

A NEW SYSTEM OF POWER: THE FRANKS AND THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POST-ROMAN
GAUL

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Investiture Controversy has been discussed and analyzed at great length by an enormous number of scholars over the decades and most argue that the proximate cause of this dispute is the friction between the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, and the reformist pope, Gregory VII in the eleventh century. This thesis argues that the foundations for the arguments used in the eleventh century were laid in sixth through ninth century post-Roman Gaul and these foundational elements made the Investiture Controversy inevitable.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The Franks developed a new system of power in post-Roman Gaul with the help of the Catholic Church. From the sixth through the ninth century three Frankish kings played crucial roles in the development of this new system, and in the process of implementing their shared system of governance, they established the necessary conditions for the Church to make the arguments of the Investiture Controversy centuries before the actual conflict.

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I will chart the growth of this new system of power and argue that as this new system is expanded and refined, the foundations for all the Church's successful arguments of the Investiture Controversy are laid. An analysis of primary sources focusing on the evolving use of Christian ritual and the changing content and tone of communications by Frankish kings with their bishops will clearly show this. In order for the events of the eleventh century to take place, three conditions had to have been met prior to the conflict. The first condition is inclusion. The Romans had gone to great lengths to remove religion from their laws and bureaucracy. Someone was going to have to allow religion back into the functions of state. The second condition is expansion. It is not enough to have religion and religious-minded people included in the functions of state. They have to be in sufficient numbers to create a tipping point in which

the following of a single religious doctrine by the participants in the functions of state is overwhelmingly the case. The final condition is assimilation. These doctrinally consistent participants in the functioning of state are not only included in carrying out the dictates of the king, but are also now included in state decisions at the highest levels.

Achieve these three conditions and conflicts like the Investiture Controversy are destined to happen, but failing to achieve all three makes a conflict like the Investiture Controversy considerably less likely to happen. If a strict separation of church and state is vigilantly maintained, there can be no conflict between the two. They just operate in their own spheres of influence. If a state contains a sufficient number of different religious doctrines, it is difficult for any one doctrine to gain a large enough population density to conflict with the state. And finally, even if a mono-doctrinal population participates in the functioning of the state, but is not allowed a voice in the highest decisions of that state, conflict between the church and state is less likely. I argue that the Franks and the Catholic Church purposefully created the conditions above, and the result was a unique, new system of power sharing that would eventually explode into the Investiture Controversy.

Three Frankish kings are examined because of their particular contributions to this argument. Clovis committed himself and subsequent Frankish kings to the Catholic Church and thus changed the king's previous position as outside the Church to firmly within the Church. Charlemagne's elevation to Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III and his extensive use of the *missi domenic* greatly expanded the inclusion of churchmen into the highest echelons of Frankish power and created a highly educated, politically savvy and cohesive corps of bishops and priests that had not existed before. And, Louis the Pious' repeated use of the rituals of confession and penance allowed the bishops the previously unheard of power to judge a king unfit and thus assimilated the bishops into the making or unmaking of an emperor. I argue that the inclusion of the king into the bishops' realm, the expansion of the role of bishops into the

circles of Frankish power, and the assimilation of the bishops into the affirmation of the king were the three pillars upon which the Investiture Controversy rested.

1.2 The Franks

Change and discontinuity in the political arena were the prevailing themes during the late antique period in Western Europe. The Roman Empire was a shadow of its former glory and numerous tribes of Europe, both federates and foes of Rome, seized the opportunity to claim lands once governed by Rome. The Franks, a loose confederation of tribes from the area broadly defined as surrounding the Rhine, were one such group that filled the vacuum left by Rome's withdrawal. They were by no means the only group to migrate west during this period, but they were the most successful and longest lasting of them in political terms. Others such as the Goths, Vandals, and Lombards are now only known to history as groups that played their scenes and have exited the stage, but the Franks have remained on Europe's stage until the present day and thus are the most successful of the post-classical tribes in Europe. To know their history is to know the history of a great deal of the land mass we today call Europe. Their growth and maturation built the foundations of Europe as we know it today.

As the Franks grew from a collection of tribes into a kingdom, a few select people began to concentrate power into their hands. Both secular and ecclesiastical leaders exercised control over the populations inhabiting their regions, and as each group's power grew in scope, disagreements inevitably arose over the jurisdiction and supremacy of authority that each claimed. This thesis will examine the evolving relationship between the rulers of the nascent kingdom of Francia and the growing Roman Catholic Church from the sixth to the ninth century. How did they work together to create a new system of power? How did they merge Frankish customs into the remnants of the Roman Empire in Gaul and forge a new system that still retained both Frankish and Roman ideals?

It will examine three rulers in particular to chart the changes in the evolution of this new system of power and their unique places in the early foundations of the Investiture Controversy

– Clovis, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious. Over the course of these three Frankish kings' reigns, the concept of power as the sole authority evolves into two distinct ideal -the physical power that is conceptualized in the body of the king with his control and exercise of secular justice over the lands and people in his realm, and the power vested in the church by virtue of moral authority over the same lands. These two distinct concepts of power formed not as opposing ideals, but instead as mutually re-enforcing ideals. They grew together and became a mutually re-enforcing system creating a wholly new system of power that was greater in scope than either could have accomplished on their own. And, in these monumental advances, the seeds of future conflict are sown over the supremacy of secular or ecclesiastical power.

Current scholarship is rethinking the contributions of the early middle ages to the formation of the basic structures that would eventually become the states of Europe. The foundations for the medieval kingdoms of the High Middle Ages are established, and the boundaries of authority and jurisdiction shared by the king and church are defined. This thesis will explore the dynamics of the secular and ecclesiastical relationship as the basis of the Investiture Controversy is established and the extraordinary growth that both experienced as a result in the Early Middle Ages. Perhaps an understanding of the genesis of this relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastical can give some context to issues current to today's reader concerning the struggles for control over state power still being contested in myriad countries across the globe.

Since Constantine legitimized the Catholic Church in the fourth century, kings and tribal rulers had taken a variety of stances with respect to the Church. Some were hostile, others indifferent. Many also embraced the faith, but not until the Franks ascendancy was the infrastructure of the Church used as part of the apparatus of command and control for a kingdom. The Merovingian king Clovis started the Frankish symbiotic relationship with the Catholic Church, albeit a rather one-sided relationship. Continuing in this style, Charlemagne's

grandfather, Charles Martel, claimed full authority over the Church and seized lands and revenues of the Church as he saw fit once he exercised supreme power in the Frankish lands.¹

But the dynamic shifted over time, as evidenced by Charlemagne's father, Pippin III, who developed an especially close relationship with the Church, as Rosamond McKitterick posits:

Pippin [III] thus entered into a political and secular relationship with the papacy, whose political advantages and disadvantages could hardly have been seen from anything other than a short-term perspective at the time. But Pippin's interest in Rome was also strongly religious. He formed a spiritual relationship with the Pope and with St. Peter, and it is this special bond which consequently becomes such a crucial part of Carolingian political ideology. The Carolingian king was above all a Christian king. He acted as a Christian monarch was to act thereafter in the name of a higher, divine, authority.²

This theory of a Christian king becomes a turning point in the ideological growth of this system of power. Both camps embraced it, but with wildly different conceptual interpretations of its implications.

By the time Charlemagne ascended to the throne, the church in his lands was considered part of the Frankish patrimony for him to do with as he wished, and the lands of St. Peter in Italy were within his grasp too if he had chosen to seize them. But Charlemagne did not seize the church lands and Einhard states that “[n]ot only did he protect and defend the church of St. Peter, but with his own money he even embellished and enriched it above all other churches.”³ Charlemagne even went as far as having a complete inventory compiled of the

¹ Stewart C. Easton and Helene Wieruszowski, *The Era of Charlemagne: Frankish State and Society* (Krieger Publishing, 1979), 26.

² Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 149-150.

³ Paul Edward Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard* (University of Toronto Press, 2009), 33.

Holy destinations in the Levant – perhaps in anticipation of extending his care to these sites also.⁴

Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son and heir, continued the very close association with the Church that his predecessors established, and he has been perceived as weak and subservient to churchmen. A closer examination will show that he was no more beholden to the Church than his father, and that the perception of weakness is more a reflection of the dynastic trouble he experienced with his overly-ambitious sons than a comment on his secular or ecclesiastical control. He maintained strict control over his nobles and the Church, but he just could not control his sons and their desire for power, and for this paternal fault Louis has been unfairly painted with a broad brush as soft in all arenas.

An examination of these three kings and their relationships with the church during their respective periods will also show the foundations of the relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical in what will eventually become the Holy Roman Empire. In the eleventh century, the relationship is forever changed in a struggle between the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor over the investment of church officials. This *investiture controversy* changed the political landscape of a fledgling Europe and set the standard for church and state relationships until a modern Europe emerged from the Enlightenment. Knowledge of the actors and issues surrounding the controversy is crucial to understanding the growth of both institutions from the ashes of a Roman world into the Middle Ages. Both began as codependent, nascent bodies, but emerged as robust and independent organizations.

1.3 Historiography

The historiography of all the ideas touched upon in this thesis is vast. A great many historians have contributed to the background narrative upon which my arguments sit. I will therefore discuss the contributions of a few that made significant contributions to my thesis

⁴ Michael McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land: Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church between Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Dumbarton Oaks, 2011).

through their work on political theory, Church history, the Investiture Controversy, or a specialization in Frankish topics.

In the field of political theory, I relied heavily on Ernst Kantorowicz. His foundational 1957 book, *The Kings Two Bodies* and its theory of the twined person of the king lies at the heart of the Investiture Controversy. Does the king, as a divine persona, not stand above the Church? Although the book is dry and filled with complicated legal and ecclesiastical theory, once understood, it clarifies the divine nature of the king and his dual existence.

On a less theoretical and more practical level, Joseph R. Strayer and R.W. Southern – two roughly contemporary scholars on opposite sides of the Atlantic – offered works that delve into the formation of states in the Middle Ages. Strayer's *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* is another foundational book on the theory of the state. It is short and to the point in its assertions perhaps a result of Strayer's side-job as a CIA analyst, and focuses mainly on the differences between the formation of the English and the French states. He notes that the Gregorian reforms and the Church's victory in the Investiture Controversy actually hastened the formation of a functional secular government.

Southern is most famous for his classic, *The Making of the Middle Ages*. It is a clear, concise book that has been a standard starting point for students of the Middle Ages. In it he recognized and legitimized the study of the twelfth-century romantic movement and opened up a new line of investigation into the Middle Ages. Similar to Strayer's *Origins*, it is a short work, and today can seem a bit dated. Although less acclaimed, I found *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* to be more useful in my research. In this work, Southern notes that "the popes practical supremacy over his emperor came to an end at the moment of coronation", and, that in the coronation of Charlemagne, Leo III created a rival not a subject.⁵ A student of Southern's, Geoffrey Barraclough, produced *The Medieval Papacy* in 1968. And while this work did little to improve on his former master's theories, his fluency in German

⁵ R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Penguin, 1970), pg 99.

allowed him access to sources unavailable to Southern. Thus his work has a deeper understanding of the Germanic body of scholarship available at the time.

The study of the papacy and papal government was dominated by Walter Ullmann's two books released in the early nineteen seventies, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* and *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the ideological relation of clerical to lay power*. An Austrian-trained lawyer, Ullmann was displaced by World War Two to the United Kingdom where he lived out his days writing and teaching. His work was essential to my understanding of the conventional theories behind the growth of the papacy as an institution. His work is clear and concise but lacks any color or dynamism – perhaps to be expected from a continentally-trained lawyer.

Following in Ullmann's research footsteps is Thomas F.X. Noble. He, too, has come to be one of the most influential scholars working in the field of medieval papal history today, but he has also published extensively in topics on the Early Middle Ages and large-scope works on the rise of western civilization. A recent work, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer*, a collection of new translations by him that highlight his gift for textual analysis and translation is quite informative. I used his translation of the Astronomer, along with an older version by Allen Cabaniss, as valuable primary source material on Louis the Pious. His abundant publishing and fine writing make his work quite valuable for anyone researching medieval topics, but his obvious deep personal Catholic convictions tend to show through in his work.

All of the previous works mentioned have been quite conventional with respect to the Investiture Controversy. They look to the decades just prior to the 1075 flashpoint for their explanations of causality. But they are not the only scholarly opinions on the topic. Ute-Renate Blumenthal, in her work, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*, maintains a mostly conventional discussion on the causes of the Investiture Controversy, but opens the door slightly to my idea that the roots of the conflict lie

much earlier than the eleventh century. She recognizes the investiture of proprietary churches in the ninth century as the beginning to Church and State issues to follow.⁶ Maureen Miller also deviates from the traditional narrative of the Investiture Controversy by asserting that the discussion of causality should not be limited to just a Church and State issue, but should include a comprehensive examination of the general societal shift to a more religious population deeply concerned with the Church, saints, and relics.

Of course, any discussion of topics associated with post-Roman Gaul will have to have a solid foundation in the history of the Franks, and the starting point for that is Augustin Thierry's book, *Tales of the Early Franks*. This nineteenth-century work has become as much a part of the history of the Franks as the history that it purports to recount in much the same fashion the Edward Gibbon's, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has. It is a colorful book filled with the fanciful exploits of Merovingian Franks. While the methodology is outdated, it is still a delightful read.

There are a number of general works that focus on Frankish history. Ian Wood's book, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: 450-751*, is an excellent narrative of the early Franks. It covers a lot of ground, so it lacks some of the detail that my research required but was essential for the big picture of Merovingian Gaul. Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding collaborated to produce *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography 640-720*. With respect to style and content, this book is nearly the polar opposite of Wood's work. It is quite detailed and is intended for an academic audience. This dense read is quite informative, but moves at slow pace.

For a broader view of Frankish history, both Edward James and Patrick J. Geary have authored a number of fine books on the subject. James' *The Franks* is a quick over-view of the Franks not designed for specialists, while his *The Origins of France: From Clovis to the*

⁶ Ullmann also mentions this proprietary church issue, but with considerably less emphasis than Blumenthal.

Capetians 500-1000 is a much more academically inclined work. Geary's *Before France & Germany: The Creation & Transformation of the Merovingian World* is a work very similar to James' *Origins*. I would be hard pressed to choose between the two, but the edge would go to *Origins* for better readability. Now Geary's *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* is a work that is on par with Strayer's and Southern's foundational works on European state building. Also a concise work, it eloquently describes his fresh take on this classic question.

For a Carolingian specialist, Rosamond McKitterick is in the highest echelon of scholars on this period. Articulate and extremely prolific, her works are the backbone of current Carolingian scholarship. Like Noble, she has tackled large-scope projects like editing Oxford's *The Early Middle Ages* and also textually based works like *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*. Her work on Charlemagne in *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* is the best of the current biographies I explored and I relied on it heavily for its information and analysis on Charlemagne's life.

Two relatively current works have investigated Louis the Pious and his use of Christian ritual. Courtney M. Booker looks at Louis the Pious and the historiography associated with his reign in *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians*. Mayke de Jong's well-received monograph, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840*, investigates the increasing connection between a Christian king's obligation to God and the use of atonement. It is a current look into the reign of Louis the Pious that reveals a strong, competent ruler who deftly used Christian ritual for his own purposes. This is another dense work written with scholars in mind, but was essential to my chapter on Louis the Pious and his repeated use of confession and atonement. Additionally, Eric J. Goldberg's opening chapters of *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876* were beneficial to my research. This work is the most current scholarship on Louis the German and heavily emphasizes the use of primary source material.

Two journal articles also contributed significant ideas to this thesis. William M. Daly's "Clovis: How Barbarian, How Pagan?" was crucial for its overview of the primary sources associated with Clovis. While Janet Nelson's "The Merovingian church in Carolingian retrospective" afforded me great insight into the Merovingian church.

1.4 Primary Sources

In the opening discussion about the foundations of power, four pre-Frankish sources are referenced. The "Edict of Milan" and "Edict of Theodosius" are fourth century documents that address the emerging Christian religion. The fifth-century "Letter from Pope Gelasius to Emperor Anastasius" and the "Decretals of Celestine I" address doctrinal issues of the emerging church that Ullmann and the other church historians have commented upon.

The primary sources for the Merovingian period are modest when compared to their successors, the Carolingians. There are few contemporary narrative accounts of the era with most of our information coming from Fredegar and Gregory of Tours.⁷ Much of the narrative about the Merovingians was written in the Carolingian period and even later as generations of Franks continued to look back to the seminal Frank, Clovis, and reworked his history to suit contemporary tastes and needs.⁸

The current trend in textually based scholarship has been to focus on the relatively few primary sources extant which include charters, correspondence, legal dictates, and hagiographical *vitae*. Much of this work is "markedly 'regicentric', for even when it is not directly concerned with what was going on in the royal palaces it is usually about people whose lives touched the palace circles" according to Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, and thus

⁷ *Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* and *Liber Historiae Francorum* represent the bulk of narrative work that covers the early Merovingian period.

⁸ Both Clovis and Charlemagne have both been subjected to revisions in their 'histories' as exigent political circumstances have made previous accounts out-of-step with contemporary thinking. See William M. Daly's "Clovis:How Barbaric, How Pagan?" for Clovis, and Robert Morrissey's "Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology" for Charlemagne. Full bibliographic citations are included in scholarly apparatus at end.

lacks an inclusive cultural perspective limiting our ability to make assertions about the effects of Church and State relations on the majority of Franks.⁹ Accordingly, we will limit our discussion to the structural elements of the relationship and leave the cultural implications to other works.

In addition to the previously mentioned narratives by Fredegar and Gregory of Tours, the “*Vitae Genovefae*” was used for its brief discussion of Clovis. Letters to Clovis by bishops Remigius and Avitus are analyzed for both the content and tone of communication between the bishops and Clovis. The “Letter from Clovis to his bishops in Aquitaine” reflects the control that he commands over his bishops, and the Record of the Council of Orleans (511) confirms Clovis’ control through the report of the council bishops.

The extant Carolingian sources are vast and comparatively accessible to the modern student conducting research on the era. In addition to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, Einhard’s biography of Charlemagne, a number of other smaller documents were used. Carloman’s “Decrees of the Synod 742 and 743” relate the king’s position to the Church before Charlemagne. A 748 “Letter from Pope Zacharius to the Frankish Nobles” gives insight into the pope’s thoughts at the time. Charlemagne’s “Admonitio Generalis (789)”, “General Capitulary for the Missi (802)”, and “Divisio Regnorum (806)” all give direct evidence of Charlemagne’s intentions. And, “The Report on Council of 813 by Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims” confirms Charlemagne’s control and expansion of his will into Church matters.

