

# FREDEGAR AND THE HISTORY OF FRANCE <sup>1</sup>

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**A**BOUT the year A.D. 660 there died a certain Burgundian known to us, though perhaps not to his friends, as Fredegar or Fredegarius. We have no evidence earlier than the sixteenth century that he was so called, though Fredegar is an authentic Frankish name. He left behind him what, in a word, may be called a chronicle; and it is because of his chronicle, though it is no longer extant in its original form, that posterity is at all bothered with him.

This chronicle was of the nature of a private record that would have been known to very few; and, moreover, it was never finished. Even so, someone (one suspects from a local monastic or cathedral scriptorium, Chalon-sur-Saône perhaps, or Lyons or Luxeuil) got to know of Fredegar's manuscript, and made a copy of it, about a generation later. It was a bad copy, and it was a copy made for a special purpose: bad, because the scribe made heavy weather of the Merovingian cursive before him (his own writing is uncial); and for a special purpose, because he shaped Fredegar, with certain additions and subtractions, into what has been called a clerical *Lesebuch*. His inscription, where he reveals himself as the monk Lucerius, can still be read. Such as it is, this *Lesebuch* survives: it is a Paris manuscript, Bibl. Nat. Latin 10910, the basis of Bruno Krusch's *Monumenta* edition of Fredegar, and the basis, in my opinion, of any future edition worth the name.<sup>2</sup> Apart from this, we have some thirty other

<sup>1</sup> Based on a paper read to the Anglo-American Historical Conference in London on 9 July 1955.

<sup>2</sup> The standard edition is that of Bruno Krusch in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum Rerum Merovingicarum*, vol. ii (1888). My own forthcoming edition of Book IV and the Continuations of the Chronicle discusses in greater detail some of the matters raised in this paper and includes a full bibliography.

manuscripts of Fredegar (two of them Harleian manuscripts),<sup>1</sup> descended either, as Krusch held, from the clerical *Lesebuch* or from another copy of the original manuscript made at about the same time. None of those we have is older than the early ninth century, from which it may be inferred that Fredegar came into his own rather suddenly in the Carolingian age. He was copied, in whole or in part, throughout the Rhineland and Northern France, from Mehrerau near Lake Constance through Lorsch and Reims to the monasteries of the Ardennes; and he came to be associated, as one might expect, with copies of the Neustrian *Liber Historiae Francorum*, with Einhard, Bede and other historians. The St. Gallen MS. 547 is a good example of such an association. Fredegar was recognized as history—and as official history, at that. This came about because an early copy of the chronicle (of the late eighth century, it may be) travelled north into Austrasia and came to rest in some Carolingian stronghold, perhaps Metz. The subsequent proliferation of copies is from Austrasia, not from Burgundy. Here Fredegar had the good fortune to fall into the hands of the great family of the Nibelungen, close connections of the Carolingians through the Lady Alpaïda, wife of Charles Martel; or rather, into the hands of a scribe employed by them to put together a chronicle of Frankish events as seen through Carolingian eyes. This chronicle, the work of several writers, is now known as the continuation of Fredegar; and though its ethos is in important respects unlike his own, it survives only in association with him. We may call the resulting amalgam official because, under the year 751, the continuator writes:

Up to this point, the illustrious Count Childebrand, uncle of the said King Pippin, took great pains to have this history or "geste" of the Franks recorded. What follows is by the authority of the illustrious Count Nibelung, Childebrand's son (Cont. chap. 35).

Almost all our copies of Fredegar are found in this Austrasian guise, and quite naturally Fredegar reached the Middle Ages in the wake of the historical Nibelungen and under their *auctoritas*, carefully copied in great scriptoria that would not otherwise have known him. They made brave but unavailing efforts to

<sup>1</sup>Harley 5251 and 3771. Their contents are described in the *Catalogue of Ancient Manuscripts in the British Museum*, pt. ii (Latin), (1884), pp. 84-5.

“ correct ” his highly individual Latin. By this route, too, he first reached the dignity of print, in the pages of Flacius Illyricus (Basel, 1568), Canisius, Scaliger, Freherus and others. Ruinart, in 1699, was the first editor to use a manuscript not of the Austrasian tradition. But my concern is less with the respectable manuscripts of that tradition than with the little uncial *Lesebuch*, and what lay behind it. It contains, as it stands, the following items :

The *Liber Generationis*,<sup>1</sup> a Latin translation of the Chronicle of Hippolytus, with additions ; the *Supputatio Eusebii-Hieronimi*, a computation from Adam to the first year of the reign of King Sigibert (613) ; a list of popes to the accession of Pope Theodore (642) later completed to the sixteenth year of Pope Hadrian I (788) ; the beginning of the Chronicle of Isidore of Seville, dealing with the creation of the world ; lists of patriarchs, kings and emperors, stopping at the thirty-first year of Heraclius I (640-1) ; interpolated extracts from the Chronicle of Eusebius, in St. Jerome's version ; interpolated extracts from the Chronicle of Hydatius, itself a continuation of St. Jerome ; a résumé or *Historia Epitomata* of the first six books of the History of Gregory of Tours, stopping at 584 ; an original chronicle in ninety chapters from the twenty-fourth year of King Guntramn of Burgundy (584, described by the chronicler as the beginning of the end of his reign) to the death of Flaohad, mayor of the Burgundian palace, in 642 ; extracts from the Chronicle of Isidore, with an *explicit* dated the fortieth year of the reign of King Chlotar (623-4)

A succession of scholars has tackled this intractable list, and though they do not agree about much, they do mostly agree that the order of contents is not quite as Fredegar left it, and in particular that Isidore has become displaced from his rightful position as it is revealed in the important prologue that I shall cite later on. My own impression of how the chronicle was put together is as follows. Early in the seventh century a, to us, anonymous Burgundian decided to attach to some local annals a short chronicle of his own. The annals seem to have covered the

<sup>1</sup> M. L. W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe* (2nd. edn., 1957), p. 178, has, by inadvertance, confused this with the *Liber Generationum*, the work of an African writer of the fifth century.

