

The History of the Franks Study Guide

The History of the Franks by Gregory of Tours

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Contents

The History of the Franks Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Introduction & Book 1.....	4
Book 2.....	5
Book 3.....	6
Book 4.....	7
Book 5.....	8
Book 6.....	9
Book 7.....	10
Book 8.....	11
Book 9.....	12
Book 10.....	13
Book 10 Continued.....	14
Book 11.....	15
Characters.....	16
Objects/Places.....	21
Themes.....	25
Style.....	28
Quotes.....	31
Topics for Discussion.....	33

Plot Summary

This work was written by a high class man during the transition from what is presently perceived to be "the ancient world" into the earliest forms of the modern world. The individual was a successful military man who later turned his talents to both religion and politics as a Bishop. The Bishop of Tours is presently deeply appreciated for writing on the history of the day, which no one else seems to have done. As a consequence, his work is part of what contemporary people have available to them to learn about the author's day and age. This work has been carefully compiled and modified by a professional editorial staff. The book is presented in a straightforward manner with an Introduction at the front. One main feature is that this is a portal through which knowledge that had not previously been available in English has become so. The author wrote the book while serving in the office of Bishop of Tours. Editors explain that this was a highly-sought-after position and that familial pride and tradition had something to do with the quality of the joy he experienced in this career role.

The open use of and reference to divine powers is commonplace within the context of this book. An early note refers to an incident involving the bishop submitting himself to a hostage position and Christian relics used in rites to provide extra protection from harm. Readers can spend a moment facing the intensity of emotions that might be involved in this type of political situation. The author was both a Roman and a Christian, clearly showing contemporary readers of how this denomination known as "Roman Catholicism" came to be and what it was like at first. While St. Augustine was one of the first to be both Roman and Christian, Gregory of Tours was able to work with centuries of practice when he served Rome first as a soldier and later as a Bishop of Christ.

Gregory of Tours, provides readers with a good account of what the main features of both politics and religion were during his time as bishop. He covers what appears to be more than the duration of his own life but does not delve too deeply into the history before his own life, summing this up in the first book. The final addition to the book is an account of some miracles. The author has succeeded in his duty to serve as a main author for the Gaulish and Frankish territories. These lands are presently viewed as substantial portions of Continental Europe, from Belgium and Germany in the North to Italy in the South. The work was written during the Roman era but more towards Rome's decline.

Introduction & Book 1

Introduction & Book 1 Summary and Analysis

The introduction helps to give readers perspective on the conditions surrounding the creation of this book. Gregory was the Bishop of Tours. This was a Frankish territory taken over by the Gauls that during the writing of the book was part of a political region known as Merovingian Gaul. It was something of a victory to have a bishop there at all, since the heathens put up a strong enough stand to have removed this Christian political position previously, and it had taken quite some effort to re-establish the position in the region. During the author's era the majority of other bishops were not literate. Those who were had to know their Latin.

The work covers the time from AD 538 - 594. Bishop Gregory of Tours completed the manuscript for the book the same year he dies. Once readers are given this basic means of contextualizing the situation, the work itself begins. The author admits quite directly that he is not the greatest of writers. However, he is a literate man in an illiterate world and as such, he'll do the job. The author himself is a strong believer and having the right relationship with the Divine is always of utmost importance. There was fighting about which religion was going to be dominant in the region. There had been a number of Frankish kings, which had been supplanted by Roman Christian Bishops. Here, the clerics overwhelmed the secular political governing officials. This may be intimated by the assertion during the Introduction that Gregory of Tours had more than one career; his first career was that of a Roman soldier, after which he became a Roman Catholic Christian Bishop.

St. Martin was a favorite of Gregory's. There was a new Christian form of worship that was reminiscent of pagan religious practices in certain ways. Where there had been altars to various gods, in this context, the Christian's experienced veneration of given Saints after a similar manner or style. A given Saint might have what is termed "a cult" in the text. Here, this term is not derogatory but means that there a number of Christians who favor this Saint ...while less than the true God, the Saints reverence still allows for preferences towards specific personalities or foci for specific plights.



Book 2

Book 2 Summary and Analysis

Each "Book" of the work, is marked using the Roman numerals rather than the Arabic ones customarily used by today's readers. The front page of each "Book" has its own Table of Contents and long list of chapters. The chapters within the "Book" are denoted simply by Arabic numerals. The author is providing a serviceable account of history; there is no pretense to literary genius in this effort.

The role of divine magic is very noticeable to readers by the second book - here described as the summary's Chapter 2. Having mentioned praying to Saint Martin in the preceding chapter and the medicinal use of the ashes of Saints, this chapter opens with more references to divine magic. In this case, it is the magic of the prophet Elias. He was reputed to control the weather to some extent. He had control over rain: he would withhold or grant rain intentionally during his lifetime to people under his command. The prophet Elisha is mentioned as having had the power of resurrection. Skeptics have no scientific means of knowing whether the power was true resurrection or a healing that brought people out of comas and permitted success now most often performed and symbolized with "CPR" and "Mouth-to-mouth" as well as other forms of modern medical practice that have brought many people back from situations that might well have resulted in their death. This also shows that the author is versed in "the Talmud" - his Old Testament knowledge goes into the same Jewish history from which Jesus the Christ's actions sprang. In this context "the Christ" is used to show that this was a title like "the Redeemer" rather than simply a surname.

The history of the Bishop position at Tours is relayed next. Saint Martin was often teased and mocked by Bricius while St. Martin was a deacon. During these centuries it was entirely normal for the Saints to perform miracles as part of their normal function as Holy men and spiritual descendants of Jesus Christ, who assured his followers that all manner of miraculous works could and would be performed by believers, especially his apostles - of whom all the bishops are.

Book 3

Book 3 Summary and Analysis

The length of each of what the author has titled a Book with a Roman numeral is so brief that for the present purpose they are referred to as Chapter. By this time in the work, readers have had the opportunity to psychologically acclimate to the general viewpoint. The editors have pointed out to readers that this is really the cleric's perspective and this colors which details are brought forth and how they are shown in relation with politics and other social systems and conditions in the city of Tours. This book begins with the author giving a history in terms of Church doctrine. He shows a direct connection between military victory and defense of the doctrine of the Trinity.

