

# CHARITY AND POWER: CAESARIUS OF ARLES AND THE RANSOMING OF CAPTIVES IN SUB-ROMAN GAUL\*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most dramatic expressions of Christian charity in late antiquity was the practice of ransoming captives taken in brigandage, piracy, or war.<sup>1</sup> Involving, as it did, the collection and disbursement of large sums of money, and delicate negotiations with hostile parties, the redemption of captives eventually came to be included in the duties of local bishops. Bishops, in turn, not only accepted, but actively solicited this responsibility, for, like other charitable activities, the liberation of captives enabled them to reinforce or expand ties of *clientela*, enhance their own status as local patrons, and publicly enact, and so promote and validate, the Christian ideal of *caritas*.

Prominent among these bishops was Caesarius, bishop of Arles from 502 to 542. On several occasions, in the years following the war in 507/8 between the Franks and Burgundians and their Ostrogothic and Visigothic opponents, Caesarius ransomed large numbers of prisoners of war, both soldiers and civilians, in the face of formidable obstacles. The bishop's generosity and determination have been much admired by ecclesiastical historians, but little attention has been paid to the ideological, social, and political dimensions of his work.<sup>2</sup>

Yet this is precisely what the sources allow us to study. There is good evidence for his career, in the form of a *Vita*, almost 250 sermons, and a body of other writings, which permits us to reconstruct to a certain degree not only his practice of redeeming captives, but also the ideology which he used to justify this often controversial practice, and the social and political consequences which followed from it.<sup>3</sup> The case of Caesarius can thus be used to illustrate some of the ways in which Christian charity—in this case, the ransoming of captives—functioned as a source of episcopal patronage and power in a particular set of social and political circumstances.

In this study I shall first review the history of episcopal involvement in the redemption of captives. Then I shall briefly discuss the main sources for the life of Caesarius. Next I shall describe Caesarius' ransoming of captives and his contribution to

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Abbreviations:

CCL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*  
CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*  
Duchesne L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*<sup>2</sup>, 3 vols. (1907–15)  
Griffe E. Griffe, *La Gaule chrétienne à l'époque romaine*<sup>2</sup>, 3 vols. (1964–66)  
Langgärtner G. Langgärtner, *Die Gallienpolitik der Päpste im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert*, Theophaneia 16 (1964)  
MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*  
(AA) *Auctores Antiquissimi*  
(Ep.) *Epistolae*  
(SRM) *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*  
Morin G. Morin (ed.), *Sancti Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (1937–42)

PL Migne, *Patrologia Latina*  
PLRE *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, ed. A. H. M. Jones et al., 2 vols. (1971–80)

PG Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*  
SC *Sources chrétiennes*

Thompson E. A. Thompson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila* (1966)

<sup>1</sup>The Christian practice of ransoming captives has never been adequately discussed. For a survey of the sources, see E. Le Blant, *Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1856–65) II, no. 543, pp. 284–99.

<sup>2</sup>For instance, A. Malnory, *Saint Césaire, Evêque d'Arles*, Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études 103 (1894, repr. 1978), 96–7; H. G. J. Beck, *The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France During the Sixth Century* (1950), 339–41; and A.-M. Abel, 'La pauvreté dans la pensée et la pastorale de Saint Césaire d'Arles', in *Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté (Moyen Âge–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* I, ed. M. Mollat (1974), 112.

<sup>3</sup>The foundation of all modern work on Caesarius is G. Morin's monumental edition, cited as Morin. Volume I contains the sermons of Caesarius (=CCL 103–4). Volume II contains all the other extant writings of Caesarius as well as the *Vita*.

the ideology of captivity and redemption. Finally I shall discuss three of the consequences which came directly out of Caesarius' charitable activity, and which in one sense help to explain that activity: his defence of ecclesiastical boundaries; his appointment as papal *vicarius* of Gaul; and his conversion of pagans.

## II. CHRISTIAN BISHOPS AND THE RANSOMING OF CAPTIVES

The capture and sale of human beings was a profitable and much practised enterprise in the ancient world.<sup>4</sup> It was all the more profitable when the captives could be sold back for a ransom higher than their value on the slave market. Given this alternative, individuals would have been fortunate to find relatives, patrons, clients, or fellow citizens willing to put up the money for their redemption, either as a loan or as a gift.

If the money had been lent, the obligation to repay it seems at first to have had only a moral force. By the first century A.D., however, the sum was apparently recoverable at law.<sup>5</sup> Between the second century A.D. and mid-sixth century, a *redemptus* who could not afford to repay his *redemptor* was constrained by a form of debt servitude, and forced to repay the price of his ransom with labour.<sup>6</sup> In this period, full reinstatement to pre-captive status (*postliminium*) would have been obtained only on discharge of the debt, a reversal of the earlier practice by which a simple return to Roman soil guaranteed *postliminium*.<sup>7</sup>

Gifts were a different matter, immediately triggering the *ius postliminii* in all periods. These must have been common in the case of client-patron, family or guest relations. Cicero describes redemption of those captured by *praedones* as a laudable form of *liberalitas*, along with the rescue of a friend from debt or the completion of his daughter's dowry.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in relation to early Rome, Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions redemption from captivity as one of the duties clients had toward their patrons.<sup>9</sup>

The New Testament enjoins the ransoming of captives only indirectly, notably in a passage of Isaiah quoted in Luke's gospel.<sup>10</sup> A more direct recommendation to this effect is found in the mid-second century *Shepherd of Hermas*.<sup>11</sup> The first extended Christian discussion of the ransoming of captives is, however, found in a letter written by Bishop Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) to several African bishops who had requested help in ransoming captives. Alluding to Mt. 25: 34 ff., he wrote:

For since the Lord says in his gospel, 'I was sick and you visited me', with how much greater a reward for our work will he say, 'I was a captive and you redeemed me'? And since after that he says, 'I was in prison and you visited me', how much more of a reward will we receive on the day of judgement when he begins to say, 'I was in the prison of captivity, and locked up and bound I lay in the hands of the barbarians, and you freed me from that prison of servitude'?<sup>12</sup>

Here, Cyprian links the promise of a reward at the last judgement with the hope of salvation (*spes*), and adds two other justifications for ransom, based on *caritas* and *fides*. The virtue of *caritas*, he says, requires that 'the captivity of our brothers be counted as our captivity, and the sorrow of those in danger must be reckoned as our sorrow.'<sup>13</sup> And if *caritas* does not motivate us to help our brothers, he says, *fides* ought to, for it is an article of Christian faith that the spirit of God dwells in every Christian (I Cor. 3: 16). According to Cyprian, the consequence of this belief is that

Christ must be observed in our captive brothers, and he who redeemed us from the peril of

<sup>4</sup> For captives seized in war, see Thuc. 6. 62; Diod. Sic. 23. 18; Strabo 7. 7. 3; Amm. Marc. 31. 8. 7-8; Greg. Tur., *HF* 5. 29; Caesarius, *Serm.* 70. 2. For those seized by brigands or pirates, see Suet., *Aug.* 32; Sen., *Controv.* 1. 2; 1. 6; 1. 7; 3. 3; 7. 4; Paus. 5. 21. 11; Augustine, *Ep.* 10\*. 3 (*CSEL* LXXXVIII, ed. Divjak); Sid. Ap., *Ep.* 6. 4. 1.

<sup>5</sup> E. Levy, 'Captivus Redemptus', *CP* 38 (1943), 160-3.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 163-71.

<sup>7</sup> W. W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery* (1908), 311-17.

<sup>8</sup> Cic., *Off.* 2. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 2. 10. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Lk. 4: 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> *Mand.* 8. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 62. 4, *CSEL* III. 2, ed. G. Hartel. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>13</sup> *Ep.* 62. 1.

death must be redeemed from the peril of captivity, so that he who pulled us out from the jaws of the devil and who now remains and lives in us might be pulled out from the hands of the barbarians, and so that he who redeemed us by the cross and his blood might be redeemed with a sum of money.<sup>14</sup>

Justified by these arguments, Cyprian collected a total of HS 100,000 from his people and clergy, and sent the money to his correspondents, with instructions to write again if they needed more.

When Ambrose of Milan treated the same topic over a century later, he did not find it necessary to give scriptural arguments for the ransoming of captives *per se*. Writing in the *de officiis ministrorum*, with frequent reference to Cicero's *de officiis*, Ambrose simply listed several varieties of *liberalitas*: feeding the hungry, watching over orphans, helping debtors.<sup>15</sup> The greatest form of *liberalitas*, he said, 'is to redeem captives, to snatch them from the hands of the enemy; to take people away from death, and, especially, to take women away from dishonour; to give children back to parents, parents to children; and to restore citizens to their country.'<sup>16</sup>

The need for scriptural justification became necessary only when Ambrose had to defend himself from the criticism of the Arian clergy of Milan for melting down sacred church vessels for the ransom of captives.<sup>17</sup> This criticism was to come up repeatedly in various contexts over the next several centuries, particularly in the case of Caesarius, and it has a bearing on the bishop's ability to perform charitable works. For if, in order to ransom captives, bishops were empowered not only to raise money on an *ad hoc* basis, as Cyprian had done, but also to use the treasury, real properties, or—most alarmingly—*vasa ministerii* of the local church, then their personal power could become truly vast. Not only were the *vasa ministerii* considered to be 'sacred' objects which ought not to be used for 'secular' purposes, but many of the church's holdings in real estate and precious objects were donations or legacies from pious individuals for the salvation of their souls, and it was not thought proper to alienate, as it were, the grounds of their salvation.<sup>18</sup>

Ambrose justified his actions by pointing out that the apostles were sent forth without gold or silver (Mt. 10: 9), and asserting that the wealth which the church did manage to obtain should be used for the care of the needy. It followed from this principle that the preservation of 'vessels of the living' (*vasa viventium*) was far better than the preservation of vessels of gold or silver (*vasa metallorum*). Those vessels, moreover, were truly precious which could redeem souls from death. And just as the blood of Christ redeemed men from sin, so the chalice of his blood could redeem them from the enemy. It was thus in imitation of Christ that people were redeemed from captivity; their lives were saved, they were preserved from idolatry, and for women in particular, *puclitia* and *castitas* were preserved.<sup>19</sup>

By the fifth century, there had long been common agreement that the ransoming of captives was one of the bishop's foremost responsibilities. The subject thus became a *topos* for episcopal panegyric, whether epigraphic or literary, all the more powerful for being backed up by episcopal practice.<sup>20</sup> Local conciliar and papal support for the practice added further to its prestige.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the ransoming of captives became an integral

<sup>14</sup> *Ep.* 62. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Off.* 2. 15, *PL* 16. 128–9.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 2. 15.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 2. 28.

<sup>18</sup> For examples of conflict over this issue, see Soz., *HE* 4. 25 and John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matth.* 50/1, 4, *PG* 58. 508–9.

<sup>19</sup> *Off.* 2. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Julianus Pomerius, *de vita contemplativa* 1. 25, *PL* 59. 440; *Vita Ambrosii* 38, *PL* 14. 43; *Vita Honorati* 20, in S. Cavallin, *Vitae Sanctorum Honorati et Hilarii Episcoporum Arelatensium*, Skrifter utgivna av vetenskaps-societeten i Lund 40 (1952), 64; *Vita Paulini* 6, *PL* 53. 862–3; Avitus of Vienne, *Ep.* 35 in *MGH (AA)* vi. 2, ed. R. Peiper, 65; and *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* 4. 10. 2, The Catholic

University of America, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Language and Literature 19, ed. J. N. Garvin, 187 (Fidelis of Mérida).

