Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Canon Law

VOLUME 8

A SACRED KINGDOM

Bishops and the Rise of Frankish Kingship, 300–850

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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS

Washington, D.C.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is an examination of the interaction between bishops and kings from the Gallic period of the fourth century to the breakup of the Carolingian Empire in about 850. We will see that kings and bishops powerfully influenced one another, and that the character of kingship was transformed in the course of the creation of the Carolingian Empire by the ideas, law, and ritual activities of bishops. Indeed, the building of the Empire and the sense of religious mission that inspired it can, to a significant extent, be attributed to the royal adoption of an episcopal platform. Royal power became ritualized and Christianized. Episcopal power was transformed at the same time, because by virtue of living in the Empire they had helped create, bishops could act on a cross-cultural, even Church-wide level. The language with which Carolingian bishops explained their role continued to draw upon the conciliar tradition of Gallic and Merovingian bishops. Ancient legal principles were used to regulate and explain the cultural role of bishops in a world that was seemingly new. To some extent this reflected the persistence of ancient social patterns, which extended from antiquity into the Carolingian era, like veins in marble.

Royal power and ideas about kingship did not result directly from the rise of royal clans or ethnic federations. Christian kingship, which became dominant in Western Europe by the end of the sixth century, must also be understood in the context of clerical and aristocratic culture and the traditions of Roman culture and ecclesiastical law that bishops possessed. Pierre Clastres has shown that power, especially in small-scale societies, may be located in social registers quite unlike the categories conceived of by Max Weber that have dominated scholar-

ly understanding for so long: according to Weber, power is only in the hands of those who have a monopoly over the use of force.[1] A related view is that power "in its pure state" has only to do with command and obedience.[2] This type of power (pure force) certainly existed in the Frankish world, but was not the basis of its political systems, which were consensual and communal. In the subtle view of Søren Kierkegaard:

> Only a wretched and mundane conception of the dialectic of power holds that it increases in proportion to the ability to compel and to make dependent. No, Socrates knew better, that the art of power lies precisely in making free. But in the relation between one human being and another this can never be done.[3]

For Kierkegaard, only Christ offered such freedom. The type of power that will most concern us here instead is the ability to govern—that is, the power to shape and guide a society rather than coerce it *(Regierung* rather than *Herrschaft*).[4] Cultural, political, and social power were shared by kings and bishops.

In reflecting on the development of kingship among the Franks, it is not my aim to trace the "rise of the secular sovereign state" in Europe, a theme that lies outside the period and scope of the present book. The role of bishops and their relation to kings and kingship—the ambitious "thin state" created by kings and bishops at the head of Frankish society, the powerful and elaborate political myths that supported this structure (aggressive political doctrines phrased as religious law, innovations in royal and episcopal symbology)—all represent the full flowering of what, at the outset of this book, we see only as a gathering of resources—something commencing—*ab illo aevo*.[5]

Sometime between 496 and 508, the Frankish king Clovis, after years of disinclination, at long last agreed to be baptized by Remigius, the founder of the

1. Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: 1989), 7–13. Also essential to this question is J.-W. Lapierre, *Essai sur le fondement du pouvoir politique* (Aix-en-Provence: 1968).

2. Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power: The Natural History of Its Growth,* trans. J. F. Huntington (1948; repr., Indianapolis: 1993), 108.

3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: A Selection,* trans. Alastair Hannay (London: 1996), 235.

4. The distinction was common in political discussions after World War II: "Regierung ist nicht Herrschaft," Dolf Sternberger, "Der alte Streit um den Ursprung der Herrschaft," in his *Schriften,* vol. 3, *Herrschaft und Vereinbarung* (Frankfurt am Main: 1980), 11–27, esp. this quote, 20; see also Sternberger, "Regierung, Regime, Obrigkeit," in GGB 5:361–421; and "Herrschaft," in GGB 3:1–102.

5. "Ab illo aevo, quo pereunte Romano imperio novae gentes terras, quas Urbs dominio suo subegerat, occupant novaque regna instaurant (saec. V–VIII)"; Carlos da Silva-Tarouca, *Fontes historiae ecclesiasticae medii aevi in usum scholarum selegit* (Rome: 1930), vii.

bishopric of Rheims.[6] Gregory of Tours tells that the public squares were hung with colored cloth and the churches with white cloth:

The baptistery was put in order, suffused with balm of Gilead; flaming candles gleamed, and the entire temple of the baptistery was filled with scent. God granted his grace to those present to such an extent that they believed themselves swept up into Paradise by the fragrance.[7]

As a gateway to heaven, the sacred precincts of a church were capable of transporting those who entered them away from the ordinary world.

The threshold of a church was the boundary between two levels of being, the terrestrial and the celestial, the one level subject to the power of kings, and the other to the power of bishops. To stand on the threshold of a church was, thus, to stand at the border of two worlds and of two ways of understanding power. Those excommunicated by their bishop were said to be "kept back from the threshold."[8] Royal law stopped at this threshold, so the first thought of anyone threatened by the king was to seek asylum by clinging to the altar of a church, something that was respected by the Frankish kings surprisingly often.[9] From the day Clovis crossed the doorstep of the church in Rheims, his relationship to the bishops of his kingdom was also transported to a new level. He had tacitly acknowledged the centrality of the church in the spiritual landscape of his

6. On the long controversy about this date, see Mark Spencer, "Dating the Baptism of Clovis, 1886–1993," EME 3 (1994): 97–116. Spencer settled on a date between 496 and 499. Ian Wood argued for a date of 508 in "Gregory of Tours and Clovis," RBPH 63 (1985): 249–72; and again in Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London: 1994), 48; Rolf Weiss earlier proposed this date in reconstructing Clovis' reign and itinerary: *Chlodwigs Taufe: Reims 508. Versuch einer neuen Chronologie für die Regierungszeit des ersten christlichen Frankenkönigs unter Berücksichtigung der politischen und kirchlich-dogmatischen Probleme seiner Zeit,* Geist und Werk der Zeiten 29 (Bern: 1971). For commemoration of the traditional date in 1996, there was an outpouring of literature on the baptism of Clovis: Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier, "La christianisation de la Gaule (VIe–VIIe siècles): Esquisse d'un bilan et orientation bibliographique," MScR 53 (1996): 5–12 [*Christianisation en Gaule de Clovis à Charlemagne*]. In this event can be found, we are still told, the origins of French catholicity, French royalty, and even the French nation: Michel Sot, "Le baptême de Clovis et l'entrée des Francs en romanité," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* (1996: fasc. 1): 64–75. For the ensuing study, the problematic that frames this event is instead the transformation of Frankish kingship and the eventual rise of a Carolingian state.

