

Changing spaces: the evidence of Vienne

by Ian Wood

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The evidence for the city of Vienne allows us to reconstruct the transformation of what had been a provincial capital of the Roman Empire, into a city dominated by the Church, initially, in the late fifth century, following the reaction of bishop Mamertus to a major earthquake, and subsequently as a result of the foundation of monasteries, some of which were in existence by the end of the fifth century, but the majority of which were founded in the sixth and seventh.

Middle Ages, Late Antiquity, 4th-7th centuries, Vienne, bishops, Church, monasteries.

1. *Church history and Urban change*

Urban change at the end of Late Antiquity is usually studied through the archaeological evidence, which has become increasingly plentiful in recent years, and which gives us the clearest insights into topographical reality. Of course, not everywhere has been equally well studied, not least because of the limitations on what may be excavated. For some cities the written sources allow a different set of insights. Rome, most obviously, can be studied through the evidence of the *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Ordo Romanus*, as well as through the city's archaeology, architecture, and inscriptions.¹ For some other cities – notably Ravenna, Le Mans, Auxerre and Reims – we are fortunate enough to have episcopal histories, and these tell us something about the foundation of ecclesiastical institutions and sometimes about urban liturgical performance – and Ravenna's architectural heritage is second only to that of Rome.

¹ Noble, *The Multiple Meanings*.

2. Vienne in the days of Mamertus and Avitus

For Vienne, as with all the cities of Gaul, we have the invaluable guide of the *Topographie chrétienne*, which draws together the evidence of the archaeology and the written word,² and there is also a useful volume in the *Guides archéologiques de la France*.³ Although the city does not boast an episcopal history (for which our chief source is the undoubtedly erratic *Chronicle* of Ado),⁴ we do have written evidence which allows us to compare the city in the late fifth and early sixth centuries with the situation later in the Merovingian period, once again in terms of church institutions, building and liturgy. For the period a little before 500 (as well as the following seventeen years) we have information in the writings of Avitus of Vienne, most notably in the first of his homilies on Rogation,⁵ and also in his poem on chastity, which provides valuable evidence on female asceticism in his episcopal city.⁶ The Merovingian evidence is very much less reliable. It consists largely of a dossier, which is extremely suspect, relating to foundations associated with “dux” Ansemundus,⁷ Ado’s *Vita Theudarii* from the late ninth century,⁸ about which Françoise Descombes stated “écrite par Adon, la *Vita*, qui situe Theudarius au VI^e siècle n’inspire aucune confiance”,⁹ and the *Vita Clari*, which belongs at the earliest to the late tenth century and, as has been shown by Nathanaël Nimmegeers, reflects concerns of the reform movement of that period.¹⁰ Historians and archaeologists have, understandably, been very wary about using these later sources. Laurent Ripart has gone so far as to talk of “le dossier falsifié des monastères viennois”.¹¹ Even so Anne Baud, Nathanaël Nimmegeers and Anne Flammin have felt able to talk of “une importante vague de fondations monastiques qui caractérise la ville de Vienne à la fin d’Antiquité tardive”.¹² The uncertainty of the evidence has, no doubt, led to the comparative neglect of the potential significance of the spiritual history of Vienne in the sixth and seventh centuries, despite the views of Baud, Nimmegeers and Flammin, and the account of *Vienne la sainte* by Pierre Cavard.¹³ If one accepts that there is a substratum of truth in the *Lives* of Theudarius and

² Descombes, Fevrier, Gauthier, *Vienne*. See also *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule*.

³ Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, *Vienne*.

⁴ Ado, *Chronicon*. There is, however, the excellent modern study by Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*.

⁵ Avitus, hom. 6.

⁶ Avitus, *De consolatoria castitatis laude*.

⁷ Schilling, *Ansemundus dux*; Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 242-3.

⁸ Ado, *Vita Theudarii* (ed. B. Krusch). A fuller version of the text is included in *Acta Sanctorum*, October 12, 840-2. I am indebted to Alain Dubreucq who has drawn my attention to the material absent from Krusch’s edition.

⁹ Descombes, *Vienne*, 21.

¹⁰ Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 255-6.

¹¹ Ripart, *Les déserts de l’Occident*, 236-62.

¹² Baud, Nimmegeers, Flammin, *L’abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut*; Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 1.

¹³ Cavard, *Vienne la sainte*.

Clarus, what we essentially witness in Vienne is the emergence of a city dominated by religious or monastic communities. It is, therefore, worth revisiting the whole of this dossier to see how much one may plausibly accept – and to ask whether the situation in Vienne was markedly different from that in other cities in Merovingian Gaul.

For the late fifth century we have eye-witness information from Avitus of Vienne. In particular the first of his homilies on Rogation presents us with the fullest – although not the earliest – narrative of the origins of Rogational processions.¹⁴ Sidonius provides an account from a generation earlier in a letter written to bishop Mamertus, the instigator of the processions, shortly after their institution in 473.¹⁵ But this account is less full, and although Sidonius had very close contacts with Vienne, Avitus is likely to have been better informed: he may well have taken part in the original processions, he was certainly living in the city at the time, and Mamertus was his godfather.¹⁶

