings (sortilegos). Those who do so will immediately lose the sacrament of baptism. They must also not drink from the same cup as Christians, Sermo 52.

Chapter 3. VISIONS IN THE "DIALOGUES" OF GREGORY THE GREAT.

1. There is a very extensive bibliography on Gregory the Great dealing with most aspects of his life and teachings: F.H. Dudden, Gregory the Great. 2 vols. (1905), C.Butler, Western Mysticism (1926) ch.2, J. Leclercq, Love of learning (1961), Claude Dagens, Saint Grégoire le Grand (1977), the published papers of the conference on Gregory at Chantilly in 1982 Grégoire le Grand (1986), G.R.Evans, The Thought of Gregory the Great (1986), and for analysis of political and cultural continuity and change from Augustine to Gregory the

Great, the collected essays of R.A.Markus, From Augustine to Gregory the Great (1983). On dreams in Gregory's writings, R.D.Sorrel, Dreams and divination in certain writings of Gregory the Great Unpublished thesis. Oxford B.Litt 1978.

2. The Sources chrétiennes vols. 251, 260, 265 (1978-80) provide the most recent edition of the text, together with a valuable commentary by Adalbert de Vogüé. The text is also to be found in U.Morrica, Gregorii Magni Dialogi libri IV (1924) and PL 77 147-430. On the Dialogues, J.Petersen The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their late antique cultural background (1984). The authenticity of Gregory's authorship of the Dialogues has been questioned most recently by F.Clarke, "The authenticity of the Gregorian Dialogues: A reopening of the question?" in Grégoire le Grand (1978) pp.429-444 and The pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues (1987) to an avalanche of criticism, most notably P.-P Verbraken in Rev.Ben. 98 (1988) pp.272-7, and A. de Vogüé in RHE 83 (1988) pp.281-384. F.Clarke's thesis, although not implausable, is not entirely convincing either.

3. A. de Vogüé, SC 251 pp.25-7 establishes this date by means of internal evidence, Gregory's letters and the testimony of Gregory of Tours.

4. Genesis 3.8 Adam and Eve hide from the sight of God. 2 Cor.12.2-4. Ambrose's De paradiso.

5. Dial IV.1 Christ sent the holy spirit "as a pledge of our inheritance." The coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples is described in Acts 2.1-4.

6. Augustine, De fide rer.invis. CC 46 (1969) ed. M.P.J.Van den Hout. Plato, Republic 7.1-2. transl. P.Shorey, Loeb 276 (1935). A. de Vogüé discusses the history of this Platonic simile and Gregory's use of it in "Un avatar du mythe de la caverne..." Homenaje à Fray Justo Perez de Urbel vol.2 Silos (1977) pp.19-24.

7. G.Cracco, "Gregorio e l'oltre-tomba", Grég.le.Grand.(1986) pp.255-66.

8. A.de Vogüé, SC.165 p.20 n.3

9. ibid. p.21.n.5.

10. A.de Vogüé,"Grégoire le Grand..." RHE 83 (1988) p.288.

11. This aspect of Gregory's attitude towards visionary powers are discussed at greater length below in "The identity of the visionary."

12. Dial.IV.1.4. Quotquot ergo hunc Spiritum, hereditatis nostrae pignus, accepimus, de vita invisibilium non dubitamus.

13. Joan Petersen, The Dialogues (1984) pp.87-8.

14. Mor.XI.20.31. R.A.Markus, "The Eclipse of a Neoplatonic Theme..." Neoplatonism ed. H.J.Blumenthal and R.A.Markus (1981) pp.204-11.

15. R.A. Markus, ibid. pp.208-9.

16. Tertullian, De anima.47. It is not clear whether Gregory knew Tertullian's De anima although he knew his Adversus Judaeos, P.Grossjean, AB 60 (1942) p.289.

17. Cassian, Conlationes VI.3.

18. Gregorii Magni, Moralia in Iob, CC ser.lat. 143 (3 vols) ed. M.Adriaen (Turnholt 1979,1979,1985). Grégoire le Grand, Morales sur Job SC 32 (1952),212 (1974),221 (1975), transl. A. de Gaudemaris and A.Bocognano, and excellent introduction by R.Gillet.

19. See discussion by R.Gillet, SC 32 p.20-36 esp.29-31.

20. Dial IV.27.1 Ipsa aliquando animarum vis subtilitate sua aliquid praevidet, aliquando autem exiturae de corpore animae per revelationem ventura cognoscunt, aliquando vero, dum iam iuxta fit ut corpus deserant, divinitus afflatae in secretis caelestibus incorporeum oculum mentis mittunt. Augustine refers to the "eye of the mind" and on Cassiodorus' use of the "eye of the soul" see J.-Y.Guillaumin, "La christianisation du thème de 'l'Oeil de l'âme'.." Rev.Philol.litt.hist.anc. 59.2 (1987) pp.247-54.

21. De anima 44.3 Omnia magis coniectes quam istam licentiam animae sine morte fugitivae, et quidem ex forma continuam. Also Augustine, De cura pro motuis ger. X (12).

22. P.Courcelle, "La vision cosmique de S.Benoît," REA 13 (1967) 97-117; B.Steidle, "Die kosmiche Vision des Gottesmannes Benedikt: Beitrag zu Gregor der Grosse. Dialog II.35" Erbe u. Auftrag 47 (1971) 187-92.

23. P.Courcelle, "La vision cosmique..." traces the literary parallels and influences evident in this passage, and most importantly notes the textual parallels between Gregory's work and Macrobius'.

24. Dial.IV.59; IV.57. Augustine rejected the idea that the prayers of the church and pious individuals had any efficacy unless the person for whom they interceded had been reborn in Christ and their sins not so bad that they were unworthy of the prayers, nor so good that they have no need of such prayers. The sacraments will certainly not save evil heretics or lapsed catholics. [CD XXI.24-25]

25. Tert.De anima 43.10 on sleep as the image of death, and [42.3] as the mirror of death. See also Ambrose, De excessu Fratis sui Satyri I.72.

26. De anima 48.1 Certiora et colatiora somniari affirmant sub extimis noctibus, quasi iam emergente animarum vigore prodacto sopore. J.B.Stearns, pp.51-69, refuted the idea that the time of dream was considered relevant to the veracity of the dream.

27. There were sceptics in the ancient world, of course. De anima 46.3. Tertullian cites Aristotle and [46.2] Epicurus among others. Belief in the efficacy of divination was debated in Cicero's De Deo nat.

28. Augustine, DGL IX.19 In Adam's sleep his mind entered God's sanctuary so that he would understand what was finally to come. On waking and seeing his wife the first words he uttered were a "prophecy."

29. On the community aspect of death see P.Ariès, Western Attitudes Towards Death (1974), and A.Rush, Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity (1941).

30. Dial IV.48 Sed plerumque de culpis minimis ipse solus pavor egredientes animas iustorum purgat...

31. Dial IV.49 Gregory describes the tranquil death of the monk Merulus: cum magna securitate animi atque hilaritate defunctus est.

32. Among them there is one count, three 'prominent men', Gregory's reclusive aunt Tarsilla (a noblewoman), a lawyer, a Jew (who later converts), a nun's nurse, a soldier, a paralytic man, a boatman and two unidentified individuals. There are also five who are identified as being children or young people.

33. On the didacticism of book IV see A.de Vogüé Grégoire le Grand SC 251 (1978) pp.77-9 who writes (p.79) "La scène est d'une tranquillité quasi liturgique. Le pontife assisté de son diàcre, exerce imperturbablement sa fonction doctrinale."

Chapter 4. VISION THINKING IN THE WORKS OF GREGORY OF TOURS

General bibliography on the Merovingian period.

A.Thierry, Récits des temps mérovingiens (1840). G.Kurth, Histoire poétique des mérovingiens (1893). J.M.Wallace-Hadrill, The Longhaired Kings and other Studies in Frankish History (1962). W.Laistner, Thought and letters in Western Europe 500-900 (1931). K.F.Stroheker Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien Tübingen (1948). K.Selle-Hosbach Prosopographie merowingischer Amtsträger in der Zeit von 511 bis 613 Bonn 1974. M.Weidemann, "Zur chronologie der Merowinger im 6 Jhd." Francia 10 (1982) pp.471-513. M.Heinzelmann, "Gallische Prosopographie 260-527" Francia 10 (1982) pp.531-718. E.Ewig, "Studien zur merowingischen Dynastie" Frühmittelalterliche Studien 8 (1974) pp.1-59. E.Zollner, Geschichte der Franken bis zur mitte des 6 Jhd (1970). E.James, The origins of France (1982). F.Graus, Volk, Herrscher, und Heiliger im reich der Merowinger (1965). F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich (1965). J.M.Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church (1983). M.Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule d'après les oeuvres de Grégoire de Tours (1976). M.Weidemann, Kulturgeschichte der Merowingerzeit nach den Werken Gregors von Tours 1.2 (1982). M.Heinzelmann, Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien (1976).

1. Gregory's works are in MGH.SRM. I and I.2. eds. Krusch, Arndt, Hannover (1885). The most recent biographical study on Gregory is Luce Pietri's, La Ville de Tours de IV au VIe siecle (1983) pp.247-64. See also G.Monod, Études critiques sur les sources de l'histoire mérovingienne 2 vols.(1872-5). The date of Gregory's birth is calculated on the basis of his Virt.Martini III,10 where he mentions his birth as being 34 years before his consecration to the bishopric of Tours in 573. On Gregory's claims to

senatorial rank, and its significance in the sixth century context, see F.D.Gilliard, "The senators of 6th century Gaul" Speculum 54 (1979) pp.685-97, and for an alternative interpretation, B.Brennan, "Senators and social mobility in sixth century Gaul" Journal of Medieval History 11 (1985) pp.145-61.

2. See on the importance of family, P.Brown Cult of the Saints (1981) pp.24-5, 30-2, and on kinship and companionship with the saints, pp.50-68.

3. GC 39. Gregory was at the age when he was just learning to read, as the vision story makes clear. Elsewhere Gregory states that he was eight years old when he began to learn to read with Nicetius of Lyons: VP VII.2.