period 584-604, though they may have gone back further. His chronicle covers the period 604-13. To this collection I think he added (though it might have happened later) a kind of hand-book of world-chronology: it comprised Jerome, Hydatius, Isidore and the *Liber Generationis*, though I would not be sure about their order. He may have found this hand-book, or he may have put it together for himself; one cannot tell. In any event, his maximum contribution was a chronological hand-book, some Burgundian annals and a short chronicle covering the decade between the ninth year of King Theuderic and the execution of Queen Brunehildis. And of course he brought up to date his chronological lists, so far as he was able. His work shows no exceptional knowledge and no indication that he held a privileged position. After a pause of another decade, his work was resumed by a second chronicler of very different calibre; and, to cut a long story short, this is the man with some claim to recognition and respect. Since it is a convenience to preserve the name, let him be Fredegar; let him be so, moreover, without the pedantic prefix "Pseudo". He is distinguishable from his predecessor on two grounds; first, his interests and, secondly, his style. A succession of French historians—Lot, Baudot and Levillain<sup>1</sup>—have argued for the unity of the whole chronicle and have emphasized (what is true) that chroniclers took their material where they could get it, so that differences in approach do not necessarily reveal different writers. But when these coincide with differences in style, as here, then surely we must allow multiple, or at least dual, authorship. German scholars, starting a century ago with Brosien and ending with Krusch, Hellmann and Levison,<sup>2</sup> have left, as I see it, nothing of the case for single

<sup>1</sup> F. Lot, "Encore la Chronique du Pseudo-Frédegaire", *Revue Historique*, vol. cxv (1914); M. Baudot, "La question du Pseudo-Frédegaire", *Le Moyen Age*, vol. xxix (1928); L. Levillain, critical review of Krusch in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, vol. lxxxix (1928).

<sup>2</sup> B. Krusch, "Die Chronicae des sogenannten Fredegar", *Neues Archiv*, vol. vii (1882); "Fredegarius Scholasticus—Oudarius? Neue Beiträge zur Fredegar—Kritik", *Nachr. der Gesellschaft der Wiss. zu Göttingen, philol.-hist. cl.* (1926), pt. 2; S. Hellmann, "Das Fredegarproblem", *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, vol. xxix (1934); W. Levison, critical review of Baudot in *Jahresberichte der deutschen Geschichte* (1928); Wattenbach-Levison, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen* (Weimar, 1952).

authorship, however little they may have agreed among themselves about the number of authors. Indeed, we may well ask how often the phenomenon of single authorship of a medieval chronicle did occur: the more skins of the onion one pulls off, the more one finds beneath. We may possibly be faced with three authors, as Krusch argued: namely, the Burgundian who took the chronicle to 613, then Fredegar, and finally an Austrasian interpolater; but, at the least, we are faced with two, if, with Hellmann, we discard the Austrasian, as I fancy we should. Fredegar writes a different language from that of his predecessor; so different that even his interpolations in the earlier work are sometimes distinguishable. There is nothing subjective about this: we are faced with distinctive linguistic uses—uses of anacoluthon, of adverbs and adjectives, of relative clauses, ablatives absolute, participles in apposition and aorist participles, and with two vocabularies. The first stands nearer to the syntactical usages of Late Antiquity, while the second—a man of vivider and more allusive mind—struggles against a fuller tittle of Romance influence on Latin. His language is extremely interesting; and one might hesitate to call it barbarous because it is consistent. But Fredegar's history, and not his language, is our present concern. I wish merely to emphasize that his language would distinguish him from his predecessor if nothing else did.

It is a reasonable guess that Fredegar was a Burgundian, like his predecessor, and quite possibly a native of the *Pagus Ultra-juranus*, from Avenches. We can hazard this because an interpolation in Jerome's Chronicle shows that he knew that Avenches (Roman *Aventicum*) was also locally called Wiffisburg, a name that can only just have been coming into use. It would not be surprising if he were also a layman<sup>1</sup> and a man of some

<sup>1</sup> It will be recalled that Merovingian chancery administration seems largely to have been in the hands of laymen, and that literacy among members of the Gallo-Frankish aristocracy was not then so rare as it was to become. Nor is it surprising that Fredegar, though a layman, should lay stress on the Christian attributes of kingship. See the remarks of E. Ewig in *Das Königtum* (Konstanz, 1956), pp. 21 ff. In my opinion, the case for considering Fredegar a layman must rest mainly on what he does *not* say; a churchman would have evinced a more specialized knowledge and interest at several points in the story which Fredegar allows to pass without comment.

standing in the Burgundian court of the mid-seventh century. He had access to official documents like the so-called Treaty of Andelot ; he was able to interview Frankish envoys and others returning from foreign parts, as, for example, from Byzantium, from the Visigothic and Lombard courts, or from the Slavs ; and he had personal knowledge of, and views about, the great men of his world, especially the mayors of the palace. He seems to have had the use of the official correspondence of King Sisebut of Spain, to say nothing of the archives of more than one Burgundian church, notably Geneva. Yet his writing is in no sense officially inspired, like that of his far-off continuators, even though it benefits from being put together in informed circles. To identify him more closely than that, and, in particular, to accept Baudot's identification of him with the Count Berthar who makes three appearances in the chronicle, is to indulge fancy too far.

How did Fredegar go to work ? He somehow acquired his predecessor's manuscript, and thus had before him a chronicle covering those ten years of Frankish history that closed with the horrible end of Brunehildis—the end, equally, of the most famous vendetta in Frankish history. It left Chlotar II sole master of the *Regnum Francorum*. To the chronicle was already attached a series of Burgundian annals, going back, at least, to the year 584, and probably also the hand-book of world-chronology, though a case can be made for Fredegar having added this on his own account. We must picture Fredegar consulting this collection, correcting it and adding to it over a period of years. His work was spasmodic, and there were probably gaps of several years in which he did nothing at all. He may have started round about the year 625 ; and what I think he did first was to construct a bridge between the end of his predecessor's chronicle and the date at which he himself was writing. Thus we have, for the decade 614 to 624, a series of rather scrappy notes that nonetheless serve their purpose. Then he begins to revise the other man's work. Into the *Liber Generationis*, Jerome, Hydatius and Isidore he inserts material of his own—some of it of great interest. He then adds, as a very necessary transition from world-history to the story of his own small world, an epitome of the first six books of Gregory of Tours' History, again with his own inter-