In the years before the institution of the processions Vienne was essentially the great imperial city that it had long been. As well as being a provincial capital, it had, after all, boasted an imperial residence, which had been a seat of government for Valentinian II, and it was there that he met his end in 371.¹⁷ In c. 473, however, the city was struck by a series of natural disasters, including earthquakes, which led to the outbreak of fires and large scale destruction. There was a particularly severe tremor the night before Easter, which destroyed what Avitus called the “*aedes publica*”, but which Gregory of Tours (who was making use of the bishop of Vienne’s homily, and of the relevant letter of Sidonius) glossed as the “*palatium regale*”.¹⁸ This may well have been the very palace in which Valentinian had died, and it may also have been used by the Gibichung “*magistri militum per Gallias*” of the 460s and 470s as their seat of power. Sidonius does not talk of either a palace or an “*aedes publica*”, but he does talk of the collapse of the facades of public buildings (“*scaenae moenium publicorum*”) and of the presence of deer in the forum.¹⁹

The disaster prompted bishop Mamertus, who was leading the Easter vigil in the cathedral, to propose three days of processions. He won over the city’s numerous senators to the plan. The first procession was relatively short, taking in a church that, according to Avitus, was subsequently rebuilt – we are probably dealing with the shrine of saint Ferreolus, on the west bank of the Rhône, which was moved further up river from the city to a site in pres-

¹⁴ Avitus, hom. 6.

¹⁵ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Lettres*, ep. VII, 1, 3-6.

¹⁶ See Avitus, hom. 6.

¹⁷ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 25, states suicide. Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, 4.54.3, and Orosius, *Historia Contra Paganos*, VII, 35, assert that he was murdered by Arbogast; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22, gives both versions; Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum*, II, 9. For more details see Croke, Arbogast, 235-44; Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 238-9.

¹⁸ Gregory, *Libri Historiarum*, II, 34; also Ado, *Chronicon*, s.a. 425.

¹⁹ Sidonius, ep. VII, 1, 3.

ent-day Saint-Romain-en-Gal.²⁰ The processions on the two following days, we are told, were longer and more ambitious. What is particularly striking about Avitus' account is the emphasis on Mamertus' skill in winning round the population, initially by dealing with the senate, and then by making the first processional route relatively short, so as to attract the population. Sidonius' account of the social background to the Rogation processions in Vienne is similar to that implied by Avitus, although it differs in a handful of ways. Whereas Avitus talks of the "numerous illustrious men" who belonged to the city's "curia", Sidonius comments that there were few men of his order.²¹ He also says that the leading men of the city had already abandoned it, as had other members of the population.²² Even allowing for the discrepancy, we can take it that before the earthquakes Vienne had a functioning "curia" – and we can also note that by the time that Avitus preached his sermon, a generation after the institution of the Rogation processions, this was a thing of the past – he notes that the "curia" flourished in those days, implying that that was no longer the case when he preached his own sermon. The creation of urban unity, to which both men refer, was clearly something that required a good deal of diplomatic skill.

We should not assume that the decline of the "curia" in Vienne was paralleled in all other cities of southern Gaul, although Sidonius does provide other instances of fellow aristocrats abandoning city life.²³ In Cahors, for instance, there is some evidence that senators remained influential through the sixth century.²⁴ It is apparent that Vienne was subject to a specific set of natural disasters – and while Sidonius relates that other bishops copied Mamertus in instituting Rogation processions,²⁵ there is no suggestion that the earthquakes and resulting fires were anything other than a local catastrophe. The same is true of the collapse of the first basilica dedicated to Ferreolus, which was caused by river damage. On this Gregory of Tours is our most explicit source. He relates that at some point in the third quarter of the sixth century he visited the shrine of Ferreolus and was surprised to learn that it also held the skull of Julian of Brioude. He was told about the circumstances of the *translatio* of the relics, following the collapse of the first basilica. According to his informant there was a large group of abbots and monks present – if accurate this is our best evidence for a significant monastic presence in Vienne as early as the episcopate of Mamertus.²⁶

²⁰ Avitus, hom. 6. See Wood, *Les relations entre Brioude et Vienne*, 254-5. For the recent archaeology of the site see Prisset, *Saint-Romain-en-Gal*. For the discussion of the church of Saint-Ferréol, see Reynaud, *Réexamen de l'identification de la basilique Saint-Ferréol*, 315-8.

²¹ Sidonius, ep. VII, 1, 5: "nostri ordinis viris et his paucis".

²² Sidonius, VII, 1, 3: "inter ista discessu primorum popularium".

²³ Sidonius, ep. I, 6, 3.

²⁴ Bonnassie, *L'évêque, le peuple et les sénateurs*.

²⁵ Sidonius, ep. V, 14.

²⁶ Gregory, *Liber de passione et virtutibus sancti Iuliani martyris*, 2.

By the time that Avitus delivered his Rogation sermons Vienne may have been subject to another disaster, which in all probability marked it out further from many other cities. In the year 500, in the course of the civil war between the Gibichung “magister militum” Gundobad and his brother Godegisel, the latter took up residence in Vienne, which was then subject to a siege, during which, according to Gregory of Tours, Gundobad’s men entered the city through the channel of an aqueduct.²⁷

Avitus tells us relatively little about Vienne in his own day, which indeed included the siege of the city, although we do know from a fragmentary dedication homily that he restored the city’s baptistry.²⁸ He also states that he was involved in the oversight of the monastic confederation of Grigny. This was obviously an institution of significance in the region of Vienne, Lyon, and Grenoble, but unfortunately the references to it are few and slight. Sidonius had already noted the importance of the community in a letter written from exile in c. 476,²⁹ where he recommends the monastic rules of the fathers of Lérins and Grigny. Its significance within Burgundian territory is apparent from the fact that the first abbot of the royal foundation of Agaune in 515, Hymnmodus, had previously been abbot of Grigny, as had a number of those who accompanied him to the Valais, and the community as a whole supplied one of the squadrons of monks that performed the “laus perennis” in the new foundation.³⁰

Unfortunately the geographical location of Grigny is a matter of dispute. Although it was subject to the bishop of Vienne, in his dealings with it Avitus had to be absent from his normal place of residence, his “habitaculum civitatis”.³¹ Ripart has examined the various conflicting pieces of evidence relating to Grigny, and has concluded that it was most likely situated in Aoste.³² Certainly there is plausible archaeological evidence for a religious community there. But the use of the plural “monasteria” by Avitus, makes it absolutely clear that we should not be looking for a single site, and the fact that it was a confederation may well explain the divergent indications of its geographical situation. It was a chain of houses united by a particular rule, the “statuta patrum Grinnicensium”.