A woman named Radegunda has some success. She obtains a husband through some kind of blend of force and its purified form - ardent loving longing, in association with a military campaign. Although she loses her brother, she actually founds a monastery successfully and grows famous for activities she conducted in association with it. This is a case where a high status woman - she was a king's daughter, is able to be viewed as great by others even though she was wed as a sign of her husband's victory over her father's country. Another lady is able to obtain help from her own brother.

Later in this book, chapter 18 is dedicated to true stories pertaining to Queen Clotilda. She developed the intention of raising some of her grandsons to be kings. Those in the generation of her sons who were not the fathers of these boys felt very envious and threatened by her activities. A plot against her was formulated as a plot against her grandsons. She was deceived into thinking that she had the support of the uncles and aunts of the grandchildren. Instead, the two were attacked. One was murdered and the other was reduced to being a commoner. This is described in this book by saying that his hair was shorn and from then on he had no kingdom in this world - upon the earth. He became a priest and lived well in that role. The similarity to Jesus Christ's repetitious assertions that he had no kingdom in this world during his lifetime and Pontius Pilate's conclusion that this was a king of the Jews is clearly explained by this story about other people centuries later.

Book 4

Book 4 Summary and Analysis

This book begins in a situation where a man is not monogamous. However, the system they use is to include multiple wives rather than one wife with no others, or with one or multiple concubines. Throughout history there has been acknowledgment of tensions surrounding men and women being nonmonogamous or monogamous. There is often drama and tension either way. There are ways that men and women can make this as okay as possible and other means they use to make it so that it really isn't. In this book the author introduces a case where an important and wealthy man has seven wives. He has at least one child by each of them, making for quite a line of descendants. Though the man who did this was a king, there were of course bishops in their region.

The author creates some confusion because at one point he very obviously uses the word death in a way that is not familiar to modern readers. He writes of how one man "died" and then proceeds to write about the man's life afterward. The presentation gives the impression that it was not that the man literally died, but that he changed careers and that something else drastic occurred. This was reflected by a number of changes ranging from shifts in hairstyle and other lifestyle decisions. One lifestyle choice was to take up again with a wife whom he had abandoned for the entire duration of his priesthood. That he was accepted upon his "post-death return" is either a miracle or else shows how twisted her culture was.

There is a man who is able to become a bishop. He is described by the author as emerging from underground. This is probably some kind of metaphor from the time during which he lived, and the best guess is that he came from a relatively humble social position. A man named Cato was elected to become a bishop. The means he chosen was through popularity. The author explains that the majority of the people's whose vote counted selected this man to be their bishop, and as such the organization was willing to ordain him.



Book 5

Book 5 Summary and Analysis

Naturally it is not possible to fit into a summary all the details of the original book. Portions of the work are being passed over in order to ensure that some details can be given of the events described through the text. The English being used in the book has been conscientiously modernized for the sake of the readers. This is worth appreciating because it had not actually been like that until editors furthered the work of the first translators.

Chilperic and Merovech are the main Kings found in this chapter. One of them is notorious. Readers may be accustomed to the delusion that monarchs forced their leadership upon the people. While there were moments when this was the case, the truth is that the leaders were selected by the people. This shows through the negative during this chapter, when Rauching's wanton cruelties result in him being "fired & impeached"—he is rejected by the people and they succeed in casting him out of what had been his own kingdom. The reports of his wickedness involve the fact that he very obviously took pleasure in the pain of others. He devised a habit of tormenting his own servants and other malicious behaviors that seemed to run unchecked until the people managed to get rid of him. The point here is that "the people" in these monarchies did have some control over who their leader was and there were limits to what they would tolerate. During this book there is also the strange story of a man named Chilperic's son's activities. Chilperic sent his son Merovech to attack one location but his adult son did something else altogether. The change in direction turned out to involve a romantic interest. Merovech married a Queen Brunnhilda; this woman was the widow of Merovech's own uncle. The older man strongly disagreed with his adult son's behavior and drama that included small armies ensued.

In chapter 5 of this Book, Gregory explains that he received a letter from another bishop who wanted one of the estates belonging to the diocese/territory of Tours. Gregory told him "No" and received another letter in which he explains the author vented a great deal of rage and dished out numerous insults. There were also vindictive references to others who had jealously murdered a bishop, but that was another matter.



Book 6

Book 6 Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins in a manner that makes certain facts now quite clear. The monarchs are often related to one another. As each reader will find with respect to his or her own life, events have a causal link and one event often leads to another. In this regard, the events of the civil warfare between the Gauls and the Franks in the region and the strife between monarchs have been playing themselves out across the generations. The conditions under which this chapter "Book VI" begins as the result of all that had come before and as the cause of events that take place in the future. Two men, Lupus and Ursio form a union and determine to attack the Duke of Champagne. When they attempt this, they are confronted by Queen Brunnhilde. She takes up arms after the manner of male warriors and goes out to defend the Duke and her own terrain. The men both like it and dislike it. She argues that their personal conflict does not serve the best interest of the district or its peoples and as such she staunchly opposes it. They point out to her that even her leadership position was one of subdominance to her husband. She keeps after them, which mitigates the following events. Essentially, the men go rob and threaten their victim instead of making open war against him. Aware of the truth of their threats, he leaves and seeks the protection of a different king. This works.

Later in the book there is a description of a healing scene. This takes place when they visit a man named Hospicious. While there he asks the deacon to bring forth his traveling companion who is suffering from some ailment. The scene depicts how the one man feels the spirit coming over him and so makes the extra effort to use this condition while it lasts. Blessed oil, kind words, some physical contact and a little time spent in the light of a window are the cure for the man's condition. After the healing is extensive recognition of healing powers of God and Jesus and the saints. Saint Martin comes up again. This time it is Saint Martin's church. This Saint has a strong connection to the area under the author's guidance. The editors explain that there is a cult of Saint Martin and that bishop Gregory of Tours is a member of this cult. Here, the problem is that thieves have broken into Saint Martin's church. The thieves fell into a quarrel and when one went so far as to murder the other, the whole set of events was found out. Ultimately, the majority of the stolen property was returned to the church and all the events were interpreted spiritually by Gregory during his office as bishop of Tours.

Book 7

Book 7 Summary and Analysis

Early on in this chapter bishop Gregory writes of difficulties with the church of St. Martin. It was robbed and plundered and later on defended. The rules of conduct are greatly marked by the gender difference when the bishop writes that "the last straw" came, not when Saint Martin's was plundered by other men but when girls who went in there touched some of the ornaments within the secluded chambers.

