
Moral Authority as a Power Resource

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Nearly half a century has passed since Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan generated a treatise on political theory that advocated analysis of power as a framework for analysis of political process.¹ Fully half a century has passed since Hans J. Morgenthau confidently assured us of the universality, in politics as in nature, of the principle of the balance of power and defined the interests of states in terms of power.² More than half a century has passed since Edward Hallett Carr set out to disabuse institutionalists and “idealists” of what he regarded as their utopian illusions and asserted a fundamental precept of the realist critique of prewar institutionalism, that politics is “in one sense always power politics.”³ The central role of power as an analytic construct in classical realist, structural realist, and structural neorealist scholarship has been so pervasive that the assertion requires no further elaboration. Still, the notion of “power” in the discipline and its usefulness as an analytic construct remain “essentially contested.”⁴

This article advances the argument that transnational moral authority is employed as a power resource to influence transnational outcomes and that it was employed as such in the presovereign system of feudal Europe. I argue that feudal ecclesial and politico-military actors competed for the moral authority attending the social identities they derived from the sacral norms and legitimating principles of the medieval,

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1. Lasswell and Kaplan 1950.
2. Morgenthau 1967 (the first edition appeared in 1948).
3. Carr 1946 (the first edition appeared in 1939).
4. Guzzini 1993, 446.

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feudal-theocratic order. I argue that moral authority was employed as a power resource to construct and define the rules of a hieratic, feudal-theocratic social order. It was employed to domesticate a troublesome and belligerent class of vassal-knights. It was employed to place the material power resource that this class constituted at the service of the Church and crown at the end of the “feudal revolution.” It was employed by the high medieval papacy to launch a military invasion of the Muslim Middle East with the preaching of the crusades. It was employed by the high medieval papacy to assert ecclesial supremacy over temporal rulership so effectively as to abet papal deposition of the Holy Roman Emperor during the Investiture Controversy. All of these applications of moral authority will be analyzed and illustrated.

Evolving Approaches to the Study of Power and Ideas

Unraveling the essence and processes of power continues to be a problem in the analysis of international politics and has drawn a variety of responses as theoretical work in the discipline has proceeded in the decades since the assertions of Carr and Morgenthau. As Friedrich Kratochwil has recently suggested, power “presumably pervades social reality from the level of discourse to that of coercion, from false-consciousness to agenda setting, but this pervasiveness has not impelled us to discard ‘power’ as an important problem. . . . It has encouraged a variety of theoretical efforts and thus is one of the strongest justifications for theoretical pluralism.”⁵

Power in the form of “capabilities,” or power resources, became the ultimate determinant of international outcomes in erstwhile dominant structural neorealist theories of international relations. The causal significance of power in this form was particularly “privileged” in the influential work of Kenneth Waltz. His definition of political structure rendered these power resources (specifically, military and economic capabilities of states) the only variable capable of changing structure (and, thus, of changing the system) provided that one accepted that the ordering principle of the system was perpetually anarchic and the function of sovereign states in the system was perpetually undifferentiated.⁶ The implicit assertion of a pervasive fungibility of these power resources in neorealist scholarship led to a spirited, if highly convergent debate between neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists regarding the utility of the economic analogy of power resources as fungibly useful for gaining one’s goals in the international arena.⁷ The neoliberal assertion of the causal significance for relations between states of economic and other forms of interdependence challenged the neorealist emphasis on an anarchic systemic ordering principle that would be diluted by interdependence. Neoliberal institutionalists suggested that these power resources were not fungible, like money, but were useful within the scope and domain of their employment—delimited by issue area. David Baldwin emphasized

5. Kratochwil 1996, 206.

6. This familiar argument is found in Waltz 1979.

7. An overview of this debate may be found in Baldwin 1993a.

the neoliberal objection to the money analogy with the concept of power in pointing out that, although money is “a standardized measure of economic value,” political value has no analog.⁸

Relational power models were developed in response to this criticism. Guzzini’s recent analysis illustrates that this task entailed a realization by neoliberals that “relational concepts of power require prior contextual analysis.”⁹ This required that social norms that provided this context be incorporated into the analysis to permit the identification and specification of “situationally relevant power resources.”¹⁰ Constructivist scholarship has taken Baldwin’s objection even further. Kratochwil argues, for example, that “it is the analogy to money that gives ‘power’ its purported explanatory force. But as we all know, money is not a thing but a shared convention.”¹¹ In other words, the capacity of money to serve as a medium of exchange, and to establish a “systemic character of independent transactions via the price mechanism,”¹² is based on agreement of parties using this mechanism. The social embeddedness of this convention accounts for the fungibility of money as a medium of economic exchange. In game-theoretic terms, this particular convention derives from norms that have been established through relatively simple games of coordination among actors with an interest in resolving the game.¹³ One implication of this observation is that to the extent that economic power resources may be fungibly applied to realize policy goals constrained even to the economic sphere, the successful application of these power resources is based on a social convention. Universal adherence to the convention permits both the agent and the object of the influence attempt to calculate the consequences of acceptance or rejection of the influence attempt. The reference point for such calculation is provided by the standard of exchange established by the price mechanism that is upheld by universal adherence to the convention. Without such a standard, calculation and rational determinative decision-making procedures become difficult and are likely to be replaced by a decision-making procedure, established by a different convention, that references a different standard.

Wendt’s critique of rational-choice theoretic models of international relations encompasses a critique of neoliberal institutionalism as well as structural neorealism. Wendt employed the debate between them to argue that many neoliberals engage in a mode of inquiry that suggests that they accept the variability of what he refers to as the “structure of identities and interests,” which he argues characterizes the context of social interaction.¹⁴ Wendt argues that this initially neoliberal insight opposes static and exogenously given assumptions about state identities and interests that have drawn so much criticism of the rational-choice theoretic mode of social analysis. He argues that the interests of actors are based on the social identities that pro-

8. Baldwin 1993b, 21.

9. Guzzini 1993, 455.

10. *Ibid.*, 456.

11. Kratochwil 1996, 212. See also Guzzini 1994, 54–56, 138.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Kratochwil 1989, 74–81.

14. Wendt 1992.

vide intersubjective meanings to actions.¹⁵ Interests, in this constructivist view, are defined in terms of the *identities* of actors, rather than in terms of the *power resources* that actors may employ in social interaction. In this view, the neorealist–neoliberal debate over the primacy of power versus institutions is misguided. Power and institutions (or conventions) are not opposing explanations of international interaction, because self-help and international anarchy are themselves institutions, constructed through sustained interaction.¹⁶ Thus, social power is embedded in the structure of identities and in the coconstituted, socially constructed interests of actors. Analysts, then, must first apprehend a *situationally specific or historically contingent structure of coconstituted identities and interests* before they can apprehend what constitutes a power resource in a given context. I adhere to this methodological suggestion in the empirical analysis that follows.

The neorealist–neoliberal debate ultimately generated some convergence around the argument that the utility of military power resources relies on the capacity to credibly threaten their use. In the prenuclear era, actors possessing a preponderance of military power resources and a reputation for willful belligerence experienced no difficulties in credibly threatening to use force to exert influence over weaker actors incapable of resistance. Brute force in a system that lacked a systemic convention that could delegitimize its use proved unproblematically useful.

My purpose is not to argue that material power resources lack utility for exerting influence over other actors in the system. Material power resources are highly useful in a system in which the structure of identities and interests of actors converge in significant measure around the social convention of systemic anarchy. In conventionally anarchic systems, the utility of material power resources is indicated by the care with which actors labor to equip themselves with these resources. I shall, however, ask the reader who may be skeptical of the utility of moral and ideational power resources to reciprocate this concession when I move on to analyze an empirically observable system in which the principal actors exerted an equivalent effort in order to equip themselves with that which, following Durkheim, I will simply call “moral authority.”¹⁷ I demonstrate that ideational and material arguments need not oppose one another but may reinforce one another to enrich our understanding of the nature and functioning of power resources in international systems.

I argue that moral authority—like money, or the credible threat of military force in a conventionally anarchic system—acquires utility as a power resource to the extent that it is institutionalized as a convention. Moral authority acquires utility as a power resource when it becomes socially embedded in a system of actors whose social identities and interests impel them to recognize it as a power resource. The structure of identities and interests that institutionalized moral authority in feudal Europe was historically contingent on the responses of actors to events peculiar to a society first united in the pseudotheocratic embrace of a transcontinental Carolingian Empire and

15. In describing ‘intersubjective meanings,’ Wendt argues that people act toward objects on the basis of meanings that these objects have for them; see Wendt 1992, 396.

16. *Ibid.*, 396–401.

17. Durkheim 1974, 45.

then forced to respond to the consequences of its systematic fragmentation on the death of Charlemagne. The moral authority of the high medieval papacy of the early thirteenth century resulted from institutionalizing a transnational *moral* form of authority and order that had been lost since the ninth-century death of Charlemagne deprived Europe of the imperial *administrative* form of authority and order.