The two contemporary accounts of Louis the Pious’ life by Thegan and Anonymous/The Astronomer were invaluable for the narrative they provided. Louis the Pious’ “*Ordatio Imperii (817)*” and “*Regni Divisio (831)*” outline Louis the Pious’ relationship with his family and kingdom in his own words. With respect to the events of 833, Pope Gregory IV’s “*Epistle to the Bishops of Louis the Pious*” and the “*Report of Compiègne by the bishops of the realm concerning the*

⁹ Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester University Press, 1996), pg 28.

penance of Emperor Louis” both highlight the conflict between Louis and his antagonists with striking clarity.

1.5 Foundations of Ecclesiastical Power

In order to analyze the evolving usage of power starting in the sixth century and how Clovis’ inclusion of himself into the Church was significant, it is necessary to understand the historical basis for the secular and ecclesiastical claims to power. The contributions of Ullmann are significant here in outlining the historical position for Church power. The king claimed power by virtue of his being chosen by God to rule over his people as the *pontifex maximus*, supreme or highest priest, in addition to his role as secular ruler by virtue of his actual physical and political power. The church took the position that it was chosen by God to minister to and guide its flock in spiritual matters which transcended mere secular concerns, and thus it held a superior position by the nature of its spiritual work. Both claims were relatively recent and not ideologically mature by the sixth century, and a debate over the nature of power was evolving around two concepts - *Auctoritas* and *Potestas*.

These two terms loosely translate as moral authority (*auctoritas*) and physical force (*potestas*). To quote Walter Ullmann: “*Auctoritas* is the faculty of shaping things creatively and in a binding manner, whilst *potestas* is the power to execute what *auctoritas* has laid down.”¹⁰ They first appeared in canonical law in a letter to Emperor Anastasius I (491-518) from Pope Gelasius (492-96). Gelasius asserted that “[t]wo there are, august emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority of the priesthood and the royal power.”¹¹ Of course, Gelasius was emphasizing that the sacred authority was the more eminent of the two – explaining that “the burden of the priests is weightier since they will render account at the last judgment even for the souls of the kings themselves.” He continued with “that although by your

¹⁰ Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (London, 1962), 21. Quoted in Figueira, *Plentitude*, 125.

¹¹ Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church & State 1050-1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1964), pp. 13-14. Quoted in Figueira, *Plentitude*, 125.

office you rule over the entire human race, you nevertheless faithfully bow the neck to those who have charge of things divine and you seek from them the means of your salvation.”¹² Innocent III some six centuries later would further solidify this hierarchy when he decreed that the emperor be anointed during his coronation on the right arm “indicating that as the arm obeys the head, so the emperor, and all other secular rulers, should obey the head of the Church, that is, the ecclesiastical hierarchy.”¹³ The popes now had the doctrinal basis to assert supremacy in both secular and ecclesiastical affairs.

The Gelasian doctrine was the prevailing doctrinal claim to supremacy over secular rulers at the beginning of the sixth century, but it was not formulated *ex nihilo*. The church had a long, rich history of doctrinal advances which laid the foundations upon which the Gelasian doctrine was built. As the imperial power faded in the fourth and fifth centuries, a number of different groups filled the vacuum, but none of them had the organizational foundation or communication networks that the empire once enjoyed. These new kingdoms were *ad hoc* affairs in many cases with little to no infrastructure to effectively govern or protect beyond their local concerns.

The Church, on the other hand, still maintained dioceses throughout Spain, Gaul, and even Africa. Additionally, it had innumerable connections to the Byzantine world that positioned the Church as the last great communications network in the west. The Church established its own chancery and through this issued decretals that were disseminated throughout its dioceses, and thus still maintained control over a vast network of ecclesiastical organizations scattered all across these new and old political entities.¹⁴ Communication disseminates knowledge, and knowledge is power in a very real sense. But beyond this manifestation of

¹² Maureen C. Miller, *Power and the Holy in the Age of the Investiture Conflict: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 9.

¹³ Fritz Kern, *Kingship and the Law in the Middle Ages*, trans. S.B. Chrimes (Oxford, 1939; repr. New York, 1970), pg. 55. Quoted in Figueira, *Plentitude*, 125.

¹⁴ Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (Routledge, 2003), 12. Ullmann sets the date of the first decretals at 385.

power through its retained organizational structure, the Church's power was created through legal and doctrinal issuances that went back to the very beginnings of Christianity itself.

The bedrock of the moral authority of the church was established in the gospel of Matthew when Jesus gave to Peter 'the keys to the kingdom of heaven.'¹⁵ Although this doctrine was not commonly discussed until the fourth century writers Cyprian and Tertullian advanced it, it was the basis for the Petrine doctrine that transferred the celestial power of Jesus to the terrestrial church, and specifically to Peter as the bishop of Rome.¹⁶ The Petrine doctrine will again be part of the discussion, but now the emperor Constantine and his "Edict of Milan" need to be added to the discussion.

In 313 the Emperors Constantine I and Licinius changed the path of Christianity with the "Edict of Milan". The edict was a proclamation of religious tolerance throughout the empire assuring the right of all citizens to worship whatever deities they wished. This effectively inserted the church into the sphere of Roman public law as a legal corporate body and thus established that "[t]he Roman church had become a body public – just as the whole Christian body, the universal church, had become a body public – with all attendant legal consequences."¹⁷ Christianity was now officially recognized as a legitimate organization within Roman public law.

Property was returned to the church and the official persecutions were ended, but this recognition came with a price. By including the Church in public law, the emperor now had the legal right to intervene directly in Church matters because, according to the old Roman constitution, the emperor was the *pontifex maximus*, supreme priest, of all public religions.¹⁸ In theory an imperial theocracy was possible, but Geoffrey Barraclough asserts that "[a]lthough the

¹⁵ Matthew 16:19

¹⁶ Ullmann, *Papacy*, 5 & 11. St. Paul also plays a part in the Petrine doctrine, as the bishopric of Rome is connected to two of the apostles, Peter and Paul. This connectivity to two apostles elevated the bishopric of Rome above all other bishoprics and helped establish the primacy of the bishopric of Rome, and thus is the basis for the bishop of Rome's supremacy over other bishops.

¹⁷ Ullmann, *Papacy*, 5.

¹⁸ Ullmann, *Papacy*, 7.

emperor's powers were frequently abused, it would be a mistake to regard the system as specifically directed against the papacy."¹⁹ This had little effect in the short run growth of the Church in the west, as it prospered within its newfound protections, but the long term effects were profound and contributed directly to the great schism between the western and eastern branches of the Church.²⁰ Legislation in 318 exempted the Church from most taxation and established ecclesiastical courts to hear cases that were considered in the church's sphere of responsibility. Thus, the Church was a legally recognized entity with the right to hold its own courts.

From here there were four major doctrinal steps forward that are most germane to this discussion, and Theodosius I issued the first of these four major rulings.²¹ In 380 Theodosius condemned Arianism and established the Roman Church as the official church of the empire and also declared that "any revolt against this religion was heresy and therefore an offence against the empire itself."²² The Roman Church now found itself the lone sanctioned religion in the empire with legal protections that could have only been imagined at the start of the fourth century.

In the fifth century, Celestine I reinforced the idea of papal supremacy through issuance of decretals and by asserting that "the law (as embodied in the papal decretals) should be our master, and we as its recipients must not try to master, but to serve, the law."²³ The pope and his decretals were the only active law in the west during the fifth century barbarian incursions into Rome, and Boniface I declared that the papacy occupied the "apostolic height" and no

¹⁹ Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy*, (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), pg 22.

²⁰ Ullmann, *Papacy*, 7. Ullmann directly attributes the "drama that was to unfold itself in the subsequent millennium was very largely due to this constitutional legal framework of the Constantinean settlement."

²¹ There are far too many small advances in the power exercised by the Church to examine every step forward as that is an enormous subject and the subject of a work entirely of its own.

²² Ullmann, *Papacy*, 9.

²³ Ullmann, *Papacy*, 16.

appeals were legally allowed of the popes' declarations.²⁴ In the absence of effective secular power, the Church assumed *de facto* control over both the secular and ecclesiastical issues.

Leo I made the last great leap forward in the establishment of papal power. During this period a new Latin translation of the Bible was created by Rufinus of Aquileja and it was to have an enormous impact on the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew.²⁵ Rufinus translated the Greek version into Latin utilizing Roman legal terminology. Ullmann commented on the change that this translation affected as follows: "In brief, the Latin translation of this Greek document crystallized attention on the ideological and juristic wealth of the Matthew passage. As a result it became one of the axiomatic tenets of the medieval papacy."²⁶ Leo was clever and postulated through the use of Roman inheritance laws that St. Peter and all his successors were legally connected back directly to Jesus as the original donor of their rights. This allowed Leo to disconnect the pope from the papacy. All subsequent popes were therefore acting legally as St. Peter, and Leo thus immunized the papacy from challenges to individual popes' authority.

This was enormously beneficial as many popes during this period were not always paragons of virtue or ecclesiastical thought. Popes were men and thus subject to the foibles of men, but the papacy as an ecclesiastical office transcended any challenge that was mounted against it because of the actions of individual popes. This ecclesiastical theory frustrated secular authorities that were now obliged to bow to the wishes of the papacy even if the pope himself was worthy of little legal respect. The pope was now established as an ecclesiastical authority to whom no challenge was permitted and the foundations of the Gelasian doctrine were laid, but the kings who ruled over the lands ministered to by the Church were not idle during this period either.

²⁴ Ibid, 18.

²⁵ Ibid, 13.

²⁶ Ibid, 15.

1.4 Foundations of Frankish Kingship

The origins of Frankish kingship are not entirely clear and were most certainly an amalgamation of a number of different traditions. The work of James and Kantorowicz certainly are the backbone of information for the scope and description of Frankish kingship. The Franks were Germanic tribes that moved into Gaul with its existing Gallo-Roman aristocracy and structure. They could have overthrown the existing structures, but they did not. They instead worked to assimilate their Frankish system of governance with the existing power structures in place in Gaul. It is ironic that the very method of administrative assimilation the Romans used to incorporate their territorial conquests was in turn used to assimilate the remnants of the Roman Empire by the Franks.

Edward James asserts that this was one of the great strengths of the Franks and the one move that they made that allowed them to succeed while other contemporaneous tribes met with considerably less success.²⁷ The Franks had been living beside the Roman province of Gaul for many generations which effectively familiarized the Franks with the Roman structure of administration. The Roman system was one that they knew, and more importantly, it was firmly established within the Gallo-Roman world. Noel Lazaro Delgado hypothesized that not only was the adoption of Gallo-Roman practices advantageous, but disregarding them was “counter-productive.”²⁸

They effectively mixed the best parts of their Germanic tribal leadership, mainly a meritocracy of strength forged through success in battle, with the existing Gallo-Roman legal and bureaucratic frameworks that had been in place for centuries. This hybrid of the two

²⁷ Edward James, *The Franks* (Blackwell, 1995). This is part of James’ general thesis concerning the unique nature of the Frankish peoples.

²⁸ Noel Lazaro Delgado, *Testamentum Remigii: A Study of the Juridical Acta in the Testamentum of Bishop Remigius* (M.A. Thesis) (Minneapolis, 2001), pg 15. “Elimination or replacement of the Roman administration of Belgica Secunda by Clovis would have been counter-productive, for this was the system with which Clovis and his people were familiar. Moreover, it would have caused unnecessary burden to those he wished to govern, especially the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, whose support was necessary for Clovis to maintain control within the region.”

systems resulted in a king with strong connections to his country nobility who had at their disposal an elaborate infrastructure to see his will done. In the sixth century, the possibilities of this new system were just that, possibilities, and many vestiges of the older systems had to be reconciled with the newer system, but the seeds for a Frankish claim to be the Roman Empire reborn were sown.

Of their distant origins, the Franks told a tale of themselves as descendants from the ancient lineage of Troy's King Priam. The stories a culture tells about itself are often quite telling. This fanciful connection to the classical past was a common cultural construct of the era, and while the historical truth of the connection is unprovable, it does indicate that there still was knowledge of the classical past and a long-held cultural desire to connect to it.²⁹ The Merovingians had an equally fanciful tale regarding the namesake of their dynasty, Merovech. Reminiscent of the multitude of classical stories of coupling between gods and humans, their story relates that Merovech's mother was impregnated by a quinotaur while she swam in the ocean.³⁰ Merovech was therefore not just the inheritor of an earthly ruling lineage, but also infused with the divine.

These origin stories highlight two of the main features of classical kingship – a direct connection to a classical ruling dynasty, and an infusion of the divine into the lineage. The king was the legitimate ruler because he was a descendant of the kings before him, connecting his claim to kingship unbroken all the way back into antiquity. This was his claim for secular or historical legitimacy. The inclusion of the divine into the lineage proved that the lineage was blessed by divine grace to exercise its rule. The king's legitimacy was established through history and re-enforced by divine grace – a direct parallel to the foundations of papal legitimacy.

²⁹ Roman history also spoke of a connection to Troy through Virgil's *Aeneid*.

³⁰ A quinotaur is a mythological sea creature that has divine origins, perhaps connected to pagan deities.

The king was therefore a *persona mixta*, a mixed person composed of his temporal self and his spiritual self.³¹ This led Ernst Kantorowicz to describe this “twinned” person of the king as a Christ-like King.³² He was both King and *Christus* by divine grace.³³ Kantorowicz cited the description of the phenomena in the Norman Anonymous documents as follows:

We thus have to recognize [in the king] a *twin person*, one descending from nature, the other from grace...One through which, by the condition of nature, he conformed with other men: another through which, by the eminence of [his] deification and by the power of the sacrament [of consecration], he excelled all others. Concerning one personality, he was, by nature, an individual man: concerning his other personality, he was, by grace, a *Christus*, that is, a God-man.³⁴

Kantorowicz noted that the description in the Norman Anonymous was based in the biblical anointing of the kings of Israel, but the temporal separation did no disservice to the idea. The kings of the Franks possessed a dual nature that was adopted from Christian theology. The Franks were by no means the only culture to adopt this theological construct for their king and Kantorowicz reflected on such:

The quid pro quo method – the taking over of theological notions for defining the state – had been going on for many centuries, just as, vice versa, in the early centuries of the Christian era the imperial political terminology and the imperial ceremonial had been adapted to the needs of the Church.³⁵

Both bodies, the State and the Church, had been borrowing from each other’s ideas for centuries and through this symbiosis, both the State and the Church were strengthened and

³¹ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 1957). Kantorowicz asserts that this duality had a special appeal to the medieval thinker. Stating on page 43 of *Bodies*: “However, the yoking of two seemingly heterogeneous spheres had a particular attraction for an age eager to reconcile the duality of this world and the other, of things temporal and eternal, secular and spiritual.”

³² Kantorowicz, *Bodies*, 44.

³³ Kantorowicz, *Bodies*, 47.

³⁴ MGH, LdL, III,664,26ff. Cited in Kantorowicz, *Bodies*, 46.

³⁵ Kantorowicz, *Bodies*, 19.

grew. The Church took the imperial structure and organization and imposed it onto its growing body with the bishop of Rome as its 'king', and the Franks refined the idea of a divinely ordained king to supplement their Germanic tribal ideals.

It is this co-mingling of ideas and structures that eventually led to the conflict over supremacy that would simmer for centuries as both sides marshaled their arguments, feigned and parried, and ultimately exploded into the Investiture Controversy. But that is a long way off, and for now, let us turn to the beginnings of this investigation – the rise of Merovingian power with Clovis and the subsequent inclusion of the Church into this new Frankish system of power.

CHAPTER 2

CLOVIS

2.1 Old Rome is Dead

In the afternoon of 27 May 1653 in Tournai, Adrian Quinquin unearthed the grave of the Frankish Chieftain Childeric while working on the hospice at Saint-Brice in Belgium.³⁶ The grave was unspoiled and offered an extraordinary view of the burial practices and customs of the Frankish people in the late fifth century.³⁷ The grave contained a wealth of objects that included, in part, Frankish weapons, an assortment of gold coins, gold *fibulae* of both Roman and Anglo-Saxon styles, cloisonné jewelry resplendent with garnet inlay, and a signet ring in the Roman Imperial fashion with the inscription “*CHILDERICI REGIS*”. This was the grave of a man living in two worlds and of the father of the most famous of the Merovingian kings, Clovis.

The grave goods highlight the multicultural identity that prevailed in late fifth-century Gaul. Childeric was a Frank as evidenced by the style of his weapons, and yet he was buried with other items that were more consistent with a high-ranking Roman ruler of an era gone by. The old Roman Empire was but a shadow of its former self. Gaul was caught between its Roman past and its Frankish future, between assorted pagan practices and a Christian hegemony, and between being an outlying area of the former empire and being the center of a new Roman empire. Clovis would create a new identity for Gaul – a hybrid of both Frankish and Roman traditions, and in the process, create with the Church a new system of governance.

³⁶ Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History* (Broadview Press, 2003), 120.

³⁷ The exact date of Childeric’s interment is not precisely known, but sometime in 481 or 482 is most probable as those are the dates that Clovis is said to have succeeded his father, Childeric, in the sources. Numismatic evidence in the grave corroborates this assertion, and thus while the dates in the sources do not precisely agree, they create a short temporal range that is reliable when considered with other physical evidence present in the grave. Unfortunately, many of the most valuable objects from this grave were stolen in the nineteenth century and never recovered. Luckily, a complete catalog was recorded with exceptionally fine drawings and even a plaster cast of the signet ring before the theft.

Pushed back from its frontiers and besieged by groups led by the Goths and then the Huns for almost a century, Rome was exhausted. Rome had been sacked, its treasury looted, and then in 451 on the Catalaunian plains Rome expended her last gasp in a pyrrhic victory against the scourge of the west, Attila. There the Huns and their subject peoples, including many Franks, met an army of Romans and mercenaries that included Goths, Bretons, Burgundians, and also Franks. Aetius and his mixed Roman army won the battle and Attila was stopped, but Rome's legions were spent and her borders broken.³⁸

The Roman Empire was finished, and those still loyal to the Emperor pulled back into Italy to salvage what they could. It was another twenty five years before Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, and put the final nail in the western empire's coffin. But that was just a formality.³⁹ Europe north of the Alps was now a power vacuum, and into this vacuum, tribes from northern and eastern lands poured. The Franks, who had previously been located mainly around the lower Rhine, began to expand westward deeper into Gaul. They moved from the Rhine basin to the Atlantic and the Pyrenees, and they defined the geographical area that has come down to us as modern Western Europe.