7. "Baptistirium conponitur, balsama difunduntur, micant flagrantes odorem cerei, totumque templum baptistirii divino respergetur ab odore, talemque ibi gratiam adstantibus Deus tribuit, ut aestimarent se paradisi odoribus collocari" (2.31); Gregory of Tours, *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis: Libri historiarum X,* ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH: SRM 1.1:77.

8. "A communionis consortio uel ab ecclesiae liminibus arceatur," Council of Paris (573), CCSL 148A: 213. Full citations of councils and royal law are provided in the bibliography.

9. The episcopal power to grant asylum was developed in late antiquity: Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: 2005), 253–60.

kingdom. Indeed, the bishop was aware of the event's significance, for as Clovis walked toward the baptismal pool, Remigius addressed the king with a reference to the ancient origins of the Franks, saying "Meekly bow down your head, Sigamber."[10] Remigius (d. 532) believed he was quelling the destructive and primitive nature of a royal clan by drawing it across the threshold of his world.

Any reader of Gregory's *Histories* will know, however, that the early Merovingians were not so easily quelled. His pages are lurid with tales of royal violence, which he found difficult to assign a Christian meaning. The role of the early Merovingian kings was centered in their ability to rally a warband. The spear thus remained the central instrument and symbol *(indicium)* of royal power. King Gunthram resorted to this symbol in handing his kingdom over to Childebert. The spear, and other war-gear, long remained the chief ensigns of kingship.[11] The history of the Frankish kingdoms, as told by Gregory, was nevertheless dominated by king and bishop as if by two main characters. In the period dating from the baptism of Clovis to 850, there was a broad transformation of the Frankish kingdoms, from a small, warlike Roman ally to the larger-scale, "complex" society of the Carolingian Empire.[12] These changes were not merely the expansion of the political and military sphere of a few powerful families, but involved, at a deeper level, the development of a highly political state making grandiose claims.[13] Along the way, kingship was considerably changed. Royal power was Christianized as it gained new dimensions of meaning and undertook new tasks.[14] At the heart of this transformation, it will be argued, stood the figure of the bishop.

10. "Mitis depone colla, Sigamber" (2.31), Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum,* 77; this traditional interpretation of the phrase was confirmed by Pascale: Bourgain and Martin Heinzelmann, "Courbe-toi, fier Sicambre, adore ce que tu a brûlé: Á propos de Grégoire de Tours, Hist. II: 31," *Bibliothèque de l'École de Chartes* 154 (1996): 591–606.

11. "Post haec rex Gunthchramnus, data in manu regis Childeberthi hasta, ait: 'Hoc est indicium, quod tibi omne regnum meum tradedi'" (7.33); Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum,* 353. On the spear and helmet, see Margarete Weidemann, *Kulturgeschichte der Merowingerzeit nach den Werken Gregors von Tours,* Römisch-germanisches Zentralmuseum, Monographien 3; 2 vols. (Bonn: 1982), 1:20–23.

12. This is a different issue than assessing the "barbaric" vs. Roman character of the early Franks: Stéphane Lebecq, "Variations sur l'image du Barbare vu par ses contemporains et par les historiens: le cas Childeric," in *Le Barbare, le primitif, le sauvage: neuf études,* edited by Jacques Boulogne and Jacques Six, Études Inter-ethniques New Series 10 (Villetaneuse: 1995), 89–108.

13. Karl Ferdinand Werner has pointed to the revolutionary changes in Frankish society as it sought to absorb and adapt to Gallo-roman culture: "Die 'Franken': Staat oder Volk?" in *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht bei Zülpich" (496/97),* edited by Dieter Geuenich, 95–101, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 19 (Berlin: 1998).

14. Mary Garrison, "The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages,* edited by Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, 114–61 (Cambridge: 2000); see 135.

The bishops described by Gregory were evidently conscious of their solidarity as actors in the arena of history. They wrote letters to one another, met in council together, faced problems together, and prayed for one another. But their most important actions were always carried out in relation to the king, a dynamic filled with tension and often with violence. For the succeeding four centuries, the character and meaning of royal power was one of the most pressing and troubling problems faced by bishops. As they came to play a role at the highest levels of power, bishops sought to articulate the norms of political life and to announce changes in the political order.

Bishops inherited an enduring aristocratic role going back to late antiquity, often governing cities and controlling extensive properties and the people who lived on them. The premier exercise of their authority was in legislation enacted at councils. This law was wide in scope and expressive not only of moral ideals, but also of a fully elaborated social thought. I have therefore reached back into late antiquity to underscore the development of the episcopate as an elite, possessing collegiality and a legal tradition radically unlike that native to Frankish society.

While the bishop emerged as the key figure in the cult, other men and women competed with or complemented his role. Recent research on late antique Christianity often reveals how bishops formed one node within extensive religious networks linking late Roman aristocrats with one another and with their local communities: ascetical holy men and women, as well as pious aristocrats. Complex relations existed between aristocratic families and the Christian public, with many opportunities for "both tension and overlap."[15] Well into the fourth century, wealthy secular landowners provided for their own religious needs by building chapels and mausolea on their estates, establishing religious connections that included the nearby bishop, but enveloping him in a larger religious world.[16] But the urban resources of episcopal authority allowed bishops to predominate on many levels. Bishops exercised important functions of mediation and judgement, rulership and leadership, for the largest Christian communities, and were strengthened in these activities by the relative stability and safety offered by city walls.

Late antique bishops adopted the transcendent values of asceticism as their own and bound these ideals to their evolving religious and governmental poten-

15. Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: 2008), 4.