4. Tobias' action on behalf of his father is not quite as the angel relates in this vision to Gregory. Tobias burned the heart and liver of the fish to banish the demon that had killed his prospective wife Sarah's previous husbands (Tobit 8.2-3), and it was by anointing Tobit's eyes with the fish's gall that his father was cured (Tobit 11.11-13). The procedure advised by the angel was in keeping with Gregory's father's illness nevertheless, for that illness did not consist of blindness, but his sickness was probably considered to have been the work of a demon. In exegetical works on Tobit the fish in the story was interpreted as Christ, piscis magnus. Quodvultdeus, Lib.Promiss. II.39.

5. HF X.30. Rogations were likewise held in Tours organised by Gregory in the face of a terrible epidemic. Gregory learned directly from his uncle's example.

6. On the marks and signs which miraculously appeared on the walls both in this case and during St.Gallus's procession to Brioude, see G.de Nie, Views from a Many-Windowed Tower. (1987) pp.261-2.

7. It should be noted that St.Benignus' cult was fostered by Gregory's grandfather and namesake Gregory of Langres. Armentaria was named for Gregory of Langres' wife. The saint thus came to console the family which had served him.

8. HF X.31. On another occasion Gregory addresses his imagined critic who will note his incorrect use of noun gender and his confusion of ablatives with accusatives and vice-versa, but he justifies his undertaking by noting that "what I describe unskillfully (inculte) and briefly in an obscure style, you will amplify in verse standing clearly and sumptuously (lucide ac splendide) on longer pages.[GC praef. Van Dam transl.] Fortunatus' exceptional skills evidently posed genuine concern for Gregory whose first writings post-date Fortunatus' arrival in Gaul.

9. de Nie, Views (1987) p.215 discusses this dream and Gregory's imprecision about whether it was the dream which took place at midday, or the cures at the basilica, and at what juncture Gregory's mother enters the narrative, whether inside or outside the dream. The simplest explanation would surely be that Gregory had his dream during a midday siesta and in his dream he was watching the cures taking place in the basilica, and that suddenly in his dream he became aware that his mother was standing next to him and her comments to him was in response to their shared view of the

events in the basilica.

10. Armentaria's attitude towards language as a means of mass communication rather than a sophisticated communication between the elite may reflect growing concern in church circles that latin compositions by clergy were often beyond the understanding of their flock, thus impeding the effective communication of the Christian faith. Gregory's latin was closer to the spoken latin of his day than that of Venantius Fortunatus. Julianus Pomerius, inspired by Augustine's De doctrina christiana 4.28 gives expression to these concerns in Gaul: De vita contemplativa I,23.1: Tam simplex et apertus; etiamsi minus Latinus, disciplinatus tamen et gravis sermo debet esse pontificis: ut ab intelligentia sui nullos, quamvis imperitos, excludat... ; ibid. III,34.2: Ea est enim, nisi fallor, judicata Latinitas, quae breviter et aperte, observata duntaxat usitatorum verborum proprietate, res intelligendas enuntiat... et prudentibus viris non placent phalerata, sed fortia: quando non res pro verbis, sed pro rebus enuntiandis verba sunt instituta. PL 59. col.438-9, 520. Gregory may not have achieved all that Pomerius admired in a bishop's style, but he came closest to it for the sixth century. Gregory undoubtedly saw his works not only as a means of preserving the memory of saintly men, but as a pastoral tool. His books of miracles are as close to Gregory's "preaching" as one can get. See E.Auerbach, Literatursprache und Publikum (1958) pp.25-63 on the sermo humilis.

11. See, G.de Nie, Views (1987) pp.269-72 for a discussion of this episode.

12. de Nie, Views (1987).

13. Artemidorus placed a hierarchy of importance on the veridical dream types (oneiros/somnium, horama/visio, chrematismos/oraculum) in which the latter two were subordinate to the first. Oneirocriticon I.2. Access to the five types of allegorical dream (oneiros) was further restricted by the dreamer's experience. Macrobius reproduces this schema. Somn.Scip. III.2ff.

14. Marcia Colish, The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the early Middle Ages.(1985) vol.2. pp.96-101, 128-31, 239-49 examines the Stoic mentality of some minor writers and theologians including Ausonius, Sidonius Apollinaris, Faustus of Riez, Claudianus Mamertus, Gennadius of Marseille, Julianus Pomerius, and Caesarius of Arles. Unfortunately her work does not extend to include Gregory of Tours, but the early sixth century Gallic contact with stoic ideas is documented. See also, P.Courcelle, "La vision cosmique..." R.E.A. 13 (1967) p.105. Insofar as this type of mystical language had penetrated Christian usage long before Gregory's time, however, it is impossible to assert any specific philosophic contact.

15. de Nie (1987) p.288 ponders the meaning behind this type of imprecise terminology, and points to the dream-like quality of Gregory's descriptions of reality. I have examined the hagiographic vision narratives of Venantius Fortunatus and Sulpicius Severus, and this mode of expression is not used by them in their descriptions of visions. Biblical use of the term such as audivi quasi vocem magnam (Rev.19.1), suggests that Gregory's employment of "imprecise" terminology may not necessarily indicate a conscious desire to distance himself from experience.

16. Augustine, De Genesi XII.13 The high value placed on ecstasy by Augustine was in agreement with the Neoplatonic estimation of the state.

17. The term ecstasis is not used by Venantius Fortunatus either. Gregory does not appear to have known the Life of Eugendus (VPJ III) which employs the term, although he did know the Lives of the first two Jura abbots (see chapter 2 note 40). Hagiographic literature after Gregory of Tours' time which employed the term include the V.Rusticulae 2, V.Eligii II.55, V.Wandregiseli 9 and 18, V.Sadalbergae 26, Passio Praeiecti 1, V.Amandi I.7.

18. See J.S.Hanson, "Dreams and visions in the Graeco-Roman world and early Christianity" in Aufstieg und Niedergang 2.23.2 (1980) pp.1405-7. P.Gautier Dalché, "La répresentation de l'espace.." Le Moyen Âge 88 (ser.4. 38) (1982) pp.397-420. Helgeland,J "Time and Space: Christian and Roman" in Aufstieg und Niedergang [2.23.2] (1980) ed.Haase pp.1285-1305. W.Speyer, "Mittag und Mitternacht als heilige Zeiten in Antike und Christentum" Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 11 (1984) pp.314-26.

19. Virt.Mart. I.38 Sic multi ex frigoriticis, dum vi febris pessimae quatiuntur, tota die inter altare et sanctum tumulum decubantes, as vesperum autem haustum ex beato sepulchro pulvere, continuo promerentur accipere sanitatem. E.Delaruelle argued against the interpretation that such cases were examples of incubation, "La spiritualité..." in Pellegrinaggi e Culto dei Santi in Europa fino alla Ia crociata (1961) see p.223 n.70.

20. Another example: Virt.Mart.I.6 A venerable old man appeared to those trying to move St.Martin's bones to the larger church constructed for them by Perpetuus of Tours: "Non videtis domnum Martinum stantem vobis iuvare paratum, si manus adponitis?."

21. On the cult of the saints and its expansion, both territorially and in the mentality of the period, and the bishop's rôle in this process see: P.Brown, The cult of the saints (1981) and review article, J.Fontaine, "Le culte des saints et ses implications sociologiques" A.B. 100 (1982) pp.17-41. J.Corbett, "The saint as patron in the work of Gregory of Tours" Journal of Medieval History 7 (1981) pp.1-13. E.Griffe, La Gaule Chrétienne 3 vols. (1965), vol.III, pp.5-65. On the topographic impact, J.Hubert, "Évolution de la topographie et de l'aspect des villes de Gaule du Vème aux Xème siècle" Settimane di Studio sull'Alto Medio Evo VI (1959) pp.529-58. J.Lestocquoy, "De l'unité à la pluralité: Le paysage urbain en Gaule du Vème au IXème siècle" Annales 8 (1953) pp.159-72. G.Fournier, "Rural Churches and Rural Communities in the Early Medieval Auvergne" in Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe ed. F.L.Cheyette (1968) pp.315-340. See also collected essays in The Church in Town and Country [Studies in Church History 16] (1979) esp. P.Fouracre, "The work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon.." pp.77-91, C.E.Stancliffe, "From Town to Country: The Christianisation of the Touraine 370-600" pp.43-59 and I.N.Wood, "Early Merovingian Devotion in Town and Country" pp.61-76. J.Le Goff's "Culture ecclésiastique et culture folklorique au Moyen Age: Saint Marcel de Paris et le dragon." in Pour un autre Moyen Âge (1977) pp.223-35 examines the legend of St.Marcellus and the dragon and its hagiographic portrayal in the context of episcopal taming of the countryside's genius loci.

22. On taxation in the 6th century, HF IX.30. Poitiers was unfairly assessed because the lists were outdated and many had died in the meantime. Gregory protected the immunity of Tours from taxation. Also HF X.7 on clerical immunity. W.Goffart, "Old and new in Merovingian taxation" Past and Present 96 (1982) pp.3-21. R.Fossier Polyptyques et censiers (1978). W.Goffart, "Merovingian polyptychs:Reflections on two recent publications" Francia 9 (1981) pp.57-77.

23. 2 Esdras 7.6-9. Visio Sancti Pauli, T.Silverstein (1935). M.E.Stone, "The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish apocalypse and Medieval vision" JTS n.s.33 (1982) pp.1-18.

24. On the Devil and demons in early Christian literature see: E.von Petersdorff, Daemonologie (1956), C.Stancliffe, St.Martin (1983) pp.215-227 in the context of Sulpicius Severus' V.Martini.

25. R.Van Dam transl. Gregory of Tours, Glory of the Confessors (1988) p.43.

26. Continuity of praise for relics or God was a very important aspect of early medieval veneration. In the East and at Agaune, the laus perennis was instituted: I.N.Wood, "A prelude to Columbanus..." BAR (1981). G.Moyse, "Les origines du monachisme dans le diocese de Besançon (Vème-Xème siècles)" Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes 131 (1973) pp.21-104, esp. pp.70-76. And when the relic of the Holy Cross was barred from entering the city of Poitiers in 569, it was removed to a monastery some distance away where it was continually venerated until the dispute in Poitiers was settled.