polations, taking the story to 584. He would at this point have sacrificed any earlier part of the Burgundian annals that there may have been. Thus he had what he probably called five chronicles : the *Liber*, Jerome, Hydatius, Isidore and Gregory ; and to them he proceeded to add a sixth, namely the annals and chronicle of his Burgundian predecessor, continued by himself from 614. This is really a notable compilation. But it is only at the year 625 that his own uninhibited writing begins. From there to 642 we are given a detailed, exciting and chaotic narrative : chaotic in large part because not written on a year-to-year basis. As and when he had the material, and perhaps the leisure, he would add a section covering several years, or would insert a chapter in the earlier material (the famous chapter about Samo and the Wends is an example) or would alter a fact. However, his work bears traces of being unfinished. It ends, abruptly, with a very long description of the vendetta between Willibad and Flaochad, respectively the patrician and the mayor of Burgundy, in 642. In the nature of things, had he had the chance, he would surely have described the settlement of Burgundy that followed. But he was adding material as late as 660. For some reason that cannot now, or yet, be determined, the narrative was never continued beyond 642. He had, it is true, already written his preface or prologue to the whole work, and to this I shall presently turn ; but prologues were not always written last, and there is no apparent reason why his narrative should have stopped where it did, except by chance. Chapter 81 ends with the words : “ How this came about I shall set down under the right year if, God willing, I finish this and other matters as I desire ; and so I shall include everything in this book that I know to be true ”. It may be that he was getting more interested in turning his collection into a great source-book, and this is what he seems to imply in his prologue. The narrative, consequently, got shelved. He had not divided his six chronicles into four books, as they appear in the earliest extant manuscript, nor had he sub-divided his personal chronicle into the chapters that now, in places, make nonsense of them. All that is later work.

Having said this much, by way of introduction, about Fredegar himself, and having briefly described what is in his

chronicle and how it got there, I now turn to why it got there ; in short, to the problem of Fredegar's rôle among the historians of France. The beginning of wisdom in this matter must be Fredegar's own statement in his prologue. It was composed as a prologue to the whole work, and not simply to Book IV (that is, the sixth chronicle), as it will be found in Krusch's edition. This is what Fredegar says, beginning with an excerpt from St. Jerome :

Unless the Almighty helps me, I cannot tell how I can express in a word the labour on which I am embarking and how, in striving to succeed, my long struggle devours days already too short. "Translator" <sup>1</sup> in our own vernacular gives the wrong sense, for if I feel bound to change somewhat the order of words, I should appear not to abide by a translator's duty.<sup>2</sup> I have most carefully read the chronicles of St. Jerome, of Hydatius, of a certain wise man,<sup>3</sup> of Isidore and of Gregory, from the beginning of the world to the decline of Guntramn's reign ; and I have reproduced successively in this little book, in suitable language and without many omissions, what these learned men have recounted at length in their five chronicles. Further,<sup>4</sup> I have judged it necessary to be more thorough in my striving for accuracy, and so I have noted in the above-mentioned chronicles, as it were a source of material for a future work, all the reigns of the kings and their chronology. I have brought together and put into order in these pages, as exactly as I can, this chronology and the doings of many peoples, and have inserted them in the chronicles (a Greek word, meaning in Latin the record of the years) compiled by these wise men—chronicles that copiously gush like a spring most pure.<sup>5</sup> I could have wished that I had the same command of language, or at least approached it ; but it is harder to draw from a spring that gushes intermittently. And now the world grows old, which is why the finer points of wisdom are lost to us. Nobody now is equal to the orators of past times, or could even pretend to equality. Thus I am compelled, so far as my rusticity and ignorance permit, to hand on, as briefly as possible, whatever I have learned from the books of which I have spoken ; and if any reader doubts me, he has only to turn to the same author to find that I have said nothing but the truth. At the end of Gregory's work I have not fallen silent but have continued on my own account with facts and deeds of later times, finding them wherever they were recorded, and relating of the deeds of kings and of the wars of peoples all that I have read or heard or seen that I can vouch for. Here I have tried to put in all I could discover from the point at which Gregory stopped writing, that is, from the death of King Chilperic.

On the whole, this is as modest, and even as commonplace, a statement of aims as it appears ; but not quite. One catches in

<sup>1</sup> *Interpretator*.

<sup>2</sup> So far St. Jerome.

<sup>3</sup> He means the author of the *Liber*.

<sup>4</sup> He resumes his citation of Jerome.

<sup>5</sup> *Velut purissimus fons largiter fluentia manantes*. Professor Laistner has suggested to me that he is likely to have built up this phrase from glossaries.

it, so to say, premonitions of Bede's insistence on accuracy about sources, echoes of Gregory's profession of *rusticitas*, and of Sidonius' lament on the growing-old of the world, to say nothing of a good foundation of Jerome and thus of Eusebius himself. Yet it is a personal statement. Fredegar wishes it to be understood that he has not just accepted the chronicles of the wise men whose command of language is so far beyond his own ; he has collected and inserted into their pages the chronology and the deeds of kings and the doings of many peoples that were not there before ; and he has continued with a chronicle of his own times, relating all that he had read or heard or seen that he could vouch for. If he is ignorant he is careful not to claim for himself an ignorance beyond that of his contemporaries.

What has he inserted into the old chronicles ? A foretaste appears in chapter 5 of the first chronicle (the *Liber Generationis*). Into the list of the descendants of Japhet are interpolated two words : *Trociane, Frigiiae*. He wishes it to be understood that the Trojans and especially such of them as the Frigii, or Franks as he later explains, as made their way west, could trace their descent to a respectable son of Noah. He starts off the second chronicle (Jerome) with the *Regnum Assyriorum* ; but it soon becomes clear that the history of Assyria, or of any other of the great empires, is not his real concern ; they are introduced as a traditional framework and because the regnal years of their rulers give him a chronology. This is why we find in chapter 10 the founding of Carthage, in chapter 15 the end of the Assyrian empire, in chapter 16 the founding of Rome and in chapter 23 the end of the empire of the Medes ; these are used as chronological reckoning-points. His historical interests are two-fold : first, he is intrigued by the history of the Jews in so far as their religion was the fore-runner of Christianity (hence the importance, to him, of Isidore's chronicle) ; and secondly, he has a particular interest in one corner of Greek history, though whatever is irrelevant to this interest he sets aside. This corner is the Trojan origin of the Franks : Fredegar is the first author to mention it. It is not now my intention to examine this matter at all closely. Briefly and in general, it is accepted that we have here a conceit, invention or misunderstanding, ultimately, though