The insights of such diverse theorists as Baldwin, Kratochwil, and Wendt suggest that successfully applying economic resources as power resources relies on the social convention of a medium of exchange and applying military power resources relies on the social convention of international anarchy. Thus, it appears reasonable to search for the utility of a power resource such as moral authority, which on first reflection appears more difficult to specify, in the sources of yet another social convention. As will emerge in the following analysis, in feudal Europe both ecclesial and politico-military authorities were careful to cloak themselves in the robe of sacral legitimacy. They struggled over moral authority as a power resource, even as they employed against one another the material power resources that have long been so familiar and useful to political leaders.

I demonstrate that the principle of the sacral legitimacy of either spiritual or temporal rulership became so firmly established as the fundamental legitimating principle of the medieval, feudal-theocratic order that it was institutionalized in widely diverse forms of ecclesial and political offices. Bereft of any secular means of legitimating rulership, politico-military authorities first clung to the moral authority conferred on them in their sacral kingship by the Church and later vied for moral authority with the Church when disputes arose between temporal and spiritual rulers. Politico-military authorities not only attempted to counter the moral authority of high ecclesial office with material power resources, they vied for their share in the moral authority of their ecclesial counterparts. Politico-military authorities ultimately advanced ideas and theories regarding the sacral basis of their rulership that, when institutionalized into a new convention of divinely ordained kingship, would lend them a moral authority that could compete as a power resource with the moral authority that the papacy had employed to such great effect in the late Middle Ages.

Recently, a number of scholars, whose analytic preferences derive from the neoliberal tradition, have examined the causal significance of ideas in structuring outcomes in international social interaction. This move is an extension of the neoliberal institutionalist research program that had extended its scope to the study of social norms in the process of developing relational models of power to compete with neorealist models, which have tended to treat power resources as unproblematically fungible. Some of these scholars have examined a class of socially significant ideas they have labeled “principled ideas” and have ascribed “power” to these ideas in a fashion that approaches identifying principled ideation (ethical or moral ideas) as a power resource.¹⁸

Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane argue that “principled beliefs” also have causal significance for social interaction. Principled beliefs are “normative ideas that

18. Sikkink 1993b.

specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust.”¹⁹ Principled beliefs “are often justified in terms of larger world views, but those world views are frequently expansive enough to encompass opposed principled beliefs.”²⁰ Robert Jackson has argued that principled ideas serve as guidelines for the behavior of a social collectivity, and Katheryn Sikkink has argued that principled ideas permit decisive collective action irrespective of uncertainty.²¹ Without taking issue with these suggestions, the mechanism by which these suggested causal attributes of principled ideas are effected is very difficult to verify without an exhaustive treatment of competing explanations. I argue that in the ideologically charged environment of high medieval, feudal Europe—an era that the historian Will Durant characterized as an “age of faith”²²—principled ideas were employed to a specific and empirically observable effect. They were invaluable in stimulating the development of new social institutions.

I also address the question of the social causation of ideas and their relation to social power. I argue that ideas are causally significant to the extent that they assist the development of new social institutions, which are sources of new power resources. Ideas, especially “principled ideas” serve as sources of new social identities for actors within a social system. This allows for change in the structure of actor identities and interests that provide the context for interaction. Here it is important to recall Wendt’s essential insight that actors who acquire new social identities may experience change in their interests (which are coconstituted with these social identities) within the system. When ideas are successfully transmitted to the system, they stimulate the development of new norms and principles, which may become institutionalized into new conventions.

As we have already learned from Kratochwil’s treatment of the convention of money and Wendt’s treatment of the convention of anarchy, institutionalizing social practices into conventions lends utility as a power resource to the subject of the convention; for example, the subject of the convention of market exchange is the medium of exchange—namely, money, which acquires utility (value) by virtue of its status within the convention as the medium of value. The subject of the convention of self-help in an anarchy is the medium of self-help—namely, state capabilities, which acquire utility (capacity to effect outcomes in disputes with other actors) by virtue of their status within the convention as the medium of dispute resolution. As will become evident in the empirical analysis to follow, in feudal Europe the subject of a convention of the primacy of spiritual–moral principles over temporal–material expedience was the medium of spiritual–moral primacy, namely moral authority. Moral authority was institutionalized in both ecclesial and temporal offices and acquired its utility by virtue of its status as a medium of arbitrating disputes among spiritual and temporal authority. Thus, money, state capabilities, and moral authority all acquire

19. Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 10.

20. *Ibid.*

21. See Jackson 1993; and Sikkink, 1993a,b.

22. Durant 1950.

the characteristics of power resources when this capacity is bestowed on them as the media by which the business of the social institutions that validate these resources may be transacted.

This article illustrates that moral authority was employed as a power resource, as well as material power resources, in feudal Europe by both ecclesial and politico-military authorities to effect outcomes in all manner of disputes. If we can identify a significant causal role for ideas and beliefs in generating social and political institutions in feudal Europe, and for explaining behavior consistent with our understanding of the broad outlines of medieval and feudal history, this might induce us to ascribe some transhistorical validity to the causal significance of social ideation. I demonstrate that new ideas were periodically advanced by both ecclesial and politico-military authorities to transform social identities, reformulate interests, and thereby assist in the creation of new social conventions and institutions from which this ideational power resource was employed to tangible effect in dispute resolution.

Principled ideas were employed by the church and politico-military authorities alike to domesticate the military caste of warrior-vassals, to transform their identities and interests, and to reconstitute them as a sanctioned class with a prominent and legitimated functional role to play in the medieval feudal-theocratic order. This stimulated new norms of behavior for belligerents, which abetted the construction of the social institution of chivalrous knighthood. This social institution served an enormously important social control function and resulted in what Michael Mann has in other contexts referred to as feudal “normative pacification.”²³ Novel principled ideas were employed by the Church, with a success that varied throughout the era, and with particular force at the time of the Investiture Controversy, to reassert the superiority of sacral authority over temporal authority. This successful assertion of the moral authority of the Church lent moral authority the characteristic of a power resource, later employed to great effect by the institution of the high medieval papacy. Temporal authority developed its own bevy of principled ideas in response to this assertion, and the social institution of a sacral kingship, which argued that it had received the right to rule directly from God, unmediated by the church. This novel (in the fourteenth century) social institution, which had begun as an idea, ultimately equipped politico-military authorities with a form of moral authority that enabled them to rival the moral power resources of the papacy. Principled ideas were employed by both ecclesial and politico-military feudal European actors to construct new institutions and conventions as bases for claims to possess moral and legitimate authority to act in both the sacral and temporal realms. Each employed this moral authority as a power resource to delegitimize the authority claims of rivals. I will now proceed with the empirical analysis by describing how the sacral, hieratic legitimating principles of the early medieval Christian belief system structured the social identities of feudal European society and thereby influenced the institutional forms of feudal social order.

23. Mann 1986, 381–83.

Sacral Hierarchy and Feudal Social Order

From the fourth through the ninth centuries, early medieval concepts of social order were founded on a concept of hierarchy based on a uniquely Christian concept of natural law. World order was founded on and conceived in terms of theological conceptions of the divine order. “God and nature were equated”—thus natural law was God’s law, the law of *aequitas* (the eternal order), and divine will constituted the exercise of *justitia* (justice).²⁴

The early medievals saw hierarchy in both the divine and earthly orders. They considered both hierarchies to reflect the divine will. “Secular law, too, was considered a gift of God . . . No distinction between natural law and morality was admitted.”²⁵ Social distinctions were thought to reflect the divine order. This theme resonates throughout the political theology of Gerard of Cambrai (975–1051), who was greatly influenced by the thought of Pope Gregory I (Gregory the Great, 540–604). Gerard articulated the social theory and ethic of the early Middle Ages by simply observing that “there were distinctions between men, an essential inequality which could be compensated only by charity, mercy, and mutual service . . . [and he called for] a generous redistribution of wealth within an inevitable framework of inequality.”²⁶

During the Middle Ages it was thought that a divinely ordained natural law set up and sanctified social distinction, and the medieval conception of *libertas* (right) was strongly conditioned by the station one had been assigned in the natural order. Early medieval thinkers lacked a conception of positive law in which the objective rights of each and every individual were set down and inalienably established. The medieval *libertas* “simply means subjective right, and that the law is nothing more than the sum of all individual *libertates*. . . . A privilege does not . . . create exceptions to a generally prevailing law; rather it is the precise formulation of an actual and concrete subjective right.”²⁷

The heteronomous legal culture that John Gerard Ruggie has described, and Bull has alluded to, resulted from the fusion of the natural legal theory, derived from the political theology of the medieval Church and from the diversity of legal cultures from which the legal tradition of the Carolingian Empire had been forged.²⁸ This diversity was so problematic for Charlemagne that in 802 he ordered revision of the Salic, Alamannian, and Bavarian codes and redacted the laws of the Saxons and Frisians. A Carolingian “jurist” might also have to be conversant in the legal traditions of the Riparians, Lombards, the “Breviary of Alaric,” the Gambetta Law, and the Theodosian Code.²⁹

All of these sources of law were eventually brought into line with the natural law tradition of the canonical Church, though the multiple sources of allegiance endemic

24. Tellenbach 1959, 25.

25. *Ibid.*, 24.