16. Bowes, *Private Worship,* 50.

cy at the head of the church. They produced a body of legislation that bolstered every bishop's authority by giving him a connection to a legal tradition spanning centuries. This legislation had a very different tone than royal legislation: bishops believed that they were guided to the truth of law by the Holy Spirit. Bishops gained a mastery of all law, both secular and religious. We can even point to an early learned common law, Roman and ecclesiastical.

Alongside the legal resources wielded by bishops went a host of unique qualities. As ritual experts, bishops occupied the center of their society, in part by absorbing and dominating pre-Christian cultic practices and ancient holy places.[17] By means of their liturgical expertise, bishops had a hand in all major aspects of life: agricultural and human fertility, the birth, maturity, marriage, and death of individuals. Through the liturgy, bishops established the periodization and the very meaning of time. As the preeminent religious authorities, bishops were able to discern God's judgment in battles or judicial ordeals. Through the ritual of baptism, bishops believed they were engaged in the establishment of Christian society, a society it was their role to govern. They therefore talked about their own power in terms full of royal imagery. Many of the hieratic images so famously used to describe the Carolingian kings ("David," "Melchizidek," "Priest and King") bishops also applied to themselves, even before they applied them to kings. This was because episcopal power was held to derive from the apostles and thence from Christ, the Priest and King.

I have emphasized the social thought of these bishops and its impact upon Frankish kingship, believing that to understand the meaning of social forms is a central task of the historian. Bishops claimed that there were two governing "persons" in their society: king and bishop. As a result of this perception, they gradually elaborated their notion of kingship, until at a certain point (751), they deployed their intellectual resources on behalf of a new royal family that offered to advance their social ideals. With the Carolingians came a far-reaching combination of royal and episcopal interests. This combination, I believe, helps explain the pious, violent ideology of the Carolingian Empire, its ability to mobilize the most powerful men in Frankish society, and its rapid expansion.

The renaissance of intellectual culture in the Carolingian period has often attracted the attention of intellectual historians. I have focused on one aspect of this change, as a triumphant episcopate forged consensus in its own ranks and across society, in a reform of church and kingdom. At the same time, Frank-

17. Alain Dierkens, "The Evidence of Archaeology," in *The Pagan Middle Ages,* edited by Ludo J. R. Milis, translated by Tanis Guest, 39–64 (Woodbridge: 1998).

ish kings increasingly turned to episcopal ideals, redirecting and newly understanding their own social and historical role. The view has become traditional that Charlemagne dominated and directed Frankish culture, himself eager for knowledge and wishing to promote learning in his kingdom. However, the programs that Charlemagne undertook may also be seen as a royal adoption of episcopal ideals, supported by an alliance of the king with his powerful bishops. This is a story of mutuality rather than of royal domination. I have sought to illustrate this by examining Frankish royal law and its transformation in the Carolingian period, when so much royal fabric seemed to absorb an episcopal dye. The rapid expansion of the Empire by means of what I call "missionary warfare" is only a more striking example of this same logic.

Memory, Law, and Power

The episcopal council was a forum in which bishops made law. It was a unique institution in early Frankish society. Law, in all the Germanic societies that inherited the lands of the Roman Empire, was not something made, but remembered and collected. The historical memory of bishops had a very different shape from that of kings and their nobles. Bishops maintained copies of lawbooks in which secular, Roman, and conciliar law from centuries past was recorded, and they were aware that bishops of the past had exercised a legislative power that they themselves possessed in the present.

Social changes in the period 450–850 were accompanied by a continuous reinterpretation of the past. Concepts of royal and episcopal power were situated in the collective memory of a restricted group. Episcopal social thought was framed by the historical memory of bishops, with its horizon extending beyond the early church, and before Rome, to long-ago Hebrew institutions, where ancient concepts of sacred rulership could be confirmed from sacred Scripture.[18] The contrast between episcopal memory and royal memory was not merely that between literacy and orality, but also reflected their relative status. The collective memory of religious groups, as Halbwachs maintained, "either obliges others to adapt themselves to its dominant representations, or it systematically ignores them."[19] This commanding position emerged, however, from the consistent, col-

18. On the concept and symbology of sacral kingship in ancient Israel, see Geo Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im Alten Testament und im Judentum,* Franz Delitzsch-Vorlesungen 1952 (Stuttgart: 1955), 44–58; a deeper time horizon is suggested by Jan Assmann, *Herrschaft und Heil: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa* (Munich: 2000), 250–64; see also Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions,* trans. John McHugh (Grand Rapids: 1997), 91–114.

19. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: 1992), 92.

legal operation of an elite making a claim to govern society and capable of acting with power. In conciliar legislation, bishops laid down their vision of society and their own role in it, amassing an institutional memory of legal and literary form spanning centuries.

Assemblies of bishops met frequently in the fourth and fifth centuries throughout the Christian Mediterranean. Often convoked by the Roman emperors to combat heresy, bishops could make use of the imperial post, usually restricted to the highest imperial functionaries, to travel to a council, as when more than 300 bishops traveled to the Council of Nicaea in 325.[20] By the fourth century, these assemblies had an official character because they frequently gathered in response to an imperial summons, and because the emperor or other lay officials might attend to intervene in those councils considered important for imperial policy. Imperial policy had meanwhile become implicated in the governance of the church.[21]

With Constantine's conversion in 312, bishops quickly found themselves serving as officials of the Roman Empire, in part because of the many public duties thrust into their hands, but also because their religious duties had come to impinge on the interests of the state. It has often been said that bishops were drawn almost exclusively from senatorial families, although in the fourth century this was still extremely rare. In the fifth century the rank of bishop became an alternative culmination of the ancient senatorial *cursus honorum*—the church offered very attractive paths to honor and achievement.[22] At the same time, the structure of ecclesiastical offices and the pathway of preferment were standardized in the course of the fourth century: "Ritualized" is the term used by Alexandre Faivre.[23] In imperial law, bishops were now reckoned near the top of the social pyramid, ranking as "illustrious" *(inlustri).* Bishops thus represented the conti-

20. Werner Eck, "Der Einfluss der konstantinischen Wende auf die Auswahl der Bischöfe im 4. u. 5. Jahrhundert," *Chiron* 8 (1978): 561–85; see 561; Jean Gaudemet, *Les sources du droit de l'Église du IIe au VIIe siècle* (Paris: 1985), 51–56; Rapp, *Holy Bishops,* 237.