not necessarily directly, based on some literary knowledge ; and whether or not we attribute it to Fredegar's imagination, as does Faral in the celebrated appendix to his *Légende Arthurienne*<sup>1</sup> or to somebody else's, might not seem much to the purpose. My own suspicion is that Faral was too definite about what was and what was not " invention ", and too quickly dismissed the possibilities of a Gaulish origin of the Frankish legend. We have to remember that, in one form or another, tales of Troy were familiar to educated Gauls of the Later Empire. The *Excidium Troiae*<sup>2</sup> is one instance of this, and shows us the Troy legend in a tradition distinct from the better-known versions of Dares and Dictys,<sup>3</sup> and in a guise that strongly suggests Gaulish composition. Ammianus (*Rer. Gest. Lib. XV, 9, 5*) tells of fugitive Trojans settling in Gaul, and Ausonius (*Lib. VI, Epitaphia Heroum*) sings of the heroes of the Trojan War. On these and other grounds, it is quite reasonable to attribute Hellenic tastes to the Gallo-Romans and to see, as does Pierre Courcelle, something like a Greek renaissance in Gaul in the later fifth century.<sup>4</sup> It must, then, be borne in mind that the Gaulish atmosphere was already impregnated with *Trojana* by the time the Franks arrived, so that we might expect a Frankish-Trojan connection too at any time from the fifth century. It surfaces, however, in the literary sense, with Fredegar ; and what we have to face is the undoubted fact that Fredegar, and perhaps also his predecessor, propagated a very powerful fiction. This is contained in a series of interpolations in chapters 4 to 7 of St. Jerome. In brief, the story, if we ignore certain contradictions that may be due to dual authorship, is that the first king of the Franks was Priam. His people

<sup>1</sup> E. Faral, *La Légende Arthurienne* (*Bibl. de l'École des Hautes Études*, fasc. 255) (1929), i. App. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Edited by E. B. Atwood and V. K. Whitaker, *Medieval Academy of America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1944).

<sup>3</sup> The reports of Dares and Dictys, alleged eyewitnesses of the Trojan war, add nothing to the story of the ancestry of the Franks. In the free adaptation of Dares that was incorporated in some manuscripts of Fredegar's Chronicle, there is mention of the Trojan princes Francus and Vassus. See Faral, *op. cit.* i. 287-8, and E. Zöllner, *Die politische Stellung der Völker im Frankenreich* (Vienna, 1950), pp. 70-1.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Lettres grecques en Occident* (2nd. edn. 1948), pp. 210-53. The conclusions of this study have, however, been attacked by Ferdinand Lot and others.

split into two main groups (a third, the Teucri, went off to become Turks), and of these one made its way into Macedonia as a mercenary force and became absorbed into the population. This may have some connection with the legend of the Pannonian origin of the Franks reported by Gregory of Tours and, as Dill thought, with the decision of the Emperor Probus to exile a band of recalcitrant Franks to the Black Sea area in the third century.<sup>1</sup> The second main group, the Frigii—and here is Fredegar's novelty—set forth under a king named Francio, whence their subsequent name, Franks (an etymology probably due to Isidore, who at the same time suggests the right one).<sup>2</sup> Under the valiant Francio they devastated part of Asia, turned west into Europe, and finally established themselves between the Rhine, the Danube and the sea. There Francio died, and his people, reduced in numbers by all their wars, chose thereafter to be governed by dukes. They did very well against the Romans—notably against Pompey, whom we find an emperor, busy fighting the German tribes. The Franks and the Saxons were alone able to resist him: “post haec nulla gens usque in presentem diem Francos potuit superare, qui tamen eos suae ditione potuissent subiugare”. Where, asked Kurth, will you find a comparable Frankish boast, apart from the longer prologue of *Lex Salica*?<sup>3</sup> In chapter 8 we then begin to cover some of the same ground again. Friga, of the house of Priam, was, we are now told, actually the brother of Aeneas, and thus the Latins too were the kindred of the Franks. A little later on, in the fifth chronicle (the epitome of Gregory) Fredegar has to explain away Gregory's much more cautious statement on Frankish origins with a careful interpolation or so of his own. In particular, he now states that when they reached the Rhine, the Franks started to build a city

<sup>1</sup> *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (1926), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Etymologiarum*, Lib. IX, ii. 101 (ed. W. M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911, i).

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire poétique des Mérovingiens* (1893), p. 511. He might perhaps have added, in King Chilperic's account to Gregory of his great golden dish—“ego haec ad exornandam atque nobilem Francorum gentem feci” (*Historiarum Libri*, ed. Krusch and Levison, *M.G.H., Script. Rer. Mero.* (1951), Lib. VI, Cap. 2). Kurth's famous appendix on the Trojan origin of the Franks champions the view that Fredegar's story was an erudite invention. Camille Jullian, on the other hand, held that the story went back to the fourth century (*De la Gaule à la France*, p. 200).

named Troy, but the work was never completed. All sorts of explanations have been advanced of this passage. Faral believed that Fredegar is here caught out at an "invention audacieuse", and that he got his idea from Gregory, who says that when the Franks had crossed the Rhine they passed through Thuringia: "Thoringiam transmeasse"; and Thuringia becomes Trojia. This may be thought a good deal wilder than the attempts of Mommsen and others to find a suitable Troy among the cities of the Rhineland. Xanten is a reasonable candidate; and next door to Xanten was ancient Colonia Traiana, known in the Middle Ages as Troja Minor. Xanten was re-settled perhaps at about the time when Fredegar was writing, and took its name—Ad Sanctos—from the Martyrs' Church that alone survived of the former Colonia Traiana, destroyed in the mid-fifth century. Archaeologists have recently been busy on the site.<sup>1</sup> There are difficulties about this identification, naturally; but it is quite likely that the Austrasian Franks of the seventh century had made it for themselves, and that Fredegar was here not inventing but reporting; it was one of the things he had heard. Really the most conclusive argument against Fredegar as author of the Frankish-Trojan legend is its presence, in a different guise, in the Neustrian *Liber Historiæ Francorum*, put together in the early eighth century.<sup>2</sup> The author of the *Liber* made no use of Fredegar, and had never even heard of him. They are independent witnesses to a tale which they inevitably give in different forms.

I do not attempt to disentangle the various strands of the Trojan legend as known to Fredegar. It is enough to draw attention to the part it plays in his story. He has found a distinguished, even an epic, background for his Franks, and has got them to the Rhine, free and independent under their dukes and well able to stand up to the Romans, to whom they are related. This is a far better story than Gregory managed. Taken as a whole, it satisfies racial pride in a new way; it incapsulates the Franks in the history of the great powers of the

<sup>1</sup> See H. von Petrikovits' "Die Ausgrabungen der Colonia Traiana bei Xanten", *Bonner Jahrbücher*, clii (1952), 41-161.

<sup>2</sup> Edited by Krusch in M.G.H., *Script. Rer. Mero.*, Lib. II (1888).