27. Albinus' feastday is traditionally celebrated in March (AASS) but this story may reflect an earlier observance closer to Martin's own festival in November.

28. HF IV.33 By the same token, the abbot's virtues increased through the virtue of his monks, see Vita Honorati SC 235 ed. M.-D.Valentin 17,8 n.3.

29. de Nie, Views (1987) p.133.

30. The association of divinity with light had a pagan and Judaeo-Christian history and was central to medieval theology. See K.Hedwig, Sphaera Lucis. Studien zur Intelligibilität des Seiendens im Kontext der mittelalterlichen Lichtspekulation (1980).

31. St.Benedict experienced this too in a vision in which he saw the earth and heavens rolled into a ball; material reality became insignificant in the contemplation of God. Gregory the Great, Dial.II.35. An interesting variation on this theme is provided by Gregory: when the devil tempted Patroclus with thoughts of abandoning his eremitical life, an angel presented him with a column of amazing height from which he could see the murders and fornifications of the world. From the birdseye perspective Patroclus was given the ability to see his desires in a larger context. [VP IX.2] On the importance of the 'observation point' on the world and on God, see P.Courcelle, "La vision cosmique" p.100-6, REA 13 (1967) pp.97-117.

32. de Nie notes that in his History Gregory shows a chronological

variation in his willingness to interpret observed phenomena as universally significant rather than being bound to short-term historical and dynastic events: "Roses in January" JMH. 5 (1979) pp.259-89 reprinted with modifications in Views (1987) pp.27-69.

33. Exodus 3.2; Severus, Dial II,2 and mentioned by Gregory also GC 20; a flame on or around the head is recorded in pagan works too, eg. Aeneas' son Iulus, Aeneid II. 11.679-86, ed.Mynors (1969) p.148. G.de Nie, Views (1987) pp.133-207 discusses fire imagery in Gregory's works. See also Clare Stancliffe St.Martin (1983) pp.191-3.

34. On the Merovingian episcopate see G.Scheibelreiter, Der Bischof in Merowingisher Zeit (1983); F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965); L.Duchesne, L'Église au VIème siècle (1925); J.Durliat, "Les attributions civiles des évêques mérovingiens: L'example de Didier, évêque de Cahors (630-55)", Annales du Midi 91 (1979) pp.237-54.

35. L.Pietri, La Ville de Tours (1983) p.247.

36. Not all bishops receive a good press in Gregory's writings. Gregory records factionalism and personal animosities among the episcopate. The struggle between the diocesan clergy to elect and the royal court to appoint new bishops proved a constant disruptive element in Merovingian ecclesiastical politics. Gregory himself was appointed over the head of the Tours clergy, was later in his career brought to trial on the charge of treason, and was spoken against by a fellow metropolitan, Bertram, bishop of Bordeux. HF V.49. D.Claude "Die Bestellung der Bischöfe im merowingische Reiche" Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung fur Rechtsgeschicte, kanonistische Abteilung 49 (1963) pp.1-75.

37. Fortunatus Carm III.8.29 MGH AA IV ed.F.Leo (1881), pp.58-9.

38. See Conc.Tur.(567) II.13 (12) "Episcopus coniugem ut sororem habeat..." Concilia Galliae ed. C.de Clercq CC ser.lat. 148A (1963) p.180.

39. On the role of the episcopae see B.Brennan, " 'Episcopae': Bishop's wives viewed in sixth century Gaul." Church History 54 (1985) pp.311-23 who considers the position of episcopae more positive than that outlined by S.Wemple, Women in Frankish Society (1981) pp.131-5. On celibacy and the clergy see P.Suso Frank, Aggelikos Bios (1964) on the connection of virginity and the angelic life, and further on the angelic life and sexual abstention as an asocial state, P.Brown, "The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church" World Spirituality 16, Christian Spirituality: Origins to the 12th century eds. B.McGinn, J.Meyendorff, J.Leclercq (1985) pp.427-43, and most recently his The Body and Society (1988). Also J.Bugge, Virginitas: an Essay in the History of a Medieval Idea (1975) esp.pp.41-7 on virginity and prophecy.

40. HF I.44 quoting I Cor 7.5

41. VP XI.1 The monasterium Miletense has been identified with the monastery of Meallat, arr. Mauriac, dep. Cantal. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, Les monuments religieux (1976) no.157, E.James ed. Gregory of Tours: Life of the Fathers (1985) p.150 n.XI.2. Also note Gregory's admiration of excessive abstinence, no longer suspect of heretical leanings.

42. The extreme asceticism of Gregory's model bishops like Gregory of Langres would have been unthinkable in the late fourth and early fifth century because of its association with Priscillianism. St.Martin, who had been suspected of such leanings, was now the model for the Gallic episcopate. See also my note 73 below.

43. On episcopal control of monasteries and eremitical practises; H.Robbins Bitterman, "The council of Chalcedon and episcopal Jurisdiction" Speculum 3 (1938) pp.198-203, T.P.McLaughlin, "Les très anciens droits monastiques de l'occident" Archives de la France Monastiques 38 (1935) ch.4 'Le choix de l'abbé' esp.p.98, P.Rousseau, "The spiritual authority of the monk-bishop..." JTS. 22 (1971) pp.380-419. Bishops in the Carolingian period could not interfere in abbatial election. In the Gallic and Merovingian period bishops had rights and a supervisory role over monasteries especially over convents. Caesarius of Arles' exemption for St.Jean in Arles from episcopal control was an exception, and Radegund of Poitiers, whose convent followed his rule, was unable to gain the same privilege.

44. Present incumbents were expected to venerate the memory of their episcopal predecessor, often encouraging their reputation as saints and miracle workers. A glance down the episcopal lists confirms their success. Often the bishop took upon himself the task of recording the life of his predecessor, or his spiritual master. St.Honoratus of Arles's life was composed by his successor as bishop, Hilary in the same year as Honoratus' death, 429 (Sermo de vita S.Honorati), and Hilary's biography in its turn was written by his disciple, Honoratus of Marseilles in 477. F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965) pp.49-50. The importance of vitae in this process is underscored by Gregory GM 63.

45. GM 66. The cult of St.Genesius of Clermont was probably promoted by Avitus as a double of that of Genesius of Arles. Van Dam Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs (1988) p.91 n.80.

46. GM 12. Huns are confused with the Visigoths who laid siege to Bazas in 414 and with the Vandals under the leadership of Geiseric. Van Dam (1988) p.34. n.18.

47. As Averil Cameron has pointed out, a number of the poems on the Virgin Mary attributed to Fortunatus have long been recognised as spuria and so Fortunatus' rôle in propagating the cult is less easily defined. "The Theotokos in 6th century Constantinople: a city finds its symbol" JTS n.s.29 (1978) pp.79-108. The similarities between the In laudem Mariae traditionally attributed to Fortunatus but considered by F.Leo in his MGH edition to be among the spuria, and the prayer to the virgin at the beginning of Corippus' poem to the emperor and voiced by Sophia, has led A.Cameron to reattribute the poem to Fortunatus. "The early religious policies of Justin II" Studies in Church history 13 (1976) pp.51-67. Further on the cult of the virgin in this period, E.C.McLaughlin, "Equality of souls, inequality of sexes..." Religion and Sexism ed. R.R.Ruether (1974) pp.246-51.

48. Fortunatus' In laudem Mariae, MGH AA IV pp.371-80, introduces the idea of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven which is also to be found in Corippus' In laudem Iustini MGH AA III.2 ed.I.Partsch pp.111-56, A.Cameron "The

Theotokos..." JTS n.s.29 (1978) pp.79-108 esp. pp.93-4. Reprinted Continuity and Change (1981).

49. W.A.Christian, Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain (1981) p.210 Also on apparitions, Ronald C.Finucane, Appearances of the Dead: a Cultural History of Ghosts (1984).

50. GM 40. Prudentius's treatise on the Jews is no longer extant.

51. On the Visigoths on Gallic soil, E.A.James "Septimania and its Frontier: an archeological approach" in Visigothic Spain ed. E.A.James (1980) pp.223-41, H.Wolfram, "The Goths in Aquitaine" German Studies Review 2 (1979) pp.153-68. General works, R.Collins, Early Medieval Spain (1983), E.A.James, Visigothic Spain (1980), J.N.Hillgarth, Visigothic Spain, Byzantium and the Irish Variorum Reprints (1985).

52. These dynastic marriages were often contentious and even tragic. The most successful alliance was that between King Sigibert and Brunhilde, an Arian visigothic princess who converted to catholicism on her marriage.[HF IV.27] Gregory admired the cultured queen's beauty and wisdom, and the marriage was celebrated in verse by Venantius Fortunatus.[Carm. VI.1, VI.2. pp.124-9, 129-30, MGH AA IV] Sigibert's brother Chilperic, who was impressed by his brother's noble match, arranged to marry Brunhilde's sister Galswinth whom he murdered shortly after probably with the connivance of Chilperic's deposed and future wife Fredegund.[HF IV.28] Brunhilde's daughter Ingund was married to the visigothic king Leuvigild's son Hermangild, whom she converted to catholicism, and who thereby became the focus of a rebellion against his father.[HF IV.38, V.38, VI.40, VI.43, VIII.28] It was proposed that Chilperic's daughter Rigunth, or alternatively Basina, be married to Leuvigild's other son Recared but neither marriage took place.[HF IV.38, VI.18, VI.34]

53. Gregory's contention that Oppila converted to catholicism on his deathbed is rather suspect. HF VI.40.

54. Gregory identifies them as Huns, although they were likely Visigoths: Van Dam Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs (1988) p.34 n.18.

55. On the history of the Jews in this period: B.Blumenkranz, Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental 430-1096 Paris 1960; B.S.Bachrach, Early medieval Jewish policy in Western Europe Minneapolis 1977; J.M.Wallace-Hadrill The Frankish Church (1983) pp.390-403.