21. As, for example, the Council of Arles, which gathered "piissimi Imperatoris voluntate adducti," Council of Arles (314), CCSL 148:4. Still central to this question is Norman H. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church,* 2nd ed., The Raleigh Lecture on History, 1929 (London: 1972), 12–14, and the notes at 74–79.

22. On the senatorial background of bishops, see Eck, "Der Einfluss der konstantinischen," 562–63. This assumption has been refuted for the fourth century: Frank D. Gilliard, "Senatorial Bishops in the Fourth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 153–75. See Martin Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien: Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte,* Beihefte der Francia 5 (Munich: 1976), 101–11.

23. Alexandre Faivre, *Ordonner la fraternité: Pouvoir d'innover et retour à l'ordre dans l'Église ancienne* (Paris: 1992), 128–30.

nuity of an "aristocratic ethos" and a "traditional form of late Roman political behavior."[24] Their insignia and garments were accordingly drawn from the official symbology of the Roman Empire.[25] Even the social and legal terminology bishops used in their councils bore the mark of their high standing. Bishops incorporated the sonorous diction of emperors in their law, thereby expressing the high importance they attached to their governing role in society.[26] Bishops always viewed imperial and royal power from across the hedgerow of their own highly defined power and functionality.

The Figure of the Bishop

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ecclesiastical historians examined the history of church structures to show the extent to which the preservation of orthodoxy in the Latin church had been grounded in institutional continuity.[27] Louis Duchesne was a unique case, given that he was also willing to apply critical methods to the documents of ecclesiastical history. In line with a tradition reaching back to Jean Mabillon, Duchesne brought to bear on church history all the acumen of modern historiography. For this he was attacked as a liberal, "modernist" priest.[28] Despite Duchesne's awareness of the political and social situations in which bishops found themselves, they remained for him essentially religious figures.[29]

Following the Second World War, the study of aristocratic families in the late antique and medieval world, combined with an interest in social history, led scholars away from the history of institutions and ideas toward the meticulous description of localized and personalized social pressures. German scholarship, in

24. Arnaldo Marcone, "Late Roman Social Relations," in *Cambridge Ancient History,* vol. 13, *The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425,* edited by Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: 1998), 338–70; see 349.

25. Theodor Klauser, *Der Ursprung der bischöflichen Insignien und Ehrenrechte* (Krefeld: 1949); Repr. in *Gesammelte Arbeiten zur Liturgiegeschichte, Kirchengeschichte und christlichen Archäologie,* edited by Ernst Dassmann, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum,* Ergänzungsband 3 (Münster: 1974), 195–211; esp. 198–99 and 203; see also Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Naissance de la noblesse: L'essor des élites politiques en Europe* (Paris: 1998), 349–54.

26. Michael H. Hoeflich, "The Concept of Utilitas Populi in Early Ecclesiastical Law and Government," ZSRG.K 67 (1981): 36–74.

27. See for example, Germain de Montauzan, "Saint-Eucher, évêque de Lyon et l'école de Lérins," *Bulletin historique du diocèse de Lyon* 2 (1923): 81–96; "A Rome, tour à tour prise et reprise, amoindrie, annihilée presque, le pape demeure inamovible, ne perdant rien de son autorité. Dans les diverses circonscriptions ecclésiastiques, le clergé reste obéissant à ses évêques," 81–82.

28. Especially in regard to his work on the *Liber Pontificalis;* Brigitte Waché, *Monseigneur Louis Duchesne (1843–1922): Historien de l'Église, directeur de l'École française de Rome* (Rome: 1992), 230–40.

29. See Louis Duchesne's last book: *L'Église au VIème siècle* (Paris: 1925), 486–550.

particular, came to rely on historical prosopography.[30] In recent decades, scholars have taken the high social standing of bishops to mean that the episcopate was gradually absorbed by the upper levels of society: according to this view, bishops in the Gallic church were essentially senators, while later on, bishops in the Merovingian church were merely Frankish or Burgundian nobles dressed in clerical garb. The importance of the episcopal office made it an object of social competition, and hence the preserve of the most important families of Gaul. Bishops could be seen as nobles who had taken a slightly different path to power, whose activities were directed primarily by reference to family politics or faction.[31]

This trend has led some scholars to reinterpret the role of Gallo-Roman and Frankish bishops almost exclusively in terms of such pressures.[32] The more detailed such descriptions become, the more convincingly can social action be portrayed in terms of self-interest and familial loyalty. Many interpretations of elite groups in the period 450–850 assume that self-interest governs the actions of individuals—that private interest is the secret truth of institutions. In such a perspective, bishops such as Audoin of Rouen (641–684) can be stripped of nearly all other significance, given the perception that "Audoin was not important because he was a bishop, he was bishop because he was important."[33] But this opposition is a false one. Self-interest is only one facet of any complex system of social exchange, as anthropologists have long understood.[34]

30. Most notably, Karl Friederich Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (Tübingen: 1948); and Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft.* For a discussion of this debate, and a suggestion of a new direction, which I favor, see Jean Heuclin, "Le clergé mérovingien et carolingien: Instrument de christianisation?" MScR 53 (1996): 27–42; see 31–34.

31. An overview of the literature may be found in Arnold Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter: Die abenländische Christenheit von 400 bis 900* (Stuttgart: 1990), 23–52.

32. Friedrich Prinz often argued that Gallo-Roman bishops were essentially equivalent to the senatorial class, and that this aristocratic episcopacy was gradually taken over by the Frankish nobility in the Merovingian era; see Prinz, "Aristocracy and Christianity in Merovingian Gaul: An Essay," in *Gesellschaft—Kultur—Literatur: Rezeption und Originalität im wachsen einer europäischen Literatur und Geistigkeit. Beiträge Luitpold Wallach gewidmet,* edited by Karl Bosl, 153–65, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11 (Stuttgart: 1975); also Prinz, "Die bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert," HZ 217 (1973): 1–35. For Jean Durliat, these powers were instead delegated by kings to bishops: Durliat, "Les attributions civiles des évêques mérovingiens: l'exemple de Didier, évêque de Cahors (630–655)," *Annales du Midi* 91 (1979): 237–54, esp. 239–40. See an assessment of this debate in Bernhard Jussen, "Über 'Bischofsherrschaften' und die Prozeduren politische-sozialer Umordnung in Gallien zwischen 'Antike' und 'Mittelalter,'" HZ 260 (1995): 673–718.

33. Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640–720* (Manchester: 1996), 148.

34. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques,* trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (New York: 1975), 244–46. Compare the reductionism of Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus,* trans. Peter Collier (Stanford: 1984), 78–79. Historians tend to assume a simple link between

Hilary of Arles, for example, was born to an aristocratic family, yet believed that such a "dignity of earthly origin" was something to be despised. The path of Christian wisdom led away from one's family—only in Christ could one come to the "height of nobility."[35] Such traditional statements (*topoi*) were frequently repeated because they had become central to a new language of power and the development of a stridently Christian elite.

Sidonius Apollinaris, a fifth-century aristocrat whose family connections, education, and abilities allowed him to attain the highest civil offices, nevertheless became bishop of Clermont in the end.[36] In doing so, he by no means retreated from civic duties. Bishops in southern Gaul were representatives of their cities, both before the emperor and before the kings of barbarian tribes.[37] They were mediators for and judges of their cities. The scope of episcopal authority was such that it was a natural outlet for the skills of organization and leadership fostered in aristocratic families.[38] Sidonius claimed that he was deeply unworthy of the office: although other souls were put in his care, his own sins needed the purification of tears.[39] In becoming the bishop of Clermont, this Gallic noble made a choice that took him from his beloved estates, forcing him to undertake the close life of the city, to care for the poor, and to lead the cultic observances of his community.[40] Marcone emphasizes the perceived starkness of this choice: "the freedom of the desert is for the monk, the hell of the city for the bishop."[41] The choice oriented him in the complex task of understanding the region's new Gothic kingdom.[42] In the case of Bishop Sidonius, self-interest falls short of providing a satisfactory explanation of a life.

Much recent scholarly work has highlighted the role of bishops and their po-

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blood and interest (thinking of this as a value-neutral approach). Lineages, however, can bear all sorts of meaning: E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan,* the Frazer Lecture 1948 (Cambridge: 1948), 17.

35. "Nec addere nobis quicquam ad dignitatem terrenae originis decus nisi contemptu suo potest" (4.1), Hilary of Arles, *Hilaire d'Arles: Vie de Saint Honorat,* ed. Marie-Denise Valentin, SC 235 (Paris: 1977), 76.

36. Still vital is C. E. Stevens, *Sidonius Apollinaris and His Age* (Oxford: 1933) and, more recently, Jill Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407–485* (Oxford: 1994).

37. André Loyen, "Le rôle de saint Aignan dans la défense d'Orléans," *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1969): 64–74.

38. Stevens, *Sidonius,* 130.

39. "Quem longis adhuc abluenda fletibus conscientia premat" (Epistolae 7:6.3), Sidonius Apollinaris, *Sidoine Apollinaire: Poèmes, Lettres,* ed. André Loyen, 3 vols. (Paris: 1960–1970), 3:44.

40. Philip Rousseau, "In Search of Sidonius the Bishop," *Historia* 25 (1976): 356–77; Françoise Prévot, "Sidoine Apollinaire et l'Auvergne," RHEF 79, no. 203 (1993): 243–59.

41. Marcone, "Late Roman Social Relations," 349.

42. Suzanne Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique: Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du Ve au VIIe siècle* (Paris: 1984), 185–206.

sition in late antiquity and afterward. The brilliant work of Peter Brown set in motion a body of research addressing the "economy of the sacred" in late antiquity that has provided the framework for studies of bishops. As Conrad Leyser, Philip Rousseau, and others have shown in many parallel studies, bishops like Sidonius developed a new model of power that gave bishops a central position of moral and political authority. Brown, in *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* and other works, placed the bishops in the context of the transformation of urban society and urban elites, revealing the dynamic interplay of "the Christian sacred" in this complex set of phenomena: extending from aristocratic patronage of building projects to protection of the poor and dealings with the centers of power and municipal authority.[43] The magisterial work of Alexandre Faivre, already mentioned, offers guidance to ecclesiastical self-perceptions and institutional self-crafting.[44] More recently, in a valuable treatise on the episcopate of late antiquity, Claudia Rapp highlights the figure of the bishop as it evolved in late Roman society, tracing developments that placed bishops beside other holy men and the emperor himself as figures of power and authority. Rapp's goal is to present the late antique episcopate, not as the outcome of a straightforward institutional development, but as the emergence of the bishop as a "leadership figure."[45] She illustrates the development of episcopal ascetic authority and the accumulation of social and religious prestige in a sweeping view of the late Roman scene. The ascetic distance of the bishop from ordinary life was part of a claim to control property and to govern the church.[46] Ultimately, as I will demonstrate, this new language of power served in the effort to Christianize power and to transform the nature of kingship.

These approaches are now complemented by studies reaching into the early medieval world. In a major reinterpretation of the early medieval episcopate, Steffen Patzold shows that the potent role of bishops in the Carolingian period was an episode in the long-enduring prominence of the episcopacy in the social order of Europe, from the fifth through the tenth century and beyond.[47] Like Claudia Rapp,

43. Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: 1992).

44. Faivre, *Ordonner la fraternité.*

45. Rapp, *Holy Bishops,* 3, 22; Rapp provides a useful survey of recent literature: 6–22.

46. See, for example, Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire,* Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures (Hannover: 2002); Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: 2000); and Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: 1978).

47. Steffen Patzold, *Episcopus: Wissen über Bischöfe im Frankenreich des späten 8. bis frühen 10. Jahrhunderts,* Mittelalter-Forschungen 25 (Ostfildern: 2008), 17–18.