Mediterranean world, namely the Church of Rome and the Eastern Empire, while at the same time giving them the dignity of historical independence.<sup>1</sup> Chapters 27 and 30 of the second chronicle contain some very interesting interpolations designed to show the completeness and speed of those Roman victories that never included the subjugation of the Franks. In chapter 65 the great Emperor Pompey conquers most of Asia; and it is now safe to call him *genere Francus* merely because he is a Roman, and thus ultimately a Trojan. Fredegar is really very skilled at working his interpolations of barbarian history into the fabric of Jerome and Hydatius. He finds room for a brief chapter (46) on the Burgundians, which may, in substance, come from Marius of Avenches; but it is certainly a pointer to what may be called his own domestic interests. He does not think much of the historical Burgundians, and, for all we know, did not consider himself descended from them. On the whole, Fredegar's pride in Frankish blood suggests that he did not carefully distinguish between indigenous and other races in his own Burgundy any more than he did in a wider field. Whatever his blood, whether Frankish or Burgundian in the narrow sense, he would probably have called himself *Romanus*. In chapter 56 he repeats the story of Hydatius, that in the second year of the reign of Anthemius blood spurted from the ground in the middle of Toulouse and continued to spurt for a whole day; but he has his own explanation of this: "signeficans, Gothorum dominatione sublata, Francorum adveniente regno". As the barbarian people move increasingly to the forefront of his picture, so it is natural that he should turn from Hydatius to Isidore's chronicle; and as attention becomes increasingly focused on one people, the Franks, so a transition to Gregory becomes equally natural. Gregory's epitome is the bridge between universal history into which Frankish matter is interpolated and Frankish history into which universal matter is interpolated. Fredegar omits Gregory's first book, which was logical, since its latest entry concerns the death of St. Martin and its subject-matter is thus Gallo-Roman and not Frankish. He begins with Gregory's account of the

<sup>1</sup> See the remarks of Helmut Beumann in *Das Königtum* (Konstanz, 1956), p. 223.

collapse of the Vandal Kingdom<sup>1</sup> and so arrives at the Franks, their origin and their history, immediately before their push into northern Gaul.<sup>2</sup>

This is no place for a systematic survey of all the interpolations in the text of Gregory that must be laid at the door of Fredegar. Some are of a purely factual nature, for example in Burgundian affairs, and take the form of a place-name here or a proper-name there that Gregory did not know and Fredegar did know. Others look rather like additions made from folk-tale or hearsay or, using the term in the limited sense employed by Dr. C. E. Wright, from saga;<sup>3</sup> and this is just as we have been warned to expect. A few examples must suffice. In chapter 9 comes Fredegar's explanation of the birth of Meroveus, the eponymous hero of the Frankish royal house. Chlodio was taking a summer bathe in the sea with his wife when she was approached by a sea-beast, "bistea Neptuni Quinitauri similis. . . . Cumque in continuo aut a bistea aut a viro fuisset concepta, peperit filium nomen Meroveum, per quo regis Francorum post vocantur Merohingii." I draw attention to Fredegar's note of doubt: the Minotaur *may* not have been the father of Meroveus; it may really have been a man. But, anyway, that is the story as reported to him. The Franks have not been content with Gregory's more sober account and have used their imagination. There are other stories of the same flavour as, for example, Clovis' wooing of the Burgundian Chrotechildis (chs. 18-19) and Basina's experiences on her wedding night (ch. 12). As is well known, Basina thrice roused her husband, Childeric (father of Clovis), and sent him out into the night to report what he should see; and he saw, the first time, lions, unicorns and leopards; and the

<sup>1</sup> *Historiarum Libri*, ed. Krusch and Levison, M.G.H., *Script. Rer. Mero.* (1951), *Lib. II*, cap. 9.

<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that Fredegar makes no mention of the Franks having participated in the *Adventus* of Germanic tribes into Roman Britain. If the blood of the Kentish settlers had been predominantly Frankish, one might expect to find some reflection of that migration in Frankish literature, whether or not those settlers had been led by their own chieftains, and whether they hailed from the Middle Rhine, as Mr. Jolliffe believed (*Pre-Feudal England, the Jutes*, 1933) or from the Lower Rhine, as Professor Hawkes argues ("The Jutes in Kent", in *Dark-Age Britain*, 1956). Franks were one thing, Frisians another.

<sup>3</sup> *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (1939).

second time, bears and wolves; and the third time, lesser beasts like dogs, and beasts "ab invicem detrahentes et voluntantes". She interprets this as the successive stages of degeneration of the Merovingian dynasty: Clovis shall be like a lion, his sons like leopards and unicorns, and their sons like bears and wolves and, finally, the fourth generation shall be like dogs and lesser beasts, and their people shall devastate one another "sine timore principum". Let us admit that this is hearsay; but is it, as Dill says, "popular legend"? I should suspect it of being not a countryman's tale but the kind of gloss that an informed public, even an aristocratic circle, might put upon events. It could even have some still undiscovered literary origin. The comment is that of a man quite capable of analysing the political troubles of his own time, who yet wishes to see no alternative to his Merovingians and thinks his compatriots a great deal more impressive than their kindred in Spain and Italy and elsewhere.

There are other long interpolations that equally deserve attention, such, for instance, as the story of Childeric's exile in Byzantium and eventual restoration through the guile of his friend Wiomad the Hun (ch. 11). Although Fredegar gets the name of the then Eastern Emperor wrong, there seems to lie behind his tale a tradition that Childeric, recently described by Professor Charles Verlinden as "only the chief of a warrior band",<sup>1</sup> actually owed his rule in Gaul to imperial backing as a rival candidate to the rebel Aegidius. This is worth reflecting upon. Fredegar seems to have had a considerable stock of information about Byzantine affairs, whether or not they directly affected Gaul. The reason may lie in the nearness of Burgundy to Byzantine Italy and to the vital route connecting Italy with Septimania. This enabled him to make additions to Gregory's account of the coup d'état of Gundowald, which involved Byzantium (ch. 87), and also to interpolate information on Franco-Lombard contacts (chs. 50, 65, 68). The Burgundian court-circle of Fredegar's day, where he certainly had friends, was more than a place where an occasional messenger could be interviewed; it had a long-standing tradition of contact with

<sup>1</sup> "Frankish Colonization: a new approach", *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, fifth ser., iv (1954), 15.