56. Concilium Agathense (AD 506) CC.ser.lat. 148 ed. C.Munier. Intermarriage prohibitions c.20 (also Conc.Aurel (AD 533) c.19; Conc.Clarem (AD 535) c.6; Conc.Aurel (AD 538) c.14). They should not eat together c.40 (which is repeated verbatim Conc.Veneticum. (461-91)c.12). On eight months preparation c.34. The preparation time appears to have been dispensed with during the mass-conversions under the Merovingians. Jews were also prohibited from walking with Christians publicly on certain days (Conc.Aurel.(AD.538) c.33; Conc.Matisc (AD.581/3) c.14). Christians could not be sold to Jews (indicating a measure of affluence and position among the Jewish community) Conc.Clipp. (AD 626/7) c.13). Non-Christians were allowed (perhaps even encouraged) to attend church services: Statuta Eccles.Antiqua (AD.475) 16(84)

Ut episcopus nullum prohibeat ingredi ecclesiam et audire verbum Dei, sive gentilem, sive haereticum, sive iudaeum, usque ad missam catechumenorum.

57. Sidonius Apollinaris, Ep. III.4 to Felix, and he addressed two letters to Popes on behalf of the Jewish community, VI.11, VIII.13. MGH AA VIII pp. 43, 100-101, 144-5.

58. e.g. Gregory's comments on Cautinus HF IV,12; a bishop should only have dealings with Jews if conversion to Christianity is the intent behind the association. On the rôle of "Judaizing" in ecclesiastical politics, see I.N.Wood "The ecclesiastical politics of Merovingian Clermont" in Ideal and Reality eds. P.Wormald, D.Bullough, R.Collins (1983) pp.34-57 and B.Brennan, "The conversion of the Jews of Clermont" JTS n.s. 36 (1985) pp.321-37.

59. See I.N.Wood, op.cit. (1983), B.Brennan, op.cit. (1985).

60. B.Brennan; HF V.11; Fortunatus, De Judaeis conversis per Avitum episcopum Avernum. Carm. V,5 MGH AA IV pp.107-112. There have been a number of important studies on Avitus of Clermont's forced conversion of the Jews and its political background: I.Wood, "The ecclesiastical politics..." in Ideal and Reality (1983) pp.34-57; B.Brennan, "The conversion of the Jews of Clermont" JTS n.s.36 (1985) pp.321-37; W.Goffart, "The conversions of Avitus of Clermont, and similar passages in Gregory of Tours" in To See Ourselves as Others See Us eds.J.Neusner, E.S.Frerichs (1985) pp.473-97. See also A.J.Zuckerman and B.S.Bachrach, "The political uses of Theology: the conflict of Bishop Agobard and the Jews of Lyons", Studies in Medieval Culture 3 (1970) pp.23-51.

61. GM 9. A similar story in Evagrius' Historia ecclesiastica IV.36 PG 86.2, 2770. The story set in Constantinople at the time of bishop Mena (536-52).

62. Venantius Fortunatus, later bishop of Poitiers, recorded how Germanus of Paris appeared to a Jewess named Anna in the form of a new Moses with radiating horns. V.Germani Parisiensis VII (22) MGH AA IV.ii ed. B.Krusch (1885).

63. For examples of Gregory's unreliability, R.A.Lecoy de la Marche, De l'authorité de Grégoire de Tours, (1861), R.Collins "Theodebert I 'Rex Francorum'" Ideal and Reality (1983) pp.7-33.

64. Averil Cameron, "The byzantine sources of Gregory of Tours" JTS n.s.26 (1975) pp.421-6, reprinted in A.Cameron, Continuity and Change, Variorum Reprints (1981).

65. Fortunatus praised Justinus II's upholding of Chalcedon in his poem sent to the emperor on his granting Radegund a fragment of the True Cross, Ad Iustinum et Sophiam Augustos MGH AA IV pp.275-8, ll.23-6. Avitus of Vienne (c.450-c.519) Contra Eutychianam heresim libri II MGH AA 6.2. ed. R.Peiper, pp.15-29. On the Acacian attempt at reconciling the Monophysite and Chalcedonian factions in the East by means of the Henoticon, see H.Chadwick, The Early Church (1967) pp.205-6.

66. See K.Wessel, "Der nackte Crucifixus" Rivista di archeologia

cristiana 43 (1967) pp.333-45; R.A.Markus, "The cult of Icons in sixth century Gaul" JTS n.s. 29 (1978) pp.151-7; A.D.Kartsonis, Anastasis (1986) 28-39,127; N.Baynes "The Icons before Iconoclasm" HTR 46 (1951) pp.93ff; P.Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis: apects of the Iconoclastic Controversy" EHR 88 (1973) pp.1-34, reprinted Society and the Holy (1982) pp.251-301 and, "Eastern and Western Christendom" Studies in Church History 13 (1976) p.1ff esp.p.15.

67. Baptismal scenes in which Christ appears completely naked may be seen in the the dome of the Arian baptistry in Ravenna. A more complex version appears in the dome of the Cathedral baptistry there. Sixth century art such as church paintings and mosaics are virtually non extant in Gaul.

68. R.A. Markus, "The cult of icons..." JTS n.s.29 (1978) p.153.

69. Van Dam, Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs, 22 n.26. Greek names were not uncommon in the south, however, where Greek saints and martyr cults were popular. See E.Ewig, "Die Verehrung Orientalischen Heilige im Spätrömischen Gallien und im Merowingerreich" Francia 3/2 (1979) pp.393-410.

70. M.Roblin, "Paganisme et rusticité: un gros problème, une étude de mots" Annales 8 (1953) pp.173-83. It has been argued that its use to denote non-Christians was influenced by the usage of Christian writers, and survived alongside its original meaning as merely an inhabitant of the territorial area of the pagus. The 'rusticity' of these pagani also came to have pejorative overtones, especially when 'rusticity' was used to convey the ideas of unpolished literary style and disrespect to the Christian religion and most specifically to the saints. P.Brown, "Relics and social status in the age of Gregory of Tours" The Stenton Lecture (1976) p.9 n.40. reprinted Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (1982) pp.222-250.

71. The Concilium Agathense (AD 506) c.42 spells out the church's objections: Ac ne id fortasse videatur omissum, quod maxime fidem catholicae religionis infestat, quod aliquanti clerici sive laici student auguriis et sub nomine fictae religionis, quas sanctorum sortes vocant, divinationis scientiam profitentur, aut quarumcumque scripturarum inspectione futura promittunt, hoc quicumque clericus vel laicus detectus fuerit vel consulere vel docere, ab ecclesia habeatur extraneus CC ser.lat. 148 pp.210-11. Conc.Tur. II (567) c.23 Some celebrate the kalends of January in honour of Janus. Some, after receiving Mass, eat offerings to demons. On the feast of St.Peter some offer potages to the dead. Priests should oversee their flock and prevent them from worshipping stones, trees or springs. Priests should ban such people from approaching the altar. The sermons of Caesarius of Arles also at the beginning of the sixth century also show an active concern to stamp out vestiges of pagan divination practises and superstition. The sortes biblicae for instance was widely practised by Christians although strictly speaking it constituted divination. St.Anthony was converted on entering a church and hearing the Gospel passage instructing him to give all his possessions to the poor. Augustine heard a child sing "Tolle, lege" [Conf. VIII.12] and Gregory consulted the psalms of David in this fashion [HF V.49], and other occasions are recorded by him: [HF IV.16, V.14]. St.Patroclus left little notes on the altar of a church he had dedicated to St.Martin at Neris as an auspicium so that the Lord would reveal what he should do: he became a hermit.[VP IX.2] Gregory also relates a miracle

performed by St.Martin when pagan demonic intervention failed, for the ut mos rusticorum habet, a sortilegis et hariolis ligamenta ei et potiones deferebant. Virt.Mart.I.26.

72. Norman Cohen, The Pursuit of the Millenium (1957) p.1-32.

73. Sulpicius, Chron II.46ff. On the Priscillianist affair and its division of the Gallic clergy see H.Chadwick, Priscillian of Avila (1976). Clare Stancliffe, St.Martin and his Hagiographer (1983) pp.278-96. An older but important work, E.-C Babut's Priscillien et le Priscillianisme (1909) who did not consider Priscillian's views to be heretical. C.Stancliffe and H.Chadwick consider that they may have been: Stancliffe, St.Martin p.279 n.2, Chadwick Priscillian pp.71, 96-9, 181, 191-205, 211-15.

74. This aspect of Gregory's thinking is fundamental to de Nie's approach to Gregory's works in Views (1987), especially the influence of his tendency to think in images on his composition of what appears to be his non-discursive method of historical writing.

75. St.Salvius' vision recorded in HF VII.1 is somewhat exceptional and has been discussed above. His experience as it is recorded in the HF probably owes more to Salvius' own currency with visionary models than necessarily Gregory's own. The detailed description of Salvius' experience, both in his physical and spiritual senses, and in the nature of what he saw, gives the impression of having been recorded more or less accurately from a written account or from Salvius' own telling of the story. The crowd of sexless people (multitudo promisci sexus) differs from Augustine's view expressed in the CD that the resurrected would have gendered bodies. The heavenly ascent above the moon and stars is reminiscent of many Judaeo-Christian cosmic visions. The profundity of the text bears little relation to the identifiably sexed and status conscious saint-filled visions of the majority of Gregory's accounts.

Chapter 5. VISIONS IN MEROVINGIAN HAGIOGRAPHY.