For inscriptions see Le Blant, *op. cit.* (n. 1), nos. 405 (Domninus of Vienne) and 425 (Namatius of Vienne), and E. Egli, 'Die christlichen Inschriften der Schweiz vom 4. – 9. Jahrhundert', *Mitteilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 24 (1895), no. 37 (Valentinianus of Chur).

Finally, see Ven. Fort., *Carm.* 4. 8. 23–4 (Cronopius of Périgueux), *Carm.* 5. 6 (Syagrius of Autun), and *Carm.* 9. 9. 19–20 (Sidonius of Mayence).

<sup>21</sup> Gelasius, *Ep.* 10, *PL* 59. 57; Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 7. 13; 7. 35, *CCL* 140. Council of Orleans (511), can. 5 in *Concilia Galliae*, ed. C. de Clercq, *CCL* 148A, 6; Council of Mâcon (585), can. 5, *ibid.*, 241.

ingredient of episcopal self-definition. By the mid-fifth century this belief can be traced on the frontiers of the romanized world, in Patrick's *Letter to Coroticus*, where the bishop contrasts the 'unchristian' behaviour of Coroticus with the common Christian practice in Gaul:

Consuetudo Romanorum et Gallorum Christianorum: mittunt viros sanctos idoneos ad Francos et ceteras gentes cum tot milia solidorum ad redimendos captivos baptizatos.<sup>22</sup>

Ambrose's influence is particularly evident when bishops felt justified in alienating church property—especially *vasa ministerii*—to pay for the ransom of captives. Among such bishops were Augustine,<sup>23</sup> Hilarius of Arles (c. 440),<sup>24</sup> Deogratias of Carthage (455),<sup>25</sup> Caesarius of Arles (508),<sup>26</sup> and Maroveus of Poitiers (585).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, by the time of Justinian, imperial law, and slightly later, Frankish canon law, permitted the alienation of church property for no other reason.<sup>28</sup>

In the long run, of course, bishops depended on the generosity of their congregations for the resources with which to practise charity. For this reason we find them transmitting the ideology of charity to their people on countless occasions. Gallic liturgies, for instance, seem regularly to have included prayers for the release of captives,<sup>29</sup> and sermons encouraged the giving of alms for the purpose.<sup>30</sup> As a result, bishops obtained the resources needed to ransom captives. They also stimulated members of their congregations to act on their own.<sup>31</sup> A vivid example appears in the newly discovered letter from St. Augustine to his friend Alypius, written in the early 420s.

About four months before I wrote these things, traders from Galata collected people from different areas, and especially from Numidia . . . and led them to Hippo so that they could be shipped out from our shores. One of the faithful was present, a man acquainted with our practice in alms (*elemosynis*) of this kind, who announced this fact to the church. I was not there at the time. Immediately about 120 people were freed by our congregation, partly from the ship on which they had been placed, and partly from the . . . place where they had been hidden to await their imprisonment on the ship.<sup>32</sup>

It is not clear in this case whether any money changed hands; some of the captives might have been freed by the application of a law of Honorius (cited only here) which prohibited the overseas transport of captives for sale.<sup>33</sup> At any rate, Augustine describes the intervention of his congregation as a form of almsgiving, *elemosyna*, in accord with his custom. Not only did the members of Augustine's congregation free these captives on their own, but some of them supported the newly redeemed for a time afterward, since, as Augustine put it, 'non enim sufficit ecclesia cunctos quos liberat pascere.'<sup>34</sup>

The spontaneous reaction of his congregation to the misery of these captives must have gratified Augustine as much as the need for it saddened him. But the incident does not only show the effectiveness of Augustine's preaching. It also underscores the importance of the congregation in episcopal generosity and patronage. Without the willing support of their congregations, late antique bishops would have had no patronage role at

<sup>22</sup> *Ep. ad Coroticum* 14 in R. P. C. Hanson (ed.), *Confession et Lettre à Coroticus*, SC 249 (1978), 144–6. These *virī sancti* may have been monks or bishops. Cf. *ibid.*, 146, n. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Vita Augustini* 24, PL 32. 54.

<sup>24</sup> *Vita Hilarii* 11 in S. Cavallin, op. cit. (n. 20), 90–1.

<sup>25</sup> Victor Vit. 1. 8. 25, CSEL VII, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *Vita Caesarii* 1. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Greg. Tur., *HF* 7. 24.

<sup>28</sup> *CJ* 1. 2. 21 (529); Justinian, *Nov.* 65 (538); *Nov.* 120. 10 (544). Council of Clichy (626–7), can. 25, CCL 148A, 296.

<sup>29</sup> L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution*, 2nd Eng. ed., trans. M. L. McClure (1904), 199, 208.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Leo the Great, *Serm.* 10. 2, PL 54. 164; Laurentius of Milan, *Hom.* 2, PL 66. 108; and Valerianus of Cimiez, *Hom.* 7. 5, PL 52. 715.

<sup>31</sup> Instances of redemption by wealthy individuals can be found in Le Blant, op. cit. (n. 1), no. 543; Ven. Fort., *Carm.* 4. 27. 15; Sid. Ap., *Ep.* 4. 11. 4; Greg. Tur., *Glor. Mar.* 105, MGH (SRM) 1, 560–1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ep.* 10\*. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ep.* 10\*. 3. There is some disagreement about this point. See M. C. Lepelley, 'La crise de l'Afrique romaine au début du V<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'après les lettres nouvellement découvertes de Saint Augustin', *CRAI*, juillet-octobre 1981, 459, and H. Chadwick, 'New Letters of St. Augustine', *JThS*, N.S. 34 (1983), 433.

<sup>34</sup> *Ep.* 10\*. 8.

all.<sup>35</sup> The responsibility which the bishop came to have for ransoming captives was thus, to a significant degree, the result of his congregation's own expectations, which he articulated through the biblical and patristic ideology of charity. It was not simply a duty of the bishop's own making, although its performance often increased his prestige. To see just how the ransom of captives functioned in the career of a single bishop, let us now turn to the life of Caesarius of Arles.

### III. CAESARIUS AND THE *VITA CAESARII*

The main source for the life of Caesarius is a *Vita* composed within seven years of his death by five churchmen of his acquaintance.<sup>36</sup> Written at the request of Caesaria the Younger, abbess of the women's monastery in Arles (and perhaps Caesarius' niece), the *Vita* was primarily aimed at a monastic and clerical audience (*Vita* 1. 1). The work was divided by its authors into two books. The first was composed by three local bishops: Cyprianus of Toulon, Firminus of Uzès, and Viventius (see unknown). It treats the life of Caesarius from birth until sometime after the year 536, when Arles was incorporated into the kingdom of Childebert I (*Vita* 1. 34). As we would expect of a narrative composed by bishops, this book emphasizes Caesarius' liturgical innovations, his administrative abilities, his skill as a preacher, and his political relations with bishops and kings. The second book was composed by Messianus, a priest, and Stephanus, a deacon, both clerics in the church of Arles. It expresses the viewpoint of men who knew little more than the service of Caesarius (*Vita* 1. 1, 63), and consists largely of a series of miracle accounts, with a concluding section on the death and burial of Caesarius (*Vita* 2. 46-50).

Both the authenticity and historical value of the *Vita Caesarii* may be fairly said to be beyond doubt.<sup>37</sup> Its authors were, in the first place, contemporaries of Caesarius. As bishop of Toulon, Cyprianus attended five Gallic church councils between 524 and 541, four of which Caesarius himself presided over;<sup>38</sup> Firminus attended three councils as bishop of Uzès between 541 and 552.<sup>39</sup> Viventius attended the Council of Orléans in 541.<sup>40</sup> Messianus appears as a *notarius* on a letter from Pope Symmachus to Caesarius dated 11 June 514.<sup>41</sup> Only Stephanus does not appear elsewhere.

As contemporaries, and indeed, acquaintances of Caesarius, the authors were in a position to use exactly those sources which they claimed to use: Caesarius himself, their own eyewitness observations, and the observations of those who knew Caesarius (*Vita* 1. 1, 5, 22; 2. 35). They were, furthermore, knowledgeable informants: their description of Caesarius' journey to Italy, for instance, and references to local bishops and aristocrats exhibit an accuracy that can be checked against independent sources.<sup>42</sup>

This is not to say that the testimony of the *Vita Caesarii* can always be accepted at face value. Like any other genre, hagiography follows its own conventions, which are not necessarily those of modern history. The *Vita Caesarii* is no exception. For instance, at junctures where the genre calls for information that the authors do not possess, such as the period of Caesarius' youth and adolescence, they borrow *topoi* and events from earlier *vitae*, notably the *Vita Martini* by Sulpicius Severus and the *Vita Honorati* by Bishop

<sup>35</sup> H. Chadwick, 'The Role of the Christian Bishop in Ancient Society', *Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture*, Colloquy 35 (Berkeley, Calif., Feb. 25, 1979), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Texts of the *Vita Caesarii* are available in Morin II, 293-349, and in *MGH (SRM)* III, ed. B. Krusch, 433-501. For the date of the *Vita*, see C. F. Arnold, *Caesarius von Arelate und die gallische Kirche seiner Zeit* (1894), 497-8.

<sup>37</sup> Even Krusch, whom Morin once called 'ce terrible critique', accepted the authenticity of the *Vita*, describing it as a 'pretiosissimum monumentum historicum', *MGH (SRM)* III, 433. Cf. also Arnold, op. cit., 496-8 and Malnory, op. cit. (n. 2), i-iv.

<sup>38</sup> Duchesne I, 278.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 315.

<sup>40</sup> Viventius appears to have been the only bishop present at this council whose see is not identified in the

subscriptions; he may not have had one at the time, *CCL* 148A, 143.

<sup>41</sup> *Epistolae Arelatenses* 28 in *MGH (Ep.)* III, ed. W. Gundlach, 41.

<sup>42</sup> Journey to Italy: for the authors' familiarity with the court of Theodoric, see their account of Caesarius' encounter with Helpidius, *infra*, p. 196; the substance of the meeting with Pope Symmachus is corroborated by *Epist. Arel.* 28. Cf. also Ennodius, *Ep.* 9. 33, *MGH (AA)* VII, ed. F. Vogel, 321.

Bishops: Silvester of Chalon (*Vita* 1. 4; Greg. Tur., *Glor. Conf.* 84, *MGH (SRM)* I, 802; Conc. Epaonense (517), *CCL* 148A, 35; Conc. Lugdunense (518-23), *CCL* 148A, 41); Aeonius of Arles (*Vita* 1. 10; *Epist. Arel.* 22, 23, 24).

Aristocrats: Firminus (*Vita* 1. 8; *PLRE* II, 471); Liberius (*Vita* 2. 10; *PLRE* II, 677-81); and Parthenius (*Vita* 1. 49; *PLRE* II, 833-4).

Hilarius of Arles.<sup>43</sup> But such instances are relatively rare in this *Life*, whose authors were not only well informed, but with the possible exception of Cyprianus, appear to have been almost as unaware of literary conventions as their prefaces maintained (*Vita* 1. 2; 2. 1).

