Carolingian Religion

Thomas F. X. Noble

The Carolingian period, roughly the eighth and ninth centuries, was dynamic and decisive in European religious history. The ruling dynasty and the clerical elite promoted wave after wave of reform that I call "unifying," "specifying," and "sanctifying." This presidential address argues that religion was the key unifying and universalizing force in the Carolingian world; that the Carolingians were obsessed with doing things the right way—usually the Roman way; and that the Carolingians sought to inculcate Christian behavior more than religious knowledge. The address concludes by arguing that the Carolingians put a markedly European stamp on Christianity and that they Romanized Christianity well before the papacy attempted to do so.

In the year 811 an old, ill, and weary Charlemagne asked, plaintively, "Are we really Christians?"[1] The following pages will attempt to answer that question as Charlemagne's contemporaries might have answered it and as modern scholars might do so. From one point of view, my remarks will be addressed to those who, like me, specialize in the early Middle Ages, in particular in the Carolingian period, the period that takes its name from Charlemagne's grandfather Charles, that is *Carolus*, Martel. From another point of view, however, I am going to make two rather grand claims for the Carolingian period. Let me just state my claims now and then try, later, to substantiate them. First, the Carolingians Europeanized Christianity as most of the world subsequently knew it. The religion had Semitic beginnings and centuries of Mediterranean cultivation so there was nothing inevitable about what Charlemagne's dynasty did. Second, Roman Catholicism as an historical phenomenon, not as a theological or ecclesiological one, is a Carolingian construction. Bold claims, as I said. But I shall come back to them.

Let me begin by clearing some scholarly underbrush. My title is "Carolingian Religion." Historians tend to worry less than religious studies scholars do about the meaning of the word "religion," or indeed if it has any legitimate meaning at all. By now everyone must be familiar with the

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[1] *Capitularia regum Francorum*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (hereafter MGH), Legum Sectio II, vol. 1, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), no. 71, c. 9, p. 161.

Thomas F.X. Noble is Andrew V. Tackes Professor of Medieval History. On January 4, 2015, he delivered this essay as the presidential address for the American Society of Church History.

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famous remark of Jonathan Z. Smith: "Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no existence apart from the academy."[2] Not many people have over the last thirty-some years agreed fully with Smith. Yet he seems undaunted. In 1998 he argued that "religion" only emerged in the seventeenth century.[3] Just before that Wilfred Cantwell Smith argued that there is no phenomenon in the world that exactly corresponds to what scholars call "religion."[4] Religion is complex and difficult to understand but I do not think that comprehension is advanced by arguments that look to me like *reductiones ad absurdum*. More sensible are the practical views of Martin Marty who says that "six marks" define a system of beliefs and practices as being religious: "That system must center on a matter of deep meaning, or 'ultimate' concern, and also involve socialization (believers tend to form communities), show a preference for symbolic language over everyday speech, use ceremonies (especially at birth, marriage and death), take a metaphysical view of life (there is more to the world than what one sees), and require behavioral adjustments (attending Sunday School or shunning pork)."[5] Those marks capture well phenomena that have existed in systemic relationship with each another for many millennia. I can find each of these marks in the Carolingian world. That world had, I insist, religion.[6] Nevertheless, I am not going to theorize religion but I am going to historicize Carolingian Christianity.

But, one may ask, what about Christianity? Needless to say even if one were to stipulate that Christianity is a religion, and that medieval, or more specifically Carolingian Christianity was a religion, then one could not claim that Christianity was uniquely a religion. That is fair enough. But in the Carolingian world Christianity was virtually the only game in town. Paganism was diminishing rapidly even if, to the fascination of historians of religion, its vestiges persist to this moment.[7] There were small, invisible, and inarticulate

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[2] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), xi.

[3] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 269–284.

[4] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1991). For some interesting reflections on this book see Talal Asad, "Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of Religion,'" *History of Religions* 40, no. 3 (February 2001): 205–222.

[5] Quoted by Gustav Niebuhr, "A Religious Quilt That is Largely Patchwork," *New York Times*, Saturday, November 23, 1996.

[6] See, for example, Mayke de Jong, "Religion," in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The Short Oxford History of Europe: The Early Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 131–164.

[7] The literature is impossibly vast. A lively starting point is Robert Bartlett, "Reflections on Paganism and Christianity in Medieval Europe," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 101 (1999): 55–76.

Muslim communities in the Pyrenees region and small Jewish communities in such cities as Lyons and Bordeaux.[8] But the Carolingian world was not diverse or multicultural.

Many would argue with considerable justification that the history of Christianity has always been marked by resistance, contestation, and diversity. I would agree with that characterization as a general proposition but then add that the Carolingian period is unusual. Ancient Christianity produced traditions that were Latin and Greek, Syriac and Coptic, Armenian and Georgian. There is absolutely nothing like this in Charlemagne's world. The patristic period generated such robust theologizing that heresies popped up everywhere. The Carolingian period was almost astonishingly eirenic.[9] This was a world of kerfuffles, not of mortal combats. Controversy over images wracked the Byzantine world while the West produced one iconoclast. Adoptionism stirred much discussion for a few years late in the eighth century but we can name exactly two "Adoptionists." A lonely Carolingian devoté of predestination was silenced and attracted no followers. Two contemporary monks at Corbie disagreed about the Eucharist without consequences.[10] This is nothing like, say, Augustine and Pelagius on grace and free will, or the bitter struggles over Origenism, or the battles over Arianism and Miaphysitism.

If, then, Christianity occupied a privileged position in the Carolingian world and experienced little internal struggle, it remains to say what that Christianity was like. Bearing in mind that I am going to turn to two large-scale interpretive issues, I want to shift now to a characterization of Carolingian religion, that is, to an interpretation of Carolingian Christianity. Any scheme runs some risk of cutting Procrustes to fit his bed, but I do need some interpretive framework to organize my discussion. I am going to suggest that Carolingian religion was unifying, specifying, and sanctifying. I will explain what I mean by each term as I go along and I will also indicate why I think each term to be both an apt characterization of Carolingian phenomena and a useful heuristic device for us looking back some twelve centuries.

I. Unifying

Religion was the fundamental tool by means of which the Carolingians sought to unify and shape their society. The Saxons might well have used the word

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[8]I am unaware of any study of Muslim people living inside the Carolingian world. A good introduction to Jews in the Carolingian world is Bat-Sheva Albert, "Christians and Jews," in *Early Medieval Christianities*, eds. Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith, The Cambridge History of Christianity 3 (New York: Cambridge University, 2008), 159–177.

[9]E. Ann Matter, "Orthodoxy and Deviance," in *Early Medieval Christianities*, 510–530.