Patrick J. Geary in his book, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, commented on the exceptional nature of the Frankish expansion with "[i]n the west, barbarian federated troops absorbed Roman systems of government, religion, and settlement. They ultimately became thoroughly Roman, even while changing utterly what this term meant."⁴⁰ They created a new Roman Empire, but not one modeled on Constantinople. The Franks were distinctive in that they had limited contact with the Mediterranean world beyond Rome herself,

³⁸ Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 98. Attila did launch one more raid into Italy the next year, but the 451 action is considered the defining moment in Rome's fight against Attila.

³⁹ Odoacer's removal of the last Roman emperor in 476 has become the traditional 'event' that marked the end of the Western Roman Empire, but it is mainly a date of convenience for textbooks surveying the late antique period. The western empire died a long, slow death and there were many events that could just as easily mark 'the end' depending on one's perspective or focus.

⁴⁰ Geary, *Myth*, 144.

thus when Rome declined, the Franks did not turn to the new Rome in the east.⁴¹ They were aware of Constantinople but did not look to her for guidance after Rome ceased to exert significant influence. They forged their own new world from the ashes of the old Western Empire.

With this expansion came further change. The importance of the cities, more favored by the Romans, waned as wealth moved into the countryside, and an older political designation became important again, the *civitates*. Cities themselves began to fall into disrepair and populations shrank, especially if the city was not the seat of a bishop. Vast land holdings were the hallmark of the powerful now, as the rich lands of Gaul were put to the plow by this new wave of Frankish settlers. Monasteries began to grow in size, number, and importance. The volume of coinage shrank and eventually went to a monometallic system struck in silver. Movable wealth was now dominated by the agricultural estates output. Grain, cattle, and slaves were now economic commodities on an equal footing with specie. Coin still circulated and trade was still active, but these new agricultural products began to be economic drivers in their own right.⁴²

This era of cultural, economic, and political transition was Clovis' birthright, and while there were other Frankish kings that were arguably more influential throughout the Frankish lands during their reigns, none of the other Merovingian kings have come down through history as Clovis has.⁴³ His prominent place in the history of the Merovingian kings was assured by his consolidation of the Frankish lands from many disparate kingdoms into an area of unified political rule, but he secured his *preeminent* place among the Merovingian kings by his

⁴¹ Geary notes that of the people that have survived to us through history, the Saxons were much like the Franks in this regard. Once Rome's power waned, they also forged their own identity without looking to Constantinople.

⁴² See Michael McCormick's *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) for a detailed study of Mediterranean trade.

⁴³ Clothar II (584-623) and Dagobert I (623-639) were the quintessential Merovingian kings and, until the renaissance of Clovis in western literature and thought, were considered the apogee of the Merovingian dynasty.

conversion to orthodox Roman Christianity.⁴⁴ Clovis was the first Merovingian king to embrace orthodox Roman Christianity and thus became the spiritual progenitor of all later Catholic French kings.⁴⁵

Clovis was the first northern European ruler to combine the power of a king with the obligations of an orthodox Roman Christian. Again, the dualism of his nature is exposed – a secular King and yet also a Roman Catholic, a subject to the Pope’s will as a Christian king. This new political landscape and how Clovis managed the new relationship with his kingdom and his church is the subject that we shall turn to now through an examination of letters, a *vitae*, and the narratives of Fredegar and Gregory of Tours showing how he used the ritual of baptism to solidify his power in post-Roman Gaul. While Ullmann and Blumenthal note that the seeds of the Investiture Controversy have roots much further back than most historians acknowledge, none of the scholars have considered that this moment of inclusion is the true beginnings of the conflict. Perhaps it is a bias of Western European historians to look past the mixing of the secular and ecclesiastical and thus not consider this conversion and inclusion of the Church anything but inevitable. Other systems of power have existed that did not include the church in state affairs with both essentially existing separately in their own spheres. I argue that this was important and not inevitable, and was a calculated move to consolidate power through the use of the Church that had unintended consequences in the twelfth century far removed from Clovis.

⁴⁴ When I reference ‘orthodox Roman Christianity’ in this context, I am referring to Christianity that followed the lead of Rome with respect to the Arian controversy. There were other leaders in Europe that were Christian during late antiquity, but were indoctrinated with the Arian concept of the Trinity, and thus became heretics when Rome came down against this doctrinal point. The Visigoths in Spain and many Frankish tribes fell into this category of being Christian, but because they were Arian Christians, were considered outside of orthodox teachings and thus heretics.

⁴⁵ Willibald Sauerländer, “The Queen of Cathedrals”, [The New York Review of Books](#) (22 March 2012), 25-26. Clovis’ connection to the present is ongoing as evidenced in this recent essay by Sauerländer in the New York Review commemorating the 800th year anniversary of the Cathedral at Reims. The Cathedral is directly connected and revered because it was here that Clovis was baptized ushering in what he called “the miraculous birth of the Christian kingdom of France.”

2.2 Frankish Power

In an age where the traditional power centers of the Mediterranean basin were being eclipsed by their northern counterparts, so too was the very definition of this power changing. The decline of Rome, Byzantine incursions into Italy, and a growing agricultural production in the north all played a part in the marginalization of Rome and the growing importance of Gaul. During the Imperial Roman rule, appointed administrators were dispatched to the provincial areas to do the Imperial will. These men were not necessarily men vested with particularly great personal power or prestige outside of their office; their power was derived from their office. The fifth century collapse of Imperial hegemony ended the Rome-directed colonial government under which Gaul had existed in one form or another since the days of Julius Caesar.

The senatorial class of Romans and Gallo-Roman creoles still exercised great influence within governmental and societal circles, but they now found themselves sharing influence with powerful local Frankish chieftains commanding the only viable military forces in these lands. These Frankish commanders who once directed legions of *foederates* at the behest of the Emperor now were the heads of local autonomous armies. Frankish leaders were now ascending into a position of 'allies' with a rapidly declining Roman empire.⁴⁶

The vast power that once rested within the families who had monopolized Imperial offices for generations now had to be shared with those that possessed the ability to exercise real power with men-at-arms. Clovis was one of these chieftains. He commanded a sizeable army and was a recognized ruler of Gaul, and he assembled around himself a secular

⁴⁶ William M. Daly, "Clovis: How Barbaric, How Pagan?", *Speculum* (Medieval Academy of America, 1994), 624. "These military "chiefs" became more often than not "the natural allies of Rome,"... With Childeric as their leader, however, the Salians became by ca. 460 the mainstay in northern Gaul of what was left of Roman authority loyal to the emperor." In addition to becoming allied with the declining Roman empire, Daly points out that the Frankish chiefs were beginning to exhibit many of the affectations of Roman nobility using, in part, Childeric's grave goods as an example, and even speculates that the Roman goods in his grave may have been a gift from the Emperor himself.

entourage of officials that was a mix of customary Roman and Frankish offices.⁴⁷ These Gallic officials were bound to Clovis as he ritually invested them with offices – some Frankish, some traditionally Roman – within his new system. Thus, Clovis aligned the prosperity of the Gallic governing elites with his own. Instead of antagonism, exile, or even death, Clovis wisely chose to incorporate these elites into his new framework through their investment into governing constructs that they were already familiar with. This was the first group of essential people Clovis brought into his new system.

Having been firmly established within the boundaries of the old Roman Empire for decades, the Franks had not been considered barbarians for some time.⁴⁸ After decades of interaction with Roman officials and serving in the military alongside Roman troops, the Franks had become Romanized to the extent that they were no longer considered foreign or out of place in fifth-century Gaul. Not much had changed for the common resident of Gaul with the Frankish ascension to power. Their master had changed, but their days played out unchanged as they had for generations under the Romans, for the Franks were very Roman in this method of conquest. They conquered an area by force, but then left the local elites in place to govern the area and created a regional alliance of local men nominally beholden to their Frankish

⁴⁷ Patrick J. Geary, *Before France & Germany: The Creation & Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988), 92. “As we have seen, even before his defeat of Syagrius, Clovis had been recognized by Bishop Remigius as a legitimate Roman governor, and after his victories over internal and external rivals, Roman and barbarian alike, his legitimacy had been acknowledged by the emperor. Thus the court of Clovis and his successors included not only the traditional officers of a Frankish aristocrat’s household, here elevated to royal prominence – the king’s *antrustiones*, or personal following, which enjoyed particular royal favor, headed by his *maior domus* or mayor of the palace, the constable, chamberlain, and the like – but Roman officers as well. Although no royal documents from the Merovingian kings prior to 528 have survived, the form of later diplomas indicates that the kings had absorbed the secretaries (*scrinarii*) and chancellors (*referendarii*) of late Roman administration. Moreover, as in late Roman and Gothic administrations, this personnel was secular; the tradition of using clerics in the royal chancellery would be a Carolingian innovation.”

⁴⁸ Geary, *Myth*, 140. Geary asserts that “powerful regional identities – each with its own law and its own aristocracy, but each orthodox and tied to central Frankish authority – led to a fundamental change in the uses of ethnic terminology.” The Franks were no longer considered ‘barbarians’, they were now just considered ‘pagans’ living in Gaul. This started the eventual loss of the idea of ‘Roman’ because without ‘barbarians’ to act as a foil to ‘Romans’, the idea of a ‘Roman’ begins to fade as an ethnic determination.

overlords, but who still managed their own local affairs. Clovis used the Gallic elites for his own ends, and that is a textbook Roman methodology and proved extremely effective.

There was one major difference between their previous Roman masters and their new Frankish ones that would remain an obstacle to cultural assimilation unless addressed – the Franks' religious affiliation. Learned opinions disagree as to whether the Franks were pagan or Arian when they entered Gaul, but all scholars acknowledge that they were not orthodox Christians like a great many of the inhabitants of Gaul.⁴⁹ Another fact universally acknowledged was Clovis' political savvy; he would have known that for the Franks to be successful in Gaul, they would have to overcome this religious chasm.

2.3 Conversion

The pragmatic Clovis overcame this chasm with one sublime gesture. He converted to orthodox Christianity and through the ritual of baptism he bound his Franks to the local people and, more importantly, the bishops of Gaul. No longer would a religious rift divide Clovis from the people of Gaul. The bishops were now available to his new system as he assumed the mantle of an orthodox Christian king. The most complete account is from Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* written in the late sixth century. Gregory of Tours states in Book 31 that Clovis accepted the invitation to the orthodox Christian faith. The bishop of Reims, Remigius, tutored Clovis in Catholic doctrine and performed his baptism in 496, recalled as follows.

Another Constantine advanced to the baptismal font, to terminate the disease of ancient leprosy and wash away with fresh water the foul spots that had long been borne. And when he entered to be baptized, the saint of God began with ready speech: "Gently bend your neck, Sigamber; worship what you burned; burn what you worshipped." The holy bishop Remi was a man of excellent wisdom and especially trained in rhetorical studies, and of such surpassing holiness that he equalled the miracles of Silvester. For

⁴⁹ Gregory of Tours implies that Clovis, and his men by extension, were pagan, but that could just mean that they were not orthodox Christians. His use of pagan could have just been a slur implying heretical beliefs and not necessarily pagan worship in the classic sense.

there is extant a book of his life which tells that he raised a dead man. And so the king confessed all-powerful God in the Trinity, and was baptized in the name of the Father, Son and holy Spirit, and was anointed with the holy ointment with the sign of the cross of Christ. And of his army more than 3000 were baptized. His sister also, Alboflod, was baptized, who not long after passed to the Lord.⁵⁰

Gregory of Tours fell back into a well-known motif and patterned the conversion of Clovis in the same epic *formulae* of Constantine's conversion with Christ's grace connecting the greatest of the Christian Romans to Clovis.⁵¹

Clovis was a new Constantine – a Christian king to whom the bishops of Gaul could readily give their allegiance. Clovis, thus, began a process of assimilation that would create a homogenous Frankish people. The Franks and the Gallo-Romans would all live within the same doctrinal constraints, and all would eventually become Franks not through birth, but instead through Christ.⁵² His people were united through his expression of faith, and the Christian unification of Europe was begun, for better or worse.⁵³

⁵⁰ Gregory, *History*. Accessed from: <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/gregory-clovisconv.asp>

⁵¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 1.28. From *Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1990), *Vol I*, 489-91. Accessed from: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/conv-const.asp>. Eusebius wrote: "He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, CONQUER BY THIS. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle."

⁵² Janet L. Nelson, "The Merovingian church in Carolingian retrospective.", *The world of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), 259. "Churchmen refracted the past for laymen, reflected it back at them, magnified in a way that accommodated eastern as well as western Frankish Christians, and Christians who were not Franks by birth at all, but like the Saxons, became one people with the Franks – through Christ." Attributed to: Einhard, *Vita Karoli 7*.

⁵³ Geary, *Myth*, 134. Geary points out that this began a new division in the post-Roman world: a united Christian populous versus the peoples of Jewish faith. "Through the course of the sixth century, Jews progressively lost their Roman identity, as orthodox Christianity and *Romanitas* became ever more closely linked. They were thus forced into an ethnogenesis of their own, one that created them as a despised and persecuted people in the eyes of their Catholic neighbors." The second Council of Orleans, under Childebert in 533, included a prohibition of marriage between Christians and Jews further increasing the social exclusion and legal persecution of the Jews in Merovingian times.

The news was greeted with great enthusiasm by the bishops of Gaul. Bishop Avitus of Vienne (ca. 470-523), who could not attend the baptism, sent a letter to Clovis celebrating his momentous decision. He commends Clovis' choice with "...the ray of truth has shone forth even among present shadows. Divine Providence has found the arbiter of our age. Your choice is a general sentence. Your faith is our victory."⁵⁴ He continues by praising Clovis for abandoning the faith of his ancestors and observance of "a futile reverence for their parents." Avitus then stresses the beneficial nature of Clovis' choice for "you have opened the way to your descendants to a heavenly reign." Avitus is obviously pleased with Clovis' choice by the tone of his remarks for he knows that the Franks as a whole are soon to follow in his footsteps. Rome has gained a great and powerful ally, and Clovis gained the support of the bishops and their networks within Gaul.

But even as Clovis and his Frankish brethren were experiencing a meteoric rise, so too were the local Christian leaders, the bishops. With Rome in turmoil, the effectual power of the Pope began to falter north of the Alps, and the local bishops began to see their authority increase as the populations began to look to them as their lone spiritual shepherds. The bishops were obviously hierarchally subservient to the Pope, but Rome was a long way off and with a question to Rome sometimes taking a year or more for a response, most matters were handled locally under the guidance of the bishop for expediency. This autonomy on all but the most important doctrinal questions came to become a hallmark of Frankish bishops. As expediency turned into custom, the Frankish bishops became virtually independent episcopal authorities and exercised nearly unfettered power locally within this new system.

⁵⁴ Quoted from *Bishop Avitus to King Clovis* in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History, 3rd Edition* (Broadview Press, 2003), pg. 137-138. Geary uses translation from: J.N. Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

2.4 The Rise of the Bishop

Just who were these Frankish bishops and what made them so different from bishops in other areas? As I just stated, their independence was one of their defining characteristics, but that was not the only characteristic that made these bishops unique from other bishops of the era.

In an era when mysticism, aesthetics, and the cult of saints posed a great danger to the established hierarchy of the church, the Merovingian bishop was the conservative establishment's protector in Gaul.⁵⁵ The bishop protected the church's traditional right to control the sacred and discipline the heretical, but Geary points out that in Gaul "[f]or all of their love of Rome, the Gallo-Romans had long considered a strong central government a threat to their familial hegemony."⁵⁶ Thus the bishop acted as a local counter-balance to imperial authority in this intentionally fragmented society. He protected the interests of the local landholders since he typically came from this segment of society and their interests were his interests even if only through familial connections.⁵⁷ This did not conflict with the bishops' ecclesiastical duty to protect the church, as in almost all cases, the interests of the conservative landholders were in line with the interests of the church, also typically a large landholder. Both were conservative agents acting to preserve the *status quo* of privilege and power, and Clovis tapped into this extensive power base.

⁵⁵ Geary, *Before*, 137-138. Geary relates the story of the young mystic Vulfoaic, the Langobard, and the lengths that the local bishops, Gregory of Tours included, went to break the spell this "living saint" cast over the locals. Vulfoaic's transgression was not his special relationship with God, but instead, the fact that he was not part of the official church and thus his connection to God without the assistance of the clergy was dangerous to the clerical dominion over the translation of God's will to man.

⁵⁶ Geary, *Before*, 93.

⁵⁷ Geary, *Before*, 93. "Rather than claiming the right to central government, this aristocracy was much more comfortable allowing the bishop, chosen by and of themselves, to direct what remained of the public sphere, the *res publicae*, at the local level of the *civitas*, which included the city and its immediate territory. Thus Remigius's plea to Clovis to follow his bishops' advice is no more than a plea for him to follow the advice of the Roman aristocracy. Power over the people was held by the great landowners, who were the real authority. Thus their sense of belonging to a wider world of Rome was much more a function of classical culture, particularly rhetoric, and of orthodox religion than of imperial administration."

While all of the bishops in Gaul were beholding to the Pope for their consecration, they were largely dismissive of the role Rome played in their execution of their duties. Rome was first and foremost a source of particularly holy relics, and Noble asserts that the Frankish bishop's attitude was that "Rome shares in the general history of the early church but has no privileged place in that history."⁵⁸ Gaul was world unto itself; the legal 'personality principle' mixed with local customs made for a unique type of Frankish Christian and their bishops had to recognize this heterogeneity to be successful.⁵⁹ Clovis recognized this too and used it to his advantage.

The bishoprics were their own, nearly independent, administrative zones. There was no over-arching Merovingian church that bound the bishops together as there would be in the Carolingian era, but instead, a collection of bishops that were more or less equals that worked within local and legal customs to administer their own bishoprics.⁶⁰ There was no unified administration for Clovis to displace. Clovis did not remove the head of the Gallic bishops; he instead became the leader himself as the Christian King of Gaul through the ritual of baptism.

⁵⁸ Thomas F.X. Noble, "Gregory of Tours and the Roman church", *The world of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), 151. Noble notes that Gregory of Tours is repeatedly dismissive of the role of the pope and the administrative role that Rome played as the head of the church, and while Gregory's specific accounting of historical events can be questioned (ie. questionable dating, myth as 'history', biased perspective issues, etc.) he was a respected and influential bishop in late sixth-century Francia. As such, his writings are invaluable for the insight they offer into the sixth-century Frankish world and cannot be excluded from analysis because of the aforementioned problems. They must be read carefully to mitigate these issues as much as possible, but cannot be ignored. William M. Daly also noted that mid-twentieth century historians, Louis Halphen and Wilhelm Levison, considered Gregory's account of Clovis to be "thoroughly legendary" and that historians must be careful not to take Gregory "too seriously". From Daly, *Clovis*, 621.