26. Duby 1980, 38.

27. Tellenbach 1959, 21.

28. See Ruggie 1983; and Bull 1977, 254–76.

29. Riché 1978, 11.

to the feudal mode of social organization obviated the application of formal legal codes in many areas. Until the middle of the eleventh century, for example, justice was not administered in France by the nobility; it was arbitrated among parties by the nobility by employing a combination of legal codes and customs to craft a mutually acceptable settlement that the nobility would then enforce.³⁰ When the administration of legal codes became more prevalent, the *libertas* granted by this fusion of canonical and secular legal tradition were subjective rights that adjudicated the privileges associated with the status assigned to the individual by his or her place in the natural social order. This place was assigned either by birth or by function in what was becoming an essentially trifunctional society. Their *libertates* became conditioned by whether they were “men of prayer [*oratoribus*], farmers [*agriculturibus*], . . . [or] men of war [*pugnatoribus*].”³¹

The subjectivity of *libertas* that was articulated in this natural law implied a reciprocal relationship between the rights or privileges and duties or obligations associated with one’s estate or status in the natural hierarchy. Both the freeman and the serf were “persons.” “Each possessed a concrete bundle of rights, with corresponding duties. . . . Though bound to the soil, the villein had a claim to his land and could not be separated from it . . . and he could only be called upon to do a fixed amount of labor [for his lord].”³² The individual’s *libertas* was ultimately conditioned by the belief that

it is the will of the Creator that in Heaven and on earth the higher shall always rule over the lower. Each individual and each class should stay in its place, perform its assigned tasks and enjoy the favors and rights proper to it. World order is assured by the fundamental principle of natural law, “to each his own”. To rebel against this rule is a grievous sin which brings confusion into the world and wrongs its Ruler.³³

Medieval heteronomy, although an artifact of the feudal political fragmentation that resulted from the rupture of the Carolingian Empire, was legitimated by a largely theocratic conception of a just social order. Thus, two major consequences of the legal reasoning that grew out of the structure of social identities informed by the strictures of Christian theology in the feudal period included the development of the legal basis for the feudal modes of *social organization* and of *production* or economic organization. Social hierarchy was thought to reflect the celestial hierarchy. The land was held in the collective stewardship of the nobility. A dependent peasantry, assigned their dependent status by natural law and low birth, were legally bound to the land and required to pay rents in the currency of their labor services. This arrangement constituted a social and economic structure that was to prove resilient for centuries and was to play a significant role in delaying the innovation of

30. White 1978, 281–301.

31. Duby 1980, 59. The doctrine of social trifunctionality held that the good of Christian society demanded that men should apply themselves to one of these three interdependent and necessary stations.

32. Tellenbach 1959, 19.

33. *Ibid.*, 39.

capitalist production relations: “as labor was tied to land and lord, it could not be easily treated as a commodity, exchangeable against other factors of production.”³⁴

The hierarchy and inequality of legal and social status, this “inequality principle,”³⁵ had been developed in the political theology of the early Middle Ages into a “hierarchy of merits” that not only served as a legitimating principle for the existing social order, but enjoined those at the top of the social pyramid to use their power to maintain the social distinctions that had been instituted by *natura*. Adalbero of Laon (circa 950–1030) advised his king that the “example of heaven leads to the assertion that inequality is providential, that the power of the king is one of *distinctio*, and of *discretio*.”³⁶ The king was to maintain social distinctions so the earthly order would reflect the celestial order.

Isadore of Seville then drew on the hierarchical thinking of Gregory the Great’s meditation on the Book of Job to the same effect. Gregory had introduced the concept of the “order of merits” as an essential order. Merit was granted by God’s arbitrary choice so “one part of society was worthy to rule over the remainder . . . [as] all hierarchy originated in the unequal distribution of good and evil.”³⁷ King and nobles were thus proven meritorious in the eyes of God by their high birth on earth. Bishops and abbots (even priests and monks) were meritorious by virtue of their divine office. The nonnoble laity were to obey their kings and bishops and gain merit by their obedience in the estate they had been allotted. The principle of the hierarchy of merits came early and stayed late as a legitimating principle and the basis of the constitutive rules of feudal social order.³⁸ “Charlemagne had laid it down as a law: ‘Every man shall keep to his own life’s purpose and his own profession, *unanimously*.’”³⁹ The structure of social identities consistent with Christian theology engendered the constitutive, hieratic principles of feudal social organization. These principles were enshrined in hieratic institutions that were employed by elites to reproduce feudal social structure.

Sacral Legitimation and Institutions: The Inequality Principle and Sacerdotal Kingship

The early medieval king, perched at the top of the hierarchy of merits among all men under his rule, was thought to be, from the time of the Carolingians, “essentially different from other laymen. . . . The king’s rule is holy, his person is sacred, he is set up and put down by God.”⁴⁰ Art of the period often depicted the hand of the creator stretched out over the king’s head. He was consecrated king in a ceremony injected into the Mass and anointed with the oil of chrism by the bishops. He was thought to

34. Mann 1986, 375.

35. Duby 1980, 58.

36. *Ibid.*, 67.

37. *Ibid.*, 48.

38. Kratochwil 1989, chap. 3.

39. Duby 1980, 48; emphasis in original.

40. Tellenbach 1959, 57.

have acquired some of God's power at the hands of the bishops by this ceremony and to emerge a *novus homo* (new man). At the conclusion of this ceremony he was "as an expression of this inner change, received into the ranks of the clergy . . . [as] protector of the Church, the head of the people, even the mediator between the clergy and the people" but still subject to guidance, in ecclesial matters, by the clergy.⁴¹

Thus, these hierarchic principles also provided the fundamental legitimating principles of sacerdotal kingship. This was a central legitimating principle of the medieval, feudal-theocratic order. The sacral status of early medieval kingship was an important legitimating principle for a society that lacked a secular conception of the legitimacy of a social order or a political regime. It had the advantage of rendering the position of the monarch unassailable at the top of the social and political pyramid. It had the disadvantage of rendering the monarch dependent on the support of the Church and its ruler. The legitimacy of the monarch's reign had no other foundation than the political theology of the Church. Neither did the monarch have recourse to an apparatus of administration that permitted excluding the higher clergy from the governance of the realm. "The only theoretical defense of monarchical power available was a theological one, an assertion that the emperor or pope was a minister of God on earth and so qualified to rule the affairs of all men."⁴²

The early medieval monarch's "Christ-centered kingship" left him ensconced firmly on the throne, but only so long as the Church continued to affirm him as sacred in his person.⁴³ Monarchs were judged in accordance with their conduct. They were not judged "sovereign" in the modern sense of possessing an unconditional right to rule, particularly as the early Middle Ages waned. Georges Duby suggests that "In the eleventh century, the bishops looked upon no sovereign authority other than that of Christ, the king of kings, as the source of sacerdotal function."⁴⁴ Among churchmen the king was valued as a provender of order, as "legislator and pacifier" from whom Christian society was to receive *Rex, lex, pax*. Still, according to the political theology that molded the social institutions of the period, kings were subject "to divine law, hence to the Church and consequently to the bishops."⁴⁵ They were to function not as clergy but as pacifying agents to ensure that the Church could do its work. This mutual interdependence, visible early in the period, ensured that the legal infrastructure of the order would be inconducive to the autonomous exercise of centralized power within a contiguous territorial realm. Heteronomy negated any notion of "sovereignty," as did the mutual interdependence of king and Church for the authority they exercised within feudal European society.

It is difficult to separate the extent to which sacerdotal kingship emerged as a bargain struck between feudal sacral authority and feudal politico-military authority and the extent to which the institution sprang naturally from the hieratic principles of medieval Christendom. Certainly the arrangement contained the elements of a positive-

41. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

42. Tierney 1988, 2.

43. Kantorowicz 1957, especially chaps. 3, 4, 8.

44. Duby 1980, 58.

45. *Ibid.*, 46.

sum bargain from which both sacral and politico-military authorities derived utility. The Church received protection and an ally who enforced social stability.

The least that can be said of the effect of the sacral legitimating principles on the institution of feudal European sacerdotal kingship is that the convention served as an agent of “normative pacification” in medieval society. It did so by delegitimizing the claims of the sacerdotal monarch’s rivals to his throne and by delegitimizing revolt against his sacrally mediated rule by nobility and peasantry alike. Thus, principles (like the inequality principle) derived from the political theology of medieval Christendom, and institutions (like sacerdotal kingship) derived from these conflicting principles, supplied monarchs with the moral authority of sacral legitimacy that helped them to combat rival authority claims by other politico-military actors.