Miracles call for careful treatment as well. Although modern readers will hardly be content to accept the numerous miraculous explanations found in both books of the *Vita*, they do not on that account have to reject the historicity of the events themselves. Indeed, as recent work on the *Vita Martini* shows, the miracles found in Gallic saints' lives—especially miracles of healing and exorcism—do not generally involve events which are *per se* improbable.<sup>44</sup> Far from indicating the credulity or ignorance of the authors, such miracles can be used to shed light on yet another aspect of the bishop's social role. Nor is there necessarily any reason to reject the incidental details contained in miracle narratives; most of our information about the rural parishes of sixth-century Arles, for instance, comes from miracle accounts in the *Vita Caesarii*.<sup>45</sup>

There is finally the matter of bias. Like other authors, hagiographers were fully capable of distorting historical events and explanations in the interests of a local church, monastery, bishop, cult or doctrine.<sup>46</sup> Yet these distortions can often be isolated by referring to the preoccupations of the hagiographer and the expectations of the audience. Moreover, for events and attitudes of a public nature, such as this paper treats, the authors' consciousness of their contemporary audience exerted some control over the narrative. Important incidents may have been inaccurately described or interpreted in a biased fashion, but they can hardly have been totally invented, ignored, or misplaced in time or space. As a result, the basic framework presented in the *Vita Caesarii* must be, in the main, reliable, and will be treated as such in this article.

According to the *Vita*, Caesarius was born around 470 at Chalon-sur-Saône, in territory controlled by the Burgundians (*Vita* 1. 3).<sup>47</sup> At the age of 18 he was tonsured by Bishop Silvester of Chalon and entered the clergy (*Vita* 1. 4). Two years later he left Chalon for the renowned island monastery of Lérins, where he spent nearly ten years as a monk (*Vita* 1. 5). At some point before 499 ill health forced him to the mainland to recover, and he was sent to Arles. The city at this time had been under Visigothic control for more than two decades, and was governed by several *comites* and their soldiers (*Vita* 1. 48); it still retained, however, some late Roman administrative offices, including a *praefectura* (*Vita* 2. 47) and a *chartarius publicus* (*Vita* 2. 39).

Caesarius was received in Arles by Firminus, a *vir illustris* known from the correspondence of Ennodius and Sidonius (and perhaps a relation of Bishop Firminus of Uzès), and by his wife Gregoria (*Vita* 1. 8).<sup>48</sup> He was then introduced to Aeonius, bishop of Arles, who turned out to be both a *conciuis* and a *propinquus*, although the exact relationship is unclear (*Vita* 1. 10). Presently, he was ordained deacon, then priest (*Vita* 1. 11), and finally, in 499, placed in charge of a monastery in the suburbs of Arles (*Vita* 1. 12). During this time Aeonius nominated Caesarius as his successor (*Vita* 1. 13), and when the aged bishop died in 502, Caesarius was persuaded to take on the *episcopatus sarcinam* (*Vita* 1. 14).

During Caesarius' episcopate, Arles was controlled by three successive barbarian tribes: Visigoths, in 502-8; Ostrogoths, in 508-36; and Franks, in 536-42. Much of the first book of the *Vita Caesarii* is concerned with Caesarius' political relationships with these groups, which tended to be unstable, but skilfully managed. He was, for instance, arrested for treason on three different occasions, yet managed in each instance to be fully exonerated.<sup>49</sup> His exposure to political charges stemmed not only from any intrigues he

<sup>43</sup> S. Cavallin, *Literarhistorische und textkritische Studien zur Vita S. Caesarii Arelatensis* (1934), 20-7.

<sup>44</sup> A. Rousselle, 'From Sanctuary to Miracle-Worker: Healing in Fourth-Century Gaul', tr. E. Forster in *Religion, Ritual, and the Sacred*, ed. R. Forster and O. Ranum (1982), 110-17; C. E. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer* (1983), 249-56.

<sup>45</sup> Luco: *Vita* 2. 18; Cataroscensis ecclesia: *Vita* 2. 20; Citaristana parrochia: *Vita* 2. 21; Succentriones: *Vita* 2. 22.

<sup>46</sup> A notable case is the treatment of Jews in the *Vita*. For a brief, but incisive discussion, see I. Lévi, 'Saint Césaire and les Juifs d'Arles', *Revue des études juives* 30 (1895), 295-8.

<sup>47</sup> For the dating of these events see M.-J. Delage (ed.), *Césaire d'Arles. Sermons au Peuple* 1, SC 175 (1971), 37-43.

<sup>48</sup> *Supra*, n. 42.

<sup>49</sup> He was twice arrested by the Visigoths (*Vita* 1. 21-4; 29-31) and once by the Ostrogoths (*Vita* 1. 36).

might have been engaged in, but also from his rapid rise as an outsider to the episcopate of Arles, which must have produced envious reactions on the part of the local clergy.<sup>50</sup>

Caesarius' deeper loyalties, however, were reserved for the diocese and province of Arles, and ultimately for that city of God which the church was to anticipate on earth. To fulfil his duty as bishop and prepare his people for the *caelestis patria*, Caesarius tried to persuade them—often in the face of indifference or resistance—to accept and abide by a Christian system of values, rituals, and beliefs. He attempted to do this through acts of charity, preaching, conciliar legislation, civic and religious ceremonial, and 'miraculous' deeds. At his death in 542, Caesarius left behind a legacy that was to have a decided impact on the shape of the Frankish church to come.<sup>51</sup>

#### IV. CAESARIUS AND THE IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF REDEMPTION

Caesarius' efforts to redeem prisoners from captivity occupied him throughout the early part of his episcopate, beginning with the Frankish and Burgundian siege of Arles in 507. Clovis and his Franks had just defeated the Visigoths at Vouillé and killed their king, Alaric II.<sup>52</sup> In conjunction with the Burgundians under King Gundobad, they mounted an attack against Arles, still under Visigothic control (*Vita* 1. 28). In 508 the Ostrogothic troops of King Theodoric, led by Count Ibbas, came to the aid of the besieged city and defeated the Franks and Burgundians, capturing a large number of men.<sup>53</sup> The enemies were then brought into the city. From this point we follow the narrative of the *Vita Caesarii*:

In Arles, however, when the Goths had returned with an immense number of captives, the sacred basilicas were filled with a dense crowd of unbelievers (*infideles*), as was the bishop's residence. On those in great need the man of God bestowed a sufficient amount of food and clothing alike, until he could free them individually with the gift of redemption. When he had spent all the silver which his predecessor, the venerable Aeonius, had left for the maintenance of the church (*mensa ecclesiae*), he observed that the Lord had dipped bread into an earthen bowl and not a silver chalice, and had advised his disciples not to possess gold or silver. The sacred work then proceeded all the way to the disposal of the articles of divine service; indeed, when the censers, chalices, and patens had been given for the redemption of these men, the consecrated ornaments (*species*) of the church (*templum*) were sold for the redemption of the true church (*verum templum*). Even today the blows of the axes can be seen on the podiums and railings from which the silver ornaments of the small columns were cut away (*Vita* 1. 32).

Unfortunately, we do not know the size of the church treasury, the value of the property sold by Caesarius, the number of prisoners ransomed, or the per capita prices. We do, however, know that the sale of church property—especially the *vasa ministerii*—outraged some of the members of Caesarius' clergy, men whose livelihood depended to a great extent on the available wealth of the church (*Vita* 1. 33). After 506 Caesarius no longer needed their permission to alienate church property;<sup>54</sup> instead, the Council of Agde had required the bishop to obtain the agreement of two or three other bishops to make such transactions valid.<sup>55</sup> But he faced clerical objections anyway, with arguments drawn from the *de officiis ministrorum*.

Caesarius maintained, following Ambrose, that the early church put little value on precious metals, and that those to be redeemed were the *verum templum* of God (*Vita* 1. 32). He also drew a similar parallel with Christ: just as he gave himself for the redemption of mankind, so too should the objects dedicated to his service be given for the redemption

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, the accusations of Licinianus, a *notarius*, in *Vita* 1. 21.

<sup>51</sup> J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (1983), 97–9.

<sup>52</sup> *Chron. Min.* 11, *MGH (AA)* xi, ed. Th. Mommsen, 223. *Greg. Tur.*, *HF* 2. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Jordanes, *Get.* 58, *MGH (AA)* v. 1, ed. Th. Mommsen, 135.

<sup>54</sup> The fifth-century *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* (can.

50, *CCL* 148, ed. C. Munier, 174) had required a bishop to obtain the consent of his clergy before disposing of church property. The clergy of Arles, in the belief that they were defending an ancient privilege, may have been protesting against not only Caesarius' alienation of church property, but also his failure to obtain their permission to do so.

<sup>55</sup> Canon 7, *CCL* 148, 195.

of those in need (*Vita* 1. 33). Thus, in selling off church property and emptying his coffers to ransom prisoners, Caesarius was acting in accord with the advice of Ambrose. But it is where Caesarius transforms and surpasses Ambrosian logic that we see the unique circumstances surrounding this programme of redemption. Ambrose spoke of saving men from barbarian servitude and women from barbarian 'impurities'. Caesarius could not use this argument since he was ransoming barbarians and not the citizens of Arles, who did not suffer from captivity in this siege (*Vita* 1. 34). Moreover, he was ransoming the enemies of his city.

In view of these circumstances, Caesarius supplied two new arguments. In order to justify his redemption of barbarians, he expanded Ambrose's suggestion that idolatry could result from captivity:

(1) Ne rationabilis homo sanguine Christi redemptus, perditio libertatis statu, pro obnoxietate (2) aut Arrianus forsitan efficiatur, aut Iudaeus, (3) aut ex ingenuo servus, aut ex dei servo hominis (*Vita* 1. 32).

Let no rational man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, having lost his free status, be coerced into becoming an Arian perhaps, or a Jew, or a slave from a free man, or a servant of man from a servant of God.

This passage furnishes us with new information about the captives as well as arguments for their release. In the first place, Caesarius suggests that these captives, though they are non-Romans, are none the less *homines rationabiles*, and as such have been redeemed by Christ's suffering and death. Left in servitude, they would have run the risk of forced conversion.

Secondly, Caesarius provides an example of such conversions: the captives might be forced to become Arians or Jews. As we have seen, the captives were previously described as *infideles*, a term which in early Christian literature can refer to pagans, Jews, or heretics.<sup>56</sup> We can identify them more precisely, however. Assuming that Caesarius would not have been greatly perturbed if a Jew were converted to Arianism, or an Arian to Judaism, we may suppose that these captives were neither the Jews of Gaul, nor the Burgundians (who were still Arians at this time), but rather the pagan Franks. If we follow an early dating of Clovis' conversion (before the spring of 508), we have to identify these men as the many Franks who did not immediately follow Clovis' lead in converting to catholicism.<sup>57</sup> But if we date Clovis' baptism after the spring of 508, then there would be no reason to expect the Franks to be anything but pagan.<sup>58</sup> Caesarius' argument shows that he was afraid that servitude under the Ostrogoths might destroy any prior inclinations these men might have had to become catholics and might instead turn them into Arians. Since they were still pagans, moreover, and would not have enjoyed the same legal protections as catholics from servitude under the Jews, Caesarius was also afraid that Jewish masters might try to convert them to Judaism, as their law required.<sup>59</sup> Liberation, he argued, released them from the manifold vexations of heresy or 'superstition', and made possible their subsequent 'free' assent to catholic Christianity.