⁵⁹ Geary, *Myth*, 154. The Franks enjoyed extraterritorial status wherever they went, the personality principle, and thus always had a connection to Salic law. This was also true of their conquered. The Franks allowed the locals to live under their own legal systems and this added greatly to political stability in their conquered territories, but created a hybrid legal system where litigants could be tried and sentenced – each according to his own law.

⁶⁰ Janet L. Nelson, "The Merovingian church in Carolingian retrospective", *The world of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), 248-249. "Localisation replaced regional concerns. The Church now operated as no more, and no less, than its constituent churches, its provinces, not just in Gaul but beyond the Rhine where, in Alemannia, Bavaria, and the Main region, ecclesiastical foundations proliferated in the early to mid-eighth century under ducal and aristocratic auspices."

These bishops were well prepared for their task. Most were from well-established, noble Gallo-Roman families where an education in rhetoric and letters was considered the *de rigueur* path to a bishopric for the young men in the family. These were men that were born into the *nobilitas* of their regions, and with this *nobilitas* came authority. As the Franks became more integrated into the society of Gaul, Frankish men of exceptional talent would eventually be able to secure bishoprics and thus would expand inclusion into the *nobilitas* to Franks by virtue of their office-holding.

The bishop's authority became a unification of two elements: "the bishop's vested status, the authority given to him by the institutional church by virtue of the possession of a see; and his achieved status acquired by personal action...."⁶¹ Men of the *nobilitas* dominated the ranks of the bishops, but these men could not retire to a life of administrative leisure and contemplation. They were required by their position in both the Church and Clovis' administrative system to be men of action within their communities. Beyond the episcopal duties of supervising the corps of parish priests that filled the local churches in his bishopric, the bishop was expected to be the voice of the Christian king in the countryside.

An effective and duty-bound bishop was a busy man and a great asset to the people in his bishopric. As with any office where nepotism and social class plays a part in the entrance requirements, the bishops that held office were a mixed bag of the exceptional and the mediocre. A common description of the bishops of this period was "he was noble by birth, but still more noble by faith."⁶² They held a position of great authority across the countryside, and with his inclusion into the Church through his baptism, Clovis used them to disseminate his will.

Control of a bishopric was a very lucrative position and the bishop would enjoy a standard of living that was equaled by very few in his locale. Only nobility that was closely

⁶¹ Simon Coates, "Venantius Fortunatus and the Image of Episcopal Authority in Late Antique and Early Merovingian Gaul", *The English Historical Review* (Oxford University Press, Nov. 2000), 1115. Coates attributes this distinction as derived from Peter Brown's *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972).

⁶² Geary, *Before France*, 123.

associated with the king or the few remaining remnants of the Roman senatorial class were as well-off as most bishops. It was a position that moved within the power circles of Gaul and thus was prized not just for its generous yearly income, but also for the influence that it bestowed, and thus it is possible that men chose this path for fiscal and not purely spiritual reasons. The interaction that a Frankish bishop had with the secular power was a complicated affair with little actual codified guidelines and thus could vary greatly in substance from bishopric to bishopric, and it is the subject that we turn to next through an examination of letters between Clovis and his bishops.

2.5 Bishop's Role in Frankish Political System

The bishop most closely associated with Clovis is Remigius. He was a classic example of the well educated bishop that came from the old senatorial class from Roman Gaul. He was exceptionally long lived (ca. 437-533), and we have a few of his letters to Clovis, many of his acts recounted in multiple sources, and generally, a significant corpus of literature associated with a late fifth-century into the sixth-century bishop who would eventually be canonized by the Catholic Church.

As we saw earlier, Remigius was the bishop that baptized Clovis and thus became eternally connected to him, but we have a letter that he wrote to Clovis in 481, well before his conversion and baptism, to congratulate the young king on the event of his ascension to the Frankish throne of the Second Belgic Province. At this point, Clovis is the ruler of only one of the more powerful Frankish territories. He will eventually come to rule them all, but in 481, he is just one Frankish king in a Frankish kingdom that had three major regions – Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy – and further subdivisions within these three major divisions. The letter has a decidedly pedantic tone to it as the bishop delivers a thinly-veiled lecture in the guise of congratulations. This tone will change dramatically as we will see in a future letter from Remigius to Clovis later in his reign.

Remigius, a respected bishop in Reims for over twenty years already at this time, instructs the young king to “act so that God’s Judgment may not abandon you at the height where you have arrived by your humility.”⁶³ The bishop has cleverly reminded the newly-minted king to not let his ego swell and reinforces that with the ominous “man’s acts are judged.”⁶⁴ The bishop’s reference to Clovis as a “man” and not a king further reinforces Remigius’ point that Clovis should remain grounded by “humility” as he is still but a man in God’s eyes. Remigius continued with a listing of the virtues that would serve him well as king – chaste and honest deeds, encouragement for his people, relief of the afflicted, protection for widows, and nourishment for the orphans – “that all may love and fear you.”⁶⁵ He furthermore included that Clovis should be just, kind to strangers, and committed to the aid of captives.

These are classical and formulaic attributes of any good king. They are not reflective of any particular vice or virtue Clovis exhibited and should not be considered anything but the formulaic description of a good king that had been understood for at least a millennium already. These admonishments could have just as easily been included in a letter to a young Alexander of Macedonia or Octavius. It is reminiscent of a schoolmaster gently reminding his pupil of his well-established duties, but Remigius also included exhortations of a different sort.

Remigius did not waste an opportunity to remind the king to “defer to your bishops and always have recourse to their advice”, and noted that this would allow his province to be “better able to stand firm.”⁶⁶ Remigius did not feel the need for rhetorical niceties and spoke plainly with the young king. Remigius had yet to feel the need to “love and fear” Clovis as evidenced by his tone in the text. The king was to be respected, but Remigius obviously felt that he, too, was worthy of respect due to his experience and position as the representative of the Church

⁶³ Remigius’ letter to Clovis (c.481) in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History, 3rd Edition* (Broadview Press, 2003), pg. 137. Geary uses translation from: J.N. Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

⁶⁴ Remigius’ letter to Clovis (c.481) in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*.

⁶⁵ Remigius’ letter to Clovis (c.481) in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*.

⁶⁶ Remigius’ letter to Clovis (c.481) in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*.

and the local elites. There is an equality-of-station implied in his writing - with Remigius outlining Clovis' job description to him and emphasizing the need for Clovis to take the advice of his bishops seriously.

Remigius ends the letter with a caution that played on the youth of the king and the experience of the bishop.⁶⁷ "Amuse yourself with young men, deliberate with the old. If you wish to reign, show yourself worthy to do so."⁶⁸ Remigius' letters would change to a more familial tone in the subsequent extant letters we have from him to Clovis, but this one remains a testimony to the uncertain nature of the relationship that existed at the end of the fifth century between a king and a bishop. There is respect extended and expected back by both parties. This would change as Clovis began to consolidate his realm, and assumed the role of a Christian king.

In a letter of congratulation for his conversion, Bishop Avitus takes a different tact with Clovis. After much praise is directed at Clovis for his choice to turn to orthodoxy in the beginning of his letter to Clovis, he asks "[s]hould we preach the Faith to the convert who perceived it without a preacher; or humility, which you have long shown towards us [bishops], although you only owe it to us now, after your profession of Faith; or mercy, attested, in tears and joy to God and men, by a people, once captive, now freed by you?"⁶⁹ His question has a mixed message in its words. Taking a broad view of the question, he is asking his king how Clovis would like the bishops to go forth into the lands and deal with those not yet converted to orthodoxy. The deference to the king's authority over the bishops seems clear in the question, but nested in the question is a reminder of Clovis' new obligation as the Christian king.

⁶⁷ Daly, *Clovis*, 632. "The paternal tone and pithy style voice the assurance of a regional leader writing to a youth whose attention and comprehension, if not necessarily his immediate compliance, could be taken for granted. A didactic Latin jingle at the end of his letter reflects the gap in their ages..."

⁶⁸ Remigius' letter to Clovis (c.481) in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*.

⁶⁹ Bishop Avitus to King Clovis in: Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*, 3rd Edition (Broadview Press, 2003), pg. 137-138. Geary uses translation from: J.N. Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

While Avitus describes in this question Clovis' long-held "humility" towards the bishops, he does not hesitate to point out that which had been given freely before, now has become an obligation that Clovis "owe[s]" to the bishops. Avitus is asserting that the king is now bound to the bishops through his new faith. The question is politely asked, as one would ask a question of one's king, but subtly reminds the king that perhaps it is not a question that the king should answer. Clovis should remain humble in the face of his bishops is the subtext of this rhetorical question. And again, like with Remigius, Clovis is reminded to remain humble and to defer to the power of the Lord and His representatives, the bishops.

The texts of these letters highlight three basic points with respect to Clovis' relationship with the bishops. The first point is Clovis' position outside the Church in his early years as evidenced by the exhortation to rely upon the bishops' council. Both Avitus and Remigius emphasize this in their letters. His position as king is acknowledged, but the authority of the Church, as an independent body, is to be respected comes through in the tone of especially Remigius' letter. The second point to note is the power invested in him through his baptism. Clovis was now free to command the actions of the bishops in Gaul – now in essence, his bishops. Avitus clearly asks for direction from Clovis in the conversion of those "without a preacher." Clovis is in the Church, but is still a king and his inclusion does nothing to lessen his power in this respect. The final point to note is that while he is free to command his bishops, Clovis is reminded of the greater power of God that his bishops also serve. Both bishops used the word "humility" in their letters and Remigius implies that failure to act humble in the face of God and his bishops would result in God's Judgment abandoning him.

2.6 Clovis and the Church

Clovis had great regard for the church beyond just a functional arm of his governance structure, and his actions were those of a devoted member of the church. The unknown author of the *Vita Genovefae* recounts his devotion to Genevieve, later St. Genevieve who interceded in the actions of both Clovis and his father throughout her life, in the following:

And then, of course, there was Clovis of glorious memory, a king justly formidable for his wars, who out of love for her repeatedly granted remission to persons confined in his workhouse. And when Genevieve pleaded for criminals, he often let them go free, even at the moment when the sword was about to strike them, rather than execute them for their offenses. Furthermore, out of respect for her, he had begun to build the church which after his death was completed with a lofty roof through the devotion of his most excellent queen, Clotild.⁷⁰

Clovis located his own burial plot in close proximity to the grave of Genevieve in this very church. This seems no coincidence. The veneration of saints' remains was a common practice and burial near a saint's remains was considered of great spiritual benefit. This is the action of someone who respected the message as well as the utility of the Church.

While Clovis genuinely believed, his actions as king show a different facet of his persona – the final arbiter of all disputes in Gaul. Clovis included himself into the Church but his words reflect that he does not consider this an obligation to defer to the judgment of his bishops. In a letter written by Clovis to the bishops of Aquitaine during his campaign against the Visigoths (507/508), Clovis outlines the protections that he is extending to the church and church property in the contested areas. He “commanded that no one is to try to seize any kind of property” from either the church or the church’s clerics and other supporters dedicated to serving the church, and that “none of them are to suffer any violence or injury.”⁷¹ Clovis continues that if any of the church’s people are taken into “captivity, they be restored without any delay at all, whether [they reside] within or outside a church.”⁷² Clovis has extended his protection to the church and its property, but not without a stipulation. He commands that

⁷⁰ William M. Daly, “Clovis: How Barbaric, How Pagan?”, *Speculum* (Medieval Academy of America, 1994), 630.

⁷¹ Letter of Clovis to Aquitanian Bishops on the King’s Peace and Apostolic Letters, a. 507/508 in: Alexander Callander Murray, ed., *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul* (Higher Education University of Toronto Press, 2008), pg. 267-268. Murray uses translation of A.C. Murray.

⁷² *Ibid.*

apostolic letters be sent to him, authenticated by the bishop's signet seal, attesting to the true ownership of the property in question. He does not give the bishops a blank check to request the return of property just on their word. Clovis invokes a powerful tenet of Salic Law – the oath.

To the Franks, an oath was a most powerful concept. It could be used to bind parties to an agreement, declare one's innocence, or attest to the veracity of a claim. Oaths were taken in sacred spaces and bound people to their declarations in front of their peers and, most importantly, God. Breaking an oath would not be taken lightly and would forever stain a man's reputation. Clovis declares:

There is this stipulation. Our forces ask that on whomever's behalf you see fit to furnish your letters, you are not to delay declaring by an oath in God's name, and with your own blessing, that what you ask for is true: for the capriciousness and lies of many have been discovered, so that one perceives the truth of the scriptural phrase, "The righteous perishes with the unrighteous [cf. Gen. 18:23]."⁷³

With this short exhortation, Clovis makes two things quite clear. First, he is firmly in control. He defines the framework within which his directives will be carried out by the bishops; he need not consult with them on these matters. They must swear an oath to him, in God's name, that they are being truthful. Thus, even bishops must prove themselves to Clovis as he assumes nothing merely through the holding of office. He is the final word on justice in the realm.

The other issue made clear in the above statement is that Clovis does not fear the church. He obliquely threatens the lives of the unrighteous with his biblical reference regardless of their station. In centuries to come, kings would be brought to their knees by the threats of bishops, and unworthy bishops would be subjected to ecclesiastical justice, not the swift justice of the king. Clovis makes clear through his very direct wording that the church is to be respected, but that its bishops still answer to him.

⁷³ Ibid.

Now when it comes to matters directly relating to faith, Clovis is willing to consult with the bishops, but again, at the time and place of his commanding. In the record of the Council of Orleans (511), the bishops opening remarks clearly illustrate the control that Clovis exercised over the bishops of Gaul. It reads:

To their lord the most glorious king Clovis, son of the Catholic church, greetings from all the bishops whom you have ordered to attend the council.

Concern for the glorious faith so impels you to improve the Catholic religion that you have ordered the bishops to assemble together in order to discuss the state of episcopal opinion as to what needs to be done. In accordance with the instructions and the agenda (*tituli*) that you supplied, we are reporting precisely what we think is the best action to take. If in your judgment what we have decided seems correct, may the agreement of so great a king and lord sanction with even greater authority the implementation of the decision of so many bishops.⁷⁴

A markedly different tone is taken by the bishops here than that which was evidenced in the letters by Remigius and Avitus earlier; gone are the pedantic chides and gentle proddings once directed at the young king. This is clear acknowledgement of Clovis' ability to command the bishops not only to convene an ecclesiastical council, but also to set the agenda. The bishops twice note that Clovis "ordered" this council and this would not have been placed in there haphazardly. Clovis has included himself in their Church but still retained his supremacy over the bishops. His authority has even extended into the ability to bless or condemn the results of the council as evidenced by their hope that he would "sanction" their suggestions. Clovis does not co-exist with the church in his realm; he commands it, in this, the final year of his life.

⁷⁴Letter of the Bishops of the Council of Orleans to Clovis, a. 511 in: Alexander Callander Murray, ed., *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul* (Higher Education University of Toronto Press, 2008), pg. 268. Murray uses translation of A.C. Murray.

2.7 Conclusions

Through the course of this chapter we have tracked the Franks' rise to power and the ensuing changes set in motion by their arrival in Gaul. The Roman world slowly evolved into the world of late antiquity, and the seeds of Western Europe are sown. Pagan Franks mixed with the Christian inhabitants of Gaul, and converted to Christianity one of their kings, Clovis. The nature and roles of the Frankish bishops are highlighted with their own letters. And a letter from Clovis himself, unambiguously exposes his relationship with the church. Invested as a Christian king through the ritual of baptism, he is a member of the Church, but the relationship between Clovis and the Frankish church was not a relationship of equals.

The doctrines that would allow the church to exist within a political state as a separate but equal organization have not yet been introduced. Clovis commanded all within his realm and acted with impunity. This is the beginning of the church and state relationship that will evolve over many centuries into the investiture controversy. At this point in history as we have seen through the works of Geary, Ullmann, Kantorowicz, and the letters of Clovis and his bishops, the church commands almost no power in this Frankish system, but as time passes the church will continually, and doggedly, strive to wield what it considers its rightful influence within the circles of power. It will make great inroads into these circles of power until the power of the pope rivals that of any great monarch or emperor, and whose influence knows no boundaries. Kings and queens will do the pope's bidding. The pope's power was apolitical; it was above the political and the letters from his bishops to Clovis are starting to hint at this position. The papacy became a tool for intrigue on a continental scale that would not be checked until the great humanist movement of the Renaissance and then the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment. But for now, the bishops were content to just have brought the king into the Christian family and thus the Church had achieved its first goal of inclusion. And while the tone and textual choices in the bishops' letters chart a dramatic change in the relationship between the once pagan and now Christian king, the Church's need for expansion into the affairs of state

and then finally assimilation into the highest decisions of state are still to be realized. The majority of scholars have not considered this inclusion the starting point for the investiture conflict of the twelfth century, but considering that other systems of governance have existed without this type of inclusion, I feel that is the valid starting point for the discussion and the texts reflect that even if the historiography does not.

CHAPTER 3

CHARLEMAGNE

3.1 The Carolingians

In the coronation on that long-ago Christmas in Rome, Karl's era comes into focus, and we can marvel at the moment that illuminates twelve centuries of history. That morning marked the birth of an institution later dubbed a *Sacrum Romanum Imperium*: a Holy Roman Empire that lasted for 1,000 years, shaped the borders of Europe, and inspired idealism and atrocities well into our own age.⁷⁵

Jeff Sypeck

The reign of Charlemagne has captured the imagination of people for over twelve centuries as the above quotation from the introduction of yet another book on his life and deeds attests to.⁷⁶ Clovis was the first Catholic Frankish king, but Charlemagne was *the* Catholic Frankish king. No other figure from the early Middle Ages has lived with us through the centuries as Charlemagne has. To say that he lives with us is not some literary overstatement aggrandizing some long dead king; he literally lives with us every day. He is the political father of Europe, a national treasure of both France and Germany, and an almost mythical figure that carries *gravitas* second-to-none in the minds of all those from the western intellectual heritage. Every year since 1950, the person that best promotes European unity is awarded the

⁷⁵ Jeff Sypeck, *Becoming Charlemagne* (Harper Perennial, 2006), xviii.

⁷⁶ Throughout history, the names of many of the actors in this narrative failed to standardize, and thus some authors use Charles or Karl instead of the more modern Charlemagne. I will use Charlemagne, but will maintain other nomenclature used in quotations to maintain the integrity of the other author's work. A more widespread and confusing issue is the name Pepin. Both Charlemagne's father and great-grandfather were named Pepin which can lead to some confusion if an author or reader is not careful. Also, the spelling of Pepin is not standardized either; Pepin and Pippin are both used quite regularly in the literature on this subject. I will use Pepin as the preferred spelling, but will again maintain any other author's use of variant spellings to maintain the integrity of their work in quotations. When I am referring to Charlemagne's father I will use just Pepin and when I refer to his great-grandfather I will use Pepin of Heristal. Hopefully, this will reduce some of the confusion inherent in the multiple nomenclatures used in the literature.