Byzantium, and must have been a store-house of information about the past. What more likely source for the famous romance of Justinian and Belisarius (II, ch. 61) inserted by Fredegar after Gregory's passage on the end of the Vandalic War? It is the tale of their matrimonial adventures with two Amazon sisters, one of whom—Antonina, wife of Belisarius—holds a command in Africa under her husband. A tissue of nonsense, no doubt; yet Procopius says that Antonina was Belisarius' wife and did accompany her husband on the Vandalic campaign,<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere in the romance is a strange parallel to the life of Pope Vigilius in the *Liber Pontificalis*.<sup>2</sup> I very much doubt if Fredegar ever set eyes on the writings of Procopius or on the *Liber Pontificalis*. In short, he gave literary shape to an already composite story current in the Mediterranean world and repeated in circles where he moved. Gregory of Tours, for all that he was a Gallo-Roman of the Auvergne with many friends in the Midi, was bishop of a see in western Gaul. He had nothing corresponding to the Burgundian court to keep him regularly informed about the eastern Mediterranean world. It would be foolish to over-emphasize this contrast, for Tours was an Austrasian city and the *Literæ Austrasicæ* show that the kings of Metz also had their dealings with Byzantium;<sup>3</sup> it is a long way, however, from Tours to Metz.

But Fredegar looks north as well as south. Among his shorter interpolations should be noticed two important references to Reims. One, well known, is in chapter 21, where he reports that Clovis was baptized by St. Rémi at Reims, a detail not given by Gregory and therefore often regarded as a fabrication,<sup>4</sup> particularly since it is followed by Clovis' comment on first hearing of our Lord's Passion—that had he been present with his Franks,

<sup>1</sup> *Vandalic War*, III, xii. 2, xiii. 23-4, xix. 11, xx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Note the remarks of R. Salamon, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xxx (1929-30), 102-10.

<sup>3</sup> A full study of these Frankish-Byzantine contacts has been made by P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam*, vol. ii, pt. 1 (*Byzance et les Francs*) (1956). His conclusions should, however, be treated with caution.

<sup>4</sup> Most recently in Sir Francis Oppenheimer's *Frankish Themes and Problems* (1952). Reims, however, is preferred by A. H. M. Jones, P. Grierson and J. A. Crook, "The authenticity of the Testamentum S. Remigii", *Rev. Belge de Philol. et d'Hist.*, xxxv (1957), No. 2, 368.

he would soon have avenged the wrong ! But in another place, chapter 16, Fredegar says that the famous vase of the Soissons incident described by Gregory belonged to the church of Reims. So here we have two allusions to Reims by a chronicler with no particular interest in the city or the church. To my mind, this tends to increase the likelihood of their veracity, or at least of Fredegar's acceptance of some local Austrasian source of information, such as a set of annals kept at Reims or at Metz (at least one interpolation suggests a Metz origin : the story in chapter 72 of how Brunehildis let the little Childebert down in a bag from a window in Paris, whence he was carried away to safety at Metz. I also suspect that he used the Metz *Vita Arnulfi*).

This selection of the more characteristic and important of Fredegar's interpolations may serve as a basis for advancing one quite modest claim ; namely, that though, in the main, he accepts and understands Gregory's account of Frankish affairs up to the year 584, he is yet able to make significant additions that probably stem from quite reputable sources, oral and written. He was no fool—and no fabricator, having no need to be one.

Lastly, there is Fredegar's own chronicle—his own, that is, apart from a few introductory chapters. Has it any coherence ? Is it in any sense controlled by a single view of events ? Or is it just an ignorant hotch-potch of whatever came along ? The dominant interest of the first forty-two chapters is not in doubt : it is the vendetta of the Visigoth Brunehildis with her Frankish connections, after the murder of her sister Galswintha. It is more than that : it is an indictment and an analysis. Fredegar is perfectly clear that Brunehildis was at the bottom of all the chaos of Frankish politics : his view is put shortly in an interpolation in Gregory (III, ch. 59)—“ Tanta mala et effusione sanguinum a Brunehildis consilium in Francia factae sunt, ut prophetis Saeville impleretur, dicens ‘ veniens Bruna de partibus Spaniae, ante cuius conspectum multae gentes peribunt’. Haec vero aequitum calcibus dirumpetur.” This foreshadows the notorious forty-second chapter, where her apprehension, her indictment for the murder of ten Frankish kings and her subsequent execution are described. Equally revealing is the

interpolation, as chapter 36 (made after 640), of a long excerpt from Jonas' *Vita Columbani*, which vividly portrays the stormy scenes between the queen and the savage old saint who refused to tolerate Merovingian polygamy.

If we analyse the last forty-two chapters of the chronicle for which no one questions Fredegar's authorship, we find that his subject-matter falls into fairly distinct groups. Six chapters deal predominantly with Burgundian affairs; five with Visigothic Spain and Gascony; six with Lombard Italy; six with Byzantium; thirteen with the general area of Austrasia and Germany; and the remaining six cover individual themes, such as the death of Dagobert at Saint-Denis, or the eulogies of Aega and Erchinoald, mayors of the palace. Their subject-matter overlaps, and they are of very unequal length; but they give some idea of proportion. Here, Fredegar is not searching wildly for any scrap of intelligence; he must have been in a position to select and to reject. In consequence, what he has left survives because he thought it important. He is able, without moving outside Burgundy, to give a vivid picture of what seventh-century Frankish politics were about, in Burgundy, Neustria, Austrasia and Aquitaine, and also to sketch in, spasmodically, the doings of neighbouring peoples, particularly as they affected the Franks. The picture is in this sense European, and it is a picture by no means entirely derived from hearsay. Fredegar's sources are difficult to distinguish because he was generally successful in recasting his information into his own literary mode. One often has the feeling of his subject-matter jumping all over the place but the same is seldom true of his style, which is episodic to a degree surpassing even Gregory of Tours. This gives the reader a first impression that he is dealing exclusively with saga-material and with scraps picked up in conversation; but one would not expect this of a man able to manage, however inexpertly, the difficult chronicles that form the bulk of his compilation, and in fact it is not true. To deny that oral sources play their part would be foolish; but they are not the whole story, or the part of the story on which he should exclusively be judged.