Patzold highlights the bishop as a "figure" within the context of his contemporary social imagination. In Patzold's view, episcopal power should be understood as resting upon social agreements, expressed in rituals, signs, and symbols, in the framework of social knowledge (*Wissen*). Social power is ever intimately tied to the social imagination. In order to understand the construction of social power, therefore, historians should reexamine and deepen the "history of images" and the "history of perceptions."[48] Social power, according to Patzold, cannot be studied only in terms of a simple history of events, as an appendage of prosopography, or as part of the traditional narrative thematics of the rise of the later Ottonian *Reichskirche.* Rather, in an approach ranging over historiography, theology, and legal and ritual texts, Patzold examines the social power of bishops as arising from social agreement and shared perceptions. Patterns of interpretation and imagination of social reality interpose between economic, social, and political relations, and thus affect our understanding of the sources. Awareness and perceptions about society have an effect on social reality, and are thus part of historical actuality.[49] A similar approach is followed here, with the goal of describing the origins and character of episcopal social power and its effect on the imagination and institutions of Merovingian and Carolingian political and ecclesiastical culture.

To portray the role of bishops in the formation of societies they helped to govern, it is necessary to temper recent research by a certain "return to Duchesne," that is, by a renewed appreciation of the religious function of the bishop. Claudia Rapp's insistence that the bishop should be seen as a holy man offers a valuable approach that puts the historian in tune with the sources.[50] The aristocratic origin of most bishops was not seen by contemporaries as an impediment to episcopal office, but rather as an appropriate background for someone who would rule a community, in addition to governing its religious cult. The bishop had become the *homme clé* of the late Roman Empire, and retained this position in the rise of Visigothic, Burgundian, and Frankish societies.[51]

48. Cf. Patzold's discussion of *Vorstellungsgeschichte* and *Wahrnehmungsgeschichte,* which imply the study of rituals and other symbolic expressions: Patzold, *Episcopus,* 45.

49. Patzold, *Episcopus,* 37–38; Patzold follows the social analysis of Barry Barnes, *The Nature of Power* (Cambridge: 1988), for whom power is essentially an aspect of the distribution of social knowledge; Patzold, 43.

50. Compare her discussion of the bishop as combining the impress of the Holy Spirit with the accumulated prestige of ascetic diligence, and the ideal of the desert: Rapp, *Holy Bishops,* 56 and 105–06.

51. *Homme clé:* Alain Dierkens, "Christianisme et 'paganisme' dans la Gaule septentrionale aux Ve et VIe siècles," in *Franken und Alemannen,* 457. Frequently cited essay collections are cited by short title. Full information is provided in the bibliography.

Bishops, moreover, did not act as functional equivalents of senators or nobles, but as a distinctive, cohesive group, possessing a self-conscious and unifying identity. Unlike senators, bishops ordained clerics, gave sermons, and baptized people. They made blessings of salt and water. They adopted a special hairstyle symbolically connecting them to the asceticism of the desert and a moral code that brought them into contact with the poor and that gave them a unique position from which to make demands on their kings (and on the poor). The religious side of episcopal activity will also occupy us.

The episcopal council was crucial to the development and durability of this identity. Although the men who attended the councils of Gaul possessed important duties and powers that could be paired with those of lay officials, bishops argued that a unique status bound them together and created a rift between themselves and the rest of society. They claimed to be members of an "order" and called one another brothers.[52] The Council of Arles in 314, for instance, made elevated claims about the ultimate source of its spiritual authority. Despite the importance of the imperial summons that caused bishops to set sail across the Mediterranean or cross the Pyrenees, the emperor had no influence over the unshakable certainty that ultimately arose from every council. That sense of verity came instead from the belief that whenever bishops were gathered in council, the Holy Spirit was present among them, accompanied by angels.[53]

Political Augustinianism

The records of Gallic and Merovingian councils preserve the activities of an articulate group that struggled to maintain its character and continuity, despite social and political change in the societies in which it functioned. The laws advanced in episcopal councils reveal how bishops viewed themselves as a group whose duty was to govern the church, and how they squared this duty with the unavoidable and often unpredictable pressure of royal power. The perception bishops had of their role in society hinged in large measure on how they viewed the past, going back to the Apostolic Church, and the manner in which their own authority flowed out of this past. Bishops therefore thought of their power

52. The clergy as a whole formed an "ecclesiastical order" *(ordo ecclesiasticus)* distinct from the "people" *(plebs).* For example: "Ex eo quod contra ecclesiasticum ordinem baptizare uidentur" *Canones suppositii ad finem canonum concilii arelatensis* CCSL 148:25; "ordinem clericatus" Council of Orange (441), CCSL 148:82. The rise of this distinction is described by Faivre, *Ordonner la fraternité,* 192–93. But bishops were a separate order of men: *(noster ordo):* "Etiam in nostri ordinis" Council of Vaison-la-Romaine (442), CCSL 148:99.

53. "Praesente Spiritu sancto et angelis eiusdem," Council of Arles (314), CCSL 148:4–5.

as having a nontemporal, structural basis (they were an *ordo*), as well as a historical basis (as the heirs and guardians of "apostolic doctrine)."[54]

The unfolding of this dual perspective will occupy us in what follows. The Roman Empire disappeared and was replaced by the (traditionally so-called) barbarian kingdoms, vying for dominance. Bishops laid out new tasks for men of power. Thus the problem of kingship became one of the most persistent concerns of bishops, because the "kings" of the peoples who swept over their ancient domains could hardly be ignored, yet were violent, often heretical, and generally difficult to deal with. All the time, however, bishops continued to insist upon their own unique role in society: "the episcopal order, both first and perfect in all things," according to a late-sixth-/early-seventh-century treatise on church offices, "is provided by the omnipotence of the Lord and Christ."[55]

Episcopal law is sometimes thought of as nothing more than a "normative source," with only a tenuous relation to social reality. It is avoided by some scholars who are in search of an "objective representation" of what actually happened in the past.[56] Indeed, episcopal and royal law should be used with caution. The legal historian Alan Watson reminds us that law should not be used uncritically as a description of society. One obvious reason is the fact that law is often borrowed, as we find so often in this period.[57] Law was accepted from other cultures, and was also "borrowed," so to speak, from the past. This book seeks to highlight instead other aspects of law: its function as holy writ, and especially its reflection of ideals and cultural aspirations. The study of law has a place in a history of early medieval concepts. In the setting of epicopal councils, bishops were able to address the powerful in society, drawing on centuries of legal tradition and the social doctrines contained therein.