On visions specifically in the context of hagiography there are some important overviews: Franz Neiske, "Vision und Totengedenken", Frühmittelalterliche Studien 20 (1986) pp.137-85; Michel Aubrun, "Caractères et portée religieuse et sociale des "Visiones" en Occident du VIè au XIè siècle." Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale 23 (1980) pp.109-30. Larger studies which draw on hagiographic literature from the whole Middle Ages are E.Benz, Die Vision (1969), and P.Dinzelbacher, Vision und Visionliteratur im Mittelalter (1981). On miracles in hagiography as topos, including visions, see H.Delehaye, The Legends of the Saints (1962) (D.Attwater transl. 1955 edition. Original French edition 1905); E.Petroff, Medieval Women's Visionary Literature (1986); S.Wemple, "Female Spirituality and Mysticism in Frankish Monasteries: Radegund, Balthild and Aldegund." Medieval Religious Women II Peaceweavers. eds. L.T.Shank and J.A.Nichols (1987) pp.39-53, an expansion of material first presented in Frankish Women (1981) ch.8. On the question of authenticity, B.Krusch's dating of many Merovingian texts in the Monumenta (SRM) should be treated with caution. L.Van der Essen, Étude critique et littéraire sur les vitae des Saints Mérovingienes de l'ancienne Belgique Louvain/Paris 1907, is particularly important in addressing issues of

authenticity. Recent research on the hagiographic accounts of the saints mentioned in this chapter is included in the notes below. See also M.Heinzelmann, "Neue Aspekte der biographischen und hagiographischen Literatur in der lateinischen Welt (1-6 Jhd)" Francia 1 (1973) pp.27-44.

1. Other examples of the birth of a saint foretold can be found in the V.Rusticulae 2 (two doves), V.Eligii ep.Noviomagensis I.2. (beautiful eagle) V.Austreberthae 1. On Eligius, see Van der Essen, Étude critique pp.329-36 and Fouracre, P. "The Work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon in extending episcopal influence from the town to the country in 7th century Neustria." The Church in Town and Country, Studies in Church History 16. (1979) pp.77-91.

2. P.Dinzelbacher, Vision u. Visionliteratur im Mittelalter (1981) pp.185-99. "Von den Visionären und vor allem von den Visionärinnen der zweiten Phase dagegen haben wir nicht selten Zeugnisse darüber, dass sie ihre Visionen sehr wohl erwarteten und erhofften." p.188.

3. On attitudes towards death and its attendant rituals see: A.Rush, Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity (1941).

4. Venantius Fortunatus attempted, in an allusion hardly flattering to the Franks, to liken the devastation of the Thuringians and Radegund's capture by Chlothar to the exile of the Israelites into captivity. V.Rad I.2. On Fortunatus and the Vita Radegundis see the preliminary notes to chapter 6.

5. Examples of the scala paradiso: Jacob's ladder. The perils of climbing the ladder described in Passio SS.Perpetua et Felicitatis. I,3. Other means of divine assistance in passing through the dangerous demon infested zones were also envisaged. At a convent at Barking a nun saw a shining figure being raised on cords brighter than gold. Bede, HE IV,9. Shining cords are also mentioned in Ps-Dionysius, The Divine Names 3. Reference to a divine cord or chain is made by Homer, Iliad 8.19. Loeb.170 p.339. Macrobius writes: invenietur pressius intuenti a summo deo usque ad ultimam rerum faecem una mutuis se vinculis religans et nusquam interrupta conexio. Somn. Scip.I.14 ed.Willis (1970) p.58.

6. V.Balthildis 14 It is indicative of the tendency for revisionist hagiographers to amplify their texts that this whimsical suggestion is related as a bona fide vision in the later version of the Life (B). On Balthild and Genesius who aided her almsgiving, see J.Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: The careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History" in Medieval Women ed.D.Baker 1978 pp.31-77 and E.Ewig, "Das Privileg des Bischofs Berthefrid von Amiens für Corbie von 664 und die Klosterpolitik der Königin Balthild" Francia I (1973) pp.538-85, esp.577-8. Genesius was abbot, not of a monastery but of the palace oratory.

7. V.Odiliae 22 On the importance of the viaticum to Christian death rituals and its pagan origin, A.Rush, Death and Burial pp.92-9.

8. Caesarian rule for nuns, text: G.Morin, Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis opera omnia II Maretoli (1942) pp.99-149. His rule for monks, ibid. pp.149-55. (Also Migne, PL 67) The so-called Rule of Augustine, based on Augustine's Ep. 211. The Rule of St.Benedict: ed.C.Butler, Freiburg (1912);

ed. A.de Vogüé and J.Neufville, SC 181, 182 (1972); Regula Magistri ed. A.de Vogüé, Sources Chrétiennes 105,106. The rule of Donatus of Besançon (written between 630 and 655, Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum p.80) and other rules Migne PL 66 and 88. Also A.de Vogüé, Les Règles des Saints Pères Sources Chrétiennes 297, 298 (1982).

For life under the Benedictine rule, G.Zimmerman, Ordensleben und Lebensstandard (1973).

9. A.Borias argued strongly for the use of the Benedictine rule at Fontanelle although in probable conjunction with that of Columbanus, "St.Wandrille, à-t-il connu S.Benoît?" Rev.Bén 89 (1979) pp.7-28.

10. V.Antonii 65.

11. W.Levison ed. V.Anstrudis MGH SRM VI p.64.

12. The state of ecstasy involved spiritual travel in the V.Wandregiseli 9,18 but in V.Amandi 7 and V.Praeiecti 1 the term is used without removal from the body being a necessary part of the experience.

13. 'Spirit' refers to the breath of life breathed into Adam and Eve at their creation, and without which the body cannot live. Barontius therefore needs the spirit to live while his soul travels. The author of this text makes it clear that the soul is distinct from the spirit because the soul can leave the body without causing death. A similar distinction is made by Jerome, Ep. 120,12. W.Levison rendered "spm" in the manuscript as being spem. [MGH SRM V (1910) p.380 and n.2.] Henschenius had rendered it as spiritum. Levison rejected Henschenius' reading because according to Jerome the senses resided in the spirit, and should therefore have been left behind as the soul journeyed alone to heaven. Barontus states explicitly that his senses went with him. Unnoted by Levison, however, was the Visio Pauli in which the souls were brought before God for judgement, and at which point the spirit testified against the soul. The spirit in the Visio Pauli identified itself thus: "Ego sum spiritus vivificationis aspirans et habitans in ea..." (ch.14) and further on, another spirit complained to God thus: "...non secuta est meam voluntatem. Iudica eam secundum tuum iudicium." Barontus may also have stated that his senses went with him precisely because it did not conform to received wisdom on the subject, but also because he would have been unable to experience his journey in a manner able to be related if he had not his senses with him. The division of soul and spirit in the face of judgement as described in this fourth century apocalypse leads me to consider Henschenius' rendition as being the correct one.

14. P.Dinzelbacher, Vision pp.140-5 especially the tables on pp.141 and 142 which plot the trend towards a longer duration as the middle ages progressed. Dinzelbacher's tables are a little misleading in that they exaggerate the chronological trend. He does not cite a three day ecstasy until the 12th century whereas the Life of St.Wandrille already reported a three day and three night ecstasy in the seventh century. This does not invalidate the importance of the trend in a general way.

15. Dreambooks in the tradition of Artemidorus were not unknown in this period. The so-called Somia Danielis which survives in many 9th and 10th century manuscripts is considered to be a 7th century production from

southern Gaul, S.R.Fischer, The complete Medieval Dreambook (1982). A bed does not signify an altar in this work. This is merely to emphasize the fact that interpretation was not a product of training or handbooks in hagiographic dream and vision accounts; it was a matter of divine inspiration.

16. This was reported in the case of Pelagia. Gregory of Tours, Glor.Conf. 102. Et statim inergumini multi exclamaverunt, dicens quia: "Martinus venit ad transitum Pelagiae."

17. Augustine considered the question in relation to ecstasy, whether the soul was fused with the divine within the body or externally.

18. An early reference in hagiography to a place of suffering from which souls could be saved occurs in the Passio Perpetua et Felicitatis 7-8 where Perpetua had a dream in which she saw her young brother Dinocrates unable to drink from a fountain, Shewring ed. pp.9-10.

19. The distictly Gregorian features of Barontus' vision include: the partially completed mansion being prepared for a revered person not yet deceased, the tug of war between angelic and demonic forces over the fate of a particular soul, the recognition of people known to the vision recipient's community, reference to purgatory and the focus on hoarding riches after entering the monastic life as a salvation-threatening sin. The retention of property and goods was regarded as a sin in all the early rules, like Caesarius of Arles' Regula ad Virgines 4 which exhorted the nuns to avoid the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1-11) and was also spelled out in the Reg. Ben 33.

20. V.Sadalbergae 26 Although the Life of Sadalberga is generally considered a ninth century product, the presence of a bishop in her vision who was a contemporary, strengthens perhaps makes a case for the survival of a genuine tradition concerning her vision.

21. Pastoral visions of this type are almost exact descriptions of extant mosaics like those at Ravenna (apse of S.Apollinare in Classe), and descriptions of Gallic art which no longer exists. Sidonius Apollinaris wrote a poem to Hesperius (c.470) intended for the west end of a church commissioned by Bishop Patiens of Lyons, whose interior he describes thus: distinctum vario nitore marmor / percurrit cameram solum fenestras / ac sub versicoloribus figuris / vernans herbida crusta sapphiratos / flectit per prasinum vitrum lapillos. Ep. II.10. ll.11-15. MGH AA VIII. p.34. Such descriptions, together with the vision images of heaven described in hagiographic literature suggest that Gallic art did not differ substantially from that in other parts of the western Mediterranean. Artistic representations of holy scenes, which were popular in churches were surely responsable for many aspects of vision iconography. It should be noted, however, that this type of art was usually confined to the church for it was often forbidden to have paintings on convent walls. Caesarius' Regula ad Virgines 41,42, is explicit on this matter. Nam nec vela cerata appendi, nec tabulae affigi, nec in parietibus vel cameris ulla pictura fieri debet.

22. The image of the heavenly city owed much to Revelation, especially 21.10-27.

23. V.Nivardi 11 Respiciebat mente civitatem gloriosam Syon et celestem Hierusalem, cuius platea auro sternentur, ipsaque est de auro mundo et preciosissimis margaritis similis vitro mundo, ubi nox non erit et cuius lucerna est agnus et de qua nullus bonus excludetur, sed populus eius populus Dei, et Dominus erit Deus eorum in perpetuum. A paraphrase of Rev.21.21,23; 22,5.

