The Life and Legacy of Constantine

The transformation from the classical period to the medieval has long been associated with the rise of Christianity. This association has deeply influenced the way that modern audiences imagine the separation of the classical world from its medieval and early modern successors. The role played in this transformation by Constantine as the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire has also profoundly shaped the manner in which we frame Late Antiquity and successive periods as distinctively Christian. The modern demarcation of the post-classical period is often inseparable from the reign of Constantine.

The attention given to Constantine as a liminal figure in this historical transformation is understandable. Constantine's support of Christianity provided the religion with unprecedented public respectability and public expressions of that support opened previously unimagined channels of social, political and economic influence to Christians and non-Christians alike. The exact nature of Constantine's involvement or intervention has been the subject of continuous and densely argued debate. Interpretations of the motives and sincerity of his conversion to Christianity have characterized, with various results, explanations of everything from the religious culture of the late Roman state to the dynamics of ecclesiastical politics.

What receives less-frequent attention is the fact that our modern appreciation of Constantine as a pivotal historical figure is itself a direct result of the manner in which Constantine's memory was constructed by the human imagination over the course of centuries. This volume offers a series of snapshots of moments in that process from the fourth to the sixteenth century.

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The Life and Legacy of Constantine

Traditions through the Ages

Edited by
M. Shane Bjornlie

For my father . . .
Salve sancta parens iterum; salvete, recepti
nequiquam cineres animaeque umbraeque paternae.
Non licuit finis Italos fataliaque arva
Nec tecum Ausonium, quicumque est, quaerere
Thybrim.

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Abbreviations

Calp. *Ecl.*	=	Calpurnius, *Eclogues*
CTh	=	*Theodosian Code*
Endelech. *DMB*	=	Endelechius, *De mortibus boum*
ELQ	=	Juvencus, *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*
Eus. *HE*	=	Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*
Eus. *VC*	=	Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*
LCL	=	*Loeb Classical Library*
LP	=	Duchesne, L., ed. (1886–1955) *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vols. 1–3
MGH	=	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
Nemes. *Ecl.*	=	Nemesianus, *Eclogues*
Pan. Lat.	=	*Latin Panegyrics*
PL	=	*Patrologia Latina*
CCSL	=	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
CSEL	=	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
EETS	=	*Early English Text Society*
Socrates *HE*	=	Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*
SSCIM	=	*Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano per il Medioevo*
Verg. *Ecl.*	=	Vergil, *Eclogues*
Verg. *Geo.*	=	Vergil, *Georgics*

8   Charlemagne

A new Constantine?

Judson Emerick

Even before King Charlemagne (768–814) arranged to have his Roman politi-
cal ally, Pope Leo III (795–816), crown him emperor in Rome on Christmas
Day 800,[1] the king's contemporaries might conceive of him as having "impe-
rial" stature. In an oft-quoted letter that Pope Hadrian (772–795) sent to the
Frankish court in May 778 the writer compared Charlemagne directly to the
first Christian emperor, Constantine:

> *Et sicut temporibus beati Silvestri Romani pontificis a sanctae recordationis piissimo
> Contantino, magno imperatore, per eius largitatem sancta Dei catholica et apostolica
> Romana ecclesia elevata atque exaltata est et potestatem in his Hesperiae partibus
> largiri dignatus, ita et in his vestris felicissimis temporibus atque nostris sancta Dei
> ecclesia, id est beati Petri apostoli, germinet atque exultet et amplius quam amplius
> exaltata permaneat, ut omnes gentes, quae hec audierint, edicere valeant: 'Domine,
> salvum fac regem, et exaudi nos in die, in qua invocaverimus te'* [Psalm 19:10]*;
> quia ecce novus christianissimus Dei Constantinus imperator his temporibus sur-
> rexit, per quem omnia Deus sanctae suae ecclesiae beati apostolorum principis Petri
> largiri dignatus est.*

> And just as during the time of blessed Pope Silvester the church of Rome
> was elevated and exalted by the most pious, great emperor Constantine of
> holy memory through his liberality and transfer of power over the western
> regions, thus in your most blessed time and ours may the church spring
> up, exult, and continue ever more fully to be exalted so that everyone who
> hears these things may loudly proclaim, 'Give victory to the king, O Lord,
> and answer us when we call'. Indeed here this day a new most Christian
> emperor Constantine has arisen, through whom God has thought worthy
> to bestow everything on the holy church of Peter, prince of the apostles.[2]

By promoting the Frankish monarch to "imperial" status thusly as *novus Con-
stantinus*, Hadrian did not seek to flatter but to obligate. Four years previously
Charlemagne had conquered Lombard Italy – Pavia, the capital of the Lombard
regnum, had fallen to the Franks in 774 – and in Easter of that same year, while
visiting Pope Hadrian in Rome, the king had promised to transfer control

of many towns and huge swaths of formerly Lombard-controlled Italy to the Republic of Saint Peter.[3] Now in 778, anxious that his Frankish royal ally fully honor the bequest, the Republic's leader wrote pointedly to call those promises to mind: Constantine had favored Silvester by liberal gifts; now Charlemagne should act in the same way toward Hadrian.[4] Hadrian used this ploy again some seven years later in a letter he wrote to the Byzantine emperor Constantine VI and his mother and regent, Irene, as he responded to their invitation in 785 to attend an ecumenical council, the second at Nicaea held in 787 to condemn iconoclasm.[5] Hadrian began by hailing the Byzantine rulers as a new Constantine and a new Helena, respectively,[6] then reminded them how the first Constantine and his mother had worked closely with, and especially favored, Pope Silvester, Peter's vicar. Thus again did Hadrian attempt to define and fix relations between all parties concerned.

   Did this political power play echo one that his predecessors, Pope Stephen II (752–757) and Paul I (757–767), had already tried out? These were the popes, brothers actually, who had first arranged the Carolingian royal-papal friendship pact, the