Later references would seem to imply that by the seventh century the centre of the community of Grigny was at the shrine of Ferreolus at Saint-Romain-en-Gal – the church that was rebuilt at a new site at some point after the first Rogations of c. 473.³³ In the light of Gregory of Tours’ account of the

²⁷ Gregory, *Libri Historiarum*, II, 33.

²⁸ Avitus, hom. 18.

²⁹ Sidonius, ep. VII, 17, 3.

³⁰ *Vita abbatum Acaunensium absque epitaphiis*, I, 4.

³¹ Avitus, ep. 74.

³² Ripart, *Les déserts de l’Occident*, 258–62.

³³ *Vita Clari*, II. Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, *Vienne aux premiers temps chrétiens*, 61–4. See Wood, *Les relations entre Brioude et Vienne*, 254–5; Reynaud, *Réexamen de l’identification de la basilique Saint-Ferréol*, 315–8.

“translatio” of the relics of Ferreolus, we might guess that already in the time of Mamertus some religious were attached to the shrine, which, however, was still accessible to the general public in the mid sixth century, and was, indeed, overseen not by an abbot but by an “aedituus”.³⁴ Ripart has insisted that the evidence only indicates the presence of “un collège des clercs” at Saint-Ferréol in the early Middle Ages,³⁵ but before the Carolingian period, and the regularisation of monasticism, it would scarcely be possible to distinguish a community of clerics from a community of monks.

3. *Monasteries in the time of Avitus*

We have much better evidence for female asceticism in Vienne at the time of Avitus from his lengthy poem on virginity, *De consolatoria castitatis laude*. The prologue is dedicated to the author’s brother Apollinaris, the bishop of Valence, but the poem is addressed to their sister, Fuscina, and it deals primarily with her and with other pious women of the family.³⁶ It presents a quite extraordinary image of female asceticism and aristocratic monasticism, although it has scarcely registered in studies of monastic history. One reason for this is perhaps the lack of specific details on the community to which Fuscina belonged. Fortunately, here we have some additional information. A later *Vita Fuscinae*, which survives in a twelfth-century manuscript, but appears to be a good deal older, reveals that Fuscina was an inmate of the nunnery dedicated to saints Gervasius and Protasius, which the hagiographer claims was built by Hesychius, bishop of Vienne, the successor of Mamertus, and father of Avitus, Apollinaris, and Fuscina.³⁷ Since there are problems with some of the information contained in the *Vita Fuscinae* we should not place too much reliance on the detail it provides. We do, however, know something about the cult of Gervasius and Protasius in the Rhodanian city. Ambrose sent relics of the Milanese martyrs to Vienne in 386, where they were received by Martin of Tours, Paulinus of Nola and Victricius of Rouen – all of whom had yet to take up episcopal office.³⁸ The arrival of the relics is also recorded by Ado in his *Chronicle*.³⁹ In addition there is an inscription relating to a woman called Foedula, who was baptised by Martin, and who was buried near the relics of Gervasius and Protasius.⁴⁰ The foundation of a nunnery dedicated to Gervasius and Protasius by the end of the fifth century is, therefore, entirely plausible.⁴¹ The community may have been established by Hesychi-

³⁴ Gregory, *Liber de passione et virtutibus sancti Juliani*, 2.

³⁵ Ripart, *Les déserts de l’Occident*, 256.

³⁶ Avitus, *De consolatoria castitatis laude*.

³⁷ *Vita Fuscinae*.

³⁸ Paulinus of Nola, ep. 18, 9; Avitus, *De consolatoria castitatis laude*, 15-16.

³⁹ Ado, *Chronicon*, col. 96C.

⁴⁰ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, 12; Doignon, *Martinus procer*.

⁴¹ Descombes, *Vienne*, 27, gathers the evidence, but omits that relating to Fuscina.

us within an established cult site. The placing of communities of religious in already existing cult sites seems to have been a feature of monasticism in Vienne. Of course the most notable example of this practice is to be found in the foundation of the monastery of Agaune at the site of the martyrdom of the Theban legion in 515, but we have already noted the association of the monks of Grigny with the shrine of Ferreolus, and we may meet it again in the churches of Saint-Pierre and Saint-André-le-Bas. This apart, we know little about the community of saints Gervasius and Protasius – except for the fact recorded in the *Vita Fuscinae* that it was there that the saint was attacked by the henchmen of a tyrant, perhaps agents of Godegisel, during the course of the 500 civil war.⁴²