After the feudal revolution, later in the Middle Ages, when the convention was more fully established, revolt against a sacerdotal king by powerful and ambitious, though legally or nominally subordinate, nobility was quite difficult when the Church had sanctioned the king’s rule. Revolt against this rulership was not only a crime, but under these conditions was also regarded as a sin. By extension of the inequality principle, revolt by the peasantry against their lord was thought to incur transcendental as well as legal sanctions. The rebellious noble who might challenge the sacerdotal monarch for temporal power would still be unlikely to flout ecclesial pronouncements for fear of transcendental sanctions. Mann recounts the essence of this “normative pacification”:

The Church preached consideration, decency, and charity toward all Christians: basic normative pacification, a substitute for the coercive pacification normally required in previous extensive societies. The main sanction that the Church could provide was not physical force but exclusion from the community—in the last resort—excommunication. *Extra ecclesium nulla salus* (no salvation outside the Church) was accepted almost universally. Even the worst bandit was wary of excommunication, wished to die absolved.⁴⁶

The Feudal Revolution and Social Trifunctionality: Creating New Social Institutions

The institution of sacerdotal kingship had been the only prop available to legitimate monarchy during the centuries when the king was hard pressed to provide order for the Church or for society at large. The institution of sacerdotal kingship was poorly established when the Carolingian Empire fragmented. Thus, the moral authority of sacerdotal kingship was not always an adequate power resource to combat the authority claims of rivals who were well endowed with material power resources. The Carolingian collapse and the “feudal revolution” that followed had weakened monarchy in the eyes of the Church. The monarchy could afford little protection to the Church. Local strongmen ruled churchmen and laity alike by the late tenth century in

46. Mann 1986, 381.

France, and the Holy Roman Emperor had limited control over German and Central European princes. The papacy was at this time struggling to recover from the nadir to which feudal disintegration had plunged it in the mid-ninth century, at which time “the popes themselves became puppets of rival factions contending the overlordship of Rome.”⁴⁷

At the local level the Church had been feudalized as well under the *eigenkloster-eigenkirchen* system (privately owned abbeys and churches). As the feudal revolution progressed, local lords gained control over monastic establishments, parish churches, and even cathedrals by building and endowing them. The decline of the monarchy across Europe left this task to the local lords as the resources of kings increasingly were consumed by the requirements of defense in the wake of feudal political fragmentation and Nordic incursions. Increasingly, local lords placed clergy or monks in their *eigenkirchen* and *eigenkloster*. They stipulated church and monastic rules, what services were owed, and disciplined the religious within them.⁴⁸ Frequently during this period feudal lords built churches but failed to endow them, and then sold them off after obtaining lucrative tithes and rights to future tithes, treating these ecclesial institutions as speculative investments, with the result that “the church fell into ruins and the poor remained hungry.”⁴⁹

Due to the general state of disorder in post-Carolingian Europe, neither churchmen nor lay society had recourse. Aside from decentralizing political authority and proprietarizing nearly all lands and institutions, the feudal revolution privatized the purposeful use of violence. This enabled the rapid development of a class of men who earned their living exclusively by bearing arms. No feudal lord could do without their services in generous quantity. They helped him to subdue his neighbors and competitors and to maximize the reach of his rent seeking. The vassal-knights of the early eleventh century were not only the agents but, in Gramscian terms, the shock troops of the feudal system of seigniorial exploitation. Their armed might and fierce social function now set them apart from other laymen. After the feudal revolution, “a fundamental social dividing line was henceforth drawn according to a new criterion, the bearing of arms.”⁵⁰

The churchmen were not blind to the extent to which the effects of the feudal revolution—disorder, seigniorial exploitation, ecclesial proprietarization—were inimical to the interests and mission of the Church. Monkish chroniclers bemoan the results during the nadir of the French monarchy when, “at the end of the tenth century . . . the king had very little authority in most of France.”⁵¹ The Church saw in this a significant crisis of the existing social order. The operation of feudal private armies had become more fierce than ever by the decades between 1020 and 1039. The vassal-knight—the incarnation of material power resources—loomed larger over the social and economic European landscape than any other identifiable contempo-

47. Tierney 1988, 25.

48. Tellenbach 1959, 71.

49. *Ibid.*, 74.

50. Duby 1980, 154.

51. Reynolds 1984, 278.

rary social grouping. It was at this precise historical moment that churchmen began to articulate a doctrine that would incorporate a rather rude feature of the terrestrial order into the divine order that this terrestrial order was expected to reflect. Gerard of Cambrai had joined the French King Robert at Compiègne in 1023 to prepare for a meeting at Ivois that was intended to achieve a general pacification of France. Duby argues that it was here that the trifunctional vision of medieval society was formally articulated.⁵² A sacral legitimation was granted to a de facto material product of the feudal revolution in the hope that thus sacrally legitimated, and accorded the status of a pillar of medieval society, the profession of arms could be domesticated. The move constituted a clear attempt to transform the social identity of the vassal-knight and thereby to alter his perception of his interests.

In essence, the *bellatores* were allotted the function of protecting the *oratores* and *laboratores*. The promulgation of the Peace of God at Le Puy in 994 had clearly not sufficed to remind them that “protection” of the people did not encompass the excesses they sometimes perpetrated in the exercise of their function. The *oratores* would, as always, speak for and intervene before God on behalf of the *bellatores* and *laboratores*. The latter were to compensate the *oratores* and *bellatores* for their protection in the divine and temporal realms with the fruits of their labor. They were sternly admonished to be about that labor.

Certainly, social trifunctionality played a strong role in mitigating a number of problems for which rational instrumental forms of interest would have impelled a search for solutions. The convention helped feudal European society to stabilize the conflagrations that the fragmentation of the Carolingian Empire had kindled. It mitigated the threat to the Church and to the crown that the feudal revolution had set in motion. It legitimated the continued subjection of the peasantry to the authority of the clerics and warriors. In as much as it was a successful attempt to legitimate the supremacy of these orders, however, it illustrates how the rationalist, material explanation is augmented by an ideational and cultural explanation. Here we can see that material and ideational-cultural explanations can actually reinforce one another. *Moral suasion was employed to direct material power toward a new social purpose. The intersubjective meaning of material force was thereby altered for all sectors of feudal European society.*

Thus the development of the doctrine of social trifunctionality, even if born of the necessity to stem the burgeoning crisis in the social order that feudal fragmentation had produced, attended two processes that supported the emerging feudal-theocratic, heteronomous order. The doctrine *institutionalized sacral legitimating principles* by sacrally legitimating existing social roles. The doctrine *institutionalized heteronomy* as a social convention by apportioning social power and social obligations among three interdependent orders of society. Of course the order of *laboratores* received many obligations and little social power from this arrangement.⁵³ These burdens were allocated to them by the doctrine of social trifunctionality as just payment for the benefits of salvation bestowed on them by the *oratores* and for the protection and

52. Duby 1980, 126.

53. Mann 1986, 384.

justitia bestowed on them by the *bellatores*. This arrangement was not seen, as we judge it today, as exploitative, but as a just and harmonious reflection of the divine order. A single convention arising from an ideational initiative—the doctrine of social trifunctionality—institutionalized three principles derived from the social theology of medieval Christendom—namely hierarchy, serfdom, and heteronomy.

***Milites Christi*: The Crusades and the Institution of Chivalrous Knighthood**

One important effect of adopting this convention was that it assisted in domesticating what had been a destabilizing and predatory class of belligerents. The convention placed the material power that this class represented at the service of the Church and of feudal European society. The creation of chivalrous knighthood as a social institution pivotal to the maintenance of a just social order endowed the Church with the moral authority to direct this material power toward the social purposes that it deemed necessary to uphold and extend this just social order.

The complete domestication of the vassal-knight had to await the preaching of the First Crusade by Urban II at the 1095 Council of Clermont. The eleventh century vassal-knight had grown weary of the bitter resentment of the more passive lay and ecclesial classes for their role as the scoundrels of the feudal revolution.⁵⁴ They responded to Urban's appeal with the enthusiasm of those promised a new and elevated social standing in return for doing what they did best—so long as they did it somewhere else. The preaching of the First Crusade was met with a resounding response by the warrior classes of Europe. The tasks that Urban assigned the first crusaders were tasks that they were uniquely qualified to accomplish, and thousands of noblemen and knights throughout Christian Europe took up these tasks with relish. Urban's call extended the moral authority of the Church to the vassal-knight, who received it as a warrant for a war of liberation, with the twin objectives of liberating beleaguered members of the Eastern churches from Muslim domination and persecution and of liberating the city of Jerusalem and all the places holy to the Christian faith from Muslim hands. Urban sanctified this military campaign by declaring that the crusaders would be doing the work of Christ. Knights pledging themselves to the campaign would be the true *milites Christi* (knights of Christ). A plenary indulgence for the remission of sins would be granted to all crusaders on the attainment of Jerusalem and a visit to the holy sepulcher. Urban pronounced instant and unconditional justification of the martyred soldiers who died in the course of the campaign, and they were granted assurance of the attainment of heaven in the event of meeting their death in the enterprise.⁵⁵

Jonathan Riley-Smith and I. S. Robinson have emphasized that crusaders were encouraged to regard the campaign as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem that they might be

54. I suggested this in an earlier essay; see Hall and Kratochwil 1993, 488–89.

55. Riley-Smith 1986, chap. 1. For a description of the significant corpus of canon law that grew out of the crusades, see Brundage 1969.

motivated by the knowledge that they would enjoy all the spiritual benefits of the pilgrim.⁵⁶ The goal of Jerusalem reinforced this, and the would-be crusader was induced to take a pilgrim's vow and receive a cross of pilgrimage at the hands of the clergy. This vow, for the laity, was akin to holy orders and went well beyond a simple oath of association. Smith notes that "it is certain that the vow introduced at the Council of Clermont was a *votum*, a proper vow, made to God [as opposed to an association of men] to fight for him on a journey to Jerusalem; only there could it be fulfilled," and "this was a public vow enforceable by the [moral authority of the] Church" and was apparently taken quite seriously in as much as "the clergy accompanying the crusade had appealed for the excommunication of those who had not left for the East as they had promised." This was enforced in turn by Urban II and Paschal II.⁵⁷ Thus, moral authority was backed up with the threat of ecclesial sanctions.