[10]David Ganz, "Theology and the Organization of Thought," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, c. 700–c.900*, vol. 2, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (New York: Cambridge University, 1995), 758–785. He points out that discussions were essentially confined to the elite.

weapon where I use tool but it comes to the same thing. Sources of many kinds repeat phrases such as "common salvation," "common utility," and "communion of the faithful."[11] The common element here is always shared faith and worship.

The Christian identity forged by the Carolingians had what might be called horizontal and vertical dimensions. By horizontal dimensions I mean the efforts of the vast Carolingian program of religious reform that extended across almost all of western Europe and was aimed at all people of every rank. I shall return to this point later. By vertical dimensions I refer to bonds of history and tradition. The many peoples of the Frankish realm were placed confidently within a tradition that reached back to the Old Testament world. In his magnificent *Opus Caroli Regis*, his theology of history, Theodulf of Orleans placed the Carolingian world along a line that reached back to the Hebrews and that included the apostles and the church fathers.[12] But it decidedly did not include Romans, in either their ancient or their contemporary instantiations. Rome was the heir of Babylon, Theodulf said.[13] Charlemagne's contemporaries variously flattered him by calling him David, and Josiah, and Solomon. It is as if the Hebrews were the ancestors of the Carolingians and the Carolingians were in some sense biblical figures.[14]

Formulations like those of Theodulf had powerful ideological aspects but there were other historical reflections in the period that repay some consideration. The Anglo-Saxon missionary and reformer Boniface, while he was working to convert pagans and reform Christians in central Germany, wrote to his old friend and mentor Bishop Daniel of Winchester to ask for advice. Daniel's advice is clever both dialectically and culturally. He told Boniface not to argue with the pagans about the origins of their gods but instead to let them affirm that their gods and goddesses were born from the intercourse of males with females and that, after the manner of men, they had beginnings. This point established, Daniel said, one can ask them whether the world had a beginning. If they claim that the world always existed you can easily refute this. One may then ask them whether the gods are to be worshipped for temporal and immediate good or for eternal blessedness. If they choose temporal benefit, ask them whether they are better off than the Christians. Daniel tells Boniface

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[11]Countless examples could be cited. See e.g. *Capitularia regum Francorum,* no. 174, c. 2, p. 357; no. 150, c. 15, p. 305; Council of Paris (829), MGH, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, ed. Albert Werminhoff (Hannover: Hahn, 1908), vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 600–601.

[12]*Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*, ed. Ann Freeman, MGH, *Concilia*, vol. 2, Supplementum I (Hannover: Hahn, 1998).

[13]*Opus Caroli regis,* 3. 15, p. 404.

[14]Thomas F. X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 208–209. The intensity of historical thinking in the Carolingian period is explored by McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (New York: Cambridge University, 2004).

that he can go through more arguments like these and then come to this one: If the gods benefit their followers in temporal matters how can they explain that everywhere the Christians are expanding while the followers of their gods are retreating? The world was once given to idol worship but is now more and more reconciled to Christ.[15] In short, Daniel urges Boniface to invite the pagans to join the story, to choose the winning side.

In 826 Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son and successor, welcomed King Harald Klak of Denmark to his court to receive baptism. Ermoldus Nigellus, in his epic biography of Louis, relates the scene but also takes us back to 822 when Louis sent Archbishop Ebbo of Reims to Denmark to evangelize the Danes. Without taking time to correct for poetic license and rhetorical strategies, here is what Louis told Ebbo to tell the Danes. There is a God in heaven who created everything. He created man but Adam sinned and fell. Sinners and idolaters of every kind emerged but eventually God took mercy and sent his Son. He invited all to join God's everlasting kingdom. Tell them that it is a crime for man to abandon his reason and worship metal images. Louis concludes by telling Ebbo to tell the Danes stories from the Gospels.[16]

A couple of years later Ebbo came back to join the Frankish court at Ingelheim and Ermoldus provides a remarkable description of a series of frescoes in the chapel of the imperial palace there. To the left, they begin with Eden and continue with the flood, then Abram and his offspring, then the deeds of Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and David. The right side begins with the annunciation, the shepherds, Herod, the flight into Egypt, various scenes from the life of Christ, the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.[17]

To return then to 826, Harald appears and tells what Ebbo has taught him. God has created the heavens and the earth. He sent his son to redeem fallen mankind. If a person confesses that Christ is God and receives baptism he will win a heavenly reward.

What these stories have in common is an historical, chronological, narrative core. Boniface's pagans and Ebbo's Danes were not taught theology. They were invited to join a story, to share a story with their foes and conquerors. My inspiration here is an old study by Arnaldo Momigliano in which he argued that becoming Christian in the Roman world meant discovering oneself the heir and beneficiary of and participant in a new history.[18] That was precisely

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[15]*Sancti Bonifacii et Lulli epistolae*, no. 23, ed. Michael Tangl, MGH, *Epistolae Selectae* 1, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955), 38–41.

[16]Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici Christianissimi Cesaris Augusti*, lines 1911–1947, ed. Edmond Faral (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1932), 146–148.

[17]Ibid., lines 2070–2123, pp. 158–162.

[18]Arnaldo Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.," in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University, 1982), 107–126.

a key dimension of Carolingian effort at Christianization. They asked people to join them in a story, to share something *communis*, common.

There is yet another way to think of Christianity as unitive force in the Carolingian world. Historical reflections had broadly cultural and also ideological connotations. There were also unitive reflections that were deeply ideological. Pope Paul I called the Franks a "New Israel."[19] The second prologue to the Salic Law, a product, like Paul's letter, of the 760s echoes the theme of the Franks as a chosen people.[20] Theodulf called the Franks the "spiritual Israel."[21] Alcuin, Charlemagne's closest adviser, spoke of the "chosen people of God."[22] But he, like annals, letters, and treatises, spoke consistently from the 780s of the *populus Christianus*.[23] By the late 790s, before Charlemagne was crowned emperor, several writers spoke of an *imperium Christianum*.[24] As Mayke de Jong has pointed out, the second quarter of the ninth century saw a subtle shift from an identity based on the Franks and the faith to one based on the church: *imperium* as *ecclesia* is how she formulates it.[25] The Christian faith remained the glue that held the system together.

Christendom, as the western world has understood that term, is a Carolingian creation. It is perfectly true that Eusebius spoke of a single empire, emperor, and faith. But his contemporary or subsequent influence was severely limited and his description itself was fanciful. Of course the Carolingian claim was inaccurate—one might say illegitimate. The Carolingians did not rule the British Isles and they left the Christians of most of Iberia out of account. They did think about the Byzantines but dismissed them as heretics. The Christian faith, as believed and practiced by the Carolingians, marked out God's chosen people, his Israel, his polity.