24. V.Ald I.5.

25. The holy city of Jerusalem in the book of Revelation had twelve doors or portals in the city walls. Barontus' doors, however, suggest a progression into the interior of the city, each stage more holy than the last.

26. Works on hell and purgatory: Le Goff, The Birth of Purgatory (1984). An exception to this is the case of the suffering Dinocrates in St.Perpetua's vision. It has been argued, however, that this particular case relates more closely to pagan ideas of the underworld than to the existence of purgatory in the Christian tradition. F.Neiske, Vision und Totengedenken Frühmittelalterliche Studien 20 (1986) pp.137-85.

27. Prudentius, Tituli historiarum 43 [Sepulchrum Christi] CSEL 61 ed.J.Bergman (1926) p.446.

28. V.Baronti 17. The book of Revelation cited cowards,faithless, polluted, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters and liars. No specific mention is made of churchmen or women. Rev. 21.8 The leaden seats are also a new element in the scene.

29. On "Fredegar's" Chronicle and its continuations J.M.Wallace-Hadrill ed. The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuation (1960). The only occasion when a dream-vision is mentioned is fairly early on, ch.22 AD.602, not long after the chronicle takes over from Gregory of Tours.

Chapter 6. TWO CASE HISTORIES: ST.RADEGUND OF POITIERS AND ST.ALDEGUND OF MAUBEUGE

1. There have been a number of recent studies which give an overview of visions of the early Middle Ages. Radegund's experiences are notably absent from them. Peter Dinzelbacher, Vision und Visionliterature im Mittelalter Stüttgart 1981 includes a number of sixth century Lives in his survey, but not Radegund's. E.Benz, Die Vision Stuttgart 1981 also neglects Radegund's visions. F.Neiske, "Vision und Totengedenken", Frühmittelalterliche Studien 20 (1986) pp.137-85 accords the Merovingian period only fleeting attention. R.Aigrain's biographies of the saint do little more than mention the Visions, nor does S.Wemple examine Radegund's visions in her "Female spirituality and mysticism in Frankish monasteries: Radegund, Balthild and Aldegund" Medieval Religious Women II eds. L.T.Shank and J.A.Nichols (1987).

2. Aldegund of Maubeuge does find a place in the studies by Dinzelbacher (1981) and Benz (1969) noted above. Her visions are briefly

considered in S.Wemple's article (1987) mentioned above. More important for Aldegund is the textual work on her Vitae by historians of Belgian saints (see notes 30 and 31 below on St.Aldegund of Maubeuge). The economic impact of her miracles on her monastic community have been noted by J.McNamara, "A legacy of Miracles: Hagiography and Nunneries in Merovingian Gaul" Women of the Medieval World ed. J.Kirshner and S.Wemple. (1985) pp.36-52.

3. V.Fortunatus Vita Radegundis MGH SRM II (1888) ed. B.Krusch pp.364-77. Fortunatus describes Radegund's youthful activities demonstrating her precocious piety. Radegund would process solemly to chapel carrying a wooden Cross, her robes sweeping the floor, in a child's imitation of a church procession. VR I.2. It is likely that Radegund was catholic from birth; there is no mention of her conversion from Arianism. See R.Aigrain, Ste Radegonde (1918) pp.21-3 for a discussion of Radegund's natal religion.

The bibliography on St.Radegund of Poitiers is substantial. Notable are: R.Aigrain, Op.cit (1918 and revised ed.1952), E.C.Briand, Sainte Radegonde reine de France et des sanctuaires et Pélérinages en son honneur Paris/Poitiers (1898), E.Delaruelle, "Sainte Radegonde, son type de sainteté et la chrétiente de son temps" Études Mérovingiennes (1953) pp.65-74, B.Brennan, "St.Radegund and the early development of her cult at Poitiers" The Journal of Medieval History 13 (1985) pp.340-54.

4. Gregory of Tours contends that Radegund's brother was killed on her husband's orders. Fortunatus, however, states that Chlothar was innocent of the murder. Fortunatus' position is perhaps a response to Chlothar's later position as benefactor of Radegund's convent and the value that the memory of his royal protection afforded it. R.Aigrain (1918) pp.46-7 suggests that Radegund's brother may have been focus of the ill-fated Thuringian uprising of 555. If this is true, Radegund had reason to fear for her own life too as a possible accomplice. If one accepts this late date for the murder, after which Radegund is said to have fled court, then the founding of the convent would have to be placed significantly later than the 552/3 date normally ascribed. Radegund's consecration as deaconess was in open violation of the ruling of the Council of Chalcedon, and its reiteration in Gallic church councils; Orleans II (533) c.18 Placuit etiam, ut nulli postmodum feminae diaconalis benedictio pro conditionis huius fragilitate credatur, and c.17 Feminae, quae benedictionem diaconatus hactenus contra interdicta canonum acceperunt, si ad coniugium probantur iterum devolutae, a communione pellantur. The exact function of the deaconesses in the Gallic and Frankish church has been discussed in a number of publications including S.Wemple, Women in Frankish Society pp.127-48. pp.136-141 especially, examine the fluctuation in the rôle women permitted to play in pastoral and liturgical functions in the church. René Metz's La Consécration des Vierges (1954) examines the consecration of female religious in the ancient and medieval world.

The traditional view of catholic historians was to claim that the title was strictly honorary, conferred by Medardus of Noyon erroneously or under pressure, and did not correspond to any real function within the church. It should not be overlooked, however, that Radegund's first task after consecration as deaconess was to set up a hospital for poor women. Care for sick women was one of the functions of deaconesses in the 4th century church. Radegund also kept her focus on the good of women, now translated into a strictly monastic form, as expressed in a letter she addressed to seven bishops, Gregory of Tours, HF IX.42.

5. Radegund herself recorded the history of her convent's founding in her letter to seven bishops of the metropolitan district of Tours. It is reproduced by Gregory of Tours HF IX.41. The exact date of the document is unclear. Gregory states that the letter was written by her on her foundation of the convent, but it must have been composed later. The letter refers to the protection of the Holy Cross which suggests a date after the relic acquisition in 569 and her reference to the funerary church she was building dedicated to the Virgin Mary, suggests this also, since before she acquired the cross relic her convent was dedicated to Mary. It also mentions the Caesarian rule which was adopted by Radegund c.573. The letter cannot be later than 573 because it was signed by Gregory of Tours' predecessor to the see of Tours, Euphronius, who died in that year. Dating the letter is further complicated by the fact that it is normally appended to the resolutions of the council of Tours which met in 567, being the last recorded occasion when the bishops mentioned were assembled. There is no reason to believe that the letter was presented to the bishops at that time, and the internal evidence of the letter argues for a later date, probably 573.

6. The reason Fortunatus' Vita Radegundis was supplemented by Baudonivia's hagiographic composition may be attributed to a number of factors. Fortunatus' biography was suffused by the influence of Severus' Vita Martini and its eremitical ideal which did not do justice to Radegund's influence on the monastic community. Baudonivia's Life records more of Radegund's life in the convent and includes important information which Fortunatus had omitted, including Radegund's relic acquisitions which were an important part of the convent's endowment and made it an important pilgrimage site. The second Vita was probably also written in response to the scandalous revolt at the convent in 589. Radegund's visions might therefore be seen in the light of an attempt to consolidate spiritual validation for Radegund's foundation. Fortunatus' Life of the queen did not mention that she had visions, a fact Baudonivia explained by saying that Radegund had confided the occurrences to two nuns with instructions to keep them secret.

7. Radegund's parvus sopor is in contrast with the oppressive sleep often recorded when significant dreams were received. However, the divintiy of the experience may have been suggested by this light sleep just as it was often a light fever which afflicted the saints before death. On the relic expedition to Jerusalem which this vision heralded, see my "Procuratrix Optima: St.Radegund of Poitiers' relic petitions to the East" forthcoming in the Journal of Medieval History.

8. Hugo Rahner, Symbole der Kirche (1964) pp.504-47.

9. The mystical body of Christ, Leo Steinberg, The Sexuality of Christ (1983) discusses the mystical body of Christ from the Middle Ages to Renaissance art.

10. VR II.17 et facta est tranquillitas magna in medio mari; navigation in this period usually relied on keeping sight of land by hugging the coast-line. The ship was in great danger in medio mari.

11. Gen 8.8-11. On the patristic interpretation of the dove and the

raven in the account of Noah, see Augustine, Contra Faustum XII,20.

12. See Augustine's CD XV,26: Nam et mensurae ipsae longitudinis et altitudinis et latitudinis eius significant corpus humanum, in cuius veritate ad homines praenuntiatas est venturus et venit.

13. Quodvultdeus' work is an exercise in identifying the foreshadowing of Christ in the Old Testament, to which his master Augustine had made a significant contribution. Quodvultdeus draws heavily on Augustine for his christological interpretation of Noah's ark, especially his book against Faustus the Manichaean.

14. The figurative use of the human body was not confined to biblical exegesis. Quodvultdeus, expanding on Augustine wrote about different heresies as relating to the anatomy of a leper's body. Lib.Promiss. II.6.

15. H.Leclercq summarizes the conflicting views of early Christian writers on Christ's physical appearance in DACL vol.7 pt.II (1927) cols.2397-2400, "Beauté ou laideur du Christ," which draws on the compilation of texts in Dom Calmet's Dissertation sur la beauté de Jésus-Christ. See also J.Kollwitz's contribution to the Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie vol.I (1968) "Christus, Christusbild" cols.355-71. E.Benz, Die Vision (1969) pp.517-39 examines the dual tradition in the visions and art of the high Middle Ages, and traces the reassertion of the image of the suffering Christ in art and visions of this later period. He links the supplanting of the beautiful Christ image by the crucified Christ in popular imagination to St.Martin's Christ vision as related in the Legenda Aurea, pp.532-4.

16. Differences in art include bearded versus unbearded Christ depictions, Christ the shepherd (common to catacomb art) and Christ the King (popular especially in the East). Artistic evidence for Gallic and Frankish churches are almost non-existant. There is reason to believe that it did not vary greatly from the representations extant at Ravenna, see previous chapter.