We can add one other detail to the history of monasticism in Vienne in the time of Avitus. According to the *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, a text of c. 515, a holy man called Leonianus, who came from Pannonia, and who initially established himself in Autun, was also active in Vienne. There he governed a small group of monks who were attached to his cell, which was apparently outside the city walls, and a larger group of 60 nuns in a community within the walls.⁴³ Since Leonianus is said to have been in communication with Eugendus, who was abbot of Condat between c. 496 and 510, we can place his presence in Vienne at the very end of the fifth century and the first decade of the sixth century. Inexplicably Marc Heijmans and Luce Pietri have claimed that Leonianus was the founder of Grigny, whose rule, they say, he drew up at some point before 477.⁴⁴ For this there is no evidence whatsoever. It is highly unlikely that a holy man who was active in the early sixth century was the author of a monastic rule which was already well regarded in the mid 470s. There is a *Vita Leoniani*, which offers some further information, but it unfortunately only dates from the thirteenth century. We may also doubt the statement in the *Vita Patrum Iurensium* that Leonianus came from Pannonia, which may be an echo of Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini*. That there were nuns in Vienne in the early sixth century other than those attached to Saints-Gervasius-and-Protasius may, however, be confirmed by several epitaphs, including that of Ananthailda, who died in 508-9, and Celsa, who died in 518, which are now preserved in the church of Saint-Pierre, which seems originally to have served as a funerary church.⁴⁵

4. Monasticism after the death of Avitus

For the half century following the death of Avitus, the evidence for Vienne is very much less reliable, despite a handful of episcopal epitaphs. The major-

⁴² *Vita Fuscinae*, 6, 8.

⁴³ *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, III, 5, 127-8.

⁴⁴ Heijmans, Pietri, *Le «Lobby» Lérinien*, 49.

⁴⁵ Baud, Nimmegeers, Flammin, *L'abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut à Vienne*, § 10.

ity of our surviving evidence relates to monasticism, but most of it is late and questionable.⁴⁶ Even so, it is probable that there was a flurry of monastic foundations in Vienne in the first half of the sixth century. Apart from the foundations of Leonianus, the most important appear to have been those associated with the family of the Burgundian aristocrat Ansemundus. The key source is a charter of Ansemundus and his wife Ansleubana, in favour of the nunnery of Saint-André-le-Bas, to be headed by their daughter Remilla/Remilia-Eugenia, which purports to have drawn up in 543. It states that Ansemundus and Ansleubana had already founded a monastery for men, dedicated to saint Peter, outside the walls of the city. The charter also claims that Remilla had previously been an inmate of another nunnery, whose abbess was Eubona, sister of one or other of the founders of Saint-André. This community, we are told, followed the Rule instituted by Leonianus.⁴⁷

The donation for Saint-André-le-Bas is unquestionably a forgery, although there is general agreement that it is based on an authentic document, and some of the information it contains is supported by other evidence, including a charter supposedly issued by Louis the Pious for the community in 831, which refers to the donation of Ansemundus – though this ninth-century document is now also regarded as a forgery.⁴⁸ Ado's *Chronicle* provides a little more evidence to add to the dossier relating to Saint-André.⁴⁹ Here we are told that in the time of bishop Philip, the daughter of “dux” Ansemundus, Remilla-Eugenia, founded the “monasterium sancti Andreae subterioris”, and handed it over to the *mater ecclesiae* of the city in her will. According to the charter the “monasterium superius sancti Andreae” was already in existence. It had been founded by Leonianus in the time of bishop Avitus, and it was there that Remilla had been instructed in religious discipline. Unfortunately very little of this statement appears to be accurate. Although, as we have seen, Leonianus does seem (from the reference to him in the *Vita Patrum Iurensium*) to have been in Vienne during the episcopate of Avitus, Philip's episcopate (from c. 567-80) does not fit with any of the evidence relating to Remilla-Eugenia. Ado's comments on the foundations of Ansemundus are unquestionably confused, and seem to reflect ninth-century concerns and recollections, rather than sixth-century reality. Nathanaël Nimmegeers' reconstruction of events is, not surprisingly, very different.

Following Nimmegeers' reconstruction,⁵⁰ Leonianus settled in Vienne around the year 500, at a site at the top of the city, later known as Saint-Marcel. Then, with the help of Ansemundus he founded a nunnery nearby, which was

⁴⁶ Baud, Nimmegeers, Flammin, *L'abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut à Vienne*; Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 15-27.

⁴⁷ Amory, *The textual transmission of the Donatio Ansemundi*; Schilling, *Ansemundus dux*; Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 242-2.

⁴⁸ Ripart, *Les déserts d'Occident*, 242.

⁴⁹ Ado, *Chronicon*, s.a. 575, col. 111.

⁵⁰ Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 240-5.

governed by Eubona, the sister of either Ansemundus or of his wife Ansleubana. This community is identified by Nimmegeers as Sainte-Blandine. It was there that Remilla-Eugenia initially became a nun, before leading her own community not at Saint-André-le-Bas, but at Saint-André-le-Haut. The foundation of this new community may have led to the decline of Eubona's nunnery, and this may underlie later confusion about the communities involved.

Ripart's reconstruction of events is different again. In his view Ansemundus founded a nunnery at Saint-André-le-Haut, which was directed by Leonianus.⁵¹ And he also suggests that this may have been the same as the nunnery which Fuscina entered.⁵² This he argues partly on the grounds that Vienne could not have housed two nunneries as early as the late fifth century. There are, however, major difficulties with this reading. First, Fuscina must have entered a religious community some time before her father's death in c. 490. There is no reason to disbelieve the statement of the *Vita Fuscinae* that Hesychius founded the nunnery, or that he entrusted Fuscina to the abbess Aspidia,⁵³ who is attested as a relative by Avitus.⁵⁴ It is unlikely that this community was directed by Leonianus: he is only known to have been active in Vienne in the time of Eugendus, who is usually reckoned to have been abbot of Condat between c. 496 and 510. Neither Avitus nor the *Vita Fuscinae* makes any reference to him. Hesychius and Avitus themselves surely oversaw the family foundation, and the known abbesses were female relatives.