Later bishop Gregory writes of especial troubles that he ran into with another man. The fellow in question worked for him for quite some time but was embittered and prone to outbursts. Among the man's behavior was his honest admission that he was subordinate to the bishop and yet at the same time, he also openly admitted that if he ever regained the king's favor he would seek vengeance upon Gregory among others. Gregory writes that this same man also attacked him, and on another occasion assaulted a priest for refusing to serve him alcohol because he was already so drunk. Gregory writes that it was this kind of belligerence that caused both himself and at least one other man to become persuaded that the man suffered from being partially possessed by a demon. Gregory informs readers that for his own part, he was disappointed that the man was so short of respect for the holy bishop - irrespective of who the man in the position was and expresses to readers that this quality was a drawback in the man.

The author makes a very clear point during this chapter. It has to do with the fear of God. He complains that the real source of the misbehavior of another man is that the fellow has insufficient fear of God. The lack of fear causes him to be unruly in ways that would simply not be the case otherwise. Here, again, readers see that the author is writing from the perspective of the church man. The question of authority and obedience are presented. Here the determining factor is rooted in religious perspective and the role of fear or force and punishment in relation to ethical development.

Book 8

Book 8 Summary and Analysis

"In Christ's Name Here Begins Book Eight" is what it says at the top of the first page here. Again, the story is told based upon the most prominent social political leaders of the day. As such, this history book is a bit like the top stories in the national and international news of the age. King Gunthram of the Gauls is in his 24th year as King. He makes a journey in order to retrieve Chilperic's son, who is being called Clothar. This isn't the same Clothar as was mentioned a few chapters ago but is along the same lineage of regional monarchs as the former of the same name.

There is a discussion of how Chilperic met his end. It comes up in conversation with Gregory himself. Another leader has brought up the idea of seeking vengeance for the death of Chilperic and has brought his own manhood into the matter. Gregory counters him by arguing that Chilperic's own misdeeds were the real cause of the method of his demise. The author then recounts how another angry bishop, who with the representation of a number of people, set about a grim finish. They treated him as if he were an animal being used to serve as a meal for a group of humans. They took him, broke a number of his bones and then threw him into what amounted to a giant stew pot. Gregory writes that he watched this, and he notes that he did weep. Readers will be relieved, if anything, that such a scene would make a grown man cry.

Part of what is playing out here are the varied and sundry fates of the children of Chilperic. In this chapter, Gregory notes that Queen Bredegunda, 3 bishops and another 100 aristocrats of the region validate the right of ascendancy of Clothar. Two of the same man's children by another woman were first protected with sights on the same throne but were later murdered in a plot by someone else mainly out of envy over the throne, by older relatives or the uncle and aunt generation.

Finally, Gregory writes that he found Diana worshipers within the terrain in which he was to officially preside. He chose to discourage these actual goddess worshipers and asserted that the main problem with what they were doing was that goddess Diana is a false goddess. As such, he advised they convert to worshipping the true God.



Book 9

Book 9 Summary and Analysis

Gregory starts this Book with another true story. This one is about a man; the author assures readers that the one he writes about is versed in necromancy. Shortly thereafter he explains why: the man is able to sense it when others speak of him in negative terms and has the reputation for rebuking aloud those who have done so. This requires a kind of clairaudience. This also tells readers a great deal about the culture. The same power so used today would normally cause the speaker to either be branded as a lunatic or shunned in public or else the person would disguise his or her ability and not make knowledge of it publicly. For some reason Gregory informs readers of the way this man was dressed. He wore a hood and a goat's hair shirt. This mysterious ability was not the source of great trouble - Gregory describes the man as extreme and ways extremely hypocritical. He claimed to be a great healer but actually tortured a number of people by trying to cure them by having people pull on their limbs. He did not eat much in public but was gluttonous in private. The combination of these behaviors made him unpopular.

Gregory moves on to recounting a story about a sorcerer who was a grown man. He came to the attention of the local clerics because he was selling imitation religious relics. They began by being kind to him, inviting him to put his wares in the window and to practice the local Christianity with the clerics of the area. The man refused the invitation. Soon thereafter he was found out to be an impostor selling fakes to people. It is after this, when Gregory describes the contents of the man's pouches that he drew the conclusion that the other man was a sorcerer. He had funny stuff - mole's teeth, and small amounts of fat, and other odds and ends that said "sorcery" rather than, say, sewing or thievery.

In chapter 15 of Book 9, Gregory reports of how the King of Spain called together his bishops and showed his disappointment and confusion with them. He did so on one point in particular, that of their apparent inability to perform miracles. This was something that was lacking given the tradition that the apostles perform mighty works and Christ's assurance that full belief makes an individual perfect and capable to perform miracles.

Book 10

Book 10 Summary and Analysis

"In The Name Of Our Lord Jesus Christ Here Begins The Tenth Book". This book begins with some dramatic information about how relics were relocated. There was a major flood in the city of Rome which dislodged a great deal. One survivor, who was transported to Gregory's terrain, described the severe damage to the Catholic temples of the area, including stored goods - treasures of food as well as artifacts of various kinds. During the flood a giant serpent appeared and the entire event culminated in the arrival of a plague. After the death of Pelasgius who was the bishop for the city, deaths from the disease were more widespread. Gregory of Tours explains that soon after this, Gregory the deacon was uplifted to the station of bishop. This was done at the behest of the people. This man had founded 7 monasteries prior to becoming a bishop. Six of these were in Sicily - the island of the South coast of Italy, and the other was so deep into Roman territory that it was "within Roman walls" (p. 227). He followed this up by genuine service to the poor, which gave him a good reputation among the common people. After that he was made an aide to the pope.

This chapter starts during the reign of a King Childebert. During this book there are two ways that the term "pope" is used. In the case of the capitalized Pope, as it is still found today, this is the title for the chief apostle of Christ as found presently living on Earth. In other cases it is used lower case; whereupon, it means the same thing as bishop or chief cleric presiding over the city, town or other clearly demarcated territory. The writing style, as modified and modernized by the editors, is rather clear. The author makes the message understandable, rather than intentionally obfuscating it. The amount of information is so vast that he focuses simply on the main events from the limited perspective of those in Gaul during the time. As previously stated, this is the top stories in the news intermingled with events that are directly concerned with the author himself. This means that much of the truth is left out, but this is not done for the purposes of deception.