17. Martin does not appear to be taking account of Rev.19,12 and other passages.

18. On the medieval asthetic sense: Edgar de Bruyne, Études D'Esthetique Médiévale 3 vols. (Bruges 1946) vol.I "De Boéce à Jean Scot Erigène."

19. I use the term 'feminine' advisedly: it was believed by some that Christ bore a resemblance to his mother, especially in the lower part of his face, see J.Kollwitz in Lex.der christ.Ikonog. "Christus, Christusbild."

20. E.Benz, Die Vision pp.517-39 'Christusvision', relates that the representation of the Christ child is a comparatively late development in western art, and overshadowed in the East by other tradition forms. Unfortunately Benz does not comment on Radegund's vision at all in his work.

21. Blandicia had negative theological connotations in patristic and hagiographic literature; it was through the serpent's blandicia that Eve fell. In the Vita S. Consortiae the saint prays that the serpent will not be

permitted to prevail over her, that serpent qui Evam verborum blanditiis et pulchritudine ac suavitate ligni vetiti decepit. AASS 22 Iun c.17. Radegund herself, we are told, rejected the false flatteries of the world: mundi falsa blandimenta respuens V.Rad II.5.

22. For the circumstances and consequences of the revolt at the convent, G.Sheibelreiter, "Königstöchter im Kloster. Radegund und der Nonnenaufstand von Poitiers (589)." MIÖG 87 (1979) pp.1-37.

23. de Nie, Views (1987) pp.237-9.

24. ibid. p.238.

25. Among the more important discussions of "Adelsheilige" are: F.Graus Volk, Herrscher und Heilige (1965); F.Prinz Frühes Mönchtum (1965) pp.496-501, K.Bosl "Der 'Adelsheilige' Idealtypus und Wirklichkeit, Gesellschaft und Kultur im Merowingerzeitlichen Bayern des 7 und 8 Jhds." Speculum Historiale 1965 pp.167-87, G.Scheibelreiter Der Bischof in Merowingischer Zeit (1983) pp.16-28. The example of St.Martin provided an alternative model but not one much in evidence in the Merovingian period, in part because of the aristocratic status of those who embraced the ascetic and episcopal life, and in part the tendency of hagiographers to ascribe noble birth to saints even when such status was unknown.

26. Regula ad Virgines Prologue PL 67. Elsewhere Caesarius emphasized the connubial aspect of Christian devotion to Christ for both men and women, religious and lay, saying that they should doubt that they are espoused to Christ. Sermo 155. The liturgy for the consecration of virgins also stressed the spiritual marriage of the nun to Christ, R.Metz, La Consécration (1954) pp.117-24.

27. On seventh century Frankish monasticism: L. van der Essen, Le siècle des saints (625-739) (Brussels 1948); ibid, Étude critique et littéraire sur les vitae des saints Mérovingiens de l'ancienne Belgique (Louvain/Paris 1907); É. de Moreau, Histoire de l'Église en Belgique vol.I (Brussels 1945); F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (Munich 1965); ibid., "Die Rolle der Iren beim Aufbau der merowingischen Klosterkultur" in H.Lowe (ed) Die Iren und Europa (1982) pp.202-18; ibid., Askese und Kultur (Munich 1980) and "Abriss der kirchlichen und monastischen Entwicklung des Frankenreiches bis zum Karl der Grossen" in Karl der Grosse vol.2 (1965) pp.290-9; J.M.Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church (1983); C.H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism (1985); J.Lestocquoy, "Monachisme et civilisation Mérovingienne dans le nord de la France" Mélanges Colombaniens (Paris 1950) pp.55-60; S.Wemple, Women in Frankish Society (1981); J.Schulenburg, "Women's monastic communities, 500-1100: patterns of expansion and decline" Signs 14 (1989) pp.261-92.

28. Later hagiographers claimed that she was of royal birth: ex regali prosapia V.Ald II.2. The sources for Aldegund's life are editions of her Vita: Bollandus, AASS 30 ian. pp. 649ff; Mabillon, AASS O.S.B. II (Paris 1668) pp.806-15; J.Ghesquière, AASS Belg.Sel IV (Brussels 6 vols. 1783-94) pp.315ff; abbreviated edition, W.Levison, MGH SRM VI (Hannover/Leipzig 1913) pp.79-90. Secondary literature on St.Aldegund and her circle include: L.Van der Essen, Étude (1907) pp.219-31; S.Wemple, "Female Spirituality..." in Medieval Women vol.2 (1987) pp.39-53; J.McNamara, "A Legacy of Miracles..."

in Women of the Medieval World pp.36-52; F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965) pp.130-1, 165; É. de Moreau, Histoire (1945) pp. 137-41.

29. V.Ald. I.1. describes her uncles as scholares and bellatores which suggests that they formed part of the king's own guard. On Landeric as mayor: Fredegar, Chron IV. 25,26; Lib.HF 35,36,40. On Gundelandus who succeeded him: Lib.HF 40, Fredegar, Chron.IV 45.

30. Fredegar Chron IV.54, Prinz p.130. The earlier Vitae do not mention Waldebert's high office. The 11th century manuscript from the monastery of St.Ghislain V.Ald IV. does.

31. The extent of this maternal pressure was vastly exaggerated in the later Lives in accordance with the hagiographic fashion popular at the time.

32. It has not been possible to establish a direct link between these foundations and Columbanian monasticism (Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum p.130-1) although it is evident in the Vitae that Aldegund had ties with St.Amandus and with Nivelles which had a joint rule at that time.

33. V.Ald II. IV.32. Later Lives added in addition to Aldetrude another daughter, Madelberta. According to St.Waldetrude's own Vita she also had two sons, Landricus and Dentlin.

34. For the purposes of the following sections, I shall use the two Vitae closest to Aldegund's own time. Together these offer, I believe, as full a record of her visions as is possible. Where the two versions have material in common they tend to concur; where they do not I have signalled this in the text and in the notes. For a lengthier discussion of the texts, and my reasons for using the second Vita in addition to the first, see the Appendix.

35. V.Ald I.5; V.Ald II.5 simply explains that at first she thought she was being offered earthly riches, but then realised that they were heavenly riches. Images on columns are also recorded in the Visio Pauli ch.19 ...duas columnas plene litteris.

36. V.Ald I.6; V.Ald II.5 relates that she was exhorted to put aside transient things, not to fear the obstructions of the world, so that she might easily attain heaven. She then heard a voice saying to her, "Do not seek any husband except the Son of God."

37. V.Ald I.7; V.Ald II.5 says the robe was white and that the palm was the palm of victory.

38. V.Ald I.5 Talibus fulta praesidiis et fisa consolationibus, quod corpore nondum valebat, animo perficere satagebat...

39. V.Ald I.8; V.Ald II.8 gives a variant tone to Aldegund's vision of the devil as will be examined in greater detail below.

40. V.Ald II.6. He also points out the similarity of this incident with the story of Samson's parents who also asked their angelic visitor his name. Judges 13.17.

41. In the second version of the Life, the same relationship with the Holy Spirit is described. The second hagiographer recorded that alongside her many visions, the Holy Spirit often spoke to her (Frequenter quoque aestimabat sibi loqui Spiritum sanctum).[V.Ald I.9] The use of aestimare here might suggest that the hagiographer wished to distance himself from this claim. However, his reference to Aldegund further on as habitaculum Spiritus sancti [V.Ald I.27] and his recording of the events below indicates otherwise.

In the second Vita the descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is included except that instead of taking place in her room, the description appears to have combined elements from another vision; Aldegund saw herself in a vision standing in a square or street (platea) surrounded by a great crowd when suddenly a fiery orb of very great brightness appeared to come from the sky. And when she asked those standing around what it was, the man on her right replied, "Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi."[V.Ald II.12] Four days after this vision, at about midnight on Sunday, the promise was fulfilled. Aldegund arose to keep the morning vigil and as she entered the church, one of the sister left it to see a very great shining light in the same place where Aldegund's vision had taken place. Only Aldegund understood its significance because she had been prepared for it by the earlier vision.

42. Eucherius of Lyons, Formulae 2 Sol dominus Iesus Christus, quia fulgeat terris... Luna ecclesia, eo quod in hac mundi nocte resplendeat... F.J.Dolger, Sol Salutis (2nd ed.Munster 1925). Philo, De Somniis explains how the sun is likened to God, "And marvel not if the sun, in accordance with the rules of allegory, is likened to the Father and ruler of the Universe [ch.73]...[Moses] gave the figurative title of "Sun" to the Universal Father, to whose sight all things are open, even those which are perpetrated invisibly in the recesses of the understanding." [ch.90] Transl. F.H.Colson and G.H.Whitaker, Loeb 275 (London 1934). A similar description is to be found in the Life of St.Eugendus in the Vita Patrum Jurensium. On manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the late medieval and early modern periods, see E.Benz, Die Vision pp.563-73.

43. V.Antonii especially chapters 8-10, 35-43, 51-3.

44. V.Antonii 9.

45. S.Wemple fleetingly notes the link between this confrontation and the virago motif in Roman literature "Female Spirituality..." p.47.

46. Important work has been done in the realm of hagiology tracing models of sanctity as revealed in the literature. Étienne Delaruelle's "Sainte Radegonde, son type de sainteté et la chrétienté de son temps" Études Mérovingiennes (1953) pp.65-74 was the first to really analyse the characteristics of the saint as a reflection of the literary visions of two different authors. Delaruelle saw Radegund in Fortunatus' biography as the self-effacing nun in the Roman tradition, and Baudonivia's version as portraying the saint as an imperious Germanic queen. F.Graus, Volk (1965) pp.407-11 offered two different categories of sanctity represented by the works: Fortunatus' ascetic hermit-queen, versus Baudonivia's "model nun." Recent scholars like P.Stafford and S.Wemple have tended to favour one or

other of these two typologies (Stafford favours Delaruelle, Wemple, Graus) but both see the conflicting views of Baudonivia as embodying greater female self-awareness. Unfortunately, however, categorisations have often been too quickly attached to stereotypes like "Roman" and "Germanic."