There is also a problem in accepting that Leonianus was in charge of Ansemundus' foundation. According to the forged donation charter, Ansemundus founded a community for his daughter Remilla-Eugenia, who had already led a religious life under the guidance of her aunt Eubona, in a community that had been founded by Leonianus. The charter boasts a date of 543. The charter has long been regarded as suspect, and Beate Schilling has conclusively shown it to be a forgery, although she acknowledges that there is a genuine core to some of the information contained within it.⁵⁵ Ripart has accepted this, but has argued that the true date of the donation must have been closer to 510, on the grounds that Ansemundus was a correspondent of Avitus, and was also a signatory to the *Liber Constitutionum* of 517.⁵⁶ This, according to Ripart, rules out the possibility that the donation was made in 543. It is possible that the father of Remilla-Eugenia can be identified with Avitus' correspondent, and he may have signed the *Liber Constitutionum* – although the name there appears as Aunemundus.⁵⁷ But it should be noted that two Aunemundi sign the law code: the name was not uncommon. And there is a third Ansemundus

⁵¹ Ripart, *Les déserts de l'Occident*, 243.

⁵² Ripart, 244.

⁵³ *Vita Fuscinae*, 6.

⁵⁴ Avitus, *De consolatoria castitatis laude*, l. 87.

⁵⁵ Schilling, *Ansemundus dux*.

⁵⁶ Ripart, *Les déserts de l'Occident*, 240-2.

⁵⁷ *Liber Constitutionum*, *Prima Constitutio* 14, 34.

who appears in the *Passio Sigismundi*, where he was responsible for securing the body of the martyr from the Frankish king Theudebert, and returning it to Agaune, supposedly three years after Sigismund's murder, that is in c. 525,⁵⁸ although Bruno Krusch insisted that the date must actually have been 533/4 – and indeed that is the earliest possible date.⁵⁹ In other words, there was an Ansemundus, who was involved with a monastic community only ten years before the traditional date of the *donatio Ansemundi*. There is no reason to place the foundation of Remilla-Eugenia's community in the 510s, which would be remarkably early for a monastic foundation by an aristocrat of barbarian origin, earlier even than Sigismund's foundation of Agaune. Nor is there any reason to amalgamate the communities of Fuscina, Leonianus and Ansemundus into a single body. We are dealing with three foundations: the first, an episcopal and senatorial foundation of the period before 490, the second a community directed by a well-respected ascetic from Autun, founded at the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, and the third a foundation established by a pious barbarian for his daughter, probably in the 530s or 540s, after the Frankish take-over of Vienne.

There can be no certainty about the foundations of Ansemundus, or their identification: the names of Saint-André-le-Bas and Saint-André-le-Haut are far less likely than the names of Remilla-Eugenia and her relatives to belong to the genuine core of the original document of 543. But the archaeological evidence does indicate that there were religious communities of some sort attached to sites that appear in the dossier. The excavations of Saint-André-le-Haut by Anne Baud have revealed the existence of a chapel of the sixth and seventh centuries.⁶⁰ So too, Monique Jannet-Vallat uncovered Merovingian layers adjacent to Saint-Pierre.⁶¹ Archaeology also indicates that there was a religious institution at Saint-André-le-Bas from the late Roman period onwards.⁶² Moreover, inscriptions preserved at both Saint-Pierre and at Saint-André-le-Bas may indicate that they were initially cemeterial sites.⁶³ The same is true of the site of Saint-Ferréol.⁶⁴ Ripart has doubted whether these last three sites can actually be classified as monastic,⁶⁵ although he has allowed that they had communities of clerics, but that is to apply a very stringent definition of monasticism in considering the nature of a religious community in the pre-Carolingian age.

In other words, even if we reject the reconstruction of events set out in the forged charter of 543, it is reasonable to accept the existence in Vienne of

⁵⁸ *Passio Sigismundi regis*, 10.

⁵⁹ B. Krusch, MGH, SRM 2, 339, n. 2.

⁶⁰ Baud, Nimmegeers, Flammin, "L'abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut à Vienne."

⁶¹ Jannet-Vallat, *Saint-Georges de Vienne*; Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, *Vienne aux premiers temps chrétiens*.

⁶² Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, *Vienne aux premiers temps chrétiens*, 31-4.

⁶³ Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, 34-5.

⁶⁴ Prisset, *Saint-Romain-en-Gal aux temps de Ferréol*.

⁶⁵ Ripart, *Les déserts de l'Occident*, 237, 243, 255-6.

a male and a female community founded by Leonianus, the second of which welcomed both Eubona and Remilla-Eugenia, together with another female community, which Ansemundus founded for his daughter, and which also followed the rule of Leonianus, although he himself was probably long dead by the time of Aunemundus' foundation. All this can be dated to the first half of the sixth century, by which time a female community dedicated to saints Gervasius and Protasius had already been in existence for several decades, as had the Vienne section or sections of the Grigny confederation. Ansemundus and his wife may in addition have instituted a religious community at the cemetery church of Saint-Pierre – this is not incompatible with the architectural and archaeological evidence.⁶⁶ If he is correctly identified with the Ansemundus who secured the return of the body of Sigismund to the martyr king's monastic foundation, he had broader monastic contacts, with the community of Agaune. He would seem to have been responsible for major developments in the ascetic life of Vienne, the origins of which go back a generation to the ascetic Leonianus, and before him to the pious activities of Hesychius and the Aviti.