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[19]*Codex Carolinus*, no. 39, ed. Wilhelm Gundlach, MGH, *Epistolae Karolini Aevi* 3 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 552.

[20]Ed. K. Eckhardt, MGH, *Leges* 4, 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1962), 22–29.

[21]*Opus Caroli Regis*, 1. 17, p. 183.

[22]*Vita Willibrordi*, c. 9, ed. Wilhelm Levison, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merowingicarum* 7 (Hannover: Hahn, 1920), 124.

[23]*Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 22, c. 62, p. 58; *Annales regni Francorum, anno* 791, ed. F. Kurze, MGH, *Scriptores in usum scholarum* (Hannover: Hahn, 1895), 88; Paulinus of Aquileia, *Libellus adversus Elipandus*, ed. Werminghoff, MGH Concilia 2.2, p. 142; Alcuin, epp. 41, 121, 174, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH, *Epistolae Karolini Aevi* 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 84, 176, 288. Mary Garrison is more skeptical than I am about the identification of the Franks as "New Israel." See her "The Franks as a New Israel? Education for and Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (New York: Cambridge University, 2000), 114–161.

[24]This finds broad treatment in Owen M. Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, Baptism, and the* Imperium Christianum (New York: Oxford University, 2014).

[25]"The Empire as *ecclesia*: Hrabanus Maurus and Biblical *historia* for Rulers," in *The Uses of the Past*, 191–226; "Ecclesia and the Early Medieval Polity," in *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, eds. Stuart Airlie, Walter Pohl, and Helmut Reimitz (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2006), 113–132.

Unity also had a significant ecclesial dimension. Quite a few scholars have noted that for a generation or two church history as either institutional or intellectual history has receded behind the history of Christianity as lived experience.[26] I am inclined to think that the pendulum has swung wildly off its arc and I am prepared to insist that one cannot talk about Carolingian religion without talking about the church. That church was organized around just over 220 bishoprics, about forty-five of them directly subject to Rome and the rest more or less built into the Carolingian system. The countryside, at least west of the Rhine and south of the Danube, "bristled" with churches, baptismal churches and oratories. There were also around 700 monasteries.[27] The numbers are impressive but growth is equally striking. Boniface worked to create new bishoprics in central Germany. Würzburg flourished but Buraburg and Erfurt failed. Boniface did create an ecclesiastical province with Mainz as its metropolitan see. He was unsuccessful in getting Sens and Rouen established as metropolitan sees in the western area of Frankish rule in his lifetime but his goal was achieved in the next generation. He worked to erect bishoprics in Bavaria and on his death Freising, Passau, Regensburg, and Salzburg were proper sees. In 798 Pope Leo III acceded to Charlemagne's plan to elevate Salzburg to metropolitan status. In about 787 Charlemagne sent Willehad to Bremen in Saxony. In the next decade or so, Münster and Paderborn were added. Under Louis the Pious, Halberstadt, Hildesheim, Minden, Osnabrück, and Verden were added and later Hamburg became a metropolitan see.[28]

This increasingly dense ecclesiastical network contributed to unity in several ways. The tone and substance of religious life in the Carolingian world was set in the royal and later imperial court.[29] Many, probably most, bishops spent

[26]John H. Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519–552; Van Engen, "The Future of Medieval Church History," *Church History* 71, no. 3 (September 2002): 492–523; Giles Constable, "From Church History to Religious Culture: The Study of Medieval Religious Life and Spirituality," in *European Religious Cultures: Essays Offered to Christopher Brooke on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Miri Rubin (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2008), 3–16; John Arnold, "Introduction: A History of Medieval Christianity," and "Histories and Historiographies of Medieval Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John Arnold (New York: Oxford University, 2014), 1–19, 23–41. The broad subject was ventilated in "Forum on the 'Burden of Church History,'" *Church History* 83, no. 4 (December 2014): 988–1018 which was itself a set of reflections on Laurie Maffly-Kipp's "The Burden of Church History," *Church History* 82, no. 2 (June 2013): 353–367.

[27]Various studies give slightly different tallies. A sound basis is Roger Reynolds, "The Organisation, Law and Liturgy of the Western Church, c. 700–900," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 587–621. See also *Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1965), 388.

[28]The preceding details are readily available and not the subject of any contention.

[29]On the court see: Janet L. Nelson, "Was Charlemagne's Court a Courtly Society?" in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 39–57;

some time at the court where they both learned about and contributed to the elaboration of plans for reform and renewal.[30] The church did its collective business in councils.[31] Boniface famously, and not quite accurately, said that down to his day there had been no councils in the Frankish world for eighty years.[32] He held five councils in the 740s. Pippin III, the first Carolingian king, held five councils in the 750s and 760s. The Bavarian Church held three councils in 756, 770, and 771 and then a further six between 799 and 811. Charlemagne held no fewer than twenty-three councils and he summoned five of these in the year 813 alone. At least sixteen councils met in the time of Louis the Pious, with the year 829 especially prominent for its four councils. Down to the end of the ninth century, in the East, West, and Middle Kingdoms at least fifty councils assembled. Thinking about these councils as a whole, they exhibit some similarities and some differences. The range of issues treated in these councils remained remarkably consistent. It is easy to discern a few central concerns: clerical education and morality; the administration of churches and their lands; proper norms for worship. The scale of the meetings differed dramatically. Some councils were virtually "national" in scope while others were provincial or regional, or even quite local.

Those regional and local councils call for another comment. From the ninth century we have thirty-four episcopal statutes.[33] Bishops were supposed to meet with their priests twice each year and the extant statutes are products of those meetings. The great councils rarely speak about priests whereas the statutes speak of little else.[34] One theme that recurs in conciliar documents of all kinds is the need to preach to the laity.[35] Preaching in the vernacular

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McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (New York: Cambridge University, 2008), 137–213.

[30]Magisterial work on the bishops is Steffen Patzold, *Episcopus: Wissen über Bischöfe im Frankenreich des späten 8. Bis frühen 10. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 2008). Fascinating insights into connections between bishops and the court are transmitted by Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, 1. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 16, 17, 18, 19, ed. Hans F. Haefele, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* 12 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1962), 1–2, 4, 5–6, 7–9, 19–21, 21–22, 22–25.

[31]Standard on the councils is Wilfried Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frnkenreich und in Italien* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1989). The conciliar records are published in the MGH *Concilia* series.

[32]Ep. no. 50, ed. Tangl, 82.