Gregory attempted to reject the promotion as he feared it would go to his head, to use a modern term for it. He said many prayers and sent off a letter to be released from accepting this position. Another interfered effectively, and the request to deny the promotion to bishop was stopped. There was one further attempt. Gregory attempted to hide as a means of evading the promotion. As a consequence, he was enthusiastically consecrated despite any personal discomforts with this.



Book 10 Continued

Book 10 Continued Summary and Analysis

Unlike the rest of this book, there are two summary chapters devoted to one book. The author has been setting out a progressive history of his times. During this chapter, readers discover more about the author himself. The writing style is quite consistent. The sentences are what editors have described from the outset. The language is more sophisticated than that of the common people but does not have the higher style of the formalized true scholars. This is the level at which the author functioned the majority of the time.

The first matter of importance is addressing the plague that has descended upon the city of Rome. Here, chanting and alms are recommended. This is continued for days in a row.

Later, Gregory observes that there is a problem with some of the political leaders. He shows that the results of their behavior is quite clear. He writes that their activities are so aggressive that they treat their own people as if they are the enemy. He writes that under their leadership their own people were abused and then they went out to face "real opponents."

There is further true drama surrounding a young woman and one of her suitors. A man, a leader of many men, determines to marry this daughter of a former bishop. He brings a military force to accomplish this and is met by a counter force assembled by the girl's mother. The mother actually repels the attempt.

Chapter 10 of this book includes an anecdote that includes environmental regulations. There were free buffalo in the area, at least in the King's Forest. There was a policy against the hunting of buffalo at least within these protected forest. This true tale comes from the time when the two Kings having the greatest influence on the politics of the author's region are King Gunthram and King Childebert. Gunthram is in the 29th year of his reign, whilst for Childebert, it is the 15th year of his reign.



Book 11

Book 11 Summary and Analysis

This is an entirely separate work that has been united with this book for the sake of providing a concise overview. The editorial staff has prepared the piece so that it can serve as university or seminary text book. It does suit a general readership - anyone who is literate to the level of eighth grade is sure to be able to manage reading it. However, like PG-13 movies, no children should be subjected to this kind of information without extensive emotional support and direct discussion from responsible and benevolent elders regarding the contents. Permitting children to speak freely about what they found most upsetting and frightening is of great importance to understand how they are actually affected. Going the other way, it is also important for parents to communicate to their children how such events pertain to ethical attitudes they hold. Which values of the parents have been offended by the events in the work and which supported? Sharing such insights with children can be of great benefit to them.

The first miracle story is about a young woman who's right hand caught on fire while she was baking a loaf of bread. She reacted to her hand burning from some coals with a religious set of rites and prayers. She prayed, she built a candle as tall as herself, and performed a vigil. Within 36 hours, she was healed and the whole event was over. The next miracle comes from an entirely different set of circumstances. This is actually a brief description of how relics were passed down in the family of Gregory of Tours. After this, there is another short anecdote. This time it is about what happens to a man when he accentuates the difference between espousing faith in God and His servants the Saints and when he takes credit for events in his own name. Essentially he either actually is punished or punishes himself out of fear of God or his loved ones or society. When he took credit for something he was thrown from his horse immediately and he believed there was a direct connection between the two. Another quintessential miracle described in these pages is that of how a young man gets so ill many think he is going to die, but once he begins to call upon the power of Saint Martin he begins to recover. He cultivates an intense desire to make a pilgrimage to Saint Martin's tomb and he wants to leave the home of his parents. Ultimately, God through Saint Martin is credited with miraculously restoring the health of this young man.



Characters

Gregory of Tours

This is the book's original author. He is a Roman and a Christian and a Gaul all at the same time. During the time of writing the book, he was one of the minority of Roman bishops who were literate. He admits in the beginning of the book that this is a main reason why he is willing to be the one to do the writing. The work itself is quite humble; it is really a general overview of the history of their times and as such is obviously a work of nonfiction.

Editors point out that Bishop Gregory wrote the work of nonfiction from the perspective of a churchman. Prior to his career as a bishop, Gregory served in the Roman military, although his rank is not specified by the editors. He was required to perform work in many roles in between. Among these was included the role of deacon. He was elected by the people of his area. He struggled against the promotion. Counter forces interfered with his ability to refuse this promotion.

Gregory was later canonized, surprisingly in part due to his having taken the task of writing the book summarized here. The reason now, is the same as it was at the time - no one else did, but he did do it.

Saint Martin

This is one of the most important saints in this particular book. The reason is that the healing powers of Saint Martin are used extensively during the course of the book. One of Gregory's pleasures is that he gets to work as a bishop near to the tomb of Saint Martin. There is more than one account in this work about how individuals or large groups of people were able to effect radical changes through group chanting and prayer.

His body is interred within Tours. The book's author is happy about his clerical positions in part because he likes being near Saint Martin. When he oversees the location as a priest, then as a bishop he is proud to also serve as a guardian of the saint's remains. At the same time, this allows him to continue to turn to the same saint for assistance whenever needed.

The saint is credited with channeling God's power through prayer and rituals to those who have come after his death. By involving Saint Martin, they are better able to receive Divine help. The most common request is for healing. The other main request brought to him after his death is for protection. Sometimes this appears in the book when Christians make a request for the use of relics for the purposes of extra protection against their enemies.



There is one more way that Saint Martin and his remains are of great significance in this book. The church named after him is used as a refuge by some individuals. This causes at least one life to be spared during the course of this work of ten volumes.

King Chilperic

During the course of the compendium the author does not capitalize the title king. Chilperic is a major figure during the early portion of the book, and some of his children are also very prominent. Some of his children suffer terribly as a direct consequence of his prestige; they are caught up in conspiracies and suffer due to contesting for a throne. One of his offspring ascends to the throne later in his life.

He and his 7 wives are introduced in Book 4, chapter 28. There are some severe events that have caused bizarre circumstances. Some of this trouble was caused by the king's deceptions. He promised one king to marry his daughter. He promised to forsake his other wives for her. She was rich and the daughter of another king. When she first arrived all went well. However, sooner or later what became unavoidably clear was that in reality, there was at least one other wife who was not accepting of his rejection of her. Not only that, but in truth he did love at least one of his other wives if not more. This truth brewed in the background until it created great strife in the home - partly the king's deceit and partly the jealousy of competing women. The newest wealthy wife tried to be released; she even offered to abandon her wealth. The king would not let her go. Sadly, it is surmised that he has her murdered. Once she was dead, he did in fact resume relations with one of the wives he had already had.