In studying the law and other writings of bishops, one should maintain a certain mental reserve. For example, the bishops often talked about their concern for the poor, going so far as to rest one corner of their governmental claims, and

54. "Euangelica praecepta et apostolicam doctrinam," Council of Tours (461), CCSL 148:143.

55. "Septimus autem in his despositionibus episcopalis ordo est, qui et primus et perfectus in cunctis est, qui omnipotentia Domini et Christi donatur," pseudo-Jerome, *Ps.-Hieronymi De septem ordinibus ecclesiae,* ed. P. Athanasius Walter Kalff, Inaugural-Dissertation . . . Bayerischen Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg (1935), 57. The question of dating was reexamined in Roger E. Reynolds, "The Pseudo-Hieronymian 'De septem ordinibus ecclesiae': Notes on its Origins, Abridgments, and Use in Early Medieval Canonical Collections," RB 80 (1970): 238–52.

56. Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge: 2000), 47–48.

57. Alan Watson, "Uses and Abuses of Law in History," in his *Ancient Law and Modern Understanding: At the Edges*, 1–19 (Athens, Ga.: 1998).

their control of ecclesiastical property, on their care for the weak and displaced. Yet the poor were kept at the very margins of biological existence by bishops as much as by other lords.[58] From our perspective bishops did not sustain the destitute, and were part of a power structure that oppressed them.[59] No doubt it has always been true that "no one helps the poor like the poor themselves."[60]

Episcopal social ideals had a profound impact on Frankish society, especially at its uppermost reaches, toward which these ideals were primarily directed. Most historians now agree that the old assumption of sacral kingship among the Germanic peoples, rooted in a distant pre-invasion antiquity, must finally be abandoned.[61] Nevertheless, I have reexamined the notion of sacral kingship, given that, under the impact of episcopal social thought, kings and the Frankish kingdom itself were thought of in religious terms. However, I argue that special qualities associated with the Carolingian Empire, especially its sacropolitical concepts, did not derive from an ancient pagan past, but were profoundly Christian, and specifically episcopal from the beginning. An important source of this new social ideal was the model of the Visigothic kingdom and the effort of bishops there to sacralize royal power.[62]

Along the way I have reexamined the notion, arising from a misreading of the bishop of Hippo, that Carolingian politics should be thought of as "political Augustinianism."[63] Augustine offered little support for the notion that the Carolingian political order was divinely ordained, believing as he did that political states arose, not as part of a special divine plan, but from a *libido dominandi* or lust for domination.[64] In contrast, Carolingian bishops were hopeful, at times even ecstatic, about the political order they helped to create. They were prepared to find the immanence of God in a rightly ordered political structure. Major discussions of social reality did not hinge on Augustine, but rather on Isidore of Seville, pseudo-Cyprian, liturgical texts, and other sources. "Mis-

58. As forcefully stated by Paul Fouracre, "Merovingian History and Hagiography," *Past and Present* 127 (1990): 3–38.

59. Such a revision has been offered by Marie-Luise Windemuth, *Das Hospital als Träger der Armenfürsorge im Mittelalter,* Sudhoffs Archiv 36 (Stuttgart: 1995).

60. In the words of the novelist José Saramago; Saramago, *The History of the Siege of Lisbon,* trans. Giovanni Pontiero (New York: 1989), 122–23.

61. A summary of recent work is Walter Goffart, "Two Notes on Germanic Antiquity Today," *Traditio* 50 (1995): 9–30.

62. Michael Zimmermann, "Les sacres des rois wisigoths," in *Clovis* 2:9–28.

63. The phrase is from the classic statement of this theme: H.-X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique: Essai sur la formation des théories politiques du moyen-âge,* L'Église et l'etat au moyen âge 2 (Paris: 1934).

64. Amos Funkenstein, *Heilsplan und natürliche Entwicklung: Formen der Gegenwartsbestimmung im Geschichtsdenken des hohen Mittelalters* (Munich: 1965), 47.

reading Augustine" was a secondary movement of men who raised a new sacro-political ideal, yet were thoroughly committed to Augustine's saintly stature and theology. The religious purpose of the Carolingian Empire was assumed to be compatible with Augustine. Anything else would have been awful!

Culture and Political Concepts

Bishops incorporated both new and old texts in a tradition they thought of as ancient and authoritative. These texts were freely adopted from Spain, Ireland, and England, and from within Gallic traditions. The history of ideas has long centered on *catenae* of thinkers whose importance extended from their own time into some future time, in a branching, organic model of influences, organized by genre (philosophy, theology, historiography, or political thought). With its focus on reception, the history of ideas has been progressive and has tended to conceptualize influence as a type of causality. It overlooks the importance of thinkers whose influence was limited in time, but who were crucial to the development of characteristic social structures. For example, the poets who wrote the early Frankish liturgies may be ranked alongside more celebrated thinkers, although their works were abandoned and lacked influence later in the Middle Ages. I have sought to describe the intellectual resources of the period without reference to their later resonance, and thereby to address tradition-building as a creative and conscious act, in which ideals about the past were generated with one eye on the present. I believe that this approach allows a reexamination of the relation of ideology to social forms.[65] I have therefore sought to extend the traditional range of intellectual history to examine clothing, hairstyles, and landscapes, as well as law and liturgy.

I attempt to trace the role of bishops in the rise of the Carolingian Empire: an entity that can be described as a newly ambitious, piously minded, yet aggressive state (a "thin state") at the upper reaches of Frankish society. The *state* is an unfortunately ambiguous term. If by the term "state" we mean a self-perpetuating structure of coercive and administrative power, distributing its effects downward, then the term is inappropriate for the entire period of Western European history between the fall of Rome and the rise of powerful kingdoms and city-states of the fourteenth century. Such a concept would certainly not be applicable to the Carolingian Empire. Nevertheless, many historians now argue for the persistence of a Roman-style state into the Merovingian period.[66] Oth-

65. See the resumé of recent debate on history and ideology in Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: 1995), 1–19.