Another family and another ascetic seem to have had a similar impact on the monastic life of Vienne in the second half of the sixth century. According to Ado's *Life* of the saint,⁶⁷ Theudarius, who was born in Vienne, decided to join the monastic community at Lérins, but as he passed through Arles he was stopped from doing so by Caesarius, who subsequently ordained him as deacon.⁶⁸ We may guess from this that he was born around the year 500. He later decided to return to Vienne, where he established himself in an oratory dedicated to Eusebius of Vercelli.⁶⁹ Thereafter he founded a cell on the river Gère, and then a community of monks at the basilica of Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon, where he was joined by his brother Arvius. He subsequently established a male community at Alaronne, and an oratory on his parents' estate at Arcisse.⁷⁰ Next he moved to a more secret place on the *collis Rupianus* (now Saint-Chef-en-Dauphiné). On the advice of the bishop of Vienne he later established a church within the city which he dedicated to saint Mary.⁷¹ This he endowed with property from his parents and relatives, and there founded a community which was subject to the "regula sanctorum patrum". Finally he was invited by bishop Philip to take on the role of intercessor for the city. He therefore handed his monastery over to his «praepositus» Severianus, and set himself up in the basilica of Saint-Lawrence *in monte Quirinali*.⁷² After his death his body was taken to his monastery, but on the way it lay in rest at the

⁶⁶ Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, *Vienne aux premiers temps chrétiens*, 45-6.

⁶⁷ Ado, *Vita Theudarii*.

⁶⁸ Ado, 4-5.

⁶⁹ Ado, 7-8.

⁷⁰ Ado, 9-10.

⁷¹ Ado, 12.

⁷² Ado, 14.

suburban church of Saint-Romanus in the *vicus* of Brenniacum, which was apparently served by nuns.⁷³

Unfortunately there is no early evidence to corroborate any of Ado's assertions about Theudarius, and some of his narrative may well be a literary fiction. But there is one detail that looks to refer to sixth-century reality. The «regula sanctorum patrum» *regula sanctorum patrum*⁷⁴ can plausibly be identified with one of the monastic rules associated by Adalbert de Vogüé with Lérins, the *Regula sanctorum patrum Serapionis, Macharii, Pafnutii et alterius Macharii*.⁷⁵ And one might note that there are other indications of Lérinian influence in Vienne. Sidonius seems to imply a connection between Grigny and Lérins, since he talks of “statuta Lirinensium patrum vel Grinnicensium”.⁷⁶ Ado in his *Martyrology*, which is based on that of Bede, adds material on two Egyptian saints called Macarius,⁷⁷ both of whom appear as monastic legislators in the Lérins material. It would seem then that knowledge of Lérinian practice was preserved in Vienne down to the days of Ado. Exactly how many of the ascetic communities mentioned in the *Vita Theudarii* really were founded by the saint, and how many of them survived any length of time is unclear, but it is plausible that the main foundations named by Ado really were associated with Theudarius, and indeed that they followed Lérinian traditions. Equally they point to a tradition of religious confederation, such as we have noted in the *monasteria Grinescensia*.

It is worth also pondering the appointment of Theudarius as an intercessor for the city.⁷⁸ This may seem to reflect some Carolingian innovation,⁷⁹ but it can be seen to belong to a longstanding Christian tradition, which is already present in the New Testament.⁸⁰ And it is perfectly in keeping with prayers of intercession in the *Missale Gothicum*.⁸¹ Moreover, one should remember the significance of Vienne for the practice of Rogation. From the 470s bishops of Vienne had masterminded a major annual three-day display of urban penitence. Perhaps the creation of an urban intercessor, who prayed for the city throughout the year, reflects a Vienne tradition which promoted various types of public intercession.

One other aspect of Ado's narrative is worth noting. Before dealing with the saint's activities in Vienne, the ninth-century bishop inserts a lengthy description of the walls and forts protecting the city.⁸² These, it seems, were what struck Ado (who came from the Gâtinais) as the distinctive feature of

⁷³ Ado, *Vita Theudarii*, 16. This passage is absent in Krusch's edition.

⁷⁴ Ado, *Vita Theudarii*, 12.

⁷⁵ *Regula sanctorum patrum Serapionis, Macharii, Pafnutii et alterius Macharii*, 180-204.

⁷⁶ Sidonius, ep. VII, 13, 3.

⁷⁷ Ado, *Martyrology*, 2 Jan, 15 Jan, PL 123, cols. 201-420.

⁷⁸ Ado, *Vita Theudarii*, 14.

⁷⁹ On Carolingian intercession see Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*.

⁸⁰ John, 17: Romans, 15, 30-1. I am indebted to Els Rose for advice on this issue.

⁸¹ *Missale Gothicum*, 473.

⁸² Ado, *Vita Theudarii*, 7.

his diocesan centre. One might have expected the bishop to have talked of the city's churches, monasteries and shrines – and to some extent the comments on the walls do provide a point of orientation in the description of Theudarius' foundations. At the same time, Ado's comments draw attention to the city's Roman past, which includes a reference to a pagan centre with a hundred deities – although not to its public buildings.