Charlemagne prize, the *Karlspreis*. Charlemagne indeed lives and continues to fascinate modern audiences.

Charlemagne was the most successful, and the namesake, of the Carolingian dynasty. Clovis and the Church worked together to establish a united Christian Frankish kingdom and the first condition of my three stated conditions for the Investiture Controversy was achieved. Charlemagne would continue this cooperation to expand and strengthen his realm, and Charlemagne's texts and the "Report on Council of 813 by Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims" will show that he expanded the use of his bishops into roles that gave them great power and experience. The power dynamic that existed between Clovis and his bishops still remains lopsided in favor of the king now in Charlemagne's time. That will not significantly change until the reign of Louis the Pious. And while we are still temporally a bit before Ullmann and Blumenthal suggested that the start of the Investiture Controversy may have begun with the proprietary church conflicts of the late ninth century, mainstream scholars like McKitterick and Noble acknowledge and praise Charlemagne's expanded use of his bishops and priests, but none have opined that this vast expansion was a crucial element in the Investiture Controversy. I believe that the evidence does support my assertion that Charlemagne's expansion of the use of his bishops and priests was in fact the second condition necessary for the Investiture Controversy to erupt.

For Charlemagne, this relationship allowed him continued utilization of the Church's infrastructure in addition to great prestige as its protector and benefactor. The Church gained a much-needed protector at home and new converts abroad as the Frankish kingdom expanded into previously pagan lands. It also benefitted, reluctantly at times, from the reformist zeal of Charlemagne who sought to improve the Church with a paternalistic benevolence. Charlemagne freely issued orders to the church, as evidenced by his 789 dictate *Admonitio Generalis*, and obviously felt secure enough in his position as head of the Frankish church to call for ecclesiastical reform with, for example, his order in 813 for reform councils. It is clear

that Charlemagne considered himself both a secular and ecclesiastical ruler within the lands of the new Holy Roman Empire. But, at the same time, the Church was solidified by the might and expansion of the Carolingians and by the expanded use of their bishops and priests in the functioning of the state.

All great dynasties strive for continuity and stability through the generations, and their perceived 'greatness' largely depends on their success in these two areas. Historically, Germanic kings fared poorly in these two very areas because upon their death their kingdom was traditionally divided equally among their male heirs. They considered the kingdom their personal patrimony and, when their will was adjudicated and the kingdom divided, civil wars frequently ensued which weakened the ruling family's political power vis à vis the political elites vying for kingship. The downfall of the Merovingians was a classic example of this slow weakening of their hold on power. As successive generations of Merovingian royals battled each other for supremacy, they had to enlist the support of important elite families to assist if they hoped to prevail. They would grant lands, money and titles to important families to ensure this support, but over time, this strategy doomed the Merovingians to fail. As more and more power was doled out to ensure support, the Merovingians themselves became weaker and weaker until they held the title of king but scarcely any authority. The real power in the Frankish kingdom had been exercised by the Carolingian family in their positions as mayors of the palace for some time before the actual deposition of the Merovingians. Einhard described the last Merovingian king, Childeric III, as follows:

Although it might seem that the [Merovingian] family ended with him, it had in fact been without any vitality for a long time and [had] demonstrated that there was nothing of any worth in it except the empty name of 'king'. For both the [real] riches and power of the kingdom were in the possession of the prefects of the palace, who were called the mayors of the palace [maiores domus], and to them fell the highest command. Nothing

was left for the king [to do] except sit on his throne with his hair long and beard uncut, satisfied [to hold] the name of king only and pretending to rule.⁷⁷

This not a flattering description of the last Merovingian king, but keep in mind that it was given by Charlemagne's biographer and companion. It is interesting to note the description of the long hair and uncut beard which was characteristic of Merovingian rulers. The text evokes a feeling of unkempt and aged decay. The Carolingians, in an active contrast, wore their hair shorter and their beards were closely cropped or even totally clean-shaven in some instances as they exercise all the "riches and power of the kingdom."

Charlemagne ascended to the throne upon the death of the first Carolingian ruler Pepin and was one of the few lucky Germanic rulers not condemned to fight his siblings for the restoration of the complete patrimony.⁷⁸ He benefited greatly from this as there was very little family infighting over the control of the realm during previous generational transfers. Thus the Frankish lands had not been plagued by an endless series of fratricidal civil wars since Charles Martel's time, and when Charlemagne took complete control of the Carolingian lands after the untimely death of his brother Carloman in 771, he inherited a kingdom that exercised great control over all the subjects in the lands that roughly cover contemporary France, Germany, northern Italy, and the Low Countries. Out of the fractured tribal control of late antiquity, the Merovingians and his immediate predecessors in the Carolingian dynasty strove to consolidate power into a greater realm that had not been seen in Europe since the height of the Roman Empire over five centuries before.

This was the world of Charlemagne. He took the framework of Church co-operation started by Clovis and expanded it enormously. Clovis used the ritual of baptism to bring all his people together under a common religious doctrine. Charlemagne used the ritual of Imperial

⁷⁷ Paul E. Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard* (University of Toronto Press, 2009), 16.

⁷⁸ Stewart Easton and Helene Wieruszowski, *The Era of Charlemagne* (Krieger Publishing, 1961), 24. It has been hypothesized by Easton and Wieruszowski that "Charlemagne's life and work would have been unthinkable without the solid foundations laid by his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

Coronation to bring all of the Christian kingdoms in the west neatly under his rule. Clovis certainly used texts to disseminate his edicts, but Charlemagne engaged a chancery that rivaled the ancient bureaucracies of Rome in volume. Texts, both contemporary and copies of ancient volumes, *regula*, council proceedings, directives to his *missi*, and countless other documents flowed forth from his chanceries. And while Clovis directed the actions of his bishops, Charlemagne not only controlled their actions, but also their education and elevation through the ranks of the clergy.

Clovis' use of ritual, and church personnel was groundbreaking, but compared to the sophisticated uses Charlemagne accomplished, they were but the first teetering steps of a child. Charlemagne would expand the use of his churchmen and engage in an even more sophisticated ritual than Clovis, and accomplished the second needed condition for the Investiture Controversy – an enormous expansion of both the number and duties of his bishops and priests while maintaining his position of Emperor over all the Christian lands in the West.

3.2 Charlemagne's Realm

Much has been written about the Carolingian obsession with legitimizing their seizure of the long-held Merovingian throne. The Carolingians knew their rise to power was scandalous and needed justification because all royal power is derived from the legitimate assumption of that power.⁷⁹ To wear the crown without legal authority is usurpation, plain and simple. Unsurprisingly then, the Carolingian writers strove to reinforce the validity of Carolingian rule. Since they could not make a sound legal argument for displacing the Merovingians, they relied upon a moral one. Paul Fouracre opined that:

The Carolingians were never in a position to question the legitimacy of Merovingian royalty, but sought instead justification on moral grounds for the transfer of that royalty to themselves. The Merovingians had become so feeble that they ignored the harm

⁷⁹ Joanna Story, ed., *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester University Press, 2005), 8. Paul Fouracre states that “[t]he holding of political office, the operation of the law courts, the summoning of assemblies and armies, and the practice of religion were all sanctioned by royal authority.”

being done to their subjects. It was therefore incumbent upon the Carolingians, as the stronger power, to make themselves kings in order to secure justice, that is, to make sure that the Franks were ruled justly, and to protect the weak.⁸⁰

Fouracre further noted that this “sense of moral obligation would remain a guiding principle of Carolingian government thereafter, for it served as a reminder of the new dynasty’s right to rule.”⁸¹

This sense of moral obligation only increased the Carolingians involvement with the Church. Not only was the immediate health of the Church their concern, but now they also saw themselves as protectors of the entire Church with a much longer temporal scope. Education became immensely important across the empire and Charlemagne leveraged his position to create church schools that dramatically increased the literacy level of his subjects. These more educated subjects not only executed a more correct, and therefore more effective, mass, but from them also came better candidates for the clergy. A cycle of education was begun that fed upon itself with increasing benefits every succeeding generation.

Einhard repeatedly bolstered the legitimate authority of Charlemagne. Einhard related the papally sanctioned decline of the Merovingians and the ascension of the Carolingians with the following curiously dry two statements:

The family of the Merovingians, from which the Franks used to make their kings, is thought to have lasted down to King Childeric [III], whom Pope Stephen [II] ordered deposed...⁸²

Moreover, Pepin, who had been mayor of the palace, was established as king [in 751] by the decision of the Roman pope [Zacharias] and he ruled the Franks by himself for fifteen years or more.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne’s Courtier*, 16.

⁸³ Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne’s Courtier*, 18.

His simplicity of statement is a reflection on an issue that needed no more comment in his mind, the moral authority of the pope had granted the Carolingians the right to rule the Franks. The old adage that the victors write history is truly applicable here. The Merovingians wrote no counterpoint to the Carolingian texts that assert their right to rule; they are silent on this issue.

So, with the Carolingians in power, the increasing size of their domains forced them to think about the governance of these vast and culturally disparate lands in a much different way than their forbearers did. Although Charlemagne always insisted that every man in his realm had the right to petition him directly, his lands became so geographically spread over the European continent that the former style of kingship was no longer possible.⁸⁴ The days of a king like Clovis riding circuit through his lands adjudicating grievances, strengthening bonds of fealty, and generally making himself available to his subjects were past. It just was not possible for Charlemagne to cover his lands effectively in person; they were just too vast – from the Elbe to the Ebro along a generally east/west axis and from the Atlantic to Rome on a generally north/south axis.

Charlemagne needed to create a corps of officials and a system of communication with these officials so that his will could be accomplished across the realm. McKitterick asserts that this purpose was achieved through three methods: his use of regional assemblies, his issuance of capitularies, and his use of officials drawn from the church and high ranking nobles, the *missi dominici*, as his representatives across the realm. Now here, McKitterick does acknowledge the expanded use of the church officials but gives it no place of significance in her argument as I do. In the *General Capitulary For The Missi* written in 802, the *missi dominici* are described as follows:

Therefore, the most serene and most Christian lord emperor Charles has chosen from his nobles the wisest and most prudent men, both archbishops and some other bishops also, and venerable abbots and pious laymen, and has sent them throughout his whole

⁸⁴ Capitulary for Aquitaine 768/9. Referenced in McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 214.

kingdom, and through them by all the following chapters has allowed men to live in accordance with the correct law. Moreover, where anything which is not right and just has been enacted in the law, he has ordered them to inquire into this most diligently and to inform him of it; he desires, God granting, to reform it.⁸⁵

McKitterick observes that “[a]ll these were part of establishing order in a *regnum* where ecclesiastical and secular concerns were intertwined and interdependent; bringing thieves to justice and combating heresy were equally matters of state.”⁸⁶ Charlemagne clearly did not distinguish between secular and ecclesiastical issues as issues that had separate jurisdictions. His control and expansion of his realm would be an enterprise where he used all of the assets available to him, and created an atmosphere of a devout Christian culture throughout his lands and subsequently leveraged the existing ecclesiastical infrastructure to enforce his will. The traditional regional assemblies and this new class of men, the *missi dominici*, armed with his textual directives became his voice in the far flung corners of his empire. These *missi*’s numbers grow until they are an indispensable part of the governance of the realm and the condition of expansion is satisfied.

3.3 Church Structure

Archbishops, bishops, and abbots were at the top of the ecclesiastical structure and were the officials to which Charlemagne would instruct in his wishes, and they would then instruct their subordinates in the wishes of the king. It is here that we can see the expansion at it most clear. It is at this parish level that the real work was done, and thus the efficacy of this level was of paramount importance if Charlemagne’s directives were to be carried out. In the middle of the eighth century no absolute structure of the lower ranks of clergy is clearly defined in any Carolingian texts so far examined, but Carine van Rhijn in her article, “Shepherds of the

⁸⁵Dana Munro, ed., *Selections from the Laws of Charles the Great* (History Dept. of University of PA, 1900),16.

⁸⁶Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge university Press, 2008), 214.

Lord: Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period”, offers up a tentative division into three categories: those living under a *regula* in a monastery under an abbot, those who lived under a *regula* supervised by a bishop, and the rest who fell under the broader episcopal authority and lived under no *regula* – i.e. the secular clergy. By the end of the century all clergy were supposed to “have both a *magisterium* and a *disciplina*, which roughly translates into ‘a superior’ and ‘rules for a proper life’.”

Generally speaking these divisions outline a loose structure that had monks (*monachi*) living under a rule in a monastery headed by an abbot, canons (*clerici canonici*) who also live under a rule but under the control of a bishop and not in a monastery, and the secular clergy who fall under the control of the bishop of their episcopate. By the time of the council of Mainz in 813, these three categories were well established and those who fell outside of these parameters were considered renegades who served no useful purpose due to their disdain for both a master and a rule. The expansion of the number of churchmen acting towards Charlemagne’s ends would be accompanied by a strict definition of their status, and for those who fell outside of this structure. Charlemagne expanded their number and responsibilities, but not without maintaining a firm hand over them.

In a reply to questions submitted to Pope Zacharias by Boniface in 748, Zacharias wrote about these questionable renegade clergymen as follows.

You report also, my brother, that you have found so-called priests, more in number than the true Catholics, heretical pretenders under the name of bishops or priests but never ordained by Catholic bishops. They lead the people astray and bring confusion into the service of the Church. Some are false vagrants, adulterers, murderers, effeminate, pederasts, blasphemers, hypocrites, and many of them are tonsured serfs who have fled from their masters, servants of the devil transformed into ministers of Christ, who,

subject to no bishop, live according to their own caprice, protected by the people against the bishops, so that these have no check upon their scandalous conduct.⁸⁷

The itinerant priests that entered into the historical record later in medieval history had no place in the Frankish lands of Charlemagne's time either. Charlemagne expanded their numbers but had no use for renegades that were outside of his control. Bishops were instructed to present these renegades into the hands of ecclesiastical discipline for relegation to a life of penance under monastic rule, and if they refuse to cooperate, the severity of discipline was greatly increased.⁸⁸ Unlike Clovis who tended to not interfere in the minutiae of Church matters, Charlemagne considered his involvement crucial to the Church's well being and constantly sought to improve the Church in every way possible. But, this is consistent with his view of the Church. He considered the Church as part of his entire being. There was not any separation that needed to exist between the Church and his governance.

The emergence and codification of these rules for clergy followed a general reform concerning the way that the Carolingian society as a whole was structured during the reign of Charlemagne. Carine van Rhijn states that "a lot of work was done both to define and to draw clear boundaries between the different groups of people that made up the society of the Christian Franks."⁸⁹ Everyone needed a defined place within the structure of Frankish society and following the issuance of the *Admonitio Generalis*, bishops began to clarify what was expected of those within their diocese.

These rules were textualized in what became known as the *Capitula Episcoporum* and were issued across the Frankish lands by numerous bishops. The *Capitula Episcoporum* had three significant goals. First, they specified a code of behavior for secular clergy and codified the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to enforce this code of behavior. Many of the

⁸⁷ Easton, *Charlemagne*, 156-157.

⁸⁸ Carine van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord: Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period*(Brepols, 2007) 41-44.

⁸⁹ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 47.

secular clergy, especially ones in rural areas, may have only had little contact and guidance from episcopal powers before this. With their expanded power came expanded responsibility. Second, they acted as a textual basis for the bishops to assert more direct control over their secular clergy at the diocesan level where little had existed before. Thirdly, this would directly advance the goals spelled out in the *Admonitio Generalis* by making the secular clergy a clear example for the lay people to follow and create a model Christian society.⁹⁰

These dictates were designed as a way for the urban bishops to communicate effectively with their rural secular clergy so that the ideas of reform and correction were implemented at the ground level. Van Rhijn clarifies this process as follows:

...priests were given the key role of executing the ideals of reform and *correctio* at a local level, for which they first needed instruction and *correctio* themselves. It was the local bishop's responsibility to make sure that his local priests' education and conduct were up to this task, and to ensure that they knew the proper way to guide their flocks in the right direction.⁹¹

It is clear Charlemagne intended for this to be a parish level reform. His parish priests were first to be made worthy of emulation as examples of correct Christian living, and then they were to live and educate the population in Charlemagne's vision of a Christian kingdom, creating the beginnings of public education and a comparatively literate population.⁹² They would be properly educated men consecrated by and beholden to the Catholic hierarchy, not dangerously uneducated men, or even worse – itinerant priests, spreading the false word of God and endangering his subjects. Using the Imperial authority bestowed upon him by the pope,

⁹⁰ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 48.

⁹¹ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 50.

⁹² The population's literacy rate would not be considered very good at all by modern standards, but in an era when a person could go their whole life and never even touch a book, even the most basic skills would put a person into a much more literate condition than a comparable person not living in Frankish lands.

Charlemagne used these officials to implement his vision of *correctio* through the dissemination of his textual admonitions and greatly expanded the ranks of churchmen into his system of rule.

3.4 Charlemagne as both Secular and Ecclesiastical Ruler

Charlemagne and the episcopal hierarchy were cooperating in this reform effort because it benefitted both their interests, but it is also possible to occasionally see Charlemagne assert his will unilaterally - revealing his ultimate control. As is often the case, Einhard gave us a fine, if brief, example of Charlemagne commanding leaders of the church in his wishes:

Even then, if he learned that sacred churches had fallen into ruin because of their age anywhere in his kingdom, he ordered the bishops and priests responsible for them to repair them and charged his representatives with insuring that his orders had been followed.⁹³

Charlemagne did not ask or request that this work be done, he ordered it done. I would like to now review three events that clearly illustrate Charlemagne's use of text, Christian ritual, and the clergy to see his will done, and not just in secular areas, or where the secular and the ecclesiastical overlap, but on issues that were unarguably ecclesiastical in nature. Charlemagne saw no need to segregate secular and ecclesiastical tasks, and therefore he used his *missi* for all his needs. First, his issuance of the *Admonitio Generalis* in 789 was the start of his program of reform within the church and is a clear illustration of a textual admonition to the Church. Second, his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in 800 will be examined as a consummate use of Christian ritual and Charlemagne's ultimate expression of his primacy in all matters both secular and ecclesiastical. And finally, Charlemagne's calling for reform councils for the church in and around 813 illustrates his delegation of the clergy to implement his will.