Caesarius' fear for the enslavement of *ingenui* is understandable, for that was the normal fate of those taken captive in war. But what did he mean by saying that through enslavement *servi dei* might become *servi hominis*? The reference has biblical echoes. In I Cor. 7: 22-4, Paul informed the members of his audience that they were *servi Christi*, no matter what their earthly status. He further told them that: 'Pretio empti estis, nolite fieri servi hominum.' In its widest possible context, then, *servi dei* would include all catholic

<sup>56</sup> H. Schmeck, 'Infidelis. Ein Beitrag zur Wortgeschichte', *Vigiliae Christianae* 5 (1951), 138-42.

<sup>57</sup> G. Bardy, 'L'attitude politique de saint Césaire d'Arles', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 33 (1947), 249.

<sup>58</sup> For an argument in favour of a conversion in the year 508, see F. Oppenheimer, 'Place and Date of Clovis' Baptism', in his *Frankish Themes and Problems* (1952), 19-63.

<sup>59</sup> The ownership of Christian slaves by Jewish mas-

ters was severely restricted or prohibited precisely because conversion to Judaism was feared. See the series of laws dating between 335 and 423 in *CTh* 16. 9. 1-5. See also *Sirm.* 6 (425); and the Frankish councils of Orléans III (538), can. 14; Orléans IV (541), can. 30; and Mâcon (581-3), can. 16 and 17, in *CCL* 148A. On the Talmudic requirement that Jews try to convert their slaves, see Z. Kahn *L'esclavage selon la Bible et le Talmud* (1867), 138-48.



Christians.<sup>60</sup> But in the *Vita* the term has a narrower significance. There, *servus dei* or *servus Christi* usually refers to Caesarius himself (*Vita* 1. 25, 29, 36, 40, 49; 2. 5, etc.) or to others like him (*Vita* 1. 45; 2. 5). In a letter to his sister, Caesarius refers to himself as 'minimus omnium servorum dei famulus.'<sup>61</sup> Clearly bishops, and by extension other clergy, could be described as *servi dei*. Were members of the clergy taken captive? Although we cannot be certain, this seems the most reasonable interpretation of the passage. We shall return to this point later.

We have seen how Caesarius publicly explained his ransom of pagan barbarians. How did he explain his ransom of enemies of the city? His argument here is not direct and must be pieced together from statements in the *Vita* and in the sermons. In *Vita* 1. 33, the author quotes a double reproach directed by the bishop against his insubordinate clergy. In the first Caesarius rebukes the clergy for their reluctance to give *insensibile argentum aut aurum* received through the generosity of Christ to the *mancipia Christi*. As we have seen, this is not a new argument. In the second reproach, however, he asks whether the clergy would consider it a sacrilege if they themselves had been taken captive and were being offered redemption from the gifts of the church. This is, of course, a reference to the biblical injunction to treat others as one would like to be treated oneself, and Caesarius in several sermons (notably *Serm.* 35-9), not surprisingly connects it with the Christian duty to love one's enemies. Moreover, for Caesarius, the *dilectio inimicorum* provides a particularly efficacious remedy (*medicamentum*) for obtaining God's forgiveness. For those who can afford it, such *dilectio inimicorum* involves almsgiving, in Caesarius' words, 'elymosina, quae datur esurientibus, nudis atque captivis' (*Serm.* 39. 1).<sup>62</sup> For the church, then, love of enemies requires even their ransom from captivity.

If Caesarius' involvement in the redemption of captives had been limited to the ransom of those imprisoned in his own churches, it would require little comment. True, the ransom of enemies was unusual, but it was not unprecedented. The church historian Socrates tells the story of Bishop Acacius who, in an act of sensible diplomacy as well as Christian charity, ransomed Persians captured by his own city of Amida and returned them to the astonished Persian king.<sup>63</sup> What is most unusual about Caesarius is not his ransom of prisoners in the city of Arles, but his ransom of captives from other cities in Gaul. Let us consider the evidence of the *Vita* on this point.

At some point after 26 August 512, when Caesarius dedicated a new monastery for women in Arles, he was arrested by the Ostrogoths and ordered to appear before Theodoric in Ravenna, probably accused of treason (*Vita* 1. 36). Once in Ravenna, however, he succeeded in impressing Theodoric to such a degree—we do not know exactly how—that he was not only freed from captivity, but was also presented with a 60-pound silver dish (worth about 300 *solidi*) and 300 *solidi* in addition.<sup>64</sup> Caesarius promptly had the dish sold and with all the money began to free captives (*Vita* 1. 37). This action, we are told, so delighted Theodoric and his ministers that Caesarius began to receive additional gifts from the senators and leading men of Ravenna. He used these funds too for redemption, and here the account becomes more detailed:

Meanwhile, in Italy, he discovered and redeemed all the captives he could from beyond the Durance (*de ultra Druentiam*), especially from the town of Orange (*Arausici oppidi*). This town had been completely enslaved, and he had already redeemed part of its inhabitants in Arles. Moreover, so that their liberty might be made more complete, he paid for horses and wagons for the journey, and by the relief and organization of his own, he arranged to return them to their homes (*Vita* 1. 38).<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> cf. also Rom. 6: 22, in which *servi Dei* refers to the entire local Christian community and, similarly, I Pt. 2: 16.

<sup>61</sup> Morin II, 134. Cf. also Acts 16: 17, where *servi Dei* refers to Paul and his companions and Rom. 1: 1, where *servus Christi* refers to Paul.

<sup>62</sup> Caesarius specifically mentions captives as recipients of Christian charity in *Serm.* 30. 4, 6; 35. 4; 39. 1; and 146. 2. It is likely that one or more of these was delivered while he was trying to raise money for the ransom of captives in Arles.

<sup>63</sup> Soc., *HE* 7. 21, *PG* 67. 781-4.

<sup>64</sup> I take 'adiectis in eo solidis trecentis' (*Vita* 1. 37) to refer to 300 *solidi* in addition to the value of the silver dish, which, at 5 *solidi* to the pound, would also have been worth about 300 *solidi*. For this rate of exchange, see *CTh* 13. 2. 1 (397) (= *CJ* 10. 78. 1); for a rate of 4 *solidi* to the pound, see *CTh* 8. 4. 27 (422). The rate would, of course, have fluctuated. See A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602* (1964) 1, 439-40.

<sup>65</sup> Translation adapted from J. N. Hillgarth, *The Conversion of Western Europe, 350-750* (1969).

He redeemed captives from 'beyond the Durance, especially from the town of Orange.' Prior to 507, the Durance had marked the division between Burgundian and Visigothic territory; these captives, then, were taken in Burgundian territory by Theodoric's victorious army. It is interesting that captives were said to come especially from the city of Orange, which had been almost completely enslaved. At this period the enslavement of an entire city under Burgundian control would almost certainly have involved the enslavement of catholic Gallo-Romans as well as Arian barbarians. I submit that it was the catholic inhabitants of Orange and northern Provence whom Caesarius had already redeemed in Arles, a group which perhaps included some clergy. This would account for his earlier reference to *servi dei*. The Burgundians, then, as Arians, would have been taken to Italy as slaves.<sup>66</sup>

Caesarius, after a short but productive stay in Rome, returned to Arles in late 513, bringing with him 8,000 *solidi* and the good will of Theodoric and Pope Symmachus (*Vita* 1. 43). He used the money, we are by now hardly surprised to hear, to redeem more captives. He himself went to Carcassonne for this purpose, which had been besieged at the same time as Arles,<sup>67</sup> and sent abbots, deacons, and other clergy into various (unnamed) regions to do the same (*Vita* 1. 44).

Before we discuss the social and political dimensions of redemption, there is one more incident to be considered. At some point after the siege of Arles had been lifted, the church of Arles found itself responsible for maintaining two groups of people in addition to the poor whom it had always maintained (*Vita* 2. 8). These were *captivi redimendi* and a great number of *redempti*, both ordinary *ingenui* and *nobiles*. Grain supplies fell dangerously low, and the bishop was informed that only one day's food remained. He ordered Messianus, his *notarius*, to serve the last of the grain, trusting, as he said, that God would soon provide what they needed. After a fast of some days, the expected help arrived in the form of three grain ships sent to Arles by the Burgundian king Gundobad and his son Sigismund in recognition of Caesarius' 'works of mercy' (*Vita* 2. 9).

The incident is difficult to date, and may have occurred at any point between the end of the war in 508 and the death of Gundobad in 516. Even without a secure date, however, the story illustrates not only the post-redemption maintenance of the poor by the local church, but also the significance of Caesarius' assistance to the Burgundians.<sup>68</sup> It is one more piece of evidence for his special interest in captives, an interest which is all the more unusual when we consider that it extended not only to catholics but also to Arians and pagans, not only to fellow citizens but also to enemies, not only to prisoners within the diocese of Arles, but to those in other, distant dioceses as well.

#### V. THE DEFENCE OF ECCLESIASTICAL BOUNDARIES

Caesarius himself, having suffered captivity, expressed a sympathy for captives which perhaps went beyond normal episcopal concern.<sup>69</sup> But contrary to his biographers, who were eager to amplify their subject's reputation for sanctity, Caesarius' charitable activities were not indiscriminate or limitless. Rather, we can discern a more particular structure and purpose behind them.

It is true that Caesarius redeemed captives both inside and outside diocesan boundaries without concern for their political citizenship, ethnic origins, or religious belief. As Daly has pointed out, Caesarius is here in a sense prefiguring the 'medieval notion of Christendom', the belief that all Christians (and in Caesarius' view, all potential

<sup>66</sup> A precedent for this action can be observed in the negotiations of Bishop Epiphanius a generation earlier. In an exact reversal of Caesarius' mission, he was sent by Theodoric to Gundobad to obtain the redemption of over 6,000 Ostrogothic subjects held by the Burgundians in their territory. Furnished with funds from Theodoric, a lay woman named Syagria, and Avitus of Vienne, Epiphanius not only obtained redemption for the captives, but provided them with

financial assistance as well, Ennodius, *Vita Epiphani* 171-81, *MGH (AA)* VII, 106.

<sup>67</sup> M. Rouche, *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes, 418-781* (1979), 49-50.

<sup>68</sup> Malnory, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 97.

<sup>69</sup> For a summary of Caesarius' general attitude to the feeding and clothing of the poor, see A.-M. Abel, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 111-21. See also *Vita* 1. 44; 2. 23-4.

Christians) are bound together by ties of fraternity and common citizenship, and are not divided by ethnic, geographical or political boundaries.<sup>70</sup>

But it is important to realize that, while ignoring the boundaries of his city and the barriers of ethnicity and religion, Caesarius very strictly observed other geographical boundaries in his redemptive activity, namely, those of the ecclesiastical province of which he was metropolitan. This is an important fact in view of the intense and frequent disagreement over ecclesiastical boundaries which we observe in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul. To draw out its significance and its political consequences will require some background.

Because of its strategic position at the mouth of the Rhône, Arles had always been an important city in the Roman province of Narbonensis.<sup>71</sup> Its political and economic importance did not give it ecclesiastical prominence, however, until the beginning of the fifth century, when political and military instability along the Rhine and in southern Gaul prompted Honorius and his ministers to make several administrative changes in the provincial structure established by Diocletian in the late third century.