An example may be found in his chapters dealing with Byzantine affairs. There are six of them, some very long; and

five form a block on their own. To them we should add three other chapters interpolated in the chronicle of Fredegar's Burgundian predecessor. They contain long and obviously exaggerated stories, full of dialogue and movement, that somehow do give an authentic impression of such various topics as the Byzantine wars with Persia, Byzantine relations with Italy and Byzantine resistance to the Arabs. Chapter 9 describes how Caesara, the wife of the Persian Emperor Anaulf, fled to Byzantium in disguise and was baptized; and how, in due course, the conversion of all Persia followed. Paul the Deacon, who is not known to have used Fredegar, has the same story with less detail and in a different form.<sup>1</sup> There was no Emperor Anaulf, say the commentators. True, but the name sounds like a possible Germanic attempt at Anōsharwān, the Persian name for Chosroes I; and Chosroes did make some remarkable concessions to Christians in his domains; and the name of his Christian and favourite wife, Shīrīn or Sira, could conceivably become Caesara. Look, again, at Heraclius' relations with Dagobert, and at the long description of Heraclius' duel with Chosroes in chapter 64. Heraclius' weapon is an *uxus*, a word used once before by Fredegar (and only by Fredegar) in the sense of a sword or dagger; to Hellmann we owe the suggestion that the word is derived from the Persian *ākus*, meaning a chisel or a knife; Professor W. B. Henning, on the other hand, has pointed out to me that Fredegar's account may go back to the source of the Greek historian Theophanes, who writes that Chosroes was killed by arrows, *τοξοις*; and that *uxus* may reflect a corrupt and subsequently misunderstood *(τ)όξον*, or rather *(τ)όξα*.<sup>2</sup> In any event we seem here, too, to be in touch with an eastern Mediterranean tradition. Closely connected with the Byzantine chapters are the Italian; and here it was long ago realized that Fredegar must have made use of traditions that were independently available to Paul the Deacon; and these must, in part, have been literary, for the two writers have too much in

<sup>1</sup> *Historia Langobardorum*, Lib. IV, cap. 50 (ed. G. Waitz, p. 173). I am much indebted to Dr. J. A. Boyle for advice on Persian matters.

<sup>2</sup> A fuller statement of Professor Henning's views will be found in my edition of Fredegar.

common to allow of an oral source when one remembers that they were separated by a century and a half. I am inclined to wonder whether Fredegar may not have had access to a collection of historical material from Bobbio, which would explain not only much of his Lombard and Byzantine chapters but also material concerning Luxeuil and Austrasia that one immediately assumes to have come from Luxeuil itself, if not from some Austrasian centre such as Metz.

To take one early seventh-century sample of his Visigothic chapters, Fredegar tells (IV, 33) of a *dux* named Francio who had conquered Cantabria in the days of the Franks and had long paid tribute to their king; but when the province turned to the Empire the Goths seized it. This rigmarole has never arrested the attention of historians, knowing as they do that the Franks never controlled Cantabria. And yet there was a *dux* Francio, a Byzantine *magister militum* who ruled over the *territorium* of Como until he was forced by the Lombards to flee to Ravenna. This was *circa* 588. Paul the Deacon talks about him.<sup>1</sup> The identification of the two is not out of the question.<sup>2</sup>

Fredegar's information about Austrasia and its problems is copious, but lacks, I think, clear evidence of direct observation. He is unable, for example, to give any reasoned account of Dagobert's great judicial tour of Burgundy (which, incidentally, is the perfect answer to the question "what were barbarian kings meant to do when they were not fighting"), an account based, one might hazard the guess, on personal knowledge. The tour ends up in Paris, where we learn that his chief advisers, at least on Austrasian affairs, were Arnulf of Metz and Pippin: "regebatur ut nullus de Francorum regibus precedentibus suae laudis fuisset precellentior". The Austrasian March against the Slavs and Wends appears to be held without the Austrasians feeling that they were, so to say, merely holding the fort for the rest of the Franks. Then comes a sudden change. Paris seems to have been too much for Dagobert and the result (ch. 60) is a total collapse of morals; he surrounds himself with wives and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Lib. III, cap. 27.

<sup>2</sup> The possibility is discussed by G. P. Bognetti, *Relazioni X Congresso Int. di Sci. Stor.*, iii. 41.

mistresses, starts robbing the churches and forgets all the justice that he had loved before. The Austrasians become restive and appear to put the blame on Pippin (ch. 61), though Fredegar here uses obscure language and one cannot be quite certain who is blaming whom. What is certain is that Fredegar himself is in a muddle; and I suggest that the reason may lie in his use of two distinct sources, the first Burgundian and the second perhaps Austrasian. He goes on to depict Dagobert's increasing difficulties with his eastern March, including the rebellion of Radulf, his duke in Thuringia (ch. 77), and the war against Samo, the extraordinary Frankish adventurer who went on a business trip to the Wends and stayed to be their king (chs. 48 and 68). Fredegar is our first informant on the Western Slavs, the Slavs more particularly of the present area of Czechoslovakia. Without him we should be nowhere, and his information on Slav politics and society is notably reliable.<sup>1</sup> One may, in passing, note that in chapter 48 (a late interpolation) Fredegar remarks that the Wends, before they were liberated by Samo, were subject to the Huns or Avars, who used them as *Befulci*. What were *Befulci*? Fredegar explains: they were mercenaries who were sent into the front line by their masters to bear the brunt of the attack; which is a reasonable gloss on *befulti*. Chaloupecký thinks that the word is a hybrid, *bis*+*folc*, "a double regiment". But, as Theodor Mayer has plausibly shown,<sup>2</sup> Fredegar gives the right explanation of the wrong word. What the Wends actually did was to look after the Avars' herds of buffalo, and hence in their own language would have been known as *Byvolci*, the people who looked after the buffaloes (*byvolû*); and the nearest Latin homophone known to Fredegar was *befulti*, or *befulci*, on which he proceeds to comment. So here again it looks as if he were in touch with a direct source of foreign intelligence and is not just romancing. (There are, in

<sup>1</sup> V. Chaloupecký, "Considérations sur Samon, le premier roi des Slavs", *Byzantinoslavica*, vol. xi (1950), gives a résumé of the important studies of the Polish scholar, G. Labuda. Dr. E. B. Fryde has since informed me that he is not entirely persuaded by Labuda's evidence, which is archaeological, that Samo led the Slavs of Moravia.