47. Quasi is so commonly used in Merovingian hagiography that it is not helpful to consider in any depth a single author's use of the term.

48. V.Ald I.5. In the second version Aldegund's confusion is spelled out more succinctly; at first she thought she was being offered worldly riches, but then she realised that they were spiritual gifts.

49. It was also believed that a visionary apparition could leave a physical imprint on the world, such as a footstep in a rock. According to later tradition Radegund's Christ vision left such a relic of his visit, the Pas-de-Dieu, which was venerated in Poitiers.

50. Reference to detractors and malicious voices had become a hagiographic topos by this time; a substitute for more concrete persecution.

51. It is difficult to determine a clear chronology in the visions. The second Life indicates that the visions it would relate were those received at Aldegund's parents' home but it is evident that some of the later visions referred to a time of communal living. There is an obvious explanation for the claim of the second Life. Communal living probably began at Aldegund's paternal home before her foundation of Maubeuge; we know that she instituted twelve nuns at the site of her parents' tomb, and she herself chose to be buried there.

52. S.Wemple, Women in Frankish Society, has argued that the 7th century blossoming of monasticism coincided with increased female authority in the church. The 7th and 8th century missionary movement often gave women greater spiritual and quasi-clerical responsabilities. Aldegund's vision of Amandus shows her own identification with this movement.

53. V.Ald.I.10 In this vision St.Peter has a message for her, that she should not fear but should love. It is possible that the reference to St.Peter's warning Aldegund of the things of heaven in the second Life refers back to this: V.Ald II.6,10. On the message of love, see S.Wemple, "Female Spirituality" Medieval Religious Women II (1987) pp.39-53.

54. In the second Life it is referred to as Christ's body.

55. The second Life explains it thus: the mystery of Christ was brought together in the chalice (in hoc calice conficiat mysteria Christi) and since she had been unable to take communion the day before she would on that very day partake of the body and blood of Christ.[V.Ald I.20]

56. Synod of Auxerre (561-605) c.36 Non licet mulieri nudam manum eucharistiam accipere. c.37 Non licet, ut mulier manum suam ad pallam Dominicam mittat. CC 147A (1963) p.269.

57. S.Wemple p.141-3.

58. On Amandus, Vita Amandi, Jonas' Life of Columbanus, E.de Moreau, Histoire de l'Église en Belgique I (1945) esp.pp.78-92. Van der Essen, Études (1907). Other prominent missionary bishops operating within the established church were : Eligius Of Noyon-Tournai (590-660), Nicetius of Trier and Remaclus of Stavelot-Malmedy. Achar of Tournai, who gave Amandus his first (unlanded) bishopric was a former monk from Luxeuil and influenced by Columbanus. The Aquitanian element in the missionary movement in Austrasia and beyond is clearly mapped by Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum (1965) Map VIII: They include SS.Filibert, Amandus, Vedastus, Silvinus, Eligius, Bercharius, Salvius, Remaclus Nicetius, and Hadelin. On the long history of shared interests between Austrasian lands and Aquitaine, see E.Ewig, "L'Aquitaine et les pays Rhénans au haut moyen âge", Spätantikes und Frankisches Gallien I Francia 3/2, 553-72.

59. V.Ald II.8 colleges of canons were a later monastic form which do not date to the seventh century.

60. Vita Honorati 2.

61. The topos of destroying pagan temples finds its way into Baudonivia's version of Radegund's Life, showing the influence of Sulpicius Severus' V.Martini. Radegund's involvement in the Christianization of Gaul, although elaborated in the Life and the letter of the seven bishops, owed more to panegyric than to reality. Radegund's mission was to women within the confinement of convent life.

62. Radegund was also said to have converted many by her preaching [G.of T. GC 104] and in her letter to the bishops reveals a deep desire to further the lot of women. [G.of T, HF IX.42] She lived in different times however, and relied on her repute, and that of her relics to attract new entrants. There is no mention of relics at Maubeuge except those provided by Aldegund's clothing on her death and ultimately her relics.

63. I have followed Van der Essen Étude p.220 for the date 684.

64. On St.Martin's cult: E.Ewig, "Der Martinskult im Frühmittelalter" Francia 3.3 pp.371-92; E.Delaruelle, "La Spiritualité des pélerinages..." in Pellegrinaggi (1963) pp.201-43.

65. E.Ewig, "Der Petrus- und Apostelkult in spätrömischen und frankischen Gallien" Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 71 (1960) pp.215-51, reprinted Francia 3.3 (1979) pp.318-54.

66. There was also a chapel dedicated to St.Vaast at Mons where Waldetrude was consecrated to the religious life.

67. V.Ald I.22; II.18 The church is only identified in the second Life.

68. Ambitious claims such as those about to be examined were the kind of material generally excised from revisionist hagiography.

69. V.Ald II.8. An allusion to Aldegund's enemies is to be found in the first Life, but it is couched in the language of the psalms, and was a

common hagiographic topos.

70. The historicity of this Vita has been much debated. For Van der Essen's dating of the text to the early eighth century based on its Merovingian style and orthography see Études pp.220-31 esp.p.222. Levison MGH SRM VI pp.79-85 gave his own manuscript history which postulated a much later date for the composition of the first Life (9th century) earliest preserved in an 11th century manuscript. Levison argued for the late date of composition on the basis of the earliest manuscript's distinctive Carolingian orthography! E.de Moreau, Histoire p.138 n.2 followed Van der Essen in ascribing an early date for the Vita's composition. De Moreau, Histoire p.138 n.4 cites the work of R.Podevijn, "Bezitten wij nog de oorspronkelijke 'Vita Aldegundis'", Ons geestelijk Erf XI (1937) pp.11-20, who believed that the first Vita was a Merovingian Life in which the vision list was inserted during the Carolingian period. I have been unable to consult Podevijn's work, but its thesis would certainly furnish one possible explanation for the different orthographies within the Life. Such a conclusion would depend on the areas in the Life in which the orthography is different. Such a conclusion would also affect our view of the Merovingian attitude to the female saint as visionary.

Dating the earliest Life also centres on how far one can believe the author's testimony of his good sources (a frequent hagiographic claim) versus the written form of the manuscript, itself undoubtedly changed and emended through successive copying. I concur with Van der Essen concerning the authenticity and 8th century date for the earliest Vita in view of the sobriety of the text which does not rely heavily on topoi. Although the earliest manuscript is 11th century, there was a 10th century copy of the Life in the library of Lobbes: Levison, op.cit. p.82.

71. Mabillon, Acta Sanctorum O.S.B. II. pp.806-15 Paris (1668) reprinted Paris 1936. This same text was reproduced by J.Ghesquiere in his Acta Sanctorum Belgii selecta IV. p.315ff. Although there are earlier manuscripts, the Mabillon text is taken from a 13th century Manuscript, Codex Parisiensis n. 17003 (Fuliensium 58,1) fol.204'-208. Other Vitae whose visions are absent in the Monumenta edition, include the Life of Fursey, and the Life of St.Rusticula of Arles.

72. Scholars are divided on the attribution first made by Surius. Levison op.cit p.84, argued against it since no manuscripts make the attribution (first made by Surius and followed by the AASS) and because there are textual similarities between it and the 11th century Vita Gisleni. The borrowing could equally be in the other direction, as Van der Essen argued.

73. Van der Essen considered this to be the case, but de Moreau believed it was written for Maubeuge, Histoire p.138.

74. V.Ald I.18. Van der Essen noted that such an expression of brevity was often a hagiographic topos, Études p.224. On this topos see also E.R.Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages (1953) pp.488-9. In this particular case and especially in the light of arguments I shall make concerning the visions in the second Vita I am inclined to accept the author of the first Life's assertion.

75. Van der Essen, Étude p.224. Van der Essen's example does not

concern the visions but the fact that the second Life attributed to her royal birth whereas the first does not. But whereas genealogical amplification might slip into a work which sought to provide more historical information on the saint and her times (see for example his lengthier introduction to the vision of St.Amandus pointing out his missionary activity) this did not necessarily occur when the author related the visions.

76. E.de Moreau, Histoire p.140 n.2 notes that P.Stracke has made a comparison between the two texts, "Een oud- frankische Visioenenboek uit de zevende eeuw" in L'Historisch Tijdschrift VII (1928) pp.361-87, VIII (1929) pp.18-38, 167-82, 340-71. De Moreau is in agreement with Stracke, whose findings, he indicates, point to the two Vitae having independent access to the original vision text. I have been unable to consult the work, and de Moreau does not indicate the basis upon which Stracke's assertion was made. Those arguments for the validity of the second Life which I present are independently arrived at.

77. The popularity of this kind of legend can be seen in the later medieval myths surrounding St.Radegund's flight from Athies. See the miracle of oats, BHL 7052.

78. Levison did not believe that Hucbald was the author of this Life, which he dated to the 11th century. Van der Essen saw similarities between this Life and another by Hucbald, that of St.Rictrudis. Etudes p.225.

79. This interpretation is not that of the earlier versions.

80. Aldegund escaped from her parental home on the continued intention of her suitor to marry her, leading a life as a hermit; Waldetrude has two daughters educated by Aldegund; Aldegund died of breast cancer.

81. Others mentioned are Arnulf of Metz, Autbertus of Cambrai, Eligius of Noyon, Audoenus of Rheims, Gertrude of Nivelles. The author recapitulates the history of the missionary drive and its successes: Quae patria, quae civitas, qui pagus, quem non decoravit alicuius sancti patrocinio speciali providentia Creatoris? (Prologue).

82. This point is somewhat obscure. Are the pannos that he will remove part of his intention to get closer to his subject, or are they the rags of poor literary presentation?

83. The bivium is presumably the first two of the three literary arts of the Carolingian trivium, that is grammar and rhetoric, but not dialectic.

84. V.Ald IV.15. This is confirmed in Van der Essen's stemma Études p.230.

85. V.Ald III.6: Si quis autem istiusmodi visiones plenius nosse desiderat, Vitam ipsius revolvat, de qua nos pauca decerpentes...

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