66. Innes, *State and Society,* 141. Ian Wood argues that the Merovingian kingdom was a "late Roman state"; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms,* 60–63; Paul Fouracre puts the "state" in inverted

ers, like Barbara Rosenwein, wish to retain the term, but reinterpret it in light of early medieval conditions. She argues for the existence of a state in this period, but one that does not fulfill the traditional assumptions about statehood: "that it is based on bureaucracy; that it thrives on centralization; and that it attempts to amass and conserve its material resources."[67] Instead, Merovingian power was massively decentralized, and Carolingian power only somewhat less so. Over this period, kings gave away huge quantities of land and wealth, even removing important lands from their own jurisdiction by grants of immunity. The purposes of such states were radically different than the purposes of modern states and modern notions of power as an end in itself. Rosenwein's view on this point is similar to my own.

What I have endeavored to describe is the creation of a piously motivated political culture in the Carolingian era that was thought of as a "sacred kingdom." The totality of the social order was conceptualized as the church: contemporaries did not identify their social and political order as a state. The old doctrine that "two persons" governed society was the basis for a thorough reinterpretation and redirection of the social order. By the time of Louis the Pious it was accepted that both *personae* were responsible for the well-being and salvation of mankind.[68] This symbolic structure had legal and institutional dimensions, and was able to mobilize and join together the most powerful men in Frankish society. Functioning only sporadically as a directive coercive force, the kingdom—in this conceptualization—was motivated by doctrines about righteous power, many of which can be traced to episcopal social thought. It is a mistake to explain away the sources by interpreting them only in light of secular power. The records of councils are a significant source for understanding changes in the nature and meaning of Merovingian and Carolingian power. As Janet Nelson has pointed out, episcopal law reflects the viewpoint of highly placed men, often involved at the highest levels of politics. The councils reflect the pressures of their historical moment and respond to social change.[69]

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commas; Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France,* 56; see also Innes, *State and Society,* 3–7. Alan Harding reviews a spectrum of meanings for state, and the medieval *status regni,* cautioning against a teleological search for the 'origins of the modern state' in medieval sources: Alan Harding, *Medieval Law and the Foundations of the State* (Oxford: 2002), 1–9.

67. Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: 1999), 14.

68. Patzold, *Episcopus,* 543, 521.

69. Janet L. Nelson, "The Intellectual in Politics: Context, Content and Authorship in the Capitulary of Coulaines, November 843," in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson,* edited by Lesley Smith and Benedicta Ward, 1–14; see 2–5 (London: 1992).

These social doctrines and concepts were persuasive, and can be shown to have affected Frankish institutions and the actions of powerful men. The ideal of a sacred kingdom involved kings, bishops, and nobles in a conversation about the nature and proper uses of power. Cultural existence is also a basic reality of the historical world. People do not merely act and behave, but also think and believe, reflecting on what they do and what is done to them. Marc Bloch rightly said that "human actions are essentially very delicate phenomena . . . which elude mathematical measurement."

Throughout this book, I have given special prominence to a major body of evidence—episcopal law, which has been used only in a limited way by historians. Records of councils are one of the most continuous source-types for the period, reflecting the social ideals, patterns of governance, and political myths of an important group of men. Nevertheless, church councils are sometimes not even mentioned in résumés of historical sources for the period.[70] Others have looked to episcopal councils to illuminate historical problems of narrative and chronology, but especially the history of religious doctrine. I have studied this body of legislation with the goal of explaining the rise of a social and intellectual elite whose influence in political and social affairs was pervasive. Political culture was shaped by political myths, and special attention is given to the formulation, tenor, and content of political myth.[71] In doing so, I have taken seriously the bishops' vision of the past—an *effective past* that formed the backdrop against which they formed their concepts and undertook action, and that is very different to our own vision of the past.

This book seeks to add another level of analysis to the important work that has been done in recent decades on the rise of the Carolingian Empire, by considering again the interrelation of political concepts and the course of history. Rather than attempt a renewal of traditional history of political thought, I have focused instead on the conceptualization of social forms: concepts of kingship, power, priesthood, and kingdom, and how these concepts were thought to be distilled in symbols and institutions. The history of these concepts is pursued in the context of cultural and social history.[72] It is a mistake to believe that a

70. See for example, Roger Collins, *Charlemagne* (Toronto: 1998), 1–15, although he does in fact discuss councils elsewhere in the text; see also Kathy Lynne Roper Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties in Early Medieval Bavaria: A View of Socio-Political Interaction, 680–900* (Aldershot: 1999).

71. Maria Pétychaki-Henze, "Les fonctions sociales des mythes politiques," in *Mythe et politique: Actes du Colloque de Liège 14–16 septembre 1989,* edited by François Jouan and André Motte, 249–59 (Liège: 1990).

72. The history of concepts *(Begriffsgeschichte)* is usually aligned with social history: Reinhart

society is understood when its mechanisms have been described. In his ethnography of the village of Ballymenone, "a small place of green hills, white homes, and brown bog," Henry Glassie aptly remarked that "Culture is not a problem with a solution. There are no conclusions. Studying people involves refining understanding, not achieving final proof."[73]

The sweep of time addressed here, from the conversion of Constantine to the coronation of Charles the Bald, encompasses the epochal rise of Christian kingship in Europe and the role that bishops played in this development. The topic evokes tremendous depths of time. The story told here commends the perception of Fustel de Coulanges about the pace and nature of political and social change:

> Political institutions are never established by the will of one man; even the will of an entire people does not suffice to create them. The human facts which engender them are not such that the caprice of one generation can change them. . . . It takes many generations to found a political regime, and many more generations to build one. From this arises also the necessity for the historian to extend his research over a vast space of time.[74]

Koselleck, "Social History and *Begriffsgeschichte*," in *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, and Frank Van Vree, 23–35 (Amsterdam: 1998).

73. Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* (Bloomington: 1982), 13.

74. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Gaule Romaine*, completed from the author's manuscript by Camille Jullian (Paris: 1994), 42.