The text of the *Amonitio Generalis* was issued in 789 as a textual injunction to correct church practices that had deteriorated to an unacceptable point in his judgement. Noting that

⁹³ Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne's Courtier*, 26.

the church had not seen any particularly pronounced deterioration since his father's or grandfather's time, I believe that he was comparing the piety, liturgical execution, and overall health and welfare of the church against an ideal of the former glory that the church enjoyed in antiquity. Einhard related that Charlemagne's favorite book was Saint Augustine's *City of God*, and that he had it read to him at every chance he could. *City of God* paints an idealized portrait of the early church, and thus Charlemagne clearly overestimated of the church's former glory. The veracity of the church fathers' work is unimportant; Charlemagne believed that theirs was the example to follow and he proceeded on this premise.

His issuance of the *Amonitio Generalis* was nothing less than a call for the complete reform, or *correctio*, of his church. Carine van Rhijn observed that:

The road toward *correctio* of the whole realm was, in this way, divided into various stages: in the *Admonitio Generalis*, Charlemagne and his inner circle admonish those in charge to 'correct' themselves according to certain principles. These people, in turn, were expected to set to work themselves and implement *correctio* on those in their jurisdiction, and/or hand on part of this responsibility to those fit for the task.⁹⁴

This admonition was the beginning of a much more active role for the whole of the episcopal hierarchy. Charlemagne had charged his bishops with a complete top down assessment and correction of the failings of the entire church apparatus down to the local parish priest. Charlemagne stated "[a]nd we also demand of your holiness that the ministers of the altar of God shall adorn their ministry by good manners, and likewise the other orders who observe a rule and the congregations of monks."⁹⁵ Not only would the number of churchmen grow, but their ranks would be improved. He instigated an educational program across the realm tasked with improving the teaching of especially grammar for the implicit purpose of improving the

⁹⁴ van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, 19-20.

⁹⁵ Charlemagne, "Admonitio Generalis (789)" published in Dana Carleton Munro, ed., *Selections from the Laws of Charles the Great* (Philadelphia, 1900), pg 15.

transmission of the liturgy stating “let schools be established in which boys may learn to read.”⁹⁶ He was intimately connected to his church and concerned with the smallest details. “Correct carefully the Psalms, the signs in writing (*notas*), the songs, the calendar...”, he commanded.⁹⁷ This expansion of the ranks of his bishops and priests with better educated men is clearly the expansion that I argue is necessary for the second condition of my argument.

Einhard relayed to us an example of his personal effort at *correctio*. He stated that Charlemagne “very carefully corrected the way in which the lessons were read and the psalms sung, for he was quite skilled at both.”⁹⁸ Many scholars have disputed the actual effectiveness of Charlemagne’s personal intervention, but his intention was to correct church liturgy – “but they pray badly because of the incorrect books”⁹⁹ - and the church’s failure to issue properly trained priests into the countryside.¹⁰⁰ The parish priests were the key to this *correctio* in the grand scheme of his reform. The ultimate goal for these corrections was the proper exercise of the Christian faith by all of his people to create an entirely Christian populous that was properly educated in the correct liturgies by competent parish priests.

In this era, the efficacy of prayer was directly tied to the form of the prayer. For his kingdom and his people, Charlemagne pushed for the correction, standardization, and dissemination of the correct liturgical texts throughout his lands, and for properly trained priests to fill the parish churches and enlighten his people with the correct texts and ceremonies for the spiritual well-being of these rural communities. McKitterick observes the power of Charlemagne’s injunction at the local level:

Certainly royal influence was transmitted through the sermons indirectly as a result of the king’s recommendation that the Christian faith be taught, for Charlemagne had

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne’s Courtier*, 33.

⁹⁹ Charlemagne, “Admonitio”.

¹⁰⁰ All of the contemporary scholars I have encountered dismiss this assertion as the flattery of a courtier. His language skills were above average for the era – even for a king, but probably not at a level sufficient to correct the Latin and Greek of church services.

decreed that every man be told of the Christian faith, be baptized a Christian and instructed how he was to honour the vows of his baptism. This is precisely what these homilies and sermon collections set out to do, carrying out the injunctions of the *Admonitio Generalis* to the letter...¹⁰¹

Charlemagne was determined that his flock was to be informed in the correct prayers, and additionally, that they would execute these prayers and observances according to rule. The ritual of baptism was required to join all Franks in the practice of a common faith. This was not a time where dissent from the church's teachings was tolerated. As a Frankish subject you were obliged to honor your inclusion in the Christian faith or you risked putting all in disfavor with your dissent; turning away from the religion of your father was a mortal sin with dire consequences. The Church's rituals and teachings were to be obeyed by all, for dissent risked the damnation of all.

3.5 The Holy Roman Emperor

Einhard stated that Charlemagne considered "nothing as more important than to restore through his material help and labor the ancient glory of the city of Rome."¹⁰² In 799 he would have a chance to do more than restore the glory of the church, he would be asked to save it. After being savagely attacked by residents of Rome hostile to him, Leo III traveled to Paderborn and appealed for Charlemagne's assistance. Einhard recalled that Charlemagne "traveled to Rome to restore the state of the church, which was extremely disrupted."¹⁰³ Charlemagne quelled the disruptions and restored Leo III to his throne as Bishop of Rome, and as a reward, he was given the title Emperor and Augustus. This is the title that was handed down until the nineteenth century as Holy Roman Emperor. Einhard asserted that Charlemagne disliked this honor and stated that if he had known Leo's plan, he would have not entered the church on that

¹⁰¹ Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895* (Swift Printers, Ltd., 1977), 113.

¹⁰² Dutton, ed., *Charlemagne's Courtier*, 33.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Christmas day in 800. Most scholars believe this to be false modesty and that Charlemagne knew exactly what would happen when he entered the church for Christmas mass. It was a simple *quid pro quo* arrangement. Charlemagne used his military power to restore Leo III, and in return, Leo III ritually invested Charlemagne with the highest honor available to a king – Emperor and Augustus. With this new honor, Charlemagne could now minister to the whole of the Christian West with his newly formed corps of *missi*.

Charlemagne considered himself now above the papacy, while Leo III and subsequent popes considered the emperor subservient to the papacy. In fact, the church would assert that because Leo elevated Charlemagne to his new position in the Latin world, the church held the supreme power as one could not simply crown oneself emperor legitimately.¹⁰⁴ Popes and emperors will wrestle with this question for centuries, but what is important now is the fact that Charlemagne saved the church and restored Leo III to his ecclesiastical throne. The restoration was a clear exercise of actual power. It was what later might be called *realpolitik* and Charlemagne's military intervention was the iron and blood that Bismark so famously invoked. By saving the church and Leo personally, Charlemagne demonstrated his military power and was ritually rewarded with moral power from the pope.

Einhard noted that Charlemagne's coronation was not met with great enthusiasm by the other emperors and that "he [Charlemagne] endured very patiently the jealousy of the emperors who were indignant about him assuming these titles. By sending them frequent embassies and letters in which he addressed them as brothers, he overcame their contempt with his magnanimity, in which he was undoubtedly their superior."¹⁰⁵ The emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire were not pleased with what they considered an encroachment into their royal title. They were the emperors of the new Rome now centered in Constantinople, not some upstart Frankish kings in rustic Gaul. The eastern emperors had lost physical control over the

¹⁰⁴ Napoleon Bonaparte did just that and crowned himself emperor in the nineteenth century to avoid even the hint that he was beholden to the church for his position.

¹⁰⁵ Easton, *Charlemagne*, 129.

majority of the former western empire, but there was still a deep desire in the eastern court to one day reunite the two halves.

With Charlemagne as the beginning of a new imperial dynasty in the west, those dreams of future re-unification were dashed. This unilateral action by the pope signaled the final turning-away from the east for the papacy. The Catholic Church created a new emperor for the west and forever abandoned their fealty to the eastern emperors. The Roman and Eastern branches of the church continued to sporadically attempt ecclesiastical re-unification every few generations with no success, but the secular empire was split permanently. The Church cast its lot in with the Franks – the only power in the west with the desire and might to protect the church in Rome, and Charlemagne had increased his honor with the imperial title and found himself in control of a large, well-trained group of *missi* ready to do his business.

3.5.1 Reform Councils

In the entry for the year 813, the Royal Frankish Annals report that in addition to crowning his son Louis co-emperor and placing his grandson, Bernard, on the throne of Italy, Charlemagne ordered that councils were to be held “by the bishops in all of Gaul to improve the condition of the churches.”¹⁰⁶ Councils were held in five cities: Mainz, Rheims, Tours, Chalon, and Arles. The results of these councils were collected together and brought to Charlemagne for his approval. Charlemagne again commanded the church to act and maintained his right to approve their actions without any obvious resistance from church leaders – just as Clovis had done during his reign. In fact, as the bishops of the Council of Orleans in 511 had done so, Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims (c.806-82) commented on the calling of councils by Charlemagne and acknowledged his prerogative to do so.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Bernhard Scholz, trans., *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals & Nithard's Histories* (University of Michigan Press, 1972), 95.

¹⁰⁷ Robert C Figueira, ed., *Plenitude of Power- The Doctrines and Exercise of Authority in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Robert Louis Benson* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 7.

Lord Charles, Emperor Augustus, has ordered us to be summoned to the synod for those matters, just as the ecclesiastical rules command, which provincial councils have been unable to resolve, especially in the matter of faith or general religion, as we have read in the decretals of the Apostolic See and the letters of the emperors. Whereas, we have read in the ecclesiastical histories and the letters of the Apostolic See that general synods have been called by imperial authority.¹⁰⁸

Note that Hincmar completely acknowledged Charlemagne's right to call councils on 'faith or general religion' without reservation and "just as the ecclesiastical rules command." This statement by Hincmar clearly showed Charlemagne's personal command of the church and the church's acknowledgement of his control. But the tone of the report does not seem to show any disdain for the control Charlemagne exerts. It is not an issue to despair over. The bishops have gained enormously from the expansion of their ranks and their new responsibilities. They have yet to get the assimilation into the highest decisions they will enjoy under Louis the Pious, but they have accomplished two of the three conditions needed for the foundation of their Investiture argument – inclusion and expansion.

Calling a church council was not new to the Franks. Carloman, the eldest son of Charles Martel and a deeply religious man, called a church council in Austrasia when he was mayor of the palace in 742. Carloman's *Decrees of the Synods of 742 and 743* piously state that "a synod should be held every year, so that in our presence the canonical decrees and the laws of the Church may be re-established and the Christian religion purified."¹⁰⁹ Clearly the reform of the church was a continuing theme in the Carolingian family even before they were officially in control. The councils recommended many reforms including the call for all boys to be sent to schools run by either monasteries or priests so that the boys could be properly

¹⁰⁸ Hincmar, *De iure metropolitanum*, PL 126:205A – referenced in Figueira, pp. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Easton, *Charlemagne*, 159.

instructed in the catechism. Even before Charlemagne, the call for a ground-level reform is heard.

3.5.2 Controversy

Charlemagne's extensive use of Church personnel for his own ends, as well as the betterment of the Church, was not welcomed by all in the Church. As Charlemagne's influence grew, so did his ambition. His authority outshone the pope's, and that initiated push-back from the Church. Many of the actions by Charlemagne were in clear violation of stated church policy and writings, but were far from unique. In a letter from Pope Zacharias to Frankish noblemen in 748, Zacharias reminded the nobles of the autonomy of the church:

I remind you of the apostolic teaching that no layman shall hold a clergyman in service but the clerk shall serve him whose seal he bears upon his forehead with heart and mind, being instructed in the things taught him by his bishop...¹¹⁰

And when a monastic community has been established there, if after the death of the abbot or abbess a successor is chosen by the community, he or she is nevertheless to be consecrated by the bishop and not inducted by the founder of the cloister; for what has once been offered to God should remain fixed and inviolate under the rule of the bishop.¹¹¹

These instructions clearly emphasized that the church considered its internal matters just that-internal matters. These are Investiture issues already being discussed a half of century before Charlemagne is crowned Emperor and a full century before Ullmann and Blumenthal give the idea any credence. The church had well-established principles of self-determination and autonomy that had been in place for centuries by the time of Charlemagne. The two most

¹¹⁰ Emerton, trans., *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 131.

¹¹¹ Emerton, trans., *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, 132.

potent arguments for the church's autonomy and the superior nature of ecclesiastical power were the Gelasian Doctrine, which we have discussed earlier, and the Donation of Constantine.

The Gelasian Doctrine had been largely ineffectual at checking royal overlap into matters that the church considered their purview since its inception in the fourth century. The power of the kings (*potestas*) still superseded the moral authority (*auctoritas*) of the church. Kings from both the Merovingian and early Carolingian dynasties exiled or eliminated bishops that defied them or when political expediency required it. The bishops still served at the whim of the king. Something more was needed, and that took shape in the Donation of Constantine. By the fifteenth century the document was widely known as a forgery, but during the reign of Charlemagne it was offered as genuine and the Church attempted to gain as much influence as it could by invoking it.¹¹² The donation was purportedly from Constantine to Pope Sylvester I in the early fourth century and was composed of two parts. The first part was Constantine's confession of Christian faith and an expression of gratitude to Sylvester for his enlightenment. The second part was the enumeration of the rights and lands that Constantine bequeathed to Sylvester and the papacy in perpetuity. The papacy was ritually invested with the rights and honors previously reserved for emperors, the primacy of the bishop of Rome was affirmed, and the lands of Rome, Italy, and all the western regions were put under his control.¹¹³ The pope was the emperor, if you will, of the empire of the Roman Church, and his will was absolute in church matters according to the forged Donation documents.

This donation put the pope on an equal footing in the secular world and when combined with the theory of the Gelasian Doctrine, established the pope as the supreme power on earth

¹¹² The donation documents were written in the late eighth or early ninth century – perhaps as a buffer to the increasing powers of the Carolingians over the papacy. The author remains unknown.

¹¹³ Easton, *Charlemagne*, 117. The donation, in part, reads: “Also to match the greatness of the empire, and not to debase the pontifical apex but to adorn its dignity which is higher than that of a terrestrial empire, and the might of its glory, we convey and surrender to the often mentioned most blessed pontiff, our father Sylvester, the universal pope, and to the power and jurisdiction of the pontiffs, his successors, not only our palace as mentioned before but also all the provinces, places and districts of the city of Rome, of Italy and the regions of the West...as a legal and permanent possession of the Roman Church.”

by virtue of his ecclesiastical pre-eminence. It was so potent in the mind of Frankish kings that Pepin re-confirmed the donation as an act of homage to the pope. Unfortunately for the Church, Charlemagne held no great regard for this re-confirmation by his father and virtually ignored the entire donation, allowing the pope secular reign only in a small area surrounding Rome. Charlemagne was subject to God, but not God's representatives on this earth.¹¹⁴ He was practical in his understanding and exercise of power. He knew that he could seize Rome and make the church bow to his wishes. He had done it before and he could do it again. Charlemagne would bow his head to no man.

3.6 Conclusions

Secured by his ritual assumption of the Imperial title, his power was absolute and would be the model for kings and emperors to attempt to emulate for a thousand years. Through the text of the *Admonitio Generalis*, Charlemagne bent the church's will to his own and started a reform movement within his church that would not be equaled until perhaps the Cluniac movement in the eleventh century. He established a virtual civil service staffed by the existing hierarchy of clerics and nobles. This became the model for the bureaucratic administrations that would be needed in the future of Europe as small kingdoms were absorbed into empires. McKitterick considers this question in the following:

Medieval and modern commentators on events in Francia in the middle of the eighth century have thus disagreed both about the role of the pope and the nature of Carolingian kingship. Their readings, like those of Einhard, Gregory VII and Hotman, quite obviously are influenced by their own constitutional preoccupations and determination of prerogatives; they serve incidentally to remind us how often history can be drawn on and distorted in new political arguments.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Easton, *Charlemagne*, 33.

¹¹⁵ McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 135.

His legacy is indeed complicated and has been co-opted by both church and state movements almost since his death, and his legacy as either patron of the church or secularist is the most complicated facet of this multi-dimensional character.

But it is clear that Charlemagne used Christian rituals and personnel to fulfill his personal vision of a Christian kingdom. By using a large number of ecclesiastically affiliated subjects as his *missi*, he blurred the line between secular and ecclesiastical as modern readers see it, but in his time and in his mind, there was no conflict in his use of his Church for his needs. This expansion was unprecedented and both Charlemagne and the Church benefited from their larger numbers. These larger numbers are exactly what my second condition argues is needed. Charlemagne expanded the *missi* until they were ubiquitous in the great halls across his kingdom. They had expanded into virtually all aspects of governance. Even with the 748 Letter by Pope Zacharias discussing Investiture issues in crystal-clear terms, and the *Admonitio* that improved and expanded the ranks of bishops and nobles fulfilling my second condition, the conventional historiography chooses to ignore them. Perhaps they think it would have been inevitable? This is certainly possible and a plausible argument against my theory, but I maintain that this expansion by Charlemagne was not inevitable and therefore should be judged as the unique event that it was.

Now we will turn to the reign of Louis the Pious and examine his use of the rituals of confession and atonement. These rituals will expand the role of the clergy into what I consider the third condition for the Investiture argument to be made – assimilation. Louis' use of confession and atonement gives the bishops a voice and they use it to their advantage.

CHAPTER 4

LOUIS THE PIOUS

4.1 Young Louis

Louis the Pious has gotten some bad press over the last millennium. As the son of the iconic king Charlemagne, he has been unfairly maligned by historians. Wrongly attempting to compare Louis' accomplishments to those of his father is the primary cause of this historical slight. Previous generations of historians have characterized him as weak and timid in stark contrast to his father's strength and decisiveness. They have chosen to hang their assessments on a few references to his timidity and love of counsel, but disregard the contemporary descriptions of Louis fighting with great success in Italy and in the marches and mountains of the Iberian Peninsula. Louis was raised as a king, and throughout his youth he was instructed in the art of war and to hunt in the wilds of Aquitaine. He was a man of action that through unfortunate fate was the son of the greatest man of action since antiquity's great heroes. He never escaped the shadow of his father, and thus his historical reputation has suffered, but a new generation of historians has begun to assess his contributions with a fresh perspective. I agree with Mayke de Jong and Courtney M. Booker, part of this new generation of historians taking a fresh assessment of Louis the Pious, that assert that Louis the Pious was a clever, strong king that used Christian ritual in a unique way. And, I will argue that his unique usage of Christian ritual fulfilled the final condition for my argument. Louis' use of Christian ritual eventually allowed the bishops of his realm to affirm or deny his divine right to rule and thus the bishops were assimilated into decisions affecting the realm at the highest levels.