[33]*Capitula Episcoporum*, ed. Peter Brommer, vols. 1 and 2, MGH (Hannover: Hahn, 1984, 1995). Brommer, *Capitula Episcoporum: Die bischöflichen Kapitularien des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985).

[34]Carine van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord: Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

[35]The best study of Carolingian preaching remains Thomas L. Amos, "The Origin and Nature of the Carolingian Sermon" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1983).

was not only permitted but even recommended.[36] The pulpit was the place where court and populace met. We simply cannot know if bishops did actually meet with their priests twice each year—or three times if we include the chrism mass—or if meetings regularly resulted in the issuance of statutes. We cannot say how frequently lay people attended church. We cannot gauge the effectiveness of Carolingian preaching. What we can say is that from the mightiest metropolitans hovering about the palace to the humblest rural priests and peasant farmers we can see a remarkably articulated system that moved consistent messages up and down the chain of command for a century and a half. The church as an institution was indeed a powerful force for unity.

II. Specifying

In the second place: specifying. What I mean by this is that the Carolingians had an acute sense of their duty to do things right and to get everyone else to do things right as well. This sense extended to virtually every aspect of religious and secular life—and the Carolingians drew almost no distinction between the two. From the 740s to the middle years of Charlemagne's reign a phrase—*norma rectitudinis*—recurs in varying expressions and it catches well the tone of the Carolingian program.[37] Committed as they were to the idea that there was a "standard of rightness" the Carolingians took it as their task to identify what was right and then to demand its implementation.[38] Diversity was unacceptable.

One can find examples of this Carolingian mania for doing things the right way almost anywhere one cares to look. When Pope Stephen II spent most of the year 754 in Francia the Franks discovered that Roman liturgical singing differed from their own and a few years later they sought chant-masters from Rome.[39] A wonderful anecdote in Notker of St. Gall's delightful grab-bag of stories adds a bit of context.[40] In his travels Charlemagne discovered that the

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[36]*Concilium Turonense*, (813) c. 17, MGH, *Concilia*, ed. Werminghoff, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 288. These provisions were repeated at the *Concilium Moguntinense* (847) c. 2, MGH, Concilia vol. 3, ed. Hartmann, (Hannover: Hahn, 1984), 164.

[37]Pope Zachary to Boniface, epp. nos. 58, 61, ed. Tangl, 108 ("normam rectitudinis"), 121 (viam rectitudinis); *Concilium Vernense* (755), *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 14, p. 33 ("rectissima norma"); Chrodegang of Metz, *Regula Canonicorum*, c. 20, Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Latina, 221 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1841–1866), 89: 1057c ("norma rectitudinis," "linea rectitudinis").

[38]The classic study remains Josef Fleckenstein, *Die Bildungsreform Karls des Grossen als Verwicklichung der Norma Rectitudinis* (Bigge-Ruhr: Josefs-Druckerei, 1953).

[39]*Codex Carolinus*, no. 41, ed. Wilhelm Gundlach, MGH, *Epistolae Aevi Karolini* 3 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 553–554.

[40]Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, 1. 10, 12–15.

clergy sung differently from one place to the next. He investigated the matter and learned that the Roman chant masters who had come in his father's time were jealous of the Franks and plotted among themselves to teach each church differently. Charles made a plan to eliminate the differences, to hew to the norm. In 789 he required the Frankish clergy to learn and practice only the Roman chant.[41]

When he was in Rome in 774 Charlemagne asked Pope Hadrian for a copy of the canon law then in force. Hadrian gave him a copy of what specialists call the Dionysio-Hadriana. There was no single body of canon law at that time but in Rome the sixth-century collection by Dionysus Exiguus was authoritative, if not official. Charles brought this text back to Francia and his palace scholars worked on it for about fifteen years before it was implemented in 789.[42]

In the 780s Charlemagne concluded that the Rule of St. Benedict was the most excellent guide to monastic life and he asked the pope for a copy of the Rule. Hadrian complied but must have been a bit puzzled because Benedict's Rule had no official standing.[43] At court, Charlemagne gave the rule to a Visigothic courtier named, ironically, Benedict—his Gothic name was Witiza; he is generally referred to as Benedict of Aniane. Working over at least a decade and maybe two, Benedict assembled about a hundred monastic rules in his *Codex Regularum* and then read each of the seventy-three chapters of the Rule of St. Benedict against the monastic tradition and produced his *Concordia Regularum*. Charlemagne and then Louis required all monasteries to adopt the Rule of St. Benedict, and to implement it in the form taught by Benedict of Aniane.[44]

From Pope Stephen's visit to Francia and from Charlemagne's visits to Rome, it became clear that Roman and Frankish worship differed in more than just singing. Accordingly, Charlemagne asked Pope Hadrian for a Gregorian Sacramentary. Hadrian complied and the Franks soon discovered that what was essentially a mass book for Roman stational liturgies was not well suited to the Frankish world. This book was also given to Benedict of Aniane for study and revision. After some years of work, Benedict generated

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[41]*Admonitio Generalis* c. 80, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, 61.

[42]Hubert Mordek, "Kirchenrechtliche Autoritäten im Frühmittelalter," in Peter Classen, ed., *Recht und Schrift im Mittelalter*, Vorträge und Forschungen 23 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1977), 237–255.

[43]*Epistula ad regem Karolum de monasterio sancti Benedicti directa et a Paolo dictate*, ed. Kassius Hallinger, *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*, vol. 1 (Siegburg: Schmitt, 1963), 157–275.

[44]Josef Semmler, "Benedictus II: Una Regula—Una Consuetudo," in *Benedictine Culture 750–1050*, eds. Willem Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (Leuven: Leuven University, 1983), 1–49; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (New York: Oxford University, 1983), 229–231, 264–266; C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: Taylor and Francis, 1989), 69–85; de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism: The Power of Prayer," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 630–634.

a new sacramentary that in its temporal and sanctoral cycles and in its common and proper prayers was adapted to Frankish usage.[45] At about the same time, Charles commissioned Paul the Deacon to prepare a new lectionary so that all the churches of the Gauls would have readings "of great excellence."[46]

With respect to the Dionyso-Hadriana, the Rule of St. Benedict, the Gregorian Sacramentary, and the lectionary, it is important to note a few things. First, even as the Carolingians turned to Rome for authoritative books, they did not hesitate to apply their own scholarly resources to revising those books. Their serene confidence is impressive. Second, uniformity was never achieved in law, monastic practice, or worship. The Dionyso-Hadriana was influential but it nestled alongside several other legal texts and traditions. Not every monastery became Benedictine. Some prominent ones simply refused to comply. It is not clear that the court intended for the revised Gregorian to become *the* sacramentary in the Frankish world. It may have been viewed as more of a benchmark. Nevertheless, things were pushed in a uniform direction much further than ever before.