Chilperic was the father of many. Theodobert, Merovich, and Clovis were the sons of Audovera.

Finally, during the time of Chilperic's reign the local kings took for wives women from among the common people. Chilperic was troubled by this, and when another man succeeded in marrying the princess of another land, Chilperic immediately endeavored to do the same thing. Fortunately, he went for that princess's sister rather than trying for the same woman. The difficulty is stated simply as his having tried to do this when he really already had too many other wives.

King Childebert

This is one of the leading politicians during the course of this book. There are 5 chapters dedicated to his activities during the 3rd Book of The History of the Franks. Amongst his many feats, Childebert marches together with one of Chilperic's sons against Clothar. Childebert befriends and forms an alliance with Theodobert who is a son of Chilperic.

After Childebert has marched against Clothar, he is able to march with the same Clothar into Spain. There are another 2 chapters dedicated to events involving Childebert in Book 4. His death is recorded in chapter 20 of Book 4.



The Pope of Rome

This is the location of the head of the Christian church as an organization during the time of the author's writing of this book. This pope is not mentioned by name. This position is referred to a few times in the book. Many readers are familiar with this office, especially if their own lives have included a great deal of exposure to modern day Catholic Christianity. During the time of the writing of THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS, the Christian Church of Rome was not Catholic. The term catholic had been used but was far from becoming a standard part of the organization and name of this large sect of Christians.

The Pope is referred to as the person who must consecrate deacons into bishops when they are deemed worthy and when others believe that they are so qualified and desired by a group of congregations. As the head cleric of each territory can also be called a pope, the purpose of including this position this way is to distinguish it as the head cleric of the Roman church and simultaneously of the entire organization of the Roman Christians

Bricius

This was a Christian cleric who lived at least much of the same time that Saint Martin lived. St. Martin and Bricius met. Bricius is noted as having mainly been a good cleric but had a couple of shortcomings. One of these was that he mocked Saint Martin, apparently not realizing that he was scoffing a living Saint. Bricius found Saint Martin to be a bit of a "cook" in the sense of insane rather than merely odd.

Bricius functions as a priest and as a deacon during his adult life. It was during his time as a deacon that he was known to poke fun at Martin. Bricius was warned by Martin that there would be trouble for him as he proceeded in his career because of this. Later while a bishop, Bricius repented and accepted what the trouble had really been. Bricius had not believed in the miracles that Martin performed and openly made fun of him as being both crazy and stupid. Bricius was also bishop of Tours, but his career truly was troubled. He was cast out by the people of Tours. Bricius went all the way to Rome and did what he could to repent and confess his wrongdoing.

The Pope urged him to go back to Tours, endure a confrontation and resume his post as their bishop. Bricius tried and failed and returned again to Rome, still repenting for having mocked a living saint. At the time, Martin was simply living and Bricius had only faithful or supernatural means for being able to tell that his colleague was an actual saint, i.e., that Martin would later be canonized. Bricius continued to repent. Tours continued to struggle against Bricius. They went through two more bishops. When their latest effort to replace Bricius failed, only to have him appear in time for Martin's funeral, the congregation of Tours received him and reinstated him as their bishop.



King Gunthram

Gunthram became famous and infamous before he became king. The reason is that he is credited with killing Theodobert, son of Chilperic. The people of Tours kept him in their church. An army came and set up an encampment across a river. Messages were exchanged. The armed force sent messengers that told them to turn over Gunthram or they would come and raze the city, church and all. The people told them, "No." The opposition mustered their strength and marched into the city, approaching the church in which Gunthram was staying. The leader, charged with the task of claiming and killing Gunthram is said to have stopped at the church and been unable to eat that day. They say he was overcome by God and turned away suffering from asthmatic symptoms instead of killing a duke during Lent.

Gregory reports that it was well known that Gunthram was on the whole a good man, but he had one very real weakness. He was no good at oaths, and when he failed to avoid making any, he tended to break them, even when he made them to friends to whom he was genuinely loyal.

Fredegunda encouraged Gunthram to rid her of Merovech. Merovech, another son of Chilperic's had grown up to be a king and opponent of Fredegunda; she liked that Gunthram had killed Theodobert, brother of Merovech. Gunthram rises in rank and faces difficulty from the Saxons. There is a forced fight, as appeasement is not accepted as an alternative.

Gunthram, as a full grown man loses both of his sons. This man is mentioned repeatedly but not constantly during the majority of the book.

Merovech

This is one of Chilperic's sons. This one grows up to be prominent. He survives, though some of his half-brothers are assassinated during their youths. He shows up as a grown man when he disobeys his father's military orders. His diversion is caused by his wish to find a wife. Because of this interest he attacks an entirely different city from the one his father told him to assault. The author writes about this in a way that comes across as nonjudgmental. Readers who feel judgmental are reminded of the importance of the combined forces of forgiveness and repentance for the cure.

Merovech proved to be fit to rule.

Cato

This is a much beloved priest. He became the bishop of Claremont. He derived a reputation for being strong of his own, but this turned out to be a drawback for the organization as a whole because it divided followers into those who followed Cautinus



and those who were led by Cato. Cato was the first bishop to succeed after St. Gall, in the same religious position. He appears in one portion of the book.

His reputation is essentially good, with his main shortcomings being a certain unyielding quality along with a tendency to vanity and vain glory.

Fredegunda

This woman is one of Chilperic's wives. She enjoys favoritism and suffers while out of favor with her husband. She is also a mother. She became wife to her husband essentially by force of arms. Despite having been wed because her father being vanquished, she made the best of it. She proved to be impressive. She became known for piety and even founded a monastery. She also still served as a Queen. She was relocated however, due to the method of her interference in a local feud.

She invited the main perpetrators of both sides to a feast after having gently and repeatedly urged them to stop their fighting for the sake of the community. When they did not do as she had ordered she invited the main leaders to a dinner. They were fed and made so drunk that they stayed the night. During the evening or night, either while they were drunk but still conscious or so far gone they'd passed out she had all three of them assassinated.