5. *The seventh century*

For the closing years of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century we have some evidence relating to bishop Desiderius of Vienne. There are three *Lives* of Desiderius, who was martyred in the first decade of the seventh century, two of which are contemporary texts, while a third is by Ado.⁸³ None of these works, however, sheds significant light on the city itself. Nor can we learn much about Desiderius' religious concerns from passages which associate him and Columbanus:⁸⁴ as Yaniv Fox has noted, the connection between the two men is no more than the fact that both were in conflict with Brunhild.⁸⁵ We can, however, glean a little from the correspondence of Gregory the Great. In the best known of his letters to Desiderius, the pope criticises the bishop's teaching of grammar, particularly because of his use of pagan poets.⁸⁶ One may ask who had drawn this to Gregory's attention: certainly not the papal "vicarius" Candidus, who had insisted to the pope that there was no problem, so one might suspect the involvement of ascetic circles in the city, which would suggest that they were of some influence. That Desiderius was himself involved in the monastic life of his city is, however, clear from another letter of Gregory, in which the pope asks the bishop to allow a deacon to become a monk in the monastery where he had entered the diaconate.⁸⁷ Unfortunately we do not know which was the community in question, but it is tempting to assume that it was one of the houses of Grigny, which we know from Avitus' letters was under episcopal supervision, and which may also have supported secular clergy, if monks of Grigny were already present at the shrine of Ferreolus – which, as we can see from Gregory of Tours' account, was openly accessible to visitors.⁸⁸

After the martyrdom of Desiderius there is something of a lacuna in information relating to Vienne, although we know that the bishop's successor, and possible rival, Domnulus, was a supporter of Rusticula, the abbess of Caesar-

⁸³ *Vitae Desiderii*.

⁸⁴ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, I, 27; Wetti, *Vita Galli*, I, 11; Walahfrid, *Vita Galli*, I, 11. See also *Vita Rusticulae*, 14.

⁸⁵ Fox, "Desiderius of Vienne," 176–94.

⁸⁶ Gregory I, *Register*, XI, 34.

⁸⁷ Gregory I, *Register*, IX, 158.

⁸⁸ Gregory, *Liber de Virtutibus sancti Juliani*, 2.

ius's old foundation in Arles,⁸⁹ which suggests that he had monastic interests and connections. There is also a tantalising statement in Bede's *Lives of the Abbots*, written in the decade after 716, that Benedict Biscop left books for safe-keeping with friends in Vienne, apparently in the 660s.⁹⁰ Given Biscop's ascetic interests – he was the founder of the abbey of Wearmouth – we might guess that his friends were to be found in one or other of Vienne's monasteries. Biscop may well have known inmates of more than one monastery in the city, since he supposedly drew inspiration from the rules of seventeen monasteries when he founded the community of Wearmouth.⁹¹

We do in fact have evidence for monastic life in Vienne during the episcopate of Caldeoldus, which can be dated to the period from c. 653 to c. 664. The crucial text here is the *Vita Clari*.⁹² Like Ado's evidence, the *Life of Clarus* presents considerable problems. As Nimmegeers has pointed out, at the very earliest this belongs to the late tenth century and should be understood as a document of the monastic reform movement of that period. Clarus himself is not documented outside the text – and effectively all one can say about him is that he became a monk at Saint-Ferréol, or Grigny, and was abbot (or spiritual adviser) of the community of Sainte-Blandine, which would seem to have become a house for widows. The most notable passage in the *Vita* is a list of the monastic communities of Vienne, and of the numbers of their inmates.⁹³

Within the city the *Vita Clari* lists 11 monasteries, for which it provides numbers of monks and nuns, together with two houses to which it assigns "clerici", without giving any figures. It also states that there were around 60 communities elsewhere in the diocese. The communities for which it provides numbers are as follows: Grigny (Saint-Ferreolus) 400 ascetics: Saint-Peter 500: Saint-Gervasius-and-Protasius 50: Saint-John-the-Baptist 50: Saint-Vincent 50: Saint-Marcellus 30: Saint-Blandina 25: *St Andrea infra moenia* (presumably Saint-André-le-Bas) 100: *Alium sancti Andreae* 100: Saint-Nicetius 40: Saint-Martin 150. Nimmegeers has stated with regard to the figure given for Saint-André-le-Haut, "il faut rejeter cette assertion fantasiste, car ce récit, élaboré au plus tôt à la fin du X^e siècle, constitue un programme de réforme monastique et non une description fidèle à la situation mérovingienne".⁹⁴ And Jean-François Reynaud has said that «le nombre des moines donné par la *Vie de Clair* est bien sûr fantaisiste». ⁹⁵ On the other hand the author of the *vita* has quite clearly inserted an earlier document into his text. Moreover, the numbers are entirely in keeping with those that we have for monastic communities in the Merovingian world.⁹⁶ There were reputed-

⁸⁹ *Vita Rusticulae*, 14: see also Fox, "Desiderius of Vienne", 191.

⁹⁰ Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, 4, and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*.

⁹¹ Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, 11.

⁹² *Vita Clari*, 54-6.

⁹³ *Vita Clari*, II.

⁹⁴ Nimmegeers, *L'abbaye de Saint-André-le-Haut à Vienne*, § 11.

⁹⁵ Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, *Vienne aux premiers temps chrétiens*, 26.