<sup>2</sup> "Fredegars Bericht über die Slawen", *Mitteilungen d. Öst. Inst. f. Gesch.*, erg. bd. ii (1929).

fact, two other instances of his misunderstanding Slav words but doing his best with them.)<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 75 Fredegar recounts how Dagobert gave to the Austrasians his little son Sigebert, as king, and established him in Metz with a suitable treasure and under proper tuition. Why did he make this concession? The answer is “*deinceps Austrasiae eorum studio limetem et regnum Francorum contra Winedus utiliter definsasse nuscutur*”: the Austrasians, for all that they hate Dagobert, will now be prepared to stand against the Wendish raiders on their eastern March. So times have changed. This view of Dagobert, and before him, of his father Chlotar, deliberately encouraging the autonomy of the Austrasians as their only barrier against the Slavs, has recently been attacked by Dr. Eugen Ewig<sup>2</sup> and others. Yet it appears to be borne out by *Lex Ribvaria*, a skilfully-constructed collection of Frankish and other law codified in the seventh century from one possible motive only: to placate and bind closer to the Merovingians the people to whom it would apply—the Franks of the region of Cologne, a particularly difficult sector of the threatened Rhineland<sup>3</sup> to which the Merovingians had devoted special attention and from which a Frankish advance north towards the Lower Rhine was planned and in part only carried out. It shows signs of having been put together by Burgundian lawyers; and we know that both Chlotar and Dagobert were much influenced by Burgundians. But all that is outside my present subject. It only suggests again that Fredegar has tapped an authentic Austrasian source. He had no great sympathy for Austrasians

<sup>1</sup> *Gagano* in the same chapter, and *Walluc* in chapter 72. Is it possible that the same word *G(k)aganus* (= Khan) has also troubled Eddius, and that we should read *Kagano* for *pagano* when he writes *sub pagano quodam rege Hunnorum degens* (*The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, edited by Bertram Colgrave (1927), ch. 28, p. 56)?

<sup>2</sup> “Die fränkischen Teilreiche im 7 Jahrhundert”, *Trierer Zeitschrift* (22 Jahrgang, 1953), p. 113; “Die Civitas Ubiorum, die Francia Rinensis und das Land Ribuarien”, *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, xix (1954), especially pp. 23-7, an admirable survey to which I am much indebted; K. A. Eckhardt, *Pactus Legis Salicae* (1954), pp. 119-20.

<sup>3</sup> *Lex Ribvaria* has been re-edited by F. Beyerle and R. Buchner, M.G.H., *Leges*, vol. iii, pt. 2, (1954). I have discussed some of the political implications of the text, and of the editors' views, in *English Historical Review*, lxx, (1955), 440-3.

but he knew where to find out about them and was always prepared to have a guess at their motives.

We come, finally, to Fredegar's two concluding chapters (89 and 90). They are the longest of his own composition, and also the vividest. The first tells how the Frankish regent, queen Nantechildis, went to Orleans in Burgundy, and summoned to her all the Burgundian *seniores*, lay and ecclesiastical, and with their approval appointed Flaochad, *genere Franco*, to be their mayor in succession to Aega; and the second goes on to tell how Flaochad, once appointed, looked for an opportunity to destroy an old enemy, the Burgundian patrician, Willibad. They meet, at last, outside the walls of Autun, and Willibad is killed. The count of the palace, Berthar, a Transjuran Frank, was, writes Fredegar: the first of them all to attack Willibad; and the Burgundian Manulf, gnashing his teeth with fury, left the ranks and came forward with his men to fight Berthar. Berthar had once been a friend of his, and now said, "Come under my shield and I will protect you from danger", and he lifted his shield to afford cover to Manulf. But the latter struck at his chest with his lance, and his men surrounded Berthar, who had advanced too far, and gravely wounded him. But when Chaubedo, Berthar's son, saw his father in danger of his life, he rushed to his assistance, threw Manulf to the ground, transfixed him with his spear, and slew all those who had wounded his father. And thus, by God's help, the good boy saved Berthar, his father, from death. Those dukes who had preferred not to throw their men upon Willibad now pillaged his tents and the tents of the bishops and the rest. The non-fighters took a quantity of gold and silver and horses and other objects.

Pierre le Gentilhomme, the numismatist, plausibly associated Willibad's scattered treasure with coins discovered at Buis (Saône-et-Loire<sup>1</sup>)—more plausibly than Baudot associated Berthar with the authorship of the chronicle on the strength of his performance on this occasion. But it is fairly clear that Fredegar had personal knowledge of, and interest in, what happened. He goes on to relate that Flaochad died eleven days after Willibad, "struck down by divine judgement . . . many believed that since Flaochad and Willibad had sworn mutual friendship in places holy to the saints, and had both greedily oppressed and robbed their people, it was God's judgement that delivered the land from their overweening tyranny: their faithlessness and deceit were the cause of their deaths." So ends the chronicle. Fredegar does not say that he believed this, though he probably did.

<sup>1</sup> *Mélanges de Numismatique Mérovingienne* (1940), p. 105.

What he gives no indication of is a clear-cut fight between the Burgundian aristocracy and the Frankish intruders. The cross-currents were, in fact, much more complicated. Both the patrician and the mayor were out to feather their own nests, and both had Franks and Burgundians, laymen and churchmen, in their followings. In fact, this precisely illustrates the point made in the story about Basina ; when " lesser beasts " reign, there will always be a scramble for local influence.

Fredegar had known and understood some of the " greater beasts ". It is because of him that we know anything of the detail of the great reign of Dagobert I. But Fredegar had an equally high opinion of Dagobert's father, Chlotar II, the executioner of Brunehildis. These two men, Chlotar and Dagobert, were masters of the Frankish scene for twenty-five years between them. After them came a minority and the rule of mayors. Fredegar did not think, or say, that this meant the end of the Merovingians or of Frankish Gaul ; but he does show, in the remaining three years of his chronicle, what the clash of uncontrolled local interests meant in practice. In this, as in much else, our whole approach to the central period of the Merovingian age is unconsciously based on Fredegar's approach ; we simply cannot avoid it.

When all is said and done, Fredegar is not a Gregory of Tours. He is less learned and more easily muddled, though it is always to be remembered that his work is incomplete. Nor is he the associate of kings. But he is equally vivid with his stories, and the stories do illustrate a consistent approach to events ; and further, they do involve personal judgments. He is not perhaps, as he stands, a historian, though, had he ever finished, he might have written that *Historia Francorum* which I incline to think Gregory never intended to write ; but he is a major adapter of other peoples' chronicles and a major chronicler in his own right. One cannot fail to be struck by the contrast between the political chaos and vendetta of seventh-century France, of which Fredegar himself is in large part our evidence, and the patient skill with which this remote figure builds up his complicated record of events. Surely he deserves serious re-assessment, and higher rank among the writers of the Dark Ages ?