The populace was mildly shocked. While revolt against her was not permitted, Gregory writes that Queen Fredegunda was relocated following this incident.

Brunnhilde

This woman is also a wife and a mother.



Objects/Places

Tours

This is the location from which the work was written. This is near to Rome, Italy but far enough away from there to be viewed as part of Gaul and as Frankish terrain. During the author's early life, this is definitely part of Gaul, but as the author's death approaches, the author sees how it is going to become Frankish. This makes the fact that the work is called THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS and not the history of the Gauls meaningful.

That having been worked out, it now becomes clear that Tours is located in present day France. The success of the Franks having descended to the present day. Their dominance in the region has lasted 1500 years.

Rome

This is both the name of the city and the seat of the Roman Empire. The Pope is also located in Rome. Rome is significant both religiously and politically. Gregory is a Roman Gaul. At least, he served the Roman military, so evidently so. This only happened because the Romans had overtaken Gaul prior to its becoming Frankish territory. Rome gained and lost Gaul as the Empire waned. The power of the Roman Empire was not always greatest in the West. For modern readers and the Westernmost Europeans, the Empire would have been more of a distant yet consolidating political power than anything else. "You can get to Rome, but most people around here don't even want to try to actually go there."

The Christian Church of which the author is a part when he writes this book is Roman. This keeps things simple in terms of his own loyalties. There was nothing turncoat about Gregory.

Relics

These are remains of saints. While there are other items that can be viewed as relics, mainly they are the physical remains of saints. There is some unexplained church tradition involving the use of relics. Normally, only prominent people, or those who have a special intimacy with the cleric would have real access to relics. Often they were requested to protect individuals against certain types of crises. While this request was sometimes granted Gregory mentions ashes being used. Whether these were the ashes of saints, or whether a system had been devised to apply ashes in place of relics is not clarified.



However, there is an anecdote about a man who sold fake relics. He was caught. Originally, the church offered him support, but when he rejected their offer of friendship they scrutinized him closer. Gregory explains that the man turned out to be a sorcerer.

Sorcerer

This is some kind of powerful individual. Sorcerers often have most of the same abilities as everyone else but there is something strange and subtle with a hint of magic or the supernatural or the forbidden about them. Gregory describes two types of sorcery during the book. One was a necromancer - the only power this man had that Gregory describes as a form of sorcery was the ability to know it if people were speaking badly of him although he was not present. He discomfited people by publicly acknowledging that this was going on, and by rebuking aloud those who were slandering him from a distance. It is the fact that he could do this accurately that Gregory of Tours labels him a necromancer. Another case of a sorcerer is a man who was selling fake church relics and false herbal remedies. He was either a village healer or a "quack" or a mixture of the two. In this case, Gregory concludes he was a sorcerer by the man's possessions and behaviors. He had medicinal herbs in pouches, as well as vials but also had odd items such as mole's teeth and the claws of mice. This, and his efforts to market products while shying away from the church, led Gregory of Tours to conclude that he's a sorcerer.

Spain

This is a location which is referred to in the later books. Effectively it comes up as a place into where Childebert and Clothar lead armies. The Spanish kings, and some of the further military relations between these kings and this country, are described in several parts of the book. Spain is not one of the main locations focused upon during the book. However, it is major.

Sword

This item is almost taken for granted in the course of the book. While it does not seem that everyone has one, it is the normal weapon chosen for armed combat. Swords come up throughout the book in the same manner that machine guns and automatic handguns come up in the present era in locations where there is active legal warfare taking place. Sword smithing and the metal working and mining associated with it are not covered in detail in this book. Such knowledge seems to be protected and occult - rarely mentioned and often dismissed but actually vital to the entire arms industry of the age. People were killed by the sword.

Church

This has two meanings in THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS. First, it is an individual complex temple with additional space for support and alternative services. The church of Saint Martin is the one most mentioned in the book. The other meaning is the entire organization of which the congregations of Tours are a part. Gregory also writes of this when he describes different positions within the church and of going to Rome in order to be promoted through consecration.

Domestic Animals

These come up here and there during the work but are especially mentioned in the middle of it. In this case, there are two meanings for domestic. One would be those permitted in the house and around the family. These often help the humans in some way. The cat that hunts or keeps away the rodents being but one example. The other main form this takes is that of farm animals or herds. These are viewed as domestic in contrast to the purely wild animals.

Accusations and Charges

These are brought up in various locations throughout the book. They are prevalent in the subject matter during The Tenth Book when a woman makes numerous charges and accusations that an abbess is behaving unacceptably. The abbess, and her allies are able to refute the accuser's charges. However, Gregory explains that in this case, as soon as some were overcome, still others were made. This being observed, it became clear that the woman accuser was simply an enemy of the abbess and would not relent in her charges against the other because of her enmity more than out of interest in the truth.

Accusation and charges in this case were both leveled at the law courts. They were also directed informally.

Property

This term is used widely and generally in the course of THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS. Property has a suspicious tendency to change hands during this book. It is defined mainly by possession and, in some cases control. However, there are exceptions to this rule. This is brought up in various ways during the book. Gregory writes of military campaigns in which property is taken by force from one individual or group of people into the control of those belonging to another group. Property also comes up in reference to his work as a bishop. More than once, Gregory is approached by another cleric with a request to take control and possession of some of the property of the church then under the authority of Gregory as part of Tours. When he said "No,"

he was often met with at least written rage if not also further forms of anger coming from whoever had made the request.

Finally, churches also gain, hold and at times lose property. One main source of faith during this book, is how property stolen from the church of Saint Martin is returned later on. This is viewed as a victory. This is the having, losing then regaining possession of a set of possessions. There were also times when the church took property from others.