The Carolingians are famous for promoting schools and education. Every cathedral and monastery was required to have a school.[47] Lay boys were not excluded from those schools and we can name some prominent figures who emerged from them—Charlemagne's biographer Einhard, educated at Fulda, is probably the most distinguished example. Some of the exhortation and legislation surrounding the schools is revealing. The preface to the "General Admonition" of 789 says, "Let schools for teaching boys to read be established in every monastery and episcopal residence [and for learning] psalms, musical notation, singing, computation, and grammar. Correct carefully the catholic books because often some desire to pray to God properly but they pray badly because of faulty books. And do not permit your boys to corrupt them in reading or writing. If there is need of writing the Gospel, Psalter, and missal, let men of mature age do the writing with all diligence."[48] At about the same time, Charlemagne sent a circular latter to the bishops and abbots of his realm. In promoting education he said, "Those who desire to please God by living rightly should not neglect to please Him by speaking correctly . . . For although correct conduct may be better than knowledge, nevertheless knowledge precedes conduct." He went on to say that "in the past few years letters were often sent to us from several

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[45]Yitzhak Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy in Frankish Gaul* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2001), 74–78.

[46]*Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 30, pp. 80–81.

[47]John J. Contreni, "The Carolingian Renaissance: Educationand Literary Culture," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 712–725.

[48]*Admonitio Generalis*, c. 72, MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 22, p. 60.

monasteries in which it was stated that the brethren who dwelt there offered up on our behalf sacred and pious prayers, we have noticed in most of these letters both correct thoughts and uncouth expressions."[49] So he urged proper schooling under qualified teachers. Once again, norms.

The Carolingians were not shy about giving advice. Smaragdus of St.-Mihiel, Ermoldus Nigellus, Jonas of Orleans, Hincmar of Reims, and Sedulius Scottus wrote "mirrors for princes," guidebooks for kings.[50] Ambrosius Autpert, Paulinus of Aquileia, Alcuin, Dhuoda, Jonas, Hincmar, and Rather of Verona wrote ethical treatises to guide the lives of prominent laymen.[51] Hrabanus Maurus produced the long *Three Books on the Clerical Order*, which is a how-to manual for priests.[52] Amalarius of Metz and Walahfrid Strabo wrote commentaries on the liturgy.[53] The belief in the necessity to do things the right way extended across a wide range of human endeavor.

On two occasions the Carolingians expended great effort to study the proper use of images in the church. In response to Byzantium's Second Council of Nicaea, which put an end to the first phase of iconoclasm, Charlemagne commissioned Theodulf of Orleans to produce his massive *Opus Caroli Regis* in the early 790s and the text was discussed at court. In 825, after Louis the Pious learned of renewed iconoclasm, he ordered several scholars to assemble in Paris to look at images once more. Their massive *Libellus* is

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[49] *Epistola de litteris colendis*, MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 29, p. 79. The key study of the letter is Thomas Martin, "Bemerkungen zur 'Epistola de litteris colendis,'" *Archiv für Diplomatik* 51 (1985): 227–272.

[50] Smaragdus, *Via regia*, PL 102: 931–970; Ermoldus, *Ad Pippinum regem I* and *II,* ed. Edmond Faral (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1932), 202–232; Jonas of Orléans, *Le métier de roi (De institutione regia),* ed. Alain Dubreucq (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1995); Hincmar, *regis persona et regio ministerio*, PL 125: 833–856; Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus Christianis*, ed. Siegmund Hellmann, *Sedulius Scottus*, Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters 1 (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1906), 1–91. Still the best study of these texts is Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*, Bonner historische Forschungen 32 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1968).

[51] Ambrosius Autpertus, *De conflictu vitiorum et virtutum*, ed. R. Weber, *Ambrosii Autperti Opera*, in *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis* 27b (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), 909–931; Paulinus, *Liber exhortationis*, PL 99: 197–232; Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis liber*, PL 101: 613–638; Dhuoda, *Manuel pour mon fils*, ed. Pierre Riché, Sources chrétiennes 255bis (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1997); Jonas, *De institutione laicali*, PL 106: 121–78; Hincmar, *De cavendis vitiis et virtutibus exercendis*, PL 125: 857–930; Rather, *Praeloquiarum libri sex*, PL 136: 145–344. On these texts see Noble, "Secular Sanctity: Forging and Ethos for the Carolingian Nobility," in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, eds. Patrick Wormald and Janet Nelson (New York: Cambridge University, 2007), 8–36; Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012).

[52] *De institutione clericorum*, ed. Detlev Zimpel (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996). Book V of Rather of Verona's *Praeloquiarum* is also a "mirror" for bishops.

[53] Amalarius, *On the Liturgy,* 2 vols., ed. and trans. Eric Knibbs, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 35 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2014); Walahfrid, *Libellus de exordiis et incrementis quarundam observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum*, ed. Alice Harting-Correa, Mittellateinische Studien und Texte 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

an impressive achievement. Whereas Theodulf had said that images were permissible only for decoration and for commemoration, the Paris scholars expanded the list of authorized uses. For example, images could teach the unlettered, provoke worthy sentiments, and affirm the incarnation.[54]

The two discussions of images actually fit into a wider context. The Carolingians encountered a suspicious Christology—Adoptionism—in the Spanish borderlands.[55] They also, on two or three occasions, learned that their understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit differed from that of the Byzantines.[56] In their own realm they were challenged by Godescalc of Orbais and his idea of predestination.[57] The Carolingians developed a methodology for dealing with these controversies.[58] They assembled expert opinion. Sometimes experts were called together at court. Sometimes they were directed to meet in a specific place away from the court. Sometimes they were requested to send their considered opinions to the court in the form of treatises. In any case, the opinions were then sifted and an authoritative view was formulated. Once again we see them holding the line—the *linea rectitudinis* as an eighth-century text put it.

The Carolingians were a society of the baptized. Texts of every kind lay stress on the importance of baptism. Interestingly, when a foreign potentate submitted to Carolingian rule—say the Saxon leader Widukind, or the khan of the Avars, or the Danish King Harald—the sources never neglect to tell us about their baptism. In this regard it is interesting that in 810 Charlemagne wondered about the practice of baptism in his realm. Accordingly, he sent out a circular letter (I have already mentioned his circular letter on education) and asked bishops in particular to report back on the practice of baptism.[59] Sixty-one replies survive.[60] This project illustrates the "norm of rectitude" vividly. It also indicates a determined persistence alongside a typically Carolingian desire to understand exactly what it meant to do things right. Already in 789 Charlemagne had demanded that baptism be performed

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[54]I have discussed these issues fully in *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 158–286.