As a result of Diocletian's reorganization, Gaul had been split into two civil dioceses. By the late fourth century, the southern diocese contained seven provinces, including Viennensis, where Arles was located.<sup>72</sup> Because Vienne was the civil capital (or *metropolis*) of Viennensis, Gallic church custom recognized Vienne as the capital of the ecclesiastical province as well, and designated its bishop as *metropolitanus*, with the authority to supervise the consecration of other bishops in his province and the responsibility of convening church councils.<sup>73</sup>

Thus far Arles remained subordinate to Vienne. However, at some point between 394 and 408 (the exact date is uncertain<sup>74</sup>), the praetorian prefecture of the Gauls was transferred from Trier to Arles. Shortly after the transfer of the prefecture, the vicariate of the diocese of southern Gaul was moved from Bordeaux to Arles, and the metropolitan capital of the province of Viennensis was transferred from Vienne to Arles.<sup>75</sup> This increase in the secular prestige of Arles produced the expectation that the city's ecclesiastical honour would be magnified as well, and at the council of Turin (which has been variously dated so as to occur just after the transfer of the praetorian prefecture<sup>76</sup>), we find a resolution of the resulting dispute between the bishops of Arles and Vienne over metropolitan control. In the second canon of the council, the assembled bishops decided that the bishops of Arles and Vienne, in the absence of any agreement about who would be metropolitan, should divide the province between them.<sup>77</sup> They further maintained, however, that under ideal conditions each province should have only one metropolitan.

Over the next century, bishops of Arles continued to extend the territory over which to exercise metropolitan authority, frequently coming into conflict with the metropolitan bishops of Vienne, Narbonne, Marseille (before 450), Aix (after 450), and Embrun, who were all in the process of trying to do the same thing.<sup>78</sup>

In 450 conflict over boundaries prompted nineteen bishops from four provinces in south-east Gaul to send a petition to Pope Leo I, requesting that the bishop of Arles be granted metropolitan authority over their dioceses.<sup>79</sup> In response, Leo distributed

<sup>70</sup> W. M. Daly, 'Caesarius of Arles, A Precursor of Medieval Christendom', *Traditio* 26 (1970), 20 ff.

<sup>71</sup> A. Grenier, *Manuel d'archéologie gallo-romaine* 1 (= J. Déchelette, *Manuel d'archéologie préhistorique celtique et gallo-romaine* v) (1931), 289-95.

<sup>72</sup> For the *Notitia Galliarum*, see Th. Mommsen (ed.), *Chron. Min.* 1, *MGH (AA)* IX, 552-612. For a recent discussion, see J. Harries, 'Church and State in the *Notitia Galliarum*', *JRS* 68 (1978), 26-43.

<sup>73</sup> Griffie II, 138-46.

<sup>74</sup> For an early date (c. 395), see J.-R. Palanque, 'La date du transfert de la Préfecture des Gaules de Trèves à Arles', *Revue des études anciennes* 36 (1934), 359-65, and 'Du nouveau sur la date de transfert de la Préfecture des Gaules de Trèves à Arles', *Provence historique* 23 (1973), fasc. 93-4, 29-38. For a late date (c. 407), see A. Chastagnol, 'Le repli sur Arles des services administratifs gaulois en l'an 407 de notre ère', *Revue*

*historique* 249 (1973), 23-40.

<sup>75</sup> Chastagnol, 'Le repli sur Arles', 32.

<sup>76</sup> Dates range from 398 (L. Duchesne, 'Le Concile de Turin', *Revue historique* 87 (1905), 278-302 and J.-R. Palanque, 'Les dissensions des églises des Gaules à la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle et la date du concile de Turin', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 21 (1935), 481-501) to 417 (E.-Ch. Babut, *Le Concile de Turin* (1904), 7 ff. and A. Chastagnol, 'Le repli sur Arles', 36-40).

<sup>77</sup> *Concilia Galliae*, CCL 148, pp. 55-6.

<sup>78</sup> The most notorious of these bishops was Hilarius of Arles. For an account of his activities and the restrictions placed on him by Pope Leo I, see Griffie II, 200-12; Langgärtner, 61-79; R. W. Mathisen, *Phoenix* 33 (1979), 160-9; and M. Heinzelmänn, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien*, Beihefte der Francia 5 (1976), 78-84.

<sup>79</sup> *Epist. Arl.* 12, op. cit. (n. 41), 17-20.

individual dioceses (*civitates*) to both Arles and Vienne. To Vienne he granted four: Valence, Tarantaise, Geneva, and Grenoble. To Arles he granted 'reliquae civitates eiusdem provinciae', by which he seems to have meant not only the remaining *civitates* in Viennensis, but also all the *civitates* in the provinces of Narbonensis II and Alpes Maritimae, and one in Narbonensis I, since it was in response to the letter of bishops from those provinces that Leo spoke of settling a disagreement 'intra provinciam vestram'.<sup>80</sup>

Although their legal rights to the other provinces are not completely clear to us, the settlement clearly favoured the bishops of Arles. From this point on, the bishops of Arles more or less successfully maintained control over their unusually extensive province. None the less, conflicts continued to erupt throughout the rest of the century.<sup>81</sup>

There must still have been in Caesarius' time some disagreement over the boundaries of the ecclesiastical province of Arles, for he specifically requested a clarification of these boundaries at his meeting with Pope Symmachus in autumn of 513.<sup>82</sup> In early November of the same year, the Pope responded with a confirmation of the decision made by Leo I. He also issued a stern warning for individuals to be content with the honours granted them and not to use *patrocinia saecularia* to further their own ambitions, a pointed reference to Avitus of Vienne.<sup>83</sup>

In view of the frequent territorial disputes among bishops in southern Gaul in the century before Caesarius, especially between the bishops of Arles and Vienne, his redemption of captives from 'beyond the Durance' and especially from Orange, carries great significance. Before 507 the Durance had served as the boundary between the Visigoths and Burgundians. Between 507 and 523 it divided the Ostrogoths from the Burgundians. In 523 Theodoric's troops pushed the boundary further north to the Drôme (or perhaps further, to the Isère).<sup>84</sup> Because the Durance had never formed an ecclesiastical boundary, much of the territory on the other side of it belonged to the ecclesiastical province of Arles. Before 523 the bishop of Vienne controlled this region only by virtue of Burgundian control. As a result, the council of Epaone, convened in 517 by Avitus of Vienne and Viventiolus of Lyon, included the bishops of nine *civitates* technically controlled by the metropolitan of Arles.<sup>85</sup> It is thus worth emphasizing a point made long ago by C. F. Arnold, that when Caesarius, on his journey through Italy in 512/13, managed to ransom very nearly the entire population of one of these *civitates*, as well as other captives from the same region, he neatly demonstrated his pastoral concern for the region and his metropolitan authority at the same time.<sup>86</sup> Although we do not know the residences of the other captives ransomed from beyond the Durance, it seems safe to assume that they fell within the boundaries of Caesarius' province and not Avitus'; most of the territory between the Durance and the Isère belonged to the province of Arles, as the *Vita* shows by designating the bishops subordinate to the bishop of Vienne as 'antistites Christi ultra Eseram consistentes' (*Vita* 1. 60).

By its extent and method of operation, then, the ransom of captives, simultaneously a form of charity and patronage, enabled Caesarius to defend the boundaries of his province against threats from without. But charity could also be employed to assert control over territory outside a metropolitan's legitimate jurisdiction. Thus, Atticus, bishop of Constantinople in the early fifth century, sent gifts of gold to the poor of neighbouring cities, including Nicaea, in order to consolidate the claims of his city—not originally a metropolitan capital—over the neighbouring ecclesiastical provinces.<sup>87</sup>

It is this possibility which is raised by Caesarius' journey to Carcassonne to ransom captives, for the city at that time belonged to the diocese of Narbonne, capital of the ecclesiastical province of Narbonensis I, and was not in Caesarius' jurisdiction.<sup>88</sup> A

<sup>80</sup> *Epist. Arl.* 13, *ibid.*, 21. There is some disagreement on this point. See Griffe II, 165, and Duchesne I, 124.

<sup>81</sup> Griffe II, 163–8.

<sup>82</sup> *Epist. Arl.* 25, *op. cit.* (n. 41), 35–6.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>84</sup> Cassiod., *Var.* 8. 10. 8 in *MGH (AA)* XII, ed. T. Mommsen, 241. Cf. also A. Malnory, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 129–32, and A. Longnon, *Géographie de la Gaule au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1878), 60–2

<sup>85</sup> *Concilia Galliae, CCL* 148A, 35–7.

<sup>86</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.* (n. 36), 261.

<sup>87</sup> Socrates, *HE* 7. 25, *PG* 67. 793–8. The distribution of grain across provincial boundaries by Patiens of Lyon in 471 may have had a similar intent, *Sid. Ap., Ep.* 6. 12. 5–8.

<sup>88</sup> Duchesne I, 300.

century earlier, Caesarius' predecessors had taken control of the diocese of Uzès from the metropolitan bishop of Narbonensis I. Was Caesarius trying to extend his authority in the same way? I think not. To begin with, these disputes generally occurred only with border parishes or dioceses, such as Uzès.<sup>89</sup> Of all the larger towns in Narbonensis I, Carcassonne was one of the most distant from Arles. An attempt to include Carcassonne in the jurisdiction of Arles would have meant an attempt on the whole of Narbonensis I. In view of Caesarius' demonstrated respect for papal authority, this is an unlikely possibility. As we have seen, Leo the Great had already in 450 clearly defined the composition of the province of Arles. The reaffirmation of this decision in 513 by Pope Symmachus demonstrated a continuing policy on the part of the bishops of Rome to maintain traditional boundaries, even when they conflicted with changing political boundaries.<sup>90</sup> Caesarius can hardly have wanted to endanger his good relations with Rome at a time when so much was at stake, especially if the journey to Carcassonne was undertaken after his return from Italy and his nomination as papal vicar of Gaul, as the *Vita* suggests. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the Ostrogoths, who were, after all, coming to the rescue of the Visigothic rulers of Septimania, would have taken captives among the natives of the area. These considerations make it probable that Caesarius went to Carcassonne to ransom either Franks or natives of the Burgundian-controlled portions of his own province. Even if he had wanted to free these captives himself, the bishop of Narbonne would hardly have been in a position to do so, since his city had been taken and pillaged by marauding Burgundians in 507/8.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the way was clear for Caesarius to intervene. But this was not his most daring intervention in a foreign province. For that we must turn to his activities in Italy.

#### VI. THE JOURNEY TO ITALY AND THE PAPAL VICARIATE

The *Vita* summarizes Caesarius' success in Italy in an account of his *adventus* in Arles:

From here he returned home and entered the city of Arles. He was received with the singing of psalms, and having left as an exile, brought back with him from Italy, after he had redeemed the captives, 8,000 *solidi* (*Vita* 1. 43).<sup>92</sup>

To his biographers, the surest proof of Caesarius' success appeared in these 8,000 *solidi*, over 100 lb. of gold. Their bishop had escaped exile in Gothic Italy, ransomed numerous *miseri* from servitude, and finally returned in triumph with a profit for the church of Arles. Virtue stood rewarded. But where had Caesarius obtained all this money? He began his journey with little or nothing. We know that Theodoric gave him a total of about 600 *solidi*, and the *Vita* mentions that he received gifts from the *senatores* and *proceres* of the court in Ravenna (*Vita* 1. 38).<sup>93</sup> It must have been these, along with the gifts he surely received in Rome from the clergy, senate, and private persons, which funded his liberality. There is no question that this was possible in early sixth-century Italy. The wealth of both the senatorial aristocracy and the Ostrogothic nobility was staggering, and in Christian times aristocrats were still the principal donors of wealth, as they had been in the days of pagan generosity.<sup>94</sup> But first the work of Caesarius had to come to their attention and win their support.