Themes

Events and Leaders in Tours

The work is titled THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS. Much of the book predates the time when the Franks have total control of Tours. For uninitiated readers, this is confusing. For those experienced in reading military histories, there will be less of a perception of chaos. The author is a Roman Gaul dwelling in terrain that has come under Frankish aggression. However, by the end of the compilation of Books, Gregory of Tours has explained that the people are excited in general. The idea of having the Franks for their leaders has grown appealing to them. This is the same kind of cultural transition that has also been found at other times. Presently, many like the Americans to be dominant. For the others, the Russians and the Chinese and the British are the best bet, the Germans being viewed as "narrowly escaped". Suffice it to note the obvious: it has not been easy to keep the Germans subordinate in Europe. Prior to this the British were amongst those who did well. Still, the Romans and Persians and Chinese have had greater luck consolidating International Empires that lasted for centuries. The closest thing to this in the Northern reaches of the Americas are the Houdensaunee - called the Iroquois by the French, with the Aztec and Incas continuing the represent the most prevailing culture of more Southern America other than the Mayas. In Europe and Persia, leaders sometimes triumphed so much that their own enemies were won over. There were Roman Generals who found love amongst those they had conquered. Napoleon of France was also gifted with this ability to win the hearts of those his armies came to dominate. While this is an idea which is less popular in the present day, Gregory explains in his writings that this was the effect of the Franks on his own region. Rather than running in horror or shuddering at the thought of being taken over by the Franks, many Gauls and Romans found this idea appealing. This shows the popularity of their leadership.

Gregory, Bishop of Tours in 6th century, also writes of the news based upon another simple reality of everyday life. Because it is true that the actions of the highest levels of leadership are extensive and pervasive in their effect, the entire document follows the course of their actions. This being the case, the bulk of the writings involve a few families of aristocrats and the main maneuvers these people make. Chilperic is one of the leaders who is directly implicated in many battles. Not only does he do many deeds, but there is great turmoil caused by the reality that he had seven women who are called his wives. Seven wives, each of whom had children with him. The offspring of two of his wives prevailed. One won out over the others for the throne but not without great treachery and the murder of children. Childebert is another of the major leaders of whom Gregory writes.

The author also writes of major clerics during the course of events. Alliances between kings and bishops were of great significance. These are not made the prominent line of thinking during this compendium. The main way Gregory notes such unions is by



indicating that the king's success stemmed from his union with God and through faithful servants of the truth.

Saints

There are some references to the saints in this "book of Books." There is one Saint who stands out as having a special role in the life of Gregory of Tours—Saint Martin. One reason is that the tomb of Saint Martin is located in Gregory's diocese. There are occasions when this tomb is robbed. There is at least one instance where the body is relocated as a matter of pride. Saint Martin is the author's favorite saint. The author does not include many details about the actual life of the saint. The role and power of saints in the Christian tradition is included but never explained. This is so much a part of the author's culture that he treats the matter as not requiring explanation. Gregory does describe for readers evidence of the powers of the saints and how they are called forth by others. The deeds that a saint did during his or her lifetime stand on their own and are normally the source for why they were canonized - recognized officially as Saints by the entire church.

During the time when he wrote this book, the author Gregory of Tours gave no indication that he foresaw that he was a saint himself. Sometime after his death he is canonized. The role of bishop is challenging because they are the living apostles of Christ and yet at the same time, there is a certain amount of pure popularity that comes into play. There is hesitation about calling Gregory "Catholic" only because, as already mentioned, the Roman Christian Church had not become Catholic as a pervasive organizational characteristic at the time of Gregory's life.

Some characteristics of the saints are cited in the text. Their remains are viewed as a source of power in and of themselves. People find even their corpses to be a source of reassurance. Their presence is greatly valued. Their bodies or objects closely associated with them are known as relics. People often sought to possess even small parts of a relic in order to obtain supernatural protection. Ashes were often serve this purpose. Gregory of Tours does not engage in a discussion about whether the ashes were from actual relics or if they were placebos or blessed, official substitutes for saintly relics.

Frankish and Gaulish Territory

The political landscape is a bit peculiar during the time that Gregory of Tours writes about when compared with the same region today. Tours is near Roman territory. The editors inform readers that Gregory served in the Roman military for some time prior to his second career as a Christian cleric. There are no details provided of how advanced in rank he was.

Gregory of Tours describes that location as being outside of Rome. This mainly comes up when it is mentioned that he founded 7 monasteries prior to becoming a bishop, one of which was within "Rome's walls." It is not clear to people who are not well educated



historians of the era whether this means within the city of Rome or within territory thoroughly controlled by the Roman state. One of the points of the book is that this period in history covered a transitional period between the ancient system of kingdoms and that of the more modern state. It covers the waning phase of the Roman Empire.

Tours was often viewed as being the territory of the Gauls. Again, this is greatly influenced by the evidence that bishop Gregory was both Roman and a Gaul himself. He writes admiringly of the Franks more than once during the course of this book. In the final analysis, Gregory is happy that the Franks are so popular that if Frankish armies overtake Tours, the people will just as pleased as not.



Style

Perspective

The entire work has been carefully preserved for the sake of posterity. There has been a team of editors involved in translating the book from Latin into English and then creating the best English translation for the current audience. Given this major limitation the work is still able to show some revelations regarding the author.

The perspective is determined by a number of factors. One of these is that the work comes from the 6th century AD/CE. Another is that this is a European history; in fact its from Continental Europe. The region involved runs as far North as Germany but never so far as Scandinavia. The region runs as far East as Eastern Germany and Prussia but apparently not as far East as Russia. The same area runs through Italy and Greece is never mentioned as part of the terrain of the Gauls and Franks. Spain is the furthest South the terrain covered by the history goes.

There are political leaders in their region. When this history was written the type of leadership prevailing were kings, queens and emperors/empresses. While these people typically came from a pre-established upper class, the rule was that they gained and held power through popular support. Although they were not technically elected, they could be and were removed from office in cases of severe abuse of power.

The power of the Christian church was not entirely consistent during the course of the history of which the author writes. The term Catholic existed near the end of this history but not during the majority of the text. As such, it is more correct to describe the author as having been a Roman Christian, but not a Roman Catholic. His predecessor, Saint Augustine, represented the turning point from whence the Christians and the Romans united. Gregory emerged a century or so later and presumes this unity of the Roman with the Christian.

Gregory was a male Gaul. He was from an upper class family. He spent years as some kind of Roman soldier - given his social status he may well have been a high ranking officer. After this he devoted him to God. He became a deacon and later was promoted to the rank of bishop. For those who don't already know: when one is consecrated as a bishop they are being turned into and recognized as one of Christ's apostles currently on the Earth. He served Tours, a territory or precinct that was actually in flux and conflict between the ruler ship of the Franks and Gauls of Rome. He was a Roman. He was part of a literate minority and educated in Christian writings.