[55]John Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785–820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993).

[56]Peter Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 82 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002).

[57]There is no recent and comprehensive study. See Klaus Vielhaber, *Gottschalk der Sachse*, Bonner historische Forschungen 5 (Bonn: L. Röhrscheid, 1956); David Ganz, "The Debate on Predestination," in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, eds. Margaret Gibson and Janet Nelson, BAR International Series 101 (New York: Oxford University, 1981), 353–373.

[58]Noble, "Kings, Clergy and Dogma: The Settlement of Doctrinal Disputes in the Carolingian World," in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds. Stephen Baxter, et al. (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 237–252.

[59]Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe*, 164–206.

[60]Susan A. Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire*, vol. 2 (Notre Dame, Ill.: University of Notre Dame, 2002), 154–633.

only according to the Roman rite. Since baptism was the badge of belonging in Christendom, the sacrament had to be understood properly and executed correctly.

III. Sanctifying

Third, and finally, sanctifying. The Carolingians tried hard to do everything right with respect to their New Israel so as to make a holy people. Sometimes the church sought to protect people from false saints or bad teaching. Sometimes the church tried to inculcate specific beliefs and behaviors. With only a few exceptions we cannot measure the effects of Carolingian efforts. But I do think that three common approaches are unhelpful and I shall attempt to sketch a fourth. I think Jacque LeGoff's famous idea about clerical and folkloric religion is simply unhelpful because its theoretical elegance is not matched by its explanatory power; there was no single thing that can be called clerical culture and folklore can mean almost anything.[61] Arnold Angenendt's idea that early medieval religion was archaic, ritualistic, and riddled with magic as compared with the authentic faith and spirituality of the later Middle Ages is pessimistic and clumsily reductionist.[62] Finally, Valerie Flint's thesis that the church basically split the difference with the pagans and left the world an enchanted place is explicitly contradicted by virtually every Carolingian text that bears on the topic of religion—partly, I think, because she does not lay down sharp enough boundaries between religion and magic.[63]

In anticipation of my further comments, let me offer just a few examples of why I think these three approaches are unhelpful. In 789 Charlemagne legislated that "unknown names of angels are neither to be invented nor pronounced." Only Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael were to have authority.[64] In 794 the king forbade the veneration or invocation of new saints or the creation of new shrines for them.[65] People were to have no truck with letters

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[61]"Clerical Culture and Folklore Traditions in Merovingian Civilization," and "Ecclesiastical Culture and Folklore in the Middle Ages: Saint Marcellus of Paris and the Dragon," in his *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980), 153–188.

[62]*Das Frühmittelalter: Die abendländische Christenheit von 400 bis 900* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 1990), 43–50. I incline more to the view of Henry Mayr-Harting, "Charlemagne's Religion," in *Am Vorabend der Kaiser Krönung*, eds. Peter Godman et al. (Berlin: Weidmann, 2002), 113–124.

[63]*The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1991). See the review article by Alexander Murray, "Missionaries and Magic in Dark-Age Europe," *Past & Present* 136 (1992): 186–205.

[64]*Admonitio Generalis*, 16, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 22, ed. Boretius, p. 55.

[65]*Synodus Franconofurtensis*, c. 42, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 28, ed. Boretius, p. 77.

alleged to have fallen from heaven.[66] Frankish legislation forbade augury, sorcery, magic, casting lots, weather prophecy—Agobard of Lyon wrote a treatise on this topic[67]—fashioning magical ligatures, or bringing candles to springs and groves.[68] While some of these practices may have been primordial, it is important to see that the Carolingian church never made bargains with them. All of these practices may have had a ritualistic dimension but ritual does not exhaust their meaning. Some may well be "primitive." Most of these issues point directly to the assimilation, albeit perhaps to the imperfect assimilation, of Christian and pagan ideas. The situation on the ground was extremely complex and Carolingian leaders combatted, they did not compromise with, whatever they deemed wrong.

Carolingian sources permit some answers to Charlemagne's question about whether or not his people were Christian. I begin with expectations. Numerous sources from the eighth and ninth centuries consistently attest to the requirement that Christians be able to recite the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.[69] It was the responsibility of godparents to teach their godchildren this prayer and profession. Charlemagne on one occasion was distressed to discover people who could not recite them and he redoubled his efforts.[70] Records of episcopal visitations provide evidence that people were indeed checked on their ability to recite them. Many manuscripts witness to vernacular versions of the Lord's Prayer and creed and inspire some confidence in their dissemination.[71] The Pater Noster, moreover, was recited orally by all in the Mass, unlike most parts of the service that were recited silently by the officiant or sung by the clergy.[72] The creed in question was probably the Apostle's Creed and not the longer, more complicated Nicene version.

In fundamental respects the ability to recite the Pater Noster and Creed provides a base-line answer to Charlemagne's question. But there is more.

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[66]*Admonitio Generalis*, c. 78, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 22, ed. Boretius, 60.

[67]*De grandine et tonitruis*, ed. L. Van Acker, *Agobardi Lugdunensis Opera Omnia*, CCCM 52 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), 3–15.

[68]*Admonitio Generalis*, 65, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 22, ed. Boretius, 65–66.

[69]For example, Theodulf, *Erstes Kapitular*, c. 22, *Capitula episcoporum*, vol. 1, p. 119.

[70]*Karoli Magni ad Ghaerbaldum episcopum leodiensem epistola et Ghaerbaldi ad dioceseos suae presbyteros epistola*, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 122, ed. Boretius, 241–242. See also Nelson, "Religion in the Age of Charlemagne," 491–492.

[71]McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 184–205; Cyril Edwards, "German Vernacular Literature: A Survey," in McKitterick, ed., *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (New York: Cambridge University, 1994), 144–149.

[72]Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, vol. 2 (1959; repr. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2012), 287–290. There is an excellent discussion of this in Nathan J. Ristuccia, "The Transmission of Christendom: Ritual and Introduction in the early Middle Ages" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2013), 426–429.

Charlemagne's famous "General Admonition" of 789 demanded that all be taught that they are to believe "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to be one God, omnipotent, eternal, invisible, who created heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are in them." Furthermore, people were to be taught that the Son of God was made flesh by the Holy Spirit, out of Mary, ever virgin, for the salvation and renewal of the human race, and that he suffered, was buried, rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come again to judge the wicked and the righteous. Thus far, we have only an abbreviated summation of the creed. The text goes on. People were to be taught the sins for which they will be consigned to eternal fire: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorceries, feuds, contentions, jealousies, animosities, wrath, strife, drunkenness, strife, dissensions, heresies, factions, malice, killings, and revellings.[73] These were indeed serious sins and they all had roots in both scripture and church teachings. Their eradication would also have contributed to social harmony in that the list of sins contains both individual offences and collective ones—feuds, contention, and factions, for example.