On the attainment of Jerusalem the terms of the crusaders' vows had been fulfilled, and they left the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem garrisoned by only a few hundreds of knights and returned home having fulfilled their vows, attained their glory, and, they hoped (trusting in Urban's indulgence), remitted their sins through service to Christ and the Church. It is misleading to speak simply of the crusaders' "failure" to hold the East, as one analyst has recently suggested.⁵⁸ The conception of crusade-as-pilgrimage strongly indicates that the majority of the crusaders had no intention or motivation to remain and hold the East, whatever the wishes of the papacy or the Eastern churches that they were relieving. This is further evidenced by the minuscule number of crusaders who made any arrangements to divest themselves of their property and estates in Europe prior to departure except for the limited purpose of raising the large sums of money required to equip and sustain them for a journey and campaign that was to keep them away from their homes, often their incomes, for three years and expose them to disease, famine, and in many cases death. Few of the crusaders took actions before leaving that gave evidence that they planned to settle in the East on attaining Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Influential historians of the crusades, such as Riley-Smith, Christopher Tyerman, and Benjamin Kedar appear to have little doubt that the motivations of the crusaders were typically genuinely religious.⁶⁰ Riley-Smith emphasizes the response of secular *milites* to Urban's call to the crusades as a "*recte oblatio* (a right kind of sacrifice) and an act of devotion for the salvation of the participant's soul."⁶¹ His social standing and self-image, however, were enormously enhanced by the venture as well.

Yet rational instrumental accounts of motivations cannot reveal the structure of identities and interests that animated the crusader. The costs of the crusade for the crusader were enormous. Riley-Smith notes that once in the Holy Land, "for under-

56. *Ibid.*, 10–18.

57. See Riley-Smith 1986, 22–23; and Robinson 1990, 333.

58. Fischer 1992, 438.

59. Riley-Smith 1986, chap. 2.

60. See Tyerman 1988; and Kedar 1984.

61. *Ibid.*, 26.

standable reasons—above all the need to live—the crusaders became [on arriving in the Middle East] obsessed by loot but . . . there is little evidence for them returning home rich in anything but [religious] relics.⁶² A crusader had to provide himself with “armor, arms, war-horses, pack-horses, and servants . . . a costly journey.”⁶³ He notes that a twelfth-century knight called on to serve in a continental conflict required a sum twice his annual income to provision himself—in the late eleventh century, a French knight would require much more to equip himself for a much further and longer campaign to the East. He estimates that “a factor of 4 or 5 [times annual income] would not be unreasonable,” noting further that many knights were landless, and many a noble family sent two or three expensively equipped family members to Jerusalem.⁶⁴ As Mann suggests, in the materially deprived conditions of medieval, feudal Europe, “only a relatively wealthy man could keep a horse and equip himself with body armor.”⁶⁵ Significantly, many a feudal lord sold his seigniorial rights to future income back to his fiefs for a pittance, often accompanied by a writ of self-denunciation for past oppression and a vow to redeem his errors as part of his contract to raise funds to accouter himself for crusading.⁶⁶

Descriptions of the conditions of the march to Jerusalem, the devotion to religious relics, nearly the only “booty” brought back, the faith the crusaders put in “apparitions,” and “visitations” of saints impelling them to continue all suggest that a crusade was not primarily a material enterprise. Evidence abounds that this was as true for subsequent crusades as for the First Crusade, and that by the Third Crusade at the end of the twelfth century, led by the English royal Richard I, crusading had become an act of political rather than merely individual duty and devotion.⁶⁷ One analyst has suggested that the Fifth Crusade was again employed by Honorius III as “an instrument for the moral transformation of society.”⁶⁸ Irrespective of how we might today judge their objective merits, the crusades illustrate the power of moral authority on the march, as did the Muslim campaigns that had earlier so effectively abetted the transmission of Islam.⁶⁹

One must consider the evidence put forward by Riley-Smith that the crusaders were influenced by the monastic reform movement that began in the late tenth century. The crusader armies gave the participants the illusion of being connected with “a great monastic community on the move, its path marked by regular and solemn intercessionary liturgies,” and because, like the cloistered monks, “renouncing wives, children, and earthly possessions they sought voluntary exile for the love of God, adopting temporary poverty and chastity” and “followed a way of the cross that could lead to martyrdom.”⁷⁰

62. *Ibid.*, 42.

63. *Ibid.*, 43.

64. Riley-Smith 1986, 42–49.

65. Mann 1986, 393.

66. For examples of such self denunciations, see Riley-Smith 1986, 37–41.

67. See Tyerman’s account of the Third Crusade in Tyerman 1988, especially 58–59.

68. Powell 1986, 201.

69. Hourani 1991, 22–97.

70. Riley-Smith 1986, 150–51, 155, see also chap. 4.

Duby has provided a penetrating analysis of the effect of the preaching of the crusade on the manner in which the medieval vassal-knight was perceived in European Christian society and on the manner in which he henceforth perceived himself. The crusade “cleansed knighthood of its impurities. . . . When a knight took the cross he was at last pledging to respect the moral code that justified his pre-eminent worldly station. . . . In perfection, he was accepting the duties associated with his specific function. God had need of knighthood. He wished it to be good.”⁷¹

Monarchy and Church now cooperated in institutionalizing a “principled” ideology of the Christianized warrior class. We call this chivalry. Monarchy benefited from the transformation of the feudal vassal-knight into the chivalrous Christian knight. As developed with the influence and teaching of the Church, chivalry “required the display of specific virtues, both moral (fidelity) and physical (valor).”⁷² By the same influence, the construction of the institution of chivalrous knighthood detached the *milites* from the abject tutelage to, and dependence on, the local seigneur. It granted the knight privileges, exempted him from seigniorial taxes, and entitled him to a share of profit from military ventures in which he participated.

As ideology, and importantly, as an emerging social institution, chivalry constituted a barrier to a return to the gritty and unadorned role to which the feudal revolution had previously consigned him. He was now, like his lords, granted his share of “nobility and wealth.” Chivalry created a “social boundary” between the knight and the laity. According to Duby, “ideology in this case actually played the role of infrastructure: it molded society.”⁷³ It served to cover the weakness of the “state” by creating a monopoly of violence within a class that by no means served exclusively as an arm of the crown, which was at this time the head of an extremely feeble protostate. The institution of chivalrous knighthood also permitted the Church, in neoliberal terms, to offer side payments to the *milites*, since chivalrous knighthood served “to denigrate anyone not belonging to the dominant class, i.e., high nobility and its underlings, the knights.”⁷⁴

The monarchy benefited from this transformation of the profession of arms into an order of society as an artifact of the Church’s sacralization of knighthood in defense of its own interests. The Church had created a rite of *adscriptio*, the *sacramentum militiae* in which the vassal-knight was consecrated into a sacred *ordo* to which membership was reserved for those so consecrated. Thus, knighthood was institutionalized in twelfth-century France and supported by an ideology built on a sacred ritual in which knights now received at the hands of the Church the functions previously allotted only to kings—to defend the Church by force of arms.⁷⁵

As the twelfth century waned, trifunctional society was firmly ensconced, and the institution of chivalry had transformed the vassal-knight from a profligate, vicious,

71. Duby 1980, 222.

72. *Ibid.*, 261.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, 262.

75. *Ibid.*, 293–98. For a description of the solemn ceremonies by which knighthood was conferred on men at arms in this period, see Keen 1984, 64–82.

and dangerous enemy of the king into a comrade of the king in the order of *bellatores* in defense of the Church. This was an enormously important precondition for the construction of the nascent sovereignty of the high medieval monarch.⁷⁶ The elevation of chivalrous knighthood to the status of a sacrally legitimated social institution freed the profession of arms from economic dependency at the whim of the lesser nobility. The emergence of this institution therefore also removed a significant material and institutional barrier to the development of monarchical sovereignty.