Louis was both pious and cruel, but his piety is what comes down to us through historical writings. He sacked entire towns, had people tortured and maimed, and sent his own

sisters from court to live out their lives in nunneries rather than risk an entangling marriage.¹¹⁶ He was neither timid nor indecisive. He elevated the commoner, Ebbo of Reims, to an archbishopric, sent Benedict of Anian into the countryside to enforce the rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia in Frankish houses of worship, and restored an amazing number of church properties. Again we see, like Clovis and Charlemagne before him, a complicated man with a number of seemingly contradictory behaviors.

In 817 Louis had a brush with mortality in a building collapse. Acting rashly, he composed and disseminated the *Ordinatio Imperii* (817), a revised version of the Imperial division among his male heirs. Publishing this edict while he was still relatively young was a considerable mistake and the consequences of this haunted him for his remaining years. Since the Carolingian ascension to imperial power in 751, there had been an orderly transfer of power from father to son with little fratricidal violence. But in 817, Louis had three sons and a nephew that all wanted a piece of the imperial domain for themselves, and none of them liked the new split dictated by the new *ordinatio*. Fratricidal civil wars, contentious relationships with the popes, and constant court intrigue became the hallmarks of Louis' reign after his 817 edict as the four heirs jockeyed for the largest bequest.

During these contentious times, his pious nature revealed itself to be one of his greatest strengths and also a weakness, and his four heirs were not hesitant to use it to their advantage. Eventually Louis placed his duty as a man in a Christian world above his Imperial dignity as he humbly prostrated himself before his bishops and begged forgiveness for his sins. Neither Clovis nor Charlemagne would have ever considered this appropriate. There were occasions

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, *Son of Charlemagne: A Contemporary Life of Louis the Pious*, Allen Cabaniss, trans., (Syracuse University Press, 1961), 9. Anonymous has traditionally been designated "the Astronomer." With regard to his female family members, 23:1 of *Son* reads: "When these affairs had been completed, the emperor gave sentence that the entire female company (which was very large) be excluded from the palace, except the very few whom he considered fit for royal service. Each of his sisters withdrew to her own lands which she had received from her father. Although they did not deserve of the emperor such treatment as they got, they yielded to his commands." Atypical of the Frankish custom, Charlemagne did not marry his daughters off into beneficial political marriages, and thus they continued to live in the royal residences with their father well into adulthood.

where both rulers offended God, but they would atone to God when they stood before Him after their eventual deaths. The emperor did not beg forgiveness from God's servants on earth. The emperor was subservient to only God himself.

Like his predecessors Clovis and Charlemagne, Louis also used Christian rituals, and personnel as a means to an end, but he took a different approach than his predecessors had used. His use of rituals, especially the rituals of confession and atonement, was unique and an effective method to forward his agenda.

Later, popes would combine these humble confessions of Louis with doctrinal suppositions to confirm their assertion of the supremacy of Rome over any secular power. The emperor ruled over a fleeting, temporal kingdom, but the pope was shepherd to all men in the celestial kingdom. Louis, thus, confirmed the Gelasian argument and allowed the clerical to enter into the imperial domain.¹¹⁷

In this chapter we shall examine Louis' use of rituals, and personnel in distinctly different ways and with mixed results. His use of textual edicts was not particularly effective, if not wholly unsuccessful, but his use of Christian ritual was both innovative and effective. Of the three kings that this thesis examines, Louis utilizes Christian ritual and involved church personnel in the execution of this ritual in a manner that neither Clovis nor Charlemagne could have imagined.

4.2 King of Aquitaine

For although those things which could be done in Spain were accomplished and the return march was successfully completed, certain ones in the rear of the royal army met with disaster; they were slaughtered on the same mountain. Since their names have been broadcast far and wide, I have foreborne to declare them.

¹¹⁷ Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13. "Even though no other medieval emperor ever submitted to a formal public penance, this kind of atonement by no means disappeared from the political arena – if only because Louis's penance of 833 was what every subsequent emperor or king wished to avoid."

When the king therefore returned, he found that his wife, Hildigard, had given birth to male twins. One of them, snatched away by untimely death, began to die almost before he began to live in the light of day. The other, emerging from his mother's womb with fortunate result, was reared with the expenses incident to childhood. The twins were born in the seven hundred seventy-eighth year of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. When it came to pass that the one who gave promise of vigorous condition was reborn through the sacrament of baptism, it pleased his father for him to be named Louis.¹¹⁸

The preceding excerpt from the *Son of Charlemagne: A Contemporary Life of Louis the Pious* marked two seminal events in the history of France: the rout of Charlemagne's rear-guard at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass that was immortalized in the *Song of Roland*, and the birth of Charlemagne's heir, Louis, while he campaigned in Northern Spain. Hildigard was left behind in Aquitaine at the villa Chasseneuil and gave birth to Louis and his ill-fated twin. Three years later Louis would be sent back to Aquitaine as their child-king so that he would know of the customs and laws of his new kingdom. His eldest brother, Charles the Younger, was King of the *regnum Francorum* and his other older brother, Pepin, was King of Italy, and they too were immersed in the lands that were to be their future bequests per Charlemagne's *Divisio Regnorum* of 806.¹¹⁹

With this *divisio*, Charlemagne broke from traditional Frankish inheritance customs that typically divided a patrimony equally among the male heirs. Charles was to be king of the

¹¹⁸ Anonymous, *Son*, (2-3) 33-34.

¹¹⁹ Munro, *Selections*, 27-33. The introduction to his edict reads, in part –“In order that we may not leave it to them in confusion and disorder or provoke strife and litigation by giving them the whole kingdom without division, we have caused to be described and designated the portion which each one of them ought to enjoy and rule; in this manner forsooth so that each one, content with his own portion in accordance with our ordination, may strive with the aid of God to defend the frontiers of his kingdom and preserve peace and charity with his brothers.” Only the death of Louis the Pious's brothers stopped this edict from taking effect, and because it is so similar to the *divisio* that Louis the Pious would himself declare in 817, one has to wonder if the troubles that Louis the Pious's *divisio* caused could have been exacted upon the Franks a generation earlier upon the passing of Charlemagne.

regnum Francorum – Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy - while the two younger brothers received kingdoms that were relatively recent additions to the empire – Aquitaine and Italy. The traditional Frankish kingdom was preserved under Charles, and the imperial title was not bequeathed to any of the sons. It seems that the preservation of the *regnum Francorum* intact was foremost in Charlemagne’s plans and not the transmission of the imperial title.¹²⁰

By 811 both of Louis’s brothers were dead and he was the sole remaining male heir to the empire. In 813, an aged Charlemagne crowned his only surviving son co-emperor in Aachen.¹²¹ The following year, 814, Charlemagne passed into history and Louis the Pious was the sole emperor. But the new pope, Stephen V, would not be content to allow the crowning of a new emperor fall out of the church’s purview.

The church had re-created the emperor of the west as a protector of the Roman faith through Charlemagne, an emperor over the ecclesiastical unit that was the western lands governed by the Roman Catholic liturgy.¹²² The classical office of emperor was conceived before the Roman church and thus had no connection to ecclesiastical boundaries. The emperor of the classical Romans was an emperor over a historically bounded empire that was entirely secular by definition.¹²³ But the Church had created the new office based on the ancient title but that was tethered to the Roman faith as no classical emperor was before. The emperor of the west was now not just emperor over the lands and people of his realm, but also a protector of the faith.

So in 816 Pope Stephen V made the highly unusual and arduous trip north over the Alps to anoint Louis the Pious in Reims and formalize his coronation as emperor in the eyes of

¹²⁰ Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817-876* (Cornell University Press, 2006), 28-29.

¹²¹ De Jong, *Penitential*, 19. “On 11 September 813, in the church of St Mary in Aachen, the old emperor made his only remaining son lift the golden crown and put it on his head, after Louis had solemnly promised to rule as his father admonished him to.” Even with the increasing piety that Charlemagne exhibited in his later years, it is interesting to note that Charlemagne crowned Louis co-emperor himself without feeling the need to legitimize it with the pope’s participation.

¹²² Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (Routledge, 2003), 85.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

the church.¹²⁴ To the greetings of “a second David”, Louis was anointed with unction “on the model of the Old Testament, understood to confer divine grace on the recipient in the shape of ruling power.”¹²⁵ Ullmann notes that this is the first time that “the unction and coronation formed the two essential pillars of the ecclesiastical making of an emperor” and those would remain the hallmarks of this ceremony onwards.¹²⁶ The anointing created a military defender of the church, bound to the Roman Church through the sacramental unction.¹²⁷ Louis was now bound even tighter to the Church.

Notice that Stephen V has altered the ritual that was used to elevate Charlemagne. The sources make no mention of Leo III anointing Charlemagne. This is the first step that the Church takes after Charlemagne’s death to reign in the power of the emperor. Now the imperial coronation required the emperor to be anointed with holy unction by a priest. The Church was bound into the imperial coronation ritual and thus began to exert some control over its use. In the future, all would-be emperors require at least some Church support to be elevated to emperor through the ritual of imperial coronation.

4.3 Emperor

The Astronomer reports that “[i]n the same year [815] he sent his two sons Lothair and Pepin to Bavaria and Aquitaine respectively, but the third, Louis, still in the years of boyhood, he kept with him.”¹²⁸ That he sent these two sons to rule without royal titles and retained the youngest at his court is curious, as he had been crowned king of Aquitaine at the age of three

¹²⁴ The location of Reims cannot have been a coincidence as it was also the site of Clovis’s baptism. This coronation was tied by location and memory back to the first Frankish King to embrace the Roman faith.

¹²⁵ Ullmann, *Short*, 87.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 88.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*. Ullmann states that “...it should also be realized that the central feature of every Western imperial (and royal) coronation was not the crowning but the anointing of the Ruler. The purpose of the imperial unction was specifically to create the military defender of the papacy as the ‘fount’ and ‘mother’ of the universal Church. The unction was counted among the sacraments which could be administered only by the appropriate ecclesiastical officer. Hence also the emperor crowned by the pope was said to be ‘the special son of the Roman church’, a feature which distinguished him clearly from the emperor at Constantinople who was never willing to accept this filial relationship.”

¹²⁸ Anonymous, *Son*, (24:1) 57.

and maintained his own residence and court in Aquitaine almost continuously until he was crowned co-emperor. Charlemagne had done almost the opposite. He sent his younger sons away to their respective kingdoms and retained his eldest with him in the traditional patrimony that was the *regnum Francorum*. But whatever his rationale for this arrangement was, it all changed on Holy Thursday 817 as the Astronomer records in the following passage.

Later in the same year, the period of Lent being almost over, on the fifth feria of the last week (the day on which the memorial of the Lord's Supper is celebrated) and after all things had been performed which the solemnity of so high a day required, it came to pass that, when the emperor sought to withdraw from the church to his royal residence, the lower parts of the wooden colonnade through which he has to go, weakened by decay and age and rotten with continual moisture, collapsed under the feet of the emperor and his counts. Great terror struck the entire palace with the noise of the crash, everyone fearing that the impact of that fall might have crushed the emperor. But he was protected from the immediate crisis by God to Whom he was a beloved son. For although twenty or more counts fell to the ground with him and met with various mishaps, he incurred no more regrettable damage than a hurt on his stomach where the hilt of his sword hit him and a very small skin-scratch on the lobe of his ear. His leg was also struck near the groin by the same wood, but aid was brought to him very quickly. Summoning skillful physicians, he was restored to his former health in a very short time. Twenty days later indeed he went hunting at Nijmegen. ¹²⁹

Louis barely escaped grave injury and again his faith was strengthened, but his mortality was made obvious by the carnage that surrounded him in the form of his injured courtiers. ¹³⁰ Louis

¹²⁹ Ibid, (28:1) 62-63.

¹³⁰ Peter R. McKeon speculates that the collapse of the colonnade could have been the an attempt on his life by factions unhappy with Louis's ouster of many of his father's trusted companions and advisors as Louis brought in many of his own men from Aquitaine, or perhaps even Bernard of Italy. From his article, "817: A Disastrous and Almost Fatal Year for the Carolingians", originally published as "817: Une année désastreuse et presque fatale pour les Carolingiens," *Le Moyen Age* 84 (1978): 5-12.

rethought his arrangement of 815 and now produced the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817. This document established the new division of his empire between his sons and laid out the behest of the imperial title down through his heirs. It is a document of immense importance to both to Louis reign and the reign of subsequent emperors because it treated the imperial title as part of the emperor's personal patrimony and it could be handed down as the emperor saw fit.¹³¹

Lothar was crowned co-emperor, and Pepin and Louis were crowned kings of Aquitaine and Bavaria, respectively. Bernard, Louis's nephew, was allowed to maintain his position in Italy, but under Lothar's overlordship and the kingdom would revert to Lothar upon Bernard's death, thus ending Bernard's familial patrimony. Louis's division owes much to Charlemagne's *Divisio Regnorum* of 806 as the following excerpt from it illustrates.

It has pleased us to debate with all our loyal subjects these articles for the welfare of the empire, for the preservation of everlasting peace between our sons and for the protection of the whole church; and, having discussed them, to write them down and afterwards sign them with our own hands, so that with God's help they may be preserved inviolate by the common devotion of men even as they have been enacted by their unanimous vote, to maintain everlasting peace between our sons and all the Christian people: saving in all things our imperial power over our sons and our people, and all the obedience which is shown to a father by his sons and to an emperor and king by his people.¹³²

Louis uses many of the same themes as his father did: fraternal peace, protection of the church, protecting the voice of the people, and a reminder of his imperial dignity. The themes of peace and protection run through both documents, and struck a welcomed chord with the

Translated by Courtney M. Booker. Accessed on: 2/24/13 at http://www.history.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/cbooker/docs/McKeon_On%20817%20%28trans%29.pdf. Used by permission.

¹³¹ Dutton, *Carolingian*, 199. In his introduction to the document, Dutton surmises that the "*Ordinatio imperii* is surely the most important constitutional document of the ninth century, both for its attempt to make the imperial title heritable and for its part in fostering events that were to trouble Louis's reign."

¹³² Dutton, *Carolingian*, 200.

majority of the populous, but in Louis' case, it fell on the angry ear of his nephew, Bernard of Italy. Bernard not surprisingly begins to campaign against the division, and then enters into open rebellion.

Bernard's rebellion did not last long as overwhelming imperial power necessitated his capitulation at Chalon. Bernard was tried and convicted of treason and then sentenced to death, but Louis spared his life and reduced his sentence to blinding.¹³³ Three days after the blinding, Bernard died of his wounds and Louis was despondent. In his work, *Life of Louis*, Thegan observed that upon hearing the news.

Louis wept with great grief for a long time and made confession in the presence of all his bishops and undertook penance by their decision for this reason: because he did not prohibit his counselors from doing that maiming. Therefore, he gave much to the poor in order to purge his soul.¹³⁴

Here is the first mention of Louis, the emperor and "special son of the Roman church", subjecting himself, and the imperial dignity, to the judgment of men below his imperial station. Any previous emperor would have written the death off as God's will, but Louis took it as a sign that he, personally, had offended God. He was not able to maintain Kantorowicz's two kings within himself –unable to compartmentalize the imperial self from the flesh and blood self. He did penance with his temporal body for the celestial action of the emperor, and the cagey bishops were more than happy to have the emperor supplicate himself and the imperial dignity before them. It would not be the last time.

In 822, a still remorseful Louis gathered a council together in Attigny to atone for his past offenses against God and usher in a new prosperity. He wished to "put a definitive end to the discord of the recent past, as publicly as possible, 'in the presence of all his people'"

¹³³ While it sounds barbaric and not much better than death itself, blinding was a traditional way to disable a rival while sparing his life. The blindness left the person unfit for any public office, and thus impotent.

¹³⁴ Thegan, *Life of Louis*, ch 24. Published in: Dutton, *Carolingian*, 167.

according to Mayke de Jong in her work, *The Penitential State*.¹³⁵ Louis publicly atoned for his sins, and Louis was so exemplary in his remorse that the bishops followed suit – confessing their sins as well.¹³⁶ Louis execution of the ritual of confession was so profound, so “exemplary”, that he inspired even his bishops into a impromptu confession of their own. De Jong asserts that in this public spectacle “[t]he moral high ground during this assembly was undoubtedly dominated by the emperor himself.”¹³⁷ The emperor’s grief may have been genuine, for in addition to Bernard, his beloved wife Irmingard had passed recently too, and perhaps his guilt was assuaged.¹³⁸ But the imperial dignity was bolstered here too. The bishops’ confessions converted a single, dire confession into a re-affirming group confession that sang up into the heavens from all the Frankish people. Louis gained enormous political capital with his religious ritual, and again, the clergy played a key role in it. Unlike Clovis or Charlemagne, Louis immersed himself and his bishops in Christian ritual. The bishops would attempt to leverage their participation to their advantage later, but in this instance, Louis used the bishops to sanctify his ritual confession and atonement for his own political gain.

Either their prayers and supplications were particularly efficacious, or there was a very fortunate series of well-received coincidences. Either way, Louis basked in an unprecedented era of success. Foes fell in battle, coins were minted emblazoned with the cross and imperial title, and Louis had a new son with his new wife, Judith. Louis secured agreements obligating the popes to swear oaths of allegiance to the Frankish emperor and affirmed the Frankish

¹³⁵ De Jong, *Penitential*, 36.

¹³⁶ Dutton, *Carolingian*, 205. The entry in the RFA for the year 822 includes this entry: “After receiving the advice of his bishops and nobles, the lord emperor was reconciled with those brothers whom he had ordered, against their will, to be tonsured. And so because of this deed and others – that is, what was done against Bernard, the son of his brother Pepin, and what was done against Abbot Adalhard and his brother Wala – he made a public confession and performed penance. He carried this out in the presence of all of his people at the assembly which he held in August 822 at Attigny. At this gathering he took the trouble to correct with the greatest care whatever things of this sort he and his father had done.”

¹³⁷ De Jong, *Penitential*, 36.

¹³⁸ Anonymous, *Son*, (35:1) 73. “He also set aright whatever he could discover had been done amiss anywhere by himself or by his father by largesse of alms as well as by the urgent prayers of Christ’s servants and also by his own personal reparation. He was careful to appease the Godhead as though these things, which had befallen each one according to law, had been done by his own cruelty.”

emperor's position as *pater* of both kingdom and church.¹³⁹ And, in 824, Louis was asked by the Byzantine co-emperors Michael II and Theophilos to weigh-in on the dispute that they were having with Pope Eugenius II over the veneration of images. Louis consulted with his bishops and submitted their recommendations concerning iconoclasm. Frankish reform and correction had made its way to Rome as all of their recommendations were adopted.¹⁴⁰ Louis' immersion of himself and the Frankish bishops into very public Christian ritual was paying dividends. His humility and piety had placed him in a position comparable with his father's achievements, but the bishops were increasingly getting assimilated into the large political events of the day.