Some very interesting corroboration comes from a late eighth-century catechetical text from Bavaria.[74] A person who wishes to become a Christian should first be asked whether he wishes to do this voluntarily or by compulsion. If involuntarily, he should be taught with sweet and gentle words to pass from the lordship of the devil to that of Christ, from eternal fire to infinite joy. If voluntarily, he must be asked if he wishes only to gain something in his earthly life. He should also be taught about his immortal soul. Then the text turns, as catechetical manuals have done for centuries, to the Decalogue. He should be told that the one God has created him in his own likeness and has given him the law for him to win his salvation. The text then moves somewhat randomly through the Ten Commandments and embellishes them at certain points. For instance, it starts with no idols, kill no man, no adultery, no falsehood, no theft, no fortune telling, no auguries, no going to hills, or trees, or springs, or rivers. Later the text comes to Jesus's teaching to love God and love neighbor. The lists of teachings included in such texts are neither long nor intellectually ambitious. People were not expected to master complex theological issues. It was hoped that they would command the most elementary Christian truths and also behave decently towards one another.

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[73]*Admonitio Generalis*, 82, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, no. 22, p. 61. This fairly basic articulation of the faith is repeated in essentials in *Concilium Arelatense* (813), c. 1, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, ed. Werminghoff, vol. 1, 249–250.

[74]*Ratio de cathecizandis rudibus*, ed. Joseph Michael Heer, *Ein karolingischer Missions-Katechismus*, Biblische und patristische Forschungen 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1911), 77–88.

The treatises on virtues and vices to which I referred earlier convey the same kinds of messages. To be sure, those treatises were addressed to noblemen but the same principles can be found in the instructions given by bishops to their clergy and in sermons. The elite used Latin, but language need not have been a fundamental problem. Charlemagne encouraged preaching "in lingua romana aut theotisca"—in French or German, we might say—and his exhortations were repeated later in the ninth century.[75]

The Old Saxon *Heliand*—*The Savior*—is a vernacular retelling of the gospel narrative. That text dates from the 830s or so and is contemporary with Otfried von Weissenburg's *Evangelienbuch*, another vernacular summary of the New Testament. The Old High German *Muspilli* communicates basic Christian teachings and there are a number of extant prayers in Germanic dialects, notably the so-called "Wessobrun Prayer."[76] One cannot say who heard these stories or prayed these prayers but one dare not suppose that no one did. Were they only heard in the halls of the mighty?

Language poses another interesting problem. In the lands north of the Danube and east of the Rhine, Latin was a learned language. It simply cannot have been known by more than a tiny fraction of the population. But west of the Rhine, in Italy, and in northeastern Spain the emerging romance was probably close to the Latin of everyday usage. One of the ironies of the so-called Carolingian Renaissance was that in fixing, in purifying Latin, the scholars separated it from the everyday language of the people, killed it, and turned it into a dead language. But before the linguistic reforms, one suspects, Latin was not a mandarin language but rather the language of everyday life.[77] One of the interesting features of the ethical manuals of the ninth century is that they consist of relatively lengthy patristic citations introduced and interpreted in contemporary language. These passages are effectively schoolhouse Latin. Andre Wilmart published four prayer books from the middle of the ninth century—and there were many more such books.[78] The sheer simplicity of the Latin in these prayers is instructive. A prayer on the Holy Trinity may serve as an example:

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[75] *Synodus Franconofurtensis* (794), c. 52, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. Boretius, no. 28, p. 78; *Concilium Turonense* (813), c. 17, MGH, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, ed. Werminghoff, vol. 1, p. 288; *Council of Mainz* (847), c. 2, MGH, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, ed. Hartmann, vol. 3, p. 164.

[76] The material is effectively surveyed by Edwards, "German Vernacular Literature," 141–160, with further references.

[77] Roger Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1982). Technicalities proved controversial and Wright edited a collection to address some of them from various angles: *Latin and the Romance Languages in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1982).

[78] *Precum libelli quattuor aevi karolini*, ed. André Wilmart (Rome: Ephemerides Liturgicae, 1940). I discuss these in "Secular Sanctity," 28–30. See also Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe*, 249–252.

You are my help, Holy Trinity. Hear me, O hear me, my Lord. For you are my God, living and true. You are my holy father. You are my pious Lord. You are my great king. You are my just judge. You are my one master. You are my fitting support. You are my most powerful healer. You are my loveliest delight. You are my living and true bread. You are a priest forever. You lead me away from this world. You are my true light. You are my holy sweetness. You are my shining wisdom. You are my pure simplicity. You are my Catholic unity. You are my peaceful harmony. You are my entire protection. You are my good portion. You are my eternal salvation. You are my great mercy. You are my sturdiest wisdom, O Savior of the world, you who live and reign for ever an ever. Amen.[79]

This prayer is actually one of the more complex ones in the prayer books. Yet it has only one complex sentence—the last one, which itself echoes the liturgy— and the range of vocabulary is restricted. Such prayers invite reflection on the penetration of the Carolingian program. I would not suggest that any farmer at his plow could recite a prayer like this but I suspect that thousands of political and social elites could have done so.

In his letter to Baugulf of Fulda Charlemagne expressed his hope that all would be "religious in heart, learned in discourse, pure in act, and eloquent in speech."[80] That was a tall order. Learning and eloquence were certainly lofty ideals but there is no reason to imagine that those outside the elite were expected to attain them. But what about everyone else?

Through baptismal preparation and preaching most people would have had at least some encounter with the aspirations of society's leaders. Still, anyone who has ever preached, or taught, would be disinclined to equate what was said with what was heard. Counts were expected to announce the contents of the royal capitularies in their court sessions; Carolingian capitularies present about equal measures of secular and religious business. We have substantial testimony to the presence of people of all kinds at these court days.[81] In principle all free men were required to serve in the army and we know of preaching, praying, fasting, and penance on military campaigns. On several occasions fasting, prayers, and almsgiving were required of everyone before military campaigns and, on at least one occasion, fasts and prayers were demanded to seek divine mercy in a time of famine.[82] Virtually all churches were painted with historical scenes from the Gospels.[83] These must have

[79]*Precum libelli*, 13.
[80]*Epistola de litteris colendis*, MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. Boretius, no. 29, p. 79.
[81]François Louis Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne*, trans. Bryce and Mary Lyon (New York, 1968), 27–34; Ganshof, *Recherches sur les capitulaires* (Paris: Sirey, 1958), 55–65.
[82]Nelson, "Religion in the Age of Charlemagne," 496–497.
[83]Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 338–340.

been used in instructing the faithful. Three times Charlemagne required all adult males to swear allegiance to him.[84] We cannot say how effective this requirement was in practice but it is suggestive of the reach of the mighty.