***Libertas Ecclesiae*: The Force of Moral Authority in the Investiture Controversy**

During the Investiture Controversy we can see principled ideas advanced by both sacral and politico-military authority in the struggle over the right to make ecclesial-administrative appointments. The Investiture Controversy originated, in essence, in the eleventh-century movement to reform the clergy. Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) had long bemoaned the corruption that the feudal revolution's proprietary ecclesial system engendered among the clergy. He determined that the clergy had to become more independent of lay authority in order for reform to succeed. He also determined that the centralization of the Church under the papacy would be essential to the independence of the Church as an institution.⁷⁷

Some reforming success had occurred in the tenth century in the area of monasticism. Cluny had been established in 910 with no authority whatever but a papal charter and was consequently subject to no authority but that of the papacy.⁷⁸ The Cluny house followed the strict, ascetic, Benedictine rule and established dozens of sister houses throughout France and beyond by the end of the tenth century. Monastic piety had broad influence on all classes of society as the tenth century drew to a close.⁷⁹ The very nature of the proprietary system brought abbots and monks into constant contact with “the great ones of the world. They became their spiritual advisers, and kings and emperors, bishops and popes, princes and nobles listened to their words.”⁸⁰

This was effected in large measure by the favorable impression on secular and ecclesial rulers of the reforms implemented within the monastic establishments. Cluny had been the institution whose reforms were chosen as a model for reform of most monasteries in Western Europe by bishops and monarchs, who had called forth a succession of Cluniac monks and installed them elsewhere as abbots and priors. The majority of these men were of aristocratic birth, giving them access to the ears of the

76. Krasner argues correctly that elements of modern sovereignty may be found in European governance arrangements much earlier than the 1648 Westphalian settlement of the Thirty Years' War, provided we accept his somewhat minimalist definition of sovereignty; see Krasner 1993, 235, 245–46.

77. Strayer 1970, 21ff.

78. Tierney 1988, 26.

79. Tellenbach 1959, 78–83.

80. *Ibid.*, 83.

secular and ecclesial rulers of the day—ears no doubt more sympathetic to messages delivered by those recognized to be their peers by birth.⁸¹ Gerd Tellenbach provides evidence of this in noting that these noble-born monks and abbots exercised influence over no less than Otto III, Henry II, Conrad II, Henry III, and Alphonso VI of Castille.⁸² This influence softened the secular bulwarks and disposed politico-military authority to grant ever-increasing privileges to the Church. A popular and nearly universal religious revival was the result.⁸³ Common noble blood lines proved to be an effective medium for moral suasion and for the transmission of principled ideas from sacral, ecclesial to temporal, politico-military authorities and institutions.

The Cluniac conception of *libertas* maintained that the rights of secular lordship over ecclesial institutions should be subordinated to ecclesial lordship if the divine order of powers were not to remain standing on its head. This innovation put an end to the proprietary system of *eigenkloster* by the eleventh century, due in no small measure to the influence that the reformed monasteries exerted on all levels of society through mechanisms previously discussed. Temporal rulers had been willing to forgo a claim to tithes, and if need be to compel the lesser nobility of their realms to eschew this claim as well, in order to enjoy the pacifying benefits of the attendant religious revival. Yet, though secular rulers had been persuaded by the monastic reform movement that the proprietary system was contrary to “right order” in the Christian world, they had not been persuaded to abandon the ancient Church-statism. By the mid-eleventh century, voices within the Church were developing and expostulating a radicalized discourse that would persuade the politico-military arm of a continental European feudal-theocratic order to divest itself of its power, upheld by ancient custom, over the ecclesial arm.⁸⁴

Certainly, a measure of this reticence of monarchs to relinquish their rights to preside over church councils, and to appoint bishops within their realms, may be explained without recourse to a model of actor motivations more sophisticated than the model provided by rational choice theory. It was particularly important for a medieval monarch to at a minimum approve the appointments of bishops as well as powerful abbots within his realm. Bishops were natural advisers of monarchs in a feudal-theocratic regime. The Church had been the sole repository and source of education and learning from the Dark Ages until the rise of lay literacy in the fourteenth century.⁸⁵ A medieval monarch relied heavily on the higher clergy as a source of trained and highly literate administrators, scribes, advisors, judges, and diplomats. Further, many bishops ruled large tracts of a monarch’s territory as feudal magnates who helped him to govern an extensive realm. For all of these services of the clergy to the crown, it was important for a monarch to have the freedom to reward this service with benefices.⁸⁶ As Christian rulers, however, Medieval monarchs could

81. Blumenthal 1988, 16.

82. Tellenbach, 1959, 83–85.

83. Blumenthal 1988, 22.

84. Robinson 1990, 245–321.

85. Mann 1986, 382.

86. Mundy 1973, 335–45.

also be responsive to the moral suasion of their ecclesial counterparts, who often enjoyed the access of kinship to feudal politico-military authority.

The pious Henry III and his kinsman Pope Leo IX had reached a common understanding of how far the Church could be freed from lay domination without encumbering the government of kings. Henry had actively promoted an assured income for the papacy and papal military power in Italy to ensure the papacy's independence there. Matters became less congenial when Henry and Leo died within two years of one another in the mid-eleventh century. The emperor's right to participate in a papal election was now an issue, as was his role in the government of the Church in general.⁸⁷

At this time there appeared the third volume of Cardinal Humbert's *Libri Adversus Simoniacos* (Books Against the Simoniacs). One influential analyst of these events has characterized this document as

one of the fruits of the debates provoked by the political situation during the years 1057 and 1058, and they amount to the first frontal attack on the whole position of laymen within the Church, especially the ideas of royal theocracy which had held the field for centuries. The sacred character of the kingship was ignored. . . . for Humbert the king was a layman pure and simple.⁸⁸

Humbert regarded simony as so serious an offense that it rendered a bishop who paid for his office invalid and incapable of accepting holy orders.⁸⁹ His consecration was a meaningless gesture, as were the ordinations of priests he would later perform. Humbert was successfully refuted in this particular position by Cardinal Damian, whose position was quite orthodox and quite opposite. Humbert had more success in his denunciation of the practice of lay investiture, which he characterized as "a usurpation of sacramental functions by an unqualified lay ruler," and was indignant that a bishop should be subordinated to a king because the bishop's priestly office was "inherently superior" to the office of the king in the order of merits. One of the results of Humbert's labor was a 1059 papal election that excluded the emperor with all other members of the laity and the ordinary Roman clergy. It constituted a "declaration of independence of the reformed papacy directed against both the imperial power and the factions of the Roman nobility that had often manipulated papal elections in the past."⁹⁰ In April of the same year a Church synod issued a decree that forbade any priest or cleric to be invested in his office by a member of the laity, though there had been no serious attempt to enforce it until the reign of Gregory VII.⁹¹

Gregory VII had within two years of his election become sufficiently annoyed that his decrees were not being fully implemented by his German bishops that he repeated the ban on lay investiture and fell into open conflict with the Holy Roman Emperor,

87. Tellenbach 1959, 106–108.

88. *Ibid.*, 109.

89. The practice of simony involved the purchase of ecclesial office.

90. Tierney 1988, 34–36.

91. Tellenbach 1959, 111.

Henry IV. Subsequent to a disagreeable exchange of letters disputing the proper candidate to fill a vacant bishopric, Henry summoned a council of his bishops to denounce Gregory as usurper of the papacy. In February 1076 Gregory in reply issued a decree excommunicating Henry and depriving him of his royal office. In rejoinder Henry wrote a letter that provides the first assertion, in bold declaration, of the form of dynastic sovereignty later to become associated with the “divine right” theory of kingship, which began with the salutation, “Henry, King not by usurpation, but by the pious ordination of God, to Hildebrand, now not Pope, but false monk.”⁹²

Henry’s recent triumph over the Saxons had, however, rendered him too powerful in the eyes of the German princes, and the events to follow indicate he had overestimated his strength. Gregory’s actions had given the German nobles a pretext on which to challenge his position. The moral effect of Gregory’s “condemnation, with its solemn invocation of the authority of St. Peter, seems to have been very great indeed. Even the [German] bishops, who had joined Henry in condemning the pope soon deserted him to seek Gregory’s pardon.”⁹³ It would appear that, at the least, the direction of the moral authority of the papacy against Henry provided his internal rivals and enemies among the nobility and higher clergy with a pretext for desertion. Henry now found himself at the mercy of a coalition of his nobles and bishops and was forced to agree to the invocation of a diet at which the pope would preside and judge his fitness to rule.

Henry had preempted this humiliation only by imposing on himself another. In route to the diet at Augsburg he went to Canossa and assumed the attitude of a barefoot supplicant of forgiveness in the snows outside the pope’s castle in the Alps. Gregory allowed Henry to prostrate himself in the snows in this manner for three days before granting him absolution and lifting the decree of excommunication (though not the decree banning him of his office as emperor). This detail had escaped the attention of a significant faction of nobles who now rallied around Henry on hearing that all had been patched up with the pope. Henry went on to appoint an anti-pope and to turn the political tables on Gregory. He ultimately invaded Italy and, after a second excommunication, enthroned his anti-pope.