<sup>89</sup> e.g., the parishes of Ceyreste and Saint-Jean-de-Garguier, on the border between Arles and Marseille, which Patroclus of Marseille attempted to transfer to his own diocese in the early fifth century, *Epist. Arl.* 1, op. cit. (n. 41), 6.

<sup>90</sup> Langgärtner discusses the papal interest in stable boundaries, 135–6.

<sup>91</sup> Isidore, *Historia Gothorum* 37, *MGH (AA)* XI, 282.

<sup>92</sup> Translation adapted from J. N. Hillgarth.

<sup>93</sup> *Senatores* and *proceres* are not necessarily mutually exclusive groups. In the *Variae* of Cassiodorus, *proceres*

refers to high officials in the king's service, either Roman or Ostrogoth (*Var.* 4. 3. 1; 6. 4. 1). It is usually found in the plural and often designates the royal court (cf. Theodoric in the *Acta* of the Roman synod of 501, *MGH (AA)* XII, 425: 'cum proceribus palatii mei'). Sometimes, in its plural form, the word refers to senators (*Var.* 9. 7. 6: 'cum tot proceres ad curiam vocas'). Cf. also *Var.* 1. 41; 8. 15. 3).

<sup>94</sup> Jones II, 554–7. See also P. Veyne, *Le Pain et le cirque* (1976), 51–4.

Broadly speaking, a bishop could solicit gifts for the church on the basis of two sources of authority. The first source was based on what we might call 'vested' status, the authority given to the bishop by the institutional church. The second was based on 'achieved' status, which the bishop acquired by his closeness to God, by his personal sanctity, asceticism, and miraculous power.<sup>95</sup> Within his diocese a bishop normally had access to both, although vested status must often have seemed pre-eminent. Outside his diocese, however, a bishop could hardly claim any vested status at all, since he was always, in theory at least, in the diocese of another bishop. Outside his diocese, then, a bishop's achieved status was the only force that counted. If he received donations or legacies on a journey, it was more as a holy man than as a representative of the institutional church.

It is clear from his reception by Theodoric, his court, the people of Ravenna, and Pope Symmachus that Caesarius attracted attention and support in Italy through 'achieved' status. The speech which the *Vita* puts in the mouth of Theodoric at his first meeting with Caesarius sets the tone for the entire journey. 'Let God not spare those who have troubled in vain a man of this innocence and sanctity with so long a journey,' said Theodoric. And how did the king know what sort of man Caesarius was? 'Because,' said Theodoric, 'when he came in to greet me, I trembled all over' ('totus contremui', *Vita* 1. 36). Such, according to the *Vita*, was the visible sanctity and power of this holy man.

Demonstrated popular support was as essential an ingredient of Caesarius' success in Italy as royal awe, for the ability to attract large crowds was an important indication of personal holiness. It was Caesarius' personal asceticism and generosity which attracted people in Ravenna. Instead of keeping the silver bowl which Theodoric had given him 'pro memoria sui', Caesarius had it sold, since, we are informed, he used no silver at his table except spoons (*Vita* 1. 37). The *Vita* describes the scene which followed, when the king's ministers reported the insult to him.

We saw your royal gift exposed for sale. With its value Caesarius is freeing crowds (*multitudines*) of prisoners. There was such a mass (*enormitas*) of the poor in his lodgings and the courtyard of his house was so full (*constipata*) that one could scarcely reach and greet him for the throng (*pro densitate*) of poor men speaking to him. We also saw great troops (*innumeras catervas*) of the unfortunate hurrying (*cursitantes*) through the streets, going and returning (*euntes ac redeuntes*) to him.<sup>96</sup>

The accumulation of words suggesting magnitude, density, and incessant coming and going is a *topos* of panegyric, intended to emphasize the popular validation of holiness. The reaction of Theodoric and his court to what might otherwise be viewed as a dangerous act of patronage or *lèse-majesté* provided a means of aristocratic validation.

According to the *Vita*, the king was so full of praise and admiration for Caesarius that 'all the senators and leading men contended with one another in the wish that their donations be distributed by the hand of the blessed man' (*Vita* 1. 38). Furthermore, 'they proclaimed that they had been divinely favoured because they were considered worthy of observing such a bishop, who in those times appeared apostolic, a true successor of the apostles, by his words and deeds' (*Vita* 1. 38).

In Ravenna, then, the court followed the example of its king in judging Caesarius worthy of support. The impression he made on them all is reflected as well in the report of two miracles which Caesarius was said to have performed in Ravenna, signs of deep sanctity. Both cases involved individuals who had close connections with the court. In one, he healed an 'adulescens praefectoriis officiis militans' (*Vita* 1. 39-40). In the other he freed the house of Helpidius from a 'diabolica infestatio' (*Vita* 1. 41). Helpidius is described in the *Vita* as a deacon and physician, and as 'regiae potestati ac sedulo famulatu intimus', and is known to us from the letters of Cassiodorus, Ennodius, and Avitus as a frequent visitor to the court of Theodoric.<sup>97</sup>

*Fama* carried Caesarius' name to Rome, where the senate and aristocracy, Pope, clergy and people eagerly awaited his arrival (*Vita* 1. 38). When Caesarius reached Rome

<sup>95</sup> P. Brown, in response to Chadwick, op. cit. (n. 35), 18.

<sup>96</sup> Trans. J. N. Hillgarth.

<sup>97</sup> *PLRE* II, 537.

he was introduced to Pope Symmachus and then to the senators and their wives (*Vita* 1. 42). Everyone thanked God and the king for the opportunity to gaze on this 'apostolic man'. Then, Pope Symmachus, 'greatly moved by the worthiness of his good deeds (*meritorum eius dignitate*) and by reverence for his sanctity (*sanctitatis eius reverentia*),' reaffirmed his metropolitan status and granted him the right to wear the *pallium*, a woollen band laid about the shoulders, which western church custom at this time permitted only to the bishop of Rome.<sup>98</sup> The deacons of Arles, moreover, were given permission to wear *dalmaticae*, according to the example of the Roman church (*Vita* 1. 42).

The degree of honour represented by these privileges matched the new responsibilities granted to Caesarius the following year. On 11 June 514, Pope Symmachus informed Caesarius that he was to exercise a general vigilance over the ecclesiastical affairs of Gaul and Spain ('*quae tam in Gallica quam in Spania provinciis de causa religionis emergerint*').<sup>99</sup> Whatever could be handled at the local level should be discussed at a provincial council; if this approach was not successful, Caesarius was asked to refer the matter to Rome. Furthermore, members of the Spanish and Gallic clergy who wished to see the Pope were obliged to notify Caesarius of their intentions, and to receive letters of introduction from him.

Thanks to his achievements, Caesarius had been granted an explicit increase in vested status, for he was elevated over all the bishops in Gaul. To grasp the practical significance of this, it is necessary to recall some facts about relations between Arles and Rome in the fifth century and about the political realities of the early sixth century. On that basis, it will be possible to argue that Caesarius' ransom of captives—an act of patronage as well as a sign of holiness—played an important role in his 'promotion' to papal *vicarius* of Gaul.

Throughout the fifth century, even as the ambitious metropolitan bishops of south-east Gaul were being warned against an excessive interest in *latitudo regionum*, the bishops of Arles were gradually being granted a far greater *latitudo*: this was a general responsibility for the maintenance of 'ecclesiastical discipline' throughout Gaul.<sup>100</sup>

We see the first evidence of this responsibility shortly after the praetorian prefect of Gaul was installed in Arles, when Pope Zosimus in 417 granted to Bishop Patroclus of Arles not only the duty of furnishing Gallic visitors to Rome with letters of introduction, but metropolitan control over three provinces as well.<sup>101</sup>

In 462 Bishop Leontius of Arles was given the honour of formally announcing the election of Pope Hilarus to the bishops of Provence (*universa Provincia*).<sup>102</sup> Shortly after this he was reprimanded by the same pope for not reporting irregularities in the behaviour of Hermes, metropolitan bishop of Narbonne, matters which, Hilarus asserted, clearly related to Leontius' *monarchia*.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Hilarus, in a letter to the bishops of Lugdunensis, Viennensis, Narbonensis I and II, and Alpes Maritimae, commended Leontius as the bishop responsible for convening annual councils among them.<sup>104</sup> Clearly he conceived of Leontius as more than a simple metropolitan bishop; his responsibilities have been extended from Provence to include even the territory of Lyon.

Leontius was succeeded by Aeonius. We do not know much about his power in this regard; all correspondence between Arles and Rome broke off in the mid 460s and was not resumed until 494 when Provence had been in Visigothic hands for more than a decade and a half. At least one of the three letters that survives between Aeonius and the popes, however, seems to indicate some continuity in the responsibilities of the bishop of Arles. In a letter of 494, two years after his ordination, Gelasius asked Aeonius formally to communicate his greetings ('*caritate tua vulgante*') to the bishops of Gaul.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Langgärtner, 131–3. See also H. Leclercq in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* XIII (1937), cols. 931–40.

<sup>99</sup> *Epist. Arles.* 28, op. cit. (n. 41), 41. By 'Spania' is probably meant Septimania, since the bishop of Seville was designated as *vicarius* by Pope Simplicius in the late fifth century. Cf. A. Thiel, *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum* 1 (1867, repr. 1974), 213. For further arguments in favour of the point, see Langgärtner, 136–7.

<sup>100</sup> The phrase was used by Pope Hilarus in a letter

written to Leontius of Arles, Veranus of Vence, and Victurus (see unknown) in the mid 460s, *PL* 58. 21. For a summary of these relations in the context of the Gallic episcopate, see Griffe II, 169–212. See also Langgärtner, *passim*.

<sup>101</sup> *Epist. Arles.* 1, op. cit. (n. 41), 5–6.

<sup>102</sup> *Epist. Arles.* 16, *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>103</sup> *Epist. Arles.* 15, *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>104</sup> *Epist. Arles.* 18, *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>105</sup> *Epist. Arles.* 22, *ibid.*, 33.

By the time Caesarius succeeded Aeonius in 503, the trend in relations had become very clear. For almost a century, with certain exceptions, the bishops of Rome had favoured the bishops of Arles, and sought to consolidate and legitimate their power by delegating some of it to loyal occupants of that see. Arles was to become a miniature Rome,<sup>106</sup> and its bishops were to exercise the degree of control over Gaul which Roman bishops claimed to exercise over the entire church. That a close relationship between Rome and Arles was welcomed by the bishops of Arles as well is vividly demonstrated by their active promotion of the cult of St. Trophimus, a missionary bishop reputedly sent to Arles by St. Peter himself.<sup>107</sup>

But current political realities mattered as much as 'apostolic' tradition. And in early sixth-century Provence, the most significant political force was Theodoric, who conquered the region in 508 and attempted to project an imperial image by reinstating the praetorian prefecture in 511. Its new occupant, Liberius, was to reside again in Arles.<sup>108</sup> It was, in fact, also in the king's interest to have access to the ecclesiastical counterpart of a praetorian prefect in Arles, that is, a bishop with wide supervisory powers.<sup>109</sup> It is perhaps no accident that a decade later, when Theodoric's troops occupied the territory between the Durance and the Isère, the ecclesiastical borders of the province of Arles for the first time very nearly coincided with the civil borders of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Gaul.<sup>110</sup>

But the Pope had his own reasons for bestowing such favours on Caesarius. One, of course, was the fact that Caesarius was already widely recognized as the leading bishop in southern Gaul, as his leadership of the Visigothic council of Agde in 506 clearly demonstrates.<sup>111</sup> But of arguably greater importance was the specific character of that leadership, which can be attributed to what we may call Caesarius' 'Symmachan' qualities. As Pietri has shown, Symmachus, a converted pagan from Sardinia,<sup>112</sup> represented the popular, as opposed to the senatorial faction in Rome.<sup>113</sup> According to his analysis, the dispute over Symmachus' election to the papacy was not fundamentally the result of different attitudes toward the Constantinopolitan church, but rather involved a basic disagreement about the control of ecclesiastical wealth. It is of crucial importance to Pietri's argument that, throughout this struggle, Symmachus was enthusiastically supported by the clergy and the *populares*, whereas Laurentius was supported by the senate.<sup>114</sup>

Symmachus earned the favour of the clergy and people by acting as an *amator pauperum*. He built churches, regularly provided clothing and food for the poor, and saved the city in times of famine.<sup>115</sup> He was also known as a *redemptor captivorum*. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, 'hic [Symmachus] captivos per Ligurias et Mediolano et per diversas provincias pecuniis redemit et dona multiplicavit et dimisit.'<sup>116</sup> Indeed, his willingness to use the wealth of the church on behalf of clerics, captives, *peregrini*, and the poor<sup>117</sup>—what the senate most feared—made it possible for him to exercise a greater and more extensive patronage than any other Roman aristocrat.