Tone

The work of the author is rather direct. Gregory endeavored to serve people well and in more than one way. There is no indication anywhere in the work that questions his integrity. The writing intends to be clear and as such appears to be free of artifice. The



work is informative and designed for education but not after the manner of a text book in the sense with which most readers today are familiar.

Obviously, the bulk of readers have as much or more education in the formal sense as the author of the work. Many have a great deal more, and in far more diverse subjects. The author is well educated in his field, in this regard the church. This includes both the writings and the living methods of the Christian church as it was in Roman Gaul on the Frankish borderlands. Even so, readers will note that the author is not "preachy." At the same time, he does have a definitive Christian perspective.

The ideas of Christianity assert itself as part of the viewpoint and even as integral to the tone of the work in a variety of ways. As such, one tone of the work is to inspire. The idea is to encourage faith should it be lacking and to nurture it where it is present. There are numerous short true stories in the course of the work where events are interpreted as showing favor and disfavor by God. One example is how Gregory shows that armies who fought on the side of the doctrine of the Trinity were successful militarily against the those armies fighting against them that did not support this same view.

Structure

The structure of the book is antiquated. This has been given some reassembly, so that it better uses the more modern means of presentation for readers today. These alterations have been conducted by scholars and while there may be some imperfections they are generally useful. As such, the form presented to readers is primarily an English translation in accordance with the original Latin rendition. Editors explain at the beginning that the style of writing is above that of the barely literate and below that of literary people or scholars.

There are a Preface and an Introduction. These give readers some context about the time and regarding the author of the work. This includes some notes about the translations and the author's history, after which there are 10 "Books." Each of these can be taken as what would now be called "a volume" in a series on a topic. At the front of each of these there is a copy of the author's original table of contents. Within each book he has numbered each chapter, which is not separated by pages as current readers would tend to find in a more recently published book.

The author gives a concise description of the regional news. The first Book is dedicated from the Biblical beginning to something near the present, nearly 5575 years. The second Book has 43 chapters. There are true stories dedicated to leaders in it. Some of the leaders are the bishops and other clerics and there are anecdotes about kings. The main warfare cited in this book is that between the Saxons and the Romans, which proved to be a sign of the decline of the Roman Empire with the exception of the Roman Christian - later Catholic Church, which is the current remaining form of the Roman Empire on Earth today. In this sense at least, God has spared Rome to the extent that it is Christian.

The interpretive framework is also part of the structure. The last statement of the previous sentence is along this line of interpretation: God has saved the Christians of Rome and thereby preserved it, in direct protection and reward for their faith. The faithless of Rome have long since fallen. There are other ways to see the situation, but this is the way Gregory of Tours sees things.

Quotes

"The History of the Franks by Gregory, bishop of Tours, is an historical record of great importance. The events which it relates are details of the perishing Roman Empire and the beginning of a great modern state and for these events it is often the sole authority" (p. ix).

"Again we hear of bishops who are illiterate. It is plain that the trend of the evidence is all in one direction, namely that in Gaul by this time the liberal arts had disappeared from education" (p. xiii)

"I believe that the word of the Father which made all things were made was Christ" (p. 5)

"Through intercourse with her companion the woman conceived and bore two sons. But when God received the sacrifice of the one with honor, the other was inflamed with envy; he rushed on his brother, overcame and killed him, becoming the first parricide by shedding a brother's blood" (p. 7).

"And of these the blessed Dionysius, bishop of Paris, after suffering divers pains in Christ's names, ended the present life by the threatening sword" (p. 12).

"After this war was waged between the Saxons and the Romans; but the Saxons fled and left many of their people to be slain, the Romans pursuing. Their islands were captured and ravaged by the Franks, and many were slain. In the ninth month of that year, there was an earthquake. Odoacer made an alliance with Childeric, and they subdued the Alamanni, who had overrun part of Italy" (p. 35).

"Euric, King of the Goths....since he was over-wanton in his love for women, and was afraid of being killed by the people of Auvergne, he fled to Rome and there was stoned to death because he wished to practice a similar wantonness" (p. 37).

"...and the Lord gave such grace to those who stood by that they thought they were places amid the odors of paradise. And the king was the first to ask to be baptized by the bishop...The holy bishop Remi was a man of excellent wisdom and especially trained in rhetorical studies, and of such surpassing holiness that he equaled the miracles of Silveste," (p.41).

"Now when Alaric, king of the Goths, saw Clovis conquering nations steadily, he sent envoys to him [to have a meeting]...They met in an island of the Loire which is near the village of Amboise in the territory of Tours...and departed in peace. Even at that time many in the Gauls desired greatly to have the Franks as masters" (p. 44).

"And, for my part, I consider this a great mystery, that the voice of the prophet proclaimed as the chief spirit that which the heretics assert to be the lesser" (p. 53).



"King Clovis confessed it [the Trinity], and crushed the heretics by its aid and extended his kingdom and people, and what is more, of eternal life itself" (p. 53).

"The Huns attack Sigibert and Chilperic takes the opportunity to seize some of his cities" (p. 87). This is in Book 4.

"Though it is my desire to continue the history which the previous books have left untold, still affection requires me first to tell somewhat concerning the death of the blessed Salvius, who, as is well known, died in this year" (p. 169).

"Now at that time in Spain king Richard was influenced by the divine mercy and summoned the bishops of his religion and said to them: Why are quarrels continually going on between you and the bishops who call themselves Catholic, and when they do many miracles by their faith why can you do nothing of the sort?" (p.211)

"And since a pure and untainted friendship has been formed in God's name between the kings mentioned, it is agreed that passage shall at no time be denied in either kingdom to the men of either king who wish to travel on public or private business" (p. 215).



Topics for Discussion

The Franks and the Gauls and the Romans all occupy much of the same geographical region. Please explain this within the context of the book.

List Gregory's 3 main occupations that writes about in this book. Clarify the order in which they occurred.

Why is there drama surrounding Chilperic's offspring and his 7 wives?

What is the relevance of the fact that Gregory was literally a Roman soldier prior to becoming a Roman Christian bishop?

Do you feel this history book has any real value or is contemporary humanity artificially manufacturing the sense of the work as meaningful? Explain your answer.

Which miracle presented seemed most real to you? Why?

What do you make of the reference to sorcery in the work? Do you think there is such a thing as sorcery? Do you think this is an outmoded concept of the person or not?