These events are illustrative of the socially constructed interdependence of the coconstituted sacral and temporal arms of the medieval feudal-theocratic social order. Each arm of the order, when they fell into conflict with one another, appealed to the institutional manifestation of the other for support where it was weak. Henry appealed to the bishops to denounce Gregory, and Gregory appealed to the lay nobility to supplant Henry. Both moral and material authority counted as recourse to “capabilities” in such an order, and all parties to conflict labored to accouter themselves with both forms. The emperor also relied on the moral authority of his sacerdotal monarchy as a tool of his “state”-craft, which he might employ to circumvent the constraints that papal authority could otherwise impose on his policy. Both ecclesial and politico-military authority made use of moral authority as a power resource

92. Tierney 1988, 53.

93. *Ibid.*, 54.

in feudal, medieval Europe. I will develop this further in the discussion of a similar dispute that occurred in the thirteenth century. This will illustrate the more effective functioning of papal moral authority almost a century after the signing of the 1122 Concordat of Worms, when some analysts have erroneously suggested the papacy had already lost the struggle for temporal power.⁹⁴

European kings generally appealed to tradition and custom to support their claims to invest bishops. Lacking a strong ideological claim of their own, this was a clear “resort to norms” to justify their assertions.⁹⁵ Henry IV’s startling claim to hold his temporal power directly by divine right was exceptional and typically not replicated in this period. The claim constituted the creation of a novel proposal of monarchical rulership by divine right: that this rulership was not mediated by the authority of the Church to sanction it. Henry countered a moral claim of ecclesial authority with a moral claim of his own, but his claim was atypical in the eleventh century. Generally, the response of monarchs in this period to the Gregorian reformers was a “readiness to deny their spiritual character . . . [and they] fell back on the argument that it [investiture] was a purely secular act.”⁹⁶

Primarily concerned with ensuring the capacity to maintain their secular rulership, European kings of the early twelfth century compromised with the Church. The investiture dispute with the French king was not resolved by formal treaty, but it became customary for bishops and abbots to be canonically elected and then request the consent of the king and, most importantly for the king, to swear a feudal oath to him. A London Concordat was signed in 1107, which borrowed the French solution and inscribed it in an agreement. The German settlement in the famous Concordat of Worms granted the king “a strictly limited influence over elections . . . [while] investiture remained essentially the same, though he [the king] was denied the use of the ancient symbols [of priestly investiture].”⁹⁷

The significance of the Investiture Controversy is not that it “ended in failure” because monarchs retained some say in the investiture of bishops, but that it succeeded in transforming the institution of kingship.⁹⁸ Its significance for the social construction of sovereign identity was paramount. As Joseph Strayer suggests,

During the quarrels the old symbiosis of religious and secular authorities was seriously weakened! Kings lost their semi-ecclesial character and some of their control over Church appointments. The Church gained leadership, if not complete control of European society. . . . The Gregorian reformers had won a victory even if it was a partial victory.⁹⁹

This victory had unforeseen consequences for the Church, however. The Church’s position induced politico-military authorities to develop a set of moral claims to

94. Fischer 1992, 459.

95. Kratochwil 1989, chap. 1.

96. Tellenbach 1959, 136.

97. *Ibid.*, 124.

98. Fischer 1992, 438.

99. Strayer 1970, 21–22.

authority to counter those of the Church. These claims would ultimately allow politico-military authorities to compete with the Church for moral authority. The proposals they advanced to counter the claims that the Church derived from their idea of *libertas ecclesiae* had liberated the legitimacy claims of politico-military authority from dependence on the Church's political theology.

By asserting its unique character, by separating itself so clearly from lay governments, the Church unwittingly sharpened concepts about the nature of secular authority. . . . The most ardent Gregorian had to admit that the Church could not perform all political functions, that lay rulers were necessary and had a sphere in which they should operate. . . . *In short, the Gregorian concept of the Church almost demanded the invention of the concept of the State. It demanded it so strongly that modern writers find it exceeding difficult to avoid describing the Investiture Conflict as a struggle of Church and State.*¹⁰⁰

Strayer couches this important insight in terms that make it clear that a lucid conception of the state—particularly, a conception that carried with it a legitimating principle distinct from the political theology of the Church—had not even begun to emerge until the end of the twelfth century, which is a premise of his book. The medieval “state” was so weak that the French king still had to bargain town to town, with the burghers and nobles of each major town in his realm, even for taxes to be applied to defense of the realm. This suggests that “the towns were within their rights in bargaining and even sometimes in refusing to pay. They certainly were not afraid to try.”¹⁰¹

Brian Tierney makes the case even more clearly and strongly in a passage that illuminates the social reconstruction of the institution of kingship, and the attendant inception of sovereign identity, from the eleventh to early fourteenth centuries:

It is hardly proper to speak of a conflict of church and state in the eleventh century at all, for there was *no real idea of the state, of a public authority exercising sovereign powers* of legislation and administering uniform laws according to a rational system of jurisprudence. . . . By 1300 the situation had changed profoundly. During the course of the twelfth century the revived study of Roman jurisprudence opened up a new world of legal thought to theorists of royal and papal power, and in the thirteenth, the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Politics* provided a new philosophical basis for reflections on the very nature of the state itself. . . . One of the most important developments in the history of church-state relations during the Middle Ages was the *re-emergence of the idea of the state.*¹⁰²

It is difficult to explain what Tierney refers to as the “reemergence” of the idea of the state without recourse to the notion of competing principles of legitimate rulership. The Church pressed its vision of *libertas ecclesiae* with considerable success from the early eleventh to late thirteenth centuries. The masses of the laity, and most politico-military authorities, responded to this initiative as a principled return to the

100. *Ibid.*, 22; emphasis added.

101. Reynolds 1984, 312.

102. Tierney 1988, 2; emphasis added.

just and, it was thought, divinely ordained conditions of the early Church.¹⁰³ Monastic institutions were reformed and the lay nobility was induced to relinquish their normative right to receive tithes from ecclesial institutions that they had endowed. The proprietary church system succumbed without a struggle.¹⁰⁴ The moral authority of the papacy and ecclesial institutions triumphed, for a time, over the competing moral authority claims of politico-military authorities.

When the Church pressed the advantage conferred on it by the success of the principles that it had promulgated, and pressed it beyond a point at which politico-military authority could accede, the discursive dynamic began to change. The assertions of the Church during the Investiture Controversy had so attenuated the moral authority that had previously attended older notions of sacerdotal kingship that feudal monarchs were required to relinquish their claims to sacerdotal agency and to reclaim a modicum of moral authority that might compete with that of the papacy by advancing the competing principle of rulership by divine right. Only when the monarchy emancipated its legitimacy from the mediational political theology of the Church was it possible for the idea of the state to reemerge around the “sovereignty” of a monarch whose rule had been sanctioned directly by God. The moral authority of the Church was ultimately countered with a claim of the moral authority of the “state” at whose head sat a divinely appointed monarchy. Not until the early fourteenth century were politico-military authorities able to advance this claim successfully.

The Material Uses of Moral Authority in the Late Middle Ages

The most important example of the victory of papal power over temporal authority, by contrast to the eleventh-century dispute between Henry IV and Gregory VII, relied on papal control over the higher clergy in the unfortunate monarch’s realm. Control had been exercised through the threat and application of sanctions that were immaterial but rather spiritual in nature. The effects of these sanctions, however, were highly tangible. Their most significant application attends the thirteenth century deposition by Innocent III of the Welf prince, Otto of Brunswick, who had become the Holy Roman Emperor Otto IV. The event culminated in Otto’s defeat in 1214 and the coronation of Frederick II as Holy Roman Emperor.

Innocent III emerged, in the early thirteenth century, as the consummate defender of *libertas ecclesiae*. Innocent intervened to great effect in the struggle for succession to the throne of empire between the Staufen prince Philip and the Welf prince Otto. Both had craved Innocent’s recognition to legitimate their contested claims to the throne. Innocent had placed enormous pressure on the bishops who had appeared to have attached themselves to the Staufen faction, moving against them one by one, slowly bringing them to abandon Philip in favor of Otto through the threat or practice

103. Mann 1986, 386–87.

104. Hall and Kratochwil, 489–90.

of deposing them from their sees, and by threat of excommunication. In 1204 the Welf faction suddenly collapsed when the Dutch War of Succession resulted in the withdrawal of Otto's support from the Netherlands. Deciding on public recognition of Otto in a last-ditch attempt to sway the factional conflict to his choice, Innocent caused serious problems for the Staufen faction as "Otto's recognition by papal authority provided the legitimate pretext at any time for a defection from Philip."¹⁰⁵ This is a clear example of the utility of papal moral authority to sanction temporal rulership. The denial or withdrawal of papal approval could be an enormous obstacle for an aspiring temporal ruler, however well financed and armed.

Philip did attempt to settle his conflict with Innocent by military force but suffered disaster at the hands of papal vassals. Peace negotiations were opened at Philip's request, allowing Innocent to absolve him by the summer of 1207 and cut a deal with Philip at Otto's expense. Innocent had been no more hesitant to employ the military forces of his vassals to achieve his policy goals than had been any secular ruler among his contemporaries. Innocent, however, also had recourse to a "tool of statecraft" that no medieval monarch or modern ruler could employ—a historical and moral claim that was recognized by the majority of the inhabitants of Christendom, and by nearly all of the clergy, to "examine the worthiness of the man he would be called upon to anoint as temporal ruler of much of Christendom."¹⁰⁶ When material power resources had failed to defeat the papacy, the man who would be emperor was relegated to a contest of moral power resources in which the papacy held the trump cards. The Church obtained its power and unique function in society and in the medieval system precisely because the legitimacy of temporal rulership had been obtained symbiotically from the sacral legitimacy of the Church. The power to bestow or withhold this legitimacy on the temporal realm lay, at this time, solely in the hands of the papacy.