Striking similarities between the two bishops—their common sympathy for the poor and captives, readiness to use ecclesiastical wealth, and ability to translate 'bonds of charity' into links of patronage<sup>118</sup>—must have had a good deal to do with the warm reception accorded by Symmachus to Caesarius, and ultimately must have contributed to

<sup>106</sup> It is perhaps worth recalling that Ausonius once described Arles as 'Gallula Roma Arelas' in his *Ordo nobilium urbium*, line 74, *MGH (AA)* v. 2, ed. C. Schenkl, 100.

<sup>107</sup> *Epist. Arl.* 12, op. cit. (n. 41), 18–19. For other references, see *Epist. Arl.* 1, 3, 5, *ibid.*, 6, 9, 11. The present church of Saint-Trophime, located at the centre of Arles—perhaps on the site of Caesarius' *basilica sancti Stephani*—commemorates the saint to this day. For further discussion of the legend, see L. Levillain, 'Saint Trophime confesseur et métropolitain d'Arles et la mission des sept en Gaul', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 13 (1927), 145–89, and E. Duprat, 'Histoire des légendes saintes de Provence', *Mémoires de l'Institut historique de Provence* 17 (1940), 146–98, and 18 (1941), 87–125.

<sup>108</sup> Ennodius, *Ep.* 9. 23, 29, and *PLRE* II, 677–81. On

the date of Liberius' appointment to the praetorian prefecture, see most recently, J. J. O'Donnell, *Traditio* 37 (1981), 44–6.

<sup>109</sup> E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* II (1949), 155.

<sup>110</sup> Arnold, op. cit. (n. 36), 271.

<sup>111</sup> Langgärtner, 121–4.

<sup>112</sup> E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums* II (1933), 88.

<sup>113</sup> C. Pietri, 'Le Sénat, le peuple chrétien et les partis du cirque à Rome sous le pape Symmaque', *MEFR* 78 (1966), 123–39.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 136–9.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 131.

<sup>116</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, I (1955), 263.

<sup>117</sup> cf. the *Acta* of the synod held in Rome in 502, *MGH (AA)* XII, 449.

<sup>118</sup> Caesarius, *Serm.* 22. 2; 23. 4; 29. 1.



Symmachus' bestowal of further privileges on Caesarius. For it was certainly of local political advantage to Symmachus, the populist *amator pauperum*, to associate himself with so holy and generous a bishop as Caesarius, especially if he had already earned the respect of Theodoric and his court. Moreover, because of his evident loyalty to Rome and his own populist sympathies, Caesarius would have been precisely the sort of bishop that Symmachus wanted representing his interests in Gaul. It is for these reasons then, along with the supposed precedent of Trophimus, the demonstrated favour of Theodoric, and the hallowed traditions of the fathers, that Caesarius returned from Italy with delegated control over the Gallic churches.

But for Caesarius the creation of *clientelae* through numerous acts of redemption had repercussions even beyond the borders of southern Gaul and Italy; its effects went as far as the captives he had redeemed, for contact with the bishop's charity exposed redeemed captives to the possibility of conversion.

#### VII. THE CONVERSION OF CAPTIVES

Charity was an important element in the ecclesiastical idiom of power in late antiquity. But to Caesarius and other bishops, it was ultimately the welfare of the soul and not the body that mattered. Augustine had already prepared the way for this distinction:

Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. If men recognized servitude, they would see from where they could receive freedom. An *ingenuus* is someone captured by the barbarians; he is made a slave from an *ingenuus*. A compassionate man hears, he determines that he has the money, he becomes a redeemer, he goes to the barbarians, he gives them the money, he redeems the man. Clearly he has given back liberty, if he has taken away iniquity. But who has taken away iniquity: man on behalf of man? The man who used to be a slave among the barbarians has now been redeemed by a redeemer, and there is a great deal of difference between the redeemer and the redeemed. None the less, they are both perhaps fellow slaves under the mistress of iniquity. I ask the redeemed, do you have sin? I do, he says. I ask the redeemer, do you have sin? I do, he says. Therefore, do not boast that you are redeemed, nor extol yourself as redeemer; but, both of you, flee to the true source of freedom.<sup>119</sup>

To Augustine, and later, to Caesarius, no one could be redeemed from spiritual servitude unless he recognized the identity of the true liberator (*Serm.* 17. 5). On the basis of this belief and Caesarius' concern with the conversion of pagans,<sup>120</sup> Arians,<sup>121</sup> and Jews,<sup>122</sup> we might expect evidence that Caesarius tried to convert some of the prisoners he freed.

As it happens, there is one passage in the *Life* which hints at the conversion of non-catholics. After they have described the cutting away and selling of the *ornamenta* of the basilica of St. Stephen in Arles, the authors of the *Vita* offer their own defence of Caesarius' actions, inserted between the reasons he himself gives.

(1) Ornavit enim per hoc et tutavit, non deformavit ecclesiam: (2) aperire fecit filiis matris viscera, non dampnari (*Vita* 1. 33).

He embellished and guarded the church by this action; he did not disfigure it. He made the womb of the mother open up with children; he did not cause it to be harmed.

The first phrase refers, of course, to the decoration of the *verum templum* which Caesarius himself spoke of. The second phrase is a reminiscence of biblical passages which speak of God permitting women to bear children beyond all expectation.<sup>123</sup> The meaning

<sup>119</sup> *Serm.* 134. 3, *PL* 38. 744.

<sup>120</sup> Especially *Serm.* 13 and 50-4.

<sup>121</sup> *Vita* 1. 23; *Serm.* 123. 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Serm.* 104. 6. See also J. Courreau, 'Saint Césaire d'Arles et les Juifs', *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 71 (1970), 105-6.

<sup>123</sup> cf. for instance, 'Videns autem Dominus, quod despiceret Liam, aperuit vulvam eius' (Gn. 29: 31) and

'Recordatus quoque Dominus Rachelis exaudivit eam et aperuit vulvam illius' (Gn. 30: 22).

There are two substitutions made in the *Vita*: *dam[p]nari* has been inserted in place of the more typical *concludere* (Gn. 20: 18; I Sm. 1: 5, 6); and *matris viscera* has replaced *vulva* because it has a more direct reference to the church (Orosius, *Apol.* 30, *PL* 31. 1199; Caesarius, *Serm.* 200. 5; and Pope Pelagius II, *PL* 72.

of the phrase can hardly be in doubt. Caesarius, by his actions, enabled the church to produce children, that is converts, beyond all expectation. But what sort of conversions were these and under what conditions did they take place?

To begin with, it is probable that any conversions that took place in Arles involved the Franks and not the Burgundians, since, as I have shown, the captives released in Arles were likely to have been Catholics and pagans.<sup>124</sup> Yet, the number of converts cannot have been very high and their baptism cannot have been a large-scale public event. If this had been the case, the authors of the *Life* would certainly have mentioned it. The extreme compression and vagueness of their statement, in fact, indicates that they knew little more about the conversion of prisoners than the fact that it happened, and could somehow be used to justify the physical disfiguring of the church. The issue is the more obscure since the date of Clovis' conversion is uncertain; it makes a great deal of difference if Caesarius' captives were among the first Franks to be converted or were merely following the lead already taken by Clovis and his retinue. Despite these difficulties, it is still possible to sketch out a plausible social framework in which barbarian conversion might have taken place.

Writing some years ago on the conversion of the northern barbarians to Christianity, E. A. Thompson observed that before Justinian none of the Germanic peoples—except the Rugi and the Lombards—was converted to Christianity while still living outside Roman borders.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, he noted, none of these peoples 'remained pagan for more than a generation after they had crossed the frontier . . . . It would seem,' he concluded, 'that the act of crossing the imperial frontiers and settling down as landlords or the like on Roman soil necessarily and inevitably entailed the abandonment of paganism and conversion to the Roman religion.'<sup>126</sup>

Thompson gave a more precise formulation of this issue in a later study of the conversion of the Visigoths.<sup>127</sup> He suggested that increasing inequalities of wealth and status, brought on by the growing economic interaction between Goths and Romans, led to the gradual disintegration of Visigothic tribal structures. This, in turn, led to a disruption of tribal religious practices, and left a religious vacuum at the heart of Visigothic society. Thus, by the time the Visigoths finally emigrated to Moesia in 376, conversion answered to clear social and religious needs.

It is noteworthy that this pattern of conversion did not hold true for Christian prisoners of war who crossed into Gothic territory from the empire. For generations after their capture, these uprooted Romans clung to their Arian or orthodox Christianity.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, they could hardly have done otherwise, since, as outsiders, they could never have been fully integrated into tribal society, and so could never have fully participated in a religion closely tied to that society. Tribal religion in Germanic society tended to be exclusive; its practice was confined to those who belonged to the kinship structure of the tribe.<sup>129</sup>

Late antique Christianity, however, was a fundamentally inclusive religion, and was organized on a territorial and not a tribal basis. In both its Arian and orthodox forms, it was closely connected to the prestige of the Roman way of life. In large part, then, it was the territorially based and inclusive nature of Christianity, in combination with the dislocation of the newly settled barbarians, which explains their rapid conversion to Christianity. Not surprisingly, the factors which led to barbarian conversion in the fourth and fifth century were still very much at work in the early sixth century. It is in this context that we shall discuss the conversion of the captive Franks in Arles. Caesarius' 'charity' may be seen to have contributed to these conversions in two ways, as a form of patronage and as 'good example'.

707). For a similar analogy between Christian conversion and the birth of a child, see Caesarius, *Serm.* 128. 6.

<sup>124</sup> *Supra*, p. 190.

<sup>125</sup> E. A. Thompson, 'Christianity and the Northern Barbarians', in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (1963), 77.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 77–8.

<sup>127</sup> *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila* (1966), 55–63, 103–10, cited as Thompson.

<sup>128</sup> These communities are principally known through the missionaries they fostered, e.g. Ulfila (Thompson, xiii–xvii) and Patrick (*Conf.* 1, ed. Hanson, op. cit. (n. 22), 70). Cf. also Prosper, *de voc. omn. gent.* 2. 33, *PL* 51. 717, and Rufinus, *HE* 1. 10, *PL* 21. 480–2.