Unfortunately, this capillary flow of aspiration and information cannot be matched with hard data on the success of the effort.[85] The sources provide hints, no more. We have no figures for mass attendance or reception of the Eucharist.[86] There are indications that both may have increased somewhat across the ninth century. Laws forbade servile work and judicial business on Sundays and insisted that priests not neglect their preaching but these laws do not tell us that people went to church.[87] Legislation constantly addressed sexual morality.[88] Repeated warnings about abortion and infanticide suggest that these practices were hard to eradicate. At the same time, there is evidence that efforts to make marriage public, monogamous, and durable had some success. Sources of many kinds attest to pilgrimages to healing shrines.[89] The great might have gone to Rome or to other famous sites but ordinary people seem to have availed themselves of local cult centers. The practice of penance seems to have rooted itself more and more deeply into society.[90] Three-fourths of all charters to St.-Gall reveal donations "*pro salutis anime.*"[91]

Healing is an interesting and revealing practice. The large number of medical manuscripts copied in the Carolingian world suggests that scientific medicine as the ancient world understood it continued to be practiced.[92] But for many people the intercession of the saints was preferable to the ministrations of doctors. And healing could also be accomplished without traveling to a shrine. There exists a large corpus of medical charms in which, interestingly, the Pater Noster played a significant part. This material suggests two things.

[84]*Capitularia*, nos. 23, c. 18, 25, cc. 1–2, 33, c. 2, ed. Boretius, 63, 66, 92.

[85]The best assessments are Jean Chélini, *L'aube du moyen age: Naissance de la Chrétienté occidentale* (Paris: Picard, 1991) and Julia M. H. Smith, "Religion and Lay Society," in McKitterick, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 2, pp. 654–678.

[86]Legislation required both, e.g.: *Duplex legationis edictum*, c. 25, MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. Boretius, p. 64; *Concilium Cabillonense* (813), c. 47, MGH, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, ed. Werminghoff, vol. 1, p. 283.

[87]*Admonitio Generalis*, c. 81, MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. Boretius, no. 22, p. 61; *Concilium Arelatense*, cc. 10, 16, *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 37, *Concilium Remense*, c. 35, *Concilium Turonense*, c. 40, MGH, *Concilia Aevi Karolini*, ed. Werminghoff, vol. 1, pp. 251–252, 270, 256, 292.

[88]Chélini, *L'aube du moyen age*, 133–237.

[89]Bat-Sheva Albert, *Le pèlerinage à l'époque carolingienne* (Brussels: Nauwelaerts, 1999).

[90]Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe 600–1200* (New York: Cambridge University, 2014), 101–139.

[91]Smith, "Religion and Lay Society," 668.

[92]John J. Contreni, "Masters and Medicine in Northern France in the Reign of Charles the Bald," in *Charles the Bald*, 33–50.

First, the dissemination of the Lord's prayer and second the Christianization of some aspects of folk medicine.[93]

In sum, Carolingian religion was a force for the unification of the *populus Christianus*, a guide to right belief and practice, and a means of making the people "religious in heart and pure in act." Jean Chélini once said, "Carolingian Catholicism assured the social and political order . . . religion invaded all domains of social life."[94] Janet Nelson asks whether the Carolingian program of religious teaching and reform "beggars belief." In fact, she argues, it "*depended* on belief—in the feasibility of a collective changing of minds and hearts."[95]

IV. EUROPEANIZING AND ROMANIZING

Charlemagne, his courtiers, and his successors sought to create a kind of Augustinian commonwealth, a city of God.[96] And that leads me to two concluding remarks that I shall spin out briefly in an attempt to be both suggestive and provocative after reflecting on these subjects for some four decades. Within the long stream of the history of the church, and particularly of its Catholic dimension, the Carolingian era is important for having Europeanized Christianity. To be sure, much was inherited from the ancient, Mediterranean church. By bringing most of Continental western Europe under their aegis, the Carolingians gave to Christianity as an institutional phenomenon and as a lived spiritual reality distinctive and durable characteristics. The alliance of throne and altar is much more a Carolingian than a late antique phenomenon. A tightly articulated territorial church was achieved in the eighth and ninth centuries more effectively than had ever been the case in the ancient world. A cultural expression of Christianity that was a synthesis of biblical, Roman, Germanic, and Celtic elements became visible in art and architecture and in poetry and music was Carolingian. Central to all of this was a faith, a people, and a realm that people for nearly a millennium called "Christendom."

In the second place, the Carolingian era witnessed the Romanization of European Christianity. Let us recall that the Carolingians turned to Rome for chant masters, for a monastic rule, for canon law, and for a sacramentary. They professed and practiced baptism as the Roman church did. Chrodegang

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[93]Ristuccia, "The Transmission of Christendom," 396–414.

[94]*L'aube du moyen age*, 496.

[95]"Religion in the Age of Charlemagne," 506. Mayr-Harting's "Charlemagne's Religion" aligns with Nelson.

[96]The fundamental work remains Henri-Xavier Arquillière, *L'augustinisme politique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955).

instituted stational liturgies at Metz on the Roman model. Carolingian churches mimicked Roman buildings. The art historian and liturgical scholar Carol Heitz said the Carolingians did things "*more Romano*."[97] Carolingian missionary work was their own initiative, although they sometimes sought papal support. Christopher Dawson's once widely read *The Making of Europe*[98] said that in the early Middle Ages Europe was made—we would say "constructed" and use that word in two quite distinct ways—by two processes of Romanization. One came with Rome's legions and a second with papal endeavor. The former contention is only partly right for it was the Carolingians who incorporated and Christianized central Europe, lands Rome never ruled. As for the second contention, Dawson had it backwards. The Romanization of early medieval Europe was a Carolingian project, not a papal one. Peter Brown famously detected a series of microchristendoms extending across the lands that would become historical Europe.[99] Each of these believed itself to be the unique bearer of an ancient and authentic Christianity. It was the Carolingians, not the popes, who gathered those microchristendoms into one large and meaningful whole. Put a little differently, the Carolingians laid the foundations, established the preconditions, on which later papal leadership would be based. I suggest that Roman Catholicism was in surprising ways a Carolingian creation.

[97]Carol Heitz, *L'architecture religieuse carolingienne: les forms et leurs fonctions* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1980).

[98]Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932) and many subsequent editions; the book is still in print.

[99]Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University, 2003).