⁹⁶ Berlière, "Les nombres des moines."

ly 500 inmates at Lérins, while under its first abbot, Sturm, Fulda already numbered 400 monks. There were 220 monks at Luxeuil, and already 60 in Columbanus' smaller foundation of Fontaines in Jonas' day.⁹⁷ In 716 the Anglo-Saxon community of Wearmouth-Jarrow boasted 600 members.⁹⁸ So the figures given for Grigny and St Peter's are not impossible – and it is worth noting that both of them seem to have had substantial churches.⁹⁹ Moreover, the *Vita Patrum Iurensium* states that Leonianus' community within the walls (according to Nimmegeers perhaps Sainte-Blandine) numbered 60 inmates in the early sixth century.¹⁰⁰ Less probably, the *Vita Fuscinae* states that the community of Saints-Gervasius-and-Protasius numbered 150 virgins.¹⁰¹ In short, the figures to be found in the *Vita Clari* can be compared with those to be found in Merovingian and early Carolingian texts. Most of them, of course, are likely to be approximations, which may well have included oblates and men and women who worked for the communities, alongside monks and nuns. In addition, the existence of some of the communities listed in the *Vita Clari* seems to be supported by other evidence, both archaeological and diplomatic¹⁰² – alongside those already mentioned, one may note Saint-John-the-Baptist,¹⁰³ Saint-Vincent,¹⁰⁴ Saint-Marcellus,¹⁰⁵ Saint-Nicetius,¹⁰⁶ and Saint-Martin.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, 11 monasteries (or 13 including houses of «clerici»), although exceptional, would not be an impossible number for a Merovingian city. Certainly some other cities of comparable size, including Lyon, had fewer. But Margarete Weidemann identified 20 in Le Mans,¹⁰⁸ and 6 are known from Auxerre,¹⁰⁹ a city for which we have even better evidence for liturgical practice than we have for Vienne.¹¹⁰ While one may question the detail in the list provided by the *Vita Clari*, especially its emphasis on episcopal influence (although there is every reason to believe that it was significant in the case of Grigny), it may well provide a broadly accurate impression of the monastic situation in Vienne in the later seventh century. Interestingly the author provides numbers of monks and nuns, but not for the communities of «clerici» in the *Domus maior sanctorum martyrum* (presumably the episcopal complex dedicated to the Maccabees and to saint Maurice) or Saint-Severus.

⁹⁷ Wood, "Entrusting Western Europe," 68. The fullest collection of material is provided by Berlière, *Les nombres des moines dans les anciens monastères*.

⁹⁸ Wood, "Entrusting Western Europe," 68.

⁹⁹ Jannet-Vallat, Lauxerois, Reynaud, "Vienne aux premiers temps chrétiens," 43-7, 61-2.

¹⁰⁰ *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, III, 5, 127-8.

¹⁰¹ *Vita Fuscinae*, 6.

¹⁰² Reynaud and Nimmegeers, "La vie religieuse et les lieux de culte chrétiens du IV^e au VI^e siècle", pp. 181-7, which provides a map on p. 183.

¹⁰³ Descombes, *Vienne*, 33-4.

¹⁰⁴ Descombes, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Descombes, 32.

¹⁰⁶ Descombes, 30-1.

¹⁰⁷ Descombes, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Weidemann, *Geschichte des Bistums Le Mans*, vol. 3, 437.

¹⁰⁹ Picard, *Auxerre*.

¹¹⁰ *Gesta Pontificum Autissiodorensium*, 19, *De Aunario*.

6. A monastic city?

Although Ado's *Chronicle* would seem to imply that the history of Vienne was essentially an episcopal one, the other evidence, including his own *Vita Theudarii*, suggests that what we see is the emergence of a city dominated by monastic or religious life. From being an imperial capital in the Later Empire, it was transformed into a hive of religious activity. Clearly this had major socio-economic, as well as religio-liturgical, implications (including, of course, the city's Rogations). 1335 ascetics is a significant number, and that does not include the «clerici» at the *Domus maior sanctorum martyrum* and Saint-Severus, both of which seem to have been genuine early-medieval institutions.¹¹¹ Even allowing for the fact that the figure given by the list in the *Vita Clari* is an exaggeration, the number of religious in the city might have constituted as much as ten percent of the local population.¹¹² Not only would they have influenced the city's topography, and its spiritual activity, they would also have had an effect on its economy. In some cases we may guess that they were maintained by the endowments originally given to the communities – for instance the properties of Ansemundus and of Theudarius. In those cases at least we can envisage that the produce of country estates which had originally provided for aristocrats in their urban villas were merely reallocated to the inmates of the communities that they had founded. Of course, it is possible that some of those listed by the *Vita Clari* as monks and nuns of Vienne may have been resident on their community's extra mural estates.

Despite the epithet of *Vienne la sainte*, the city was not unique, although it may have boasted more religious institutions than most comparable centres. We have noted that some other cities boasted as many, or even more, monasteries, and we have also noted that the figures for monks and nuns that the *Vita Clari* gives for Vienne can be paralleled by the figures we have for the numbers of individual communities elsewhere. We need, therefore, to understand that in the sixth and seventh centuries in parts of Francia we are talking of an economy that was geared to support ecclesiastical institutions, episcopal, of course, but above all monastic. In many respects the *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule* is not just a survey of religious institutions, but does in fact reveal the essential topography of the cities, which were dominated by religious monuments, religious space, and liturgical performance. This was an extraordinary development that took place essentially between the late fifth and early seventh centuries. Although Vienne, and other cities, boasted numerous temples during the pagan period, they had not been staffed with large numbers of permanent priests, and there was no equivalent to the monastic

¹¹¹ The «domus maior sanctorum martyrum» is the cathedral, dedicated to the Maccabees: for St Severus, Descombes, *Vienne*, 31-2; Nimmegeers, *Évêques entre Bourgogne et Provence*, 101-3.

¹¹² Wood, *The Christian Economy*, 47-8.

institutions of the post-Roman period. Between c. 450 and c. 650, Vienne, like other urban centres, had been transformed from being a city of the empire to a city of God.

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