<sup>129</sup> Thompson, 62.

We begin with patronage. As we noted earlier, late Roman law required the *redemptus ab hostibus* to pay his redemption price. In lieu of this, the *redemptor* was permitted to extract labour services from the *redemptus* until the price was paid.<sup>130</sup> Repayment was required by barbarian law codes as well.<sup>131</sup> In the correspondence of Gregory the Great we read of a *clericus* in Sipontum, redeemed from captivity, who owed 12 *solidi* to his *redemptor*. Gregory ordered the man's bishop to provide it.<sup>132</sup>

From the emphasis which he placed on the ransom of captives as a form of *elemosyna*, we may be fairly certain that Caesarius did not require repayment. His reputation for personal generosity, in fact, attracted numerous captives to Arles seeking redemption (*Vita* I. 44; 2. 8, 23-4). Gregory the Great shared this view, as we see in a letter of 598 in which he reassured two *clerici* that neither they nor their heirs would be required to repay a ransom of eleven pounds of silver paid out by bishop Fabius on behalf of them and their parents.<sup>133</sup>

But the very fact that Gregory had to write such a letter shows that a burden of repayment was at least sometimes thought to rest on the shoulders of those redeemed by a bishop. There is, indeed, some Gallic evidence which shows captives in relations of economic dependence with the bishops who redeemed them, suggesting that they were repaying their ransom in the form of labour services. We can see this situation in, for example, the will of Bishop Remigius of Reims (d. 533),<sup>134</sup> a Gallic council of 583,<sup>135</sup> and the will of Bishop Bertrand of Le Mans (d. 615).<sup>136</sup> Though the exact form of dependence in these cases is poorly defined (a problem with late Roman dependence in general<sup>137</sup>), it

<sup>130</sup> *CJ* 8. 50. 20.

<sup>131</sup> *Lex Burgundionum, Liber Constitutionum*, 56. 2 in *MGH (Leges Nationum Germanicarum)* II. 1, ed. L. R. de Salis, 91: 'si ingenuus rogans redemptus fuerit, pretium suum emptori reddat.'

<sup>132</sup> *Ep.* 4. 17.

<sup>133</sup> Gregory, *Ep.* 9. 52: 'ratio aequitatis exposcit ut, quod studio pietatis impensum est, ad redemptorum onus vel afflictionem non debeat pertinere.'

<sup>134</sup> The evidence comes from the shorter will of Remigius, *MGH (SRM)* III, 336-40, the probable authenticity of which was demonstrated by A. H. M. Jones, P. Grierson, and J. A. Crook in 'The Authenticity of the "Testamentum S. Remigii"', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 35 (1957), 356-73.

In this document Remigius makes provisions for three individuals whom he has freed from captivity: '[Alarici] uxorem, quam redemi et manu misi, commendo ingenuam defendam' (*MGH (SRM)* III, 338) and 'Sunnoveifam, quam captivam redemi, bonis parentibus natam et eius filium Leuberredum' (*ibid.*, 339). The fact that he manumits these (originally free) *redempti*, along with those who are obviously slaves, shows that redeemed captives stood in fairly close relations of dependence with him. It is possible that they were, in some way, repaying the price of their ransom, although this makes Remigius' advice to the young Clovis, that he use his wealth for the redemption of captives, sound somewhat hollow (*Epist. Austr.* 2, *MGH (Ep.)* III, 113). It is perhaps just as likely that these Germans were unwilling to return to their homes after their redemption, and chose to become dependents of the bishop for their own protection. Their testamentary manumission would, on this interpretation, be merely a legal fiction which entitled them to claim a Roman status which they could only have had as *liberti*.

<sup>135</sup> In canon 2 of the Council of Lyon, *CCL* 148A, 232, provisions were made for bishops to issue letters of recommendation (*epistolae commendationis*) to those captives 'in servitio pontificum consistentibus.' In addition to clearly recognizable signatures, the letters were to include explicit dates (*dies datarum*), the prices established (*precia constituta*), and the needs of the captives (*necessitates captivorum*) whom the bishops were sending out with letters.

It is clear that these letters were intended to confirm the legitimacy of captives seeking the price of their redemption. (An illuminating and amusing incident of fraud is found in *Vita* 2. 23-4.) What is not clear is the legal status of the captives. Verlinden believed that they had already been redeemed by a bishop and were now seeking funds with which to repay him (C. Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale* I (1955), 687). Lesne thought that they had not yet been redeemed, and were furnished with letters of recommendation to enable them to beg for ransom among wealthier congregations (E. Lesne, *Histoire de la Propriété ecclésiastique en France* I (1910), 365-7).

The fact that they are described as *captivi* throughout the canon, and are never referred to as *redempti*, slightly reinforces Lesne's position, but the phrase in *servitio pontificum* clearly describes some kind of dependence. The most we can say is that the bishops have somehow become temporarily responsible for these *captivi*, perhaps by redeeming them, perhaps by guaranteeing their ransom. None the less, the captives were still ultimately responsible for their own redemption, surely the ordinary state of affairs. We glimpse its consequences in several desperate vignettes in the *Vita Caesarii*, where captives or their near relations wandered from one Christian town to the next begging for the price of their ransom (*Vita* I. 44; 2. 8, 23-4).

<sup>136</sup> J. M. Pardessus, *Diplomata, Chartae, Epistolae, Leges, Aliaque Instrumenta ad res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia* I (1843), no. 230. There are two references in the will to the manumission of individuals whom the bishop had redeemed from captivity. The first involves *redempti* working at the villa Murocincto, who were to remain free while their fellow labourers were to be willed to the bishop's nephew and grand nephew: '[quos] ego de captivitate redemi, ipsi liberi perseverent', p. 204. The second reference involves labourers on the villa Boalcha: 'illi vero, quos de captivitate redemi, et ante ingenui fuerunt, et modo pro pretio servire videntur, tam viri quam mulieres de villa Boalcha omnes a servitio relaxentur', p. 214. The expression *pro pretio servire* shows unambiguously that these *redempti* were repaying the bishop with their service as labourers.

<sup>137</sup> M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (1980), 123-6.

appears certain that captives redeemed by a bishop often became dependents of one kind or another. In some cases, close ties of economic dependence must have been formed, the nature and extent of which we cannot now recover. In other cases, however, where the captives were explicitly freed by an act of *elemosyna*, the ties which resulted were more likely to resemble those of *clientela*. By rendering so great a *beneficium*, the bishop often became a patron of the *redemptus*, and could expect certain non-economic, but none the less tangible *officia* in return.

These ties of economic or moral dependence were obviously most significant when the *redempti* continued to live in the same locale as their redeemers, either because they had originally lived there or because they chose not to return to their original homes. It was clearly the latter—as outsiders—who were most likely to contract ties of economic dependence with their redeemers and to abandon their previous way of life, including their previous religious practices, in the process of adapting to a Roman way of life. It is in this category that we would place any Franks who remained in Arles after their redemption.

But the evidence hardly permits us to be certain that any Franks remained in Arles after 508. The only Frank mentioned as such in the *Vita* (besides Childebert who took the city in 536) appears as a seeker of relics after the death of Caesarius (*Vita* 2. 42). There was, however, a second way in which Caesarius' charity might have effected the conversion of some of the Franks. Indeed, Caesarius himself often reminded his congregation that charity, in the form of 'good example' provided an effective means of proselytism.

Yet, may our way of life be so just that Jews and pagans, according to the Gospel: 'Seeing our good works may glorify our Father who is in heaven' (Mt. 5: 16). Then, may they desire to take refuge in our faith and imitate the example of our life (*Serm.* 104. 6).

The story of Pachomius' conversion provides a convincing parallel.<sup>138</sup> Conscripted into Maximin's army in 312<sup>139</sup> at the age of twenty, Pachomius, a pagan, encountered his first Christians at an army camp in Luxor, where they were helping to feed and comfort the dislocated draftees. When he asked about this, he was told that Christians exercised charity toward strangers, and that they bore the name of Christ, son of the one God who created heaven and earth and man himself. Pachomius then prayed to the creator of heaven and earth, and promised that if the Christian god released him from the oppression of military service, he would serve him for the rest of his life. Upon his release from the army the next year, he returned to the Thebaid and was baptized.

It is certainly conceivable that, for more than one of these Frankish prisoners, release from captivity provided the occasion for the fulfilment of a similar vow. This is all the more likely if Clovis and his retinue were already known to be dedicated to the Christian god.<sup>140</sup>

Unfortunately, the evidence does not permit us to choose between these two explanations for conversion, the one political and the other religious. But the very plausibility of both explanations underscores the fact that we are dealing here with a society in which the actions of bishops or converts could make sense in terms of several interrelated religious, social or political value systems at the same time.

#### VIII. CONCLUSIONS

*Redemptio captivorum* was therefore one means by which a powerful bishop could exercise patronage and, at the same time, fulfil basic religious ideals, thus acquiring honour both for his generosity and for his sanctity. These motivations were not in conflict.

<sup>138</sup> *Vita Prima*, 4–5 in F. Halkin (ed.), *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae* (1932), 3–4.

<sup>139</sup> D. J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (1966), 7.

<sup>140</sup> A conversion due, as Gregory of Tours relates, to a prayer made in the desperate moments of combat and

answered in victory, *HF* 2. 30. One cannot of course rule out the influence of Constantine's conversion on Gregory's account. But its plausibility is not thereby affected.

In a fundamentally patronal society, where the exchange of gifts both symbolized status relationships and fulfilled political and economic needs, there were rarely conferrals of *beneficia* which did not also have a social meaning.<sup>141</sup> In articulating a Christian ideology of charity, bishops may have changed the focus of ancient gift giving—introducing, for instance, a new motivation (love of God), and directing gifts to a different circle of recipients (the poor)<sup>142</sup>—but they could not and did not try to reduce the social significance of the practice or limit the effects which it produced. In fact, as I have shown, bishops were quite prepared to accept the consequences of this system of gift giving, for it allowed them in many instances to emerge as the uncontested patrons of their cities, and to reap numerous political benefits as a result. The degree to which Caesarius was able to translate his numerous acts of charity into political achievements is an indication both of his own political acumen and of the continuation of a social and cultural system in which acts of charity were thought to require a political response, taking the form, at the very least, of expressions of loyalty.

But acts of charity like the ransoming of captives had another set of meanings outside the sphere of patronage. Not only did they function as concrete tokens of much-needed protection or as symbols of existing social relationships; they also represented public enactments of fundamental Christian virtues: generosity, hospitality, or love of enemies. By practising these virtues, bishops like Caesarius could act to reinforce the value system which they constantly professed. At the same time, they could work to acquire that reputation for sanctity which, as they themselves taught, resulted from the performance of extraordinary deeds of goodness. Thus, within a shared system of values, episcopal acts of charity could be used to demonstrate both the validity of central Christian virtues and the rewards for their performance. It was, then, by actions meaningful in religious and political terms, such as the ransoming of captives, as well as by their professions of ideology, that late Roman bishops were able to create within their cities the bonds of loyalty and patterns of continuity which made them formidable protectors of those cities in times of discord and discontinuity, and which remain among the more remarkable features of those troubled times.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (1982), 22–39.

<sup>142</sup> H. Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum* (1939), 438–9, 483–4; E. Patla-

gean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4<sup>e</sup>–7<sup>e</sup> siècles* (1977), 188–9.

<sup>143</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 51), 15–16.