4.4 Rebellion

This era of good feeling and prosperity did not last. By 830 the empire had experienced setbacks that had caused enough general discord that empire-wide prayers were offered to correct the Frankish offence.¹⁴¹ But, the cause for the discord was much closer to home than heavenly disfavor. Louis had experienced contentious relationships with his two older sons for years by now. Pepin never really seemed to live up to Louis' standard of excellence in his beloved Aquitaine, and Lothar was regularly removing himself from Italian affairs to live in his father's orbit in Aachen, Paderborn, or wherever Louis happened to be – much to Louis's annoyance. Added to this tension was the grant of a kingdom, carved from the kingdoms of the elder three sons, for Louis's youngest son, Charles the German.¹⁴²

The spark that set this tinderbox ablaze was the promotion of Bernard of Septimania to chamberlain and protector of Charles the German. This move displaced Lothar back to Italy out of the imperial court. He was still officially co-emperor, but he could exercise little power sequestered in Italy as he was. Almost immediately the courtiers began to grumble about

¹³⁹ de Jong, *Penitential*, 36-37. The documents are the *Constitutio Romana* (824) and the *Admonition to all orders of the realm* (825).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 37-38.

¹⁴¹ De Jong, *Penitential*, 40.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 41. Both Nelson and de Jong speculate that this grant was less contentious than many historians suggest.

Bernard and Louis's wife Judith, and some disaffected Aquitainian nobles approached Pepin with accusations and innuendo.¹⁴³ They would support the good son if he removed his bewitched father from the clutches of those doing the devil's work. Pepin took the bait, mobilized his troops, and marched to Verberie.

Lothar eventually joined the rebellion and took command as the eldest son and co-emperor. But by this time, Louis was prepared to make a stand. He gathered supporters during assemblies in Compiègne and later Nijmegen, and with the support of his youngest son, Louis the King of Bavaria, Louis the Pious skillfully managed to check the movement of Lothar and force his surrender as Lothar's troops were reduced by defection to Louis's side. In the aftermath of the rebellion both Lothar and Pepin were pardoned, as were most of the conspirators, with the notable exception of two clerics who dared take a side, Abbot Hilduin and Abbot Walach were both sent from public life.¹⁴⁴

4.4.1 Regni Divisio

In the name of the Lord God and our savior Jesus Christ. Louis, ordained emperor augustus by divine providence, to all the faithful of the holy church of God and to all the Catholic people, namely present and future, of the races and nations set under our power and guidance.

We wish it to be known to all your shrewdness that we have decreed to make such a division of the kingdom entrusted to us by God among our dear sons Pepin, Louis, and Charles, so that after our departure from this life each one of them may avail to know—

¹⁴³ Anonymous, *Son*, (44:1) 89. Aquitainian nobles that had been in great disfavor with the emperor for military disasters in the Spanish March in the late 820's cajoled Pepin as follows: "Relying therefore upon the number and consent of many, they approached the emperor's son, Pepin, alleging his being slighted, Bernard's arrogance, and the despising of others, and claiming indeed (what is wicked to relate) that Bernard was an incestuous polluter of Pepin's father's bed. They insinuated furthermore that his father was baffled by certain delusions to such a degree that he was in no way able to avenge these things nor indeed even to perceive them. It was therefore necessary, they said, that a good son suffer his father's shame with indignation and that he restore his father to reason and honor."

¹⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Son*, (45:1) 91.

if divine piety shall wish them to be our heir—which portion was allotted to him by us for the purpose of holding and ruling. We wish to describe and designate this division in this way, so that each one, in accordance with our ordination, may strive to defend with the aid of God the frontiers of his kingdom, which extend out to foreigners, and work to preserve peace and fraternal charity among themselves. It has pleased us to make such an ordination and kind of division.¹⁴⁵

In 831 Louis published a new division of the empire, the *Regni Divisio* of 831 –the introduction to which is quoted above. Louis triumphed in 830, but his sons had become formidable forces in their own right. So, Louis declared a new imperial split, one that excluded Lothar completely as discipline for his part in the rebellion of 830 in a kind and benevolent tone that is at odds with the fact that the edict disinherits his eldest son. Louis wishes “to preserve peace and fraternal charity” by excluding his son? Lothar would be brought back into the fold shortly, and that would be just one of many changes to the division that happened over the next two years. Louis frequently changed the text of the *divisio* and pitted the sons against each other in petty territorial disputes and thereby reduced the chances that they would come to a common peace and join forces against him.¹⁴⁶ But that stratagem lasted just a brief two years, and in 833 rebellion was stirring again.

Early summer 833, Lothar and his brothers came together in Rothfeld to challenge their father, but this time was different.¹⁴⁷ This time they attacked Louis on two fronts. Lothar, of course had mustered a great number of troops, but he also brought a weapon of even greater

¹⁴⁵ *Regni divisio* of 831. [ed. Alfred Boretius, Victor Krause, *MGH Capitularia regum Francorum 2* (Hannover, 1897) 20–24] trans. Courtney M. Booker: accessed On 2/25/13, http://www.history.ubc.ca/documents/faculty/booker/regni_divisio.pdf. Used by permission.

¹⁴⁶ De Jong, *Penitential*, 46.

¹⁴⁷ The field at Rothfeld in Alsace is known to history as “The Field of Lies” for the duplicity of Louis’s deserting troops per Thegan, *Life*, (42) 170. The Astronomer blames the devil for the sons unification (48:1): “The devil, long hostile to the human race and to peace, was in no wise tricked by th emperor’s success, but was stirring up the sons through the cunning of his accomplices, persuading them that their father wished to destroy them wantonly, not reflecting that he who was very mild to foreigners could be inhuman to his own.”

power, Pope Gregory IV. Gregory was there ostensibly to broker a peace between the two forces, but he failed to give the Emperor Louis his proper acknowledgement upon his arrival, the *adventus*, and thus appeared to be siding with Lothar as the true emperor.¹⁴⁸ Gregory's epistle to Louis' bishops clearly states where Gregory stands. Gregory stands with Lothar and blames the divisions of the realm with creating "disorder and dissension" in the Frankish lands.¹⁴⁹ Louis' Frankish bishops and the Pope exchanged hasty threats of mutual excommunication over what each side considered an overstepping of authority by the other party.¹⁵⁰ When the pope hears that his meeting with Louis "could be forestalled by a sacred command of the emperor," he is furious and responds in his Epistle to that slight as follows:

Such words are reprehensible, on the one hand, because a command from the Apostolic Seat should not have appeared to you less sacred than that command which you call imperial; on the other hand, because it is false when you said that this imperial command precedes ours. For it does not come before it; rather our command, that is, the pontifical, takes precedence. You should have not been unaware that the

¹⁴⁸ De Jong, *Penitential*, 47.

¹⁴⁹ "Epistle of Pope Gregory IV to the Bishops of Louis the Pious" (June, 833), ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 5 (Berlin, 1899) 228–232, trans. Courtney M. Booker, lines 80-92. Accessed on 2/25/13 at: <http://www.history.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/cbooker/docs/%2AGregory%20IV%20letter%20trans.pdf>. Used by permission. "Moreover, you say that the first division of the realm, which the emperor made among his sons, should now be changed in accordance with the suitability of things [*rerum oportunitatem*]*—*which is doubly false. On the one hand, it is not suitable but unsuitable [*inportunitas*], because it is the cause and origin of the disorder and dissension, of the commotion and depredation, and of all the evils that are too many to declare in detail, not to mention the innumerable perjuries and those who have worked to drive away both faith and peace. On the other hand, it is false because you do not yet know whether that first division is indeed changed or remains inviolate [*inlibata*] by the True King and Lord. For that change, which you declare was made in accordance with the suitability of things, has been perceived in the time since as not having been the will of God, because it is the source of many sins. To be sure, that which is done through the will of God is also commonly the cause of oppression and persecution, just as was done to the holy Apostles and martyrs, who suffered for nothing but the defense and confirmation of the gospel truth. But that which is done by the will of God cannot be the cause of crimes and sins, as is your division, which you declare was "suitable" [*oportunam*]."

¹⁵⁰ Booker, "Epistle", lines 43-59.

government of souls, which is pontifical, is greater than the imperial government, which is temporal.¹⁵¹

The pope's tone is terse and combative with disjointed, complicated grammar designed to beat his opponent down rhetorically. Why use the disjointed phrases and especially the double negative at the end except to try to unbalance the reader with the complex construction? Note also that the pope even now in 833 is asserting the primacy of the Apostolic Seat with "rather our command, that is, the pontifical, takes precedence" as if it has been a resolved issue for centuries.

But these exchanges remained just a battle of letters. Time was not on Louis' side. Having prospered long on the benefice of Christian ritual, but now without the blessing of the pope, Louis's troops felt on the wrong side of the Lord and began to desert him.¹⁵² With his numbers dwindling, Louis placed himself into the care of Lothar and was essentially deposed, again. Louis' foes had turned Christian text, ritual, and personnel against him.

But there was a problem. How do you legally depose an emperor? His position is granted by divine Grace, not any power available to men – even other emperors. Peter R. McKeon deftly dissects the problem in the following selection from his paper on Ebbo of Reims.

To them it seemed evident that no solution could be possible so long as Louis reigned, while in Lothar, designated by Louis himself as his successor, those who championed the principle of empire saw the logical alternative. But accomplishment of the replacement raised many problems. What was the nature of the imperial title granted Lothar in 817, and what was its relation to that still held by Louis? On the other hand, patently disastrous as Louis' reign was, there was no legitimate way of deposing him

¹⁵¹ Booker, "Epistle", lines 5-10.

¹⁵² Thegan, *Life*, (42) 170. "Then several men conspired to abandon the Emperor and to go over to his sons, especially those who had offended him before. Others followed and one night the largest part left him: leaving their tents, they went over to his sons. On the next day those who remained came to the emperor who admonished them, saying 'Go to my sons. I do not wish any of you to lose your lives or limbs on account of me.' And they, filled with tears, withdrew from him."

from the throne that was his, not by popular election or even ecclesiastical creation, but by the grace of God; the Fathers were clear that God demanded the unquestionable obedience of subjects to even the most evil of rulers. It was the episcopate that found a solution to the dilemma and in serving as catalyst for factions united only in their opposition to Louis' rule, the bishops sought to establish themselves as a vital political force in the Frankish state.¹⁵³

Lothar and his advisors concluded that Louis could not be stripped of his position, as it was conferred upon him by divine Grace and repeatedly strengthened by ritual. Thus their only solution was for Louis to renounce his title. If Louis were to renounce the title given to him through the ritual of anointment, Lothar would not be committing a grave error and the renunciation could be considered part of God's plan. Louis had firmly established himself as a devoutly Catholic emperor and this protected him for a time. No one was willing to question God's plan.

Lothar took Louis to the palace at Compiègne and attempted to commit Louis to a monastery for the rest of his days. Louis refused.¹⁵⁴ Lothar then unleashed his ecclesiastical offensive and sent bishops loyal to him to persuade Louis to renounce his throne and repent for his sins. In a cruel twist, Ebbo, Louis' lifelong companion, was sent to Louis to affect his renunciation. Thegan relates Ebbo's efforts as follows.

Then the bishops chose a shameless and most cruel man – Ebbo, the bishop of Rheims – who was originally of servile stock, to savagely crush Louis with lies of the others. Daily reproaching him, they said unheard of thing, they did unheard of things.

¹⁵³ Peter R. McKeon, "Archbishop Ebbo of Reims (816-835): A Study in the Carolingian Empire and Church", *Church History* (Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History, 1974), 440-441.

¹⁵⁴ Thegan, *Life*, (43) 170. "Lothar took his father to the palace at Compiègne and there, along with the bishops and several others, he deposed Louis. They ordered Louis to go to a monastery and spend all the days of his life there. But, he refusing, did not agree to their wish."

They took the sword from his thigh, putting him into monastic habit in accordance with the judgment of his slaves.¹⁵⁵

The ecclesiastical attack was successful and Louis relented. In the church of Saint-Médard in Soissons Louis presented himself to an assembly of bishops and nobles to hear the charges against him.

He did not contest the overblown charges and for the third time Louis committed himself to the ritual of public penance. An anonymous bishop that was present at the proceedings recorded the event for their records. Both the charges and Louis' actions were recorded. The following excerpt recounts Louis's actions on that day.

Thus, for all these [outrages] and all those recalled above, he [Louis] confessed himself tearfully to be guilty before God and the bishops and all the people, and attested aloud that he had sinned in all these respects; and he asked for a public penance, so that by doing penance he might give satisfaction to the church, which he had scandalized by sinning; and just as he had been a scandal by neglecting many matters, he surely professed his desire to be an example by undergoing a fitting penance. After this confession he handed over to the bishops the document with his sins and his confession, as a record for the future, and they laid it on the altar. Then he took off his belt of office, and placed it on the altar; taking off his worldly habit, he received the habit of a penitent by the imposition of the hands of the bishops. Let no one after a penance of this scope and kind dare to return to worldly office.¹⁵⁶

The tone of this document is drastically different from documents written by bishops concerning their king earlier in the paper. This is written by the hand of a man not threatened by criticism of the emperor and fears no repercussions from these actions. These bishops have become comfortable not only being in the presence of the emperor, but also casting judgment upon him.

¹⁵⁵ Thegan, *Life*, (44) 170-171.

¹⁵⁶ -, *The report of Compiègne by the bishops of the realm concerning the penance of Emperor Louis (833)*, translated in: De Jong, *Penitential*, 277.

It speaks of the emperor's sin as if it was the sin of a common man, and it clearly illustrates the assimilation that the bishops have attained.

Lothar succeeded with the help of the church and his bishops. Louis had repented publically twice before, but neither cost him his kingdom.¹⁵⁷ This time it did and the church was now intimated into the legitimacy of the emperor. Was he truly remorseful of his supposed sins? Was this another episode of political theater? It is impossible to know what Louis' true intentions were. But within a few months the tensions again grew between the three older brothers and Louis was restored with the help of Pepin and Louis of Bavaria. Louis continued to robustly reign over his empire for the remaining years of his life with no mention in the sources of trouble with his sons again. He passed in 840 aged sixty-four.

Even though he was restored in the end, we see that more than any of his Frankish predecessors, Louis allowed Christian ritual to play a significant role in the political sphere – even to his own detriment. The mistake of 817, the *Ordinatio Imperii*, clearly led to the rebellions of 817, 830 and 833, and resulted in Louis the Pious being deposed twice during his imperial reign. His piety, or perhaps his cunning, led him to publicly admit his sins and then submit to public penance – something unheard of since antiquity by an emperor – on three different occasions.

On the first two occasions he was judged, did his penance, and emerged stronger than before. But in 833 he had lost control of the ecclesiastical powers in his realm and those powers took an unprecedented step. In the course of doing Lothar's bidding, the bishops were allowed to claim that the emperor was no longer suitable for imperial office through religious error. Never before had an emperor been judged unfit by ecclesiastical authorities in this way. Louis could have surely refused to be judged by these bishops and cited nearly endless precedent. Yet he conceded to be judged, and that is what makes the judgment in 833 at

¹⁵⁷ McKeon, "Archbishop", 442. "By this strange alliance between prelates and aristocracy, imperialist and particular factions, and ultimately by Louis' own recognition of the significance of what had occurred, the empire left his hands so that he might save his soul."

Soissons monumental. The clergy could now stand in judgment of kings and emperors. But the clergy did not storm their way into imperial judgment, Louis let them in and allowed the clergy to seize the third required condition of my argument.¹⁵⁸

4.5 Conclusions

In the preceding chapters I have charted the growth of the new system of power implemented by the Franks with the active cooperation of the Catholic Church, and I argue that within this new system of power, the seeds of the Investiture Controversy are sown contrary to the conventional historiography.

The historiography of the Investiture Controversy conventionally looks to the tumultuous events of the early eleventh century for the basis of the Church's arguments. The majority of historians that specialize in the Investiture Controversy or twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe fail to look as far back as the ninth century for the origins of the conflict, and those historians that specialize in Late Antiquity typically consider the Investiture Controversy as a Middle Ages question. I assert that it is a conflict that bridges across both eras. The two notable exceptions are Ullmann and Blumenthal who make note of the ninth-century proprietary church issues, that if my thesis is correct, were the first small conflicts of the Investiture Controversy almost three hundred years before the conventional historiography places it.

In defense of this argument, I have postulated that there are three conditions necessary for the Church to successfully press its arguments in the Investiture Controversy. I assert that these three conditions are fulfilled by the completion of Louis the Pious' forced abdication in the ninth century. Once all three conditions were present, the Church had both the doctrine and the

¹⁵⁸ McKeon, "Archbishop", 442. "At the same time the bishops emphasized the necessity of their own involvement, deriving from a ministry which imposed upon them magisterial, advisory and corrective duties that they might disregard only at their peril; it is their order alone which was qualified to instruct about criteria of monarchy and to determine in what respects any monarch may be deficient in them. In this interpretation of the nature of their ministry, produced in the extraordinary circumstances of 833, we can see the germs of later Episcopal claims to exercise of a supervisory capacity inhering in their college with respect to the ordinary practice of government in the Christian realm."

bishops' assimilation into the circles of power to successfully press their assertion of the supremacy of ecclesiastical power over secular power.

These three necessary conditions are inclusion, expansion, and assimilation. I have shown how Clovis included himself and subsequent Frankish kings into the realm of the Catholic Church through his baptism. The letters of bishops Remigius and Avitus illustrated Clovis' early position as a king outside the Church and their subsequent approval of his baptism. This baptism established the first of a long line of Christian kings in Western Europe.

The second condition of expansion was fulfilled during the reign of Charlemagne. During his reign, the bishops and priests of his empire were put into his service as part of the *missi domenicis*. These bishops and priests saw their roles within the empire greatly increased as their duties expanded into the governance of the empire. This expansion of their duties and responsibilities was necessary for Charlemagne to implement his program of *correctio*.

The third and final condition of assimilation was fulfilled during the reign of Louis the Pious. Louis' repeated public use of the rituals of confession and atonement not only included his bishops in this very public spectacle, but also allowed them a voice in the emperor's fitness to serve is the final and most powerful of the conditions for the Church to successfully press its arguments of the Investiture Controversy. It is at this point that the Church has all the tools needed to press its claim of superiority. Shortly after this, the Church and Frankish nobles began to contest the rights of the nobility to install their hand-picked men as priests in their proprietary churches. This, I assert, is the beginnings of the Investiture Controversy.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

James Haun has a B.S. in Information Systems in addition to a M.A. in History. He is interested in the formation of the European State System as well as more modern European history – specifically the two World Wars that destroyed Europe in the twentieth century. He intends to explore the Second World War in the upcoming years.