Innocent's moral authority to judge the spiritual and moral fitness-to-rule of his secular brethren, and the pains that they undertook in order to obtain his sanction to rule, however, demonstrate that his "function" was replicated by no other person or institution during the time of his reign. This provides the starkest illustration of Ruggie's contention that the second component of Waltzian structure—differentiation of function—does not drop out of the analysis of the international system of the late Middle Ages.¹⁰⁷ In the thirteenth century, the moral hegemony of the high medieval Church provided Innocent with a unique function in the feudal European system. The later principles of the divine right of kings were developed in large measure precisely to level the playing field for temporal rulers, to furnish them with comparable moral power resources, and to obviate the unique function of the high medieval papacy.

105. Tillman 1980, 131–32.

106. Tillman claims that Innocent impressed even the Staufen legation with whom he was negotiating with the argument that "If this right was contested . . . the monstrous consequence would be that he could be compelled to anoint and crown a sacrilegious, heathen, heretic, excommunicate, tyrant, or lunatic"; see Tillman 1980, 118–19.

107. Hall and Kratochwil 1993, 491.

In exchange for his absolution and sanction for Philip to ascend to the imperial throne, Philip “either explicitly or tacitly renounced the reclamation [for the empire] of the duchy of Spoleto, the March of Ancona and . . . Roman Tuscany, and that he further waived the guardianship over Frederick of Sicily and imperial claims to the kingdom [of Sicily].”¹⁰⁸ Theorists who regard power as fungible might incorporate Innocent’s “moral authority” into their repertoire of power resources. In a system that had transnationally institutionalized the primacy of spiritual–moral social purposes over temporal–material social purposes, moral currency could be spent for tangible gains. Neither should we be tempted to believe that Philip’s proposed territorial concessions to Innocent were a singular result of his cool appraisal of his military situation alone. Philip recognized that “Innocent could refuse the imperial crown even to a king who was victorious in Italy. No power on earth could force the coronation out of the pope. But in Germany, too, peace would hardly have been achieved, let alone secured, without the pope’s reconciliation with Philip.”¹⁰⁹

Unfortunately for Innocent, Philip was assassinated in Bamberg on 21 June 1208, and his gains were undone. He was forced to throw his support back to Otto against a new challenger, Frederick of Sicily, in order to consolidate most of the gains that his negotiations with Philip had won for the Church and the Patrimony of Peter. On obtaining coronation from Innocent, however, Otto became arrogantly hostile, invading the duchy of Spoleto in December 1208, awarding the March of Ancona to an imperial sycophant in January 1209, challenging the Church’s rights over Ferraro in March, and occupying cities in Roman Tuscany in August and September. Innocent responded by appealing for sympathy and relief to the German princes and clergy beginning early in 1210 and by warning of the consequences of what was to come if they did not restrain Otto. This would include not only interdiction and ban over German territory, but the excommunication of clerics who cooperated with Otto, as well as appeals for support from Otto’s most dangerous temporal enemy, Philip Augustus of France.¹¹⁰

Innocent pronounced the ban over Otto on 18 November 1210 and absolved his subjects from their oaths of allegiance to him. He excommunicated Otto on 31 March 1211, repeated the waiver of his subjects’ oaths of allegiance, and excommunicated and anathematized all of Otto’s supporters. In so doing, Innocent “blazed the trail for the princely opposition [to Otto], he had sanctioned their revolt as a fight for the defense of the Church against its persecutors and made it their duty to bring it about. It was for them to take the next step”¹¹¹ This they quickly did, rising up in revolt and nominating Frederick of Sicily as a candidate for the throne.

Otto fought on, and in April 1212 Innocent declared Otto to be *reprobis et male-dictus* (a prostrate, accused of God) with an order for all citizens of the Empire to shun Otto. This cost Otto any pretense of German ecclesial support because Innocent

108. Tillman 1980, 130–31.

109. *Ibid.*, 131.

110. *Ibid.*, 142–44.

111. *Ibid.*, 145–47.

had forced the German clergy to take either his side or Otto's in a clear matter of spiritual, not temporal authority.

Every single ecclesiastical prince was now faced with the decision between the pope and the emperor, and now not only suspension and excommunication are at stake, but office and title. Sweeping assertions of obedience [to Innocent] no longer could help but a clear and open rupture with the ruler was required. . . . It is significant of the measure of ecclesiastical obedience which in the matter of the emperor Innocent experiences with the German clergy that *Otto does not find a single priest to perform his marriage to Mary of Brabant*.¹¹²

Otto was utterly defeated and unequivocally deposed by 1214. Frederick II wisely gave Innocent more in the way of territorial concessions, security guarantees, and authority in German clerical investiture than had either Philip or Otto. That which was later lost back to the emperor was lost after the death of the great pope at Perugia in 1216 by the comparatively flaccid performance of his successor, Honorius III. Significantly, it is not simply “the balance of military power” that determined “attempts by popes to exercise their theoretical judicial authority in conflicts between a ruler and his internal and external adversaries.”¹¹³ It was the extent to which the “pope-as-statesman” had the will and the skill to make his unique position felt. There have been great and weak popes just as there have been great and weak kings and statesmen. Theorists who subscribe to the toolbox theory of power resources might wish to treat the moral authority of the high medieval papacy as they would treat any such tool. It could be used well, or badly.

Conclusions

Ninety-two years after the 1122 Concordat of Worms—with which the Church was forced to compromise with secular interests in the investiture of bishops—Innocent successfully asserted papal authority over the *secular* office of the Holy Roman Emperor. He did so primarily by employing his moral authority to extend or withhold the Church's sanction for a man to rule. By withholding this sanction, he empowered aristocratic opposition and compelled ecclesial opposition with an authority that was backed by few “capabilities” of his own aside from near universal recognition of his claim to supremacy in the judgment of matters of morality. Thus, it cannot be fairly argued that “the authority of the pope over secular potentates was epiphenomenal at best.”¹¹⁴ Papal deposition of the Holy Roman Emperor is a tangible phenomenon.

In spite of possessing a preponderance of force, vast military and economic capabilities, Otto fell from power. Innocent effectively fought Otto's material power resources with pronouncements—excommunication, the interdict, and the ban. The tangible effects of successful papal claims of moral authority to judge the worthiness

112. *Ibid.*, 148–49; emphasis added.

113. Fischer 1992, 459.

114. *Ibid.*, 461.

of temporal rulers were to be countered in later centuries, not only with military force, but with counterclaims derived from the novel principled ideas that they advanced. If monarchs had not felt it important to advance the claims of their divine right of rulership for this purpose, it is difficult to understand why they felt it necessary to do so at all.

It is difficult to correctly apprehend the major outlines of feudal European history without analysis of the manner in which moral authority provided the utility of a power resource to help resolve conflicts and issues that proved intractable with recourse to material power resources alone. To discover what constitutes a power resource in a specific context one must begin by specifying the structure of identities and interests of a historically specific system.

It is difficult to locate a contemporary transnational institution that can be observed to lay claim to moral authority with the utility of a power resource as effective as that wielded by the high medieval papacy. One reason for this, of course, is that the crown, and later its “state,” was to compete effectively with the Church for this moral authority as the Middle Ages waned. The absolutist state would ultimately wrest this authority from the Church, uniting temporal and sacral authority in the person of the absolute monarch.¹¹⁵ This move did not attenuate the utility of moral authority as a power resource, but it did restrict its geographical range of application. More recently, the moral authority of the monarch, sacred in his person, has been transferred to the “people.” Particularly where the doctrine of popular sovereignty has merged with ethnically, linguistically, or historically derived nationalist ideology, political leaders have found it useful to invoke the moral authority they derive from speaking and acting in the name of their “people” and have exercised it nationally rather than transnationally.

Yet Woodrow Wilson claimed transnational moral authority when justifying American entry into World War I to “make the world safe for democracy.” Throughout the Cold War, American presidents claimed transnational moral authority in pronouncements of Cold War policies, however poorly coordinated with allies, as “leader of the free world,” while their Soviet counterparts invariably claimed to speak and act in the name of the “international working class.” As was the case in feudal Europe, if these claims were not advanced to at least legitimate policy decisions in the eyes of the transnational peoples whose moral compasses were expected to align with these policies, it is difficult to see why they should have been made at all.

Finally, the demise of the colonial order in the periphery subsequent to World War II provides us with some illustrations of potential uses of moral authority that might stimulate further investigation of it as a power resource in a transnational context in the troubled twentieth century and beyond. Competing visions of the doctrine of self-determination of peoples emerged triumphant from the war, with the attendant elevation of their proponents, the United States and the Soviet Union, to superpower status. Colonial paternalism was thoroughly inconsistent with either Soviet proletarian internationalist solidarity or American liberal pluralism, which now competed for

115. See Hall 1996; and Hall (forthcoming).

the allegiance of peripheral peoples as developmental blueprints under conditions of peripheral self-determination. The moral authority of racist and paternalistic doctrines of the “white man’s burden” was further demolished by the inability of colonial powers to defend their colonies from Axis aggression. As Eric Hobsbawm has recently observed, “What fatally damaged the old colonialists was the proof that white men and their states could be defeated, shamefully and dishonorably, and the old colonial powers were patently too weak . . . to restore their old positions.”¹¹⁶

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116. Hobsbawm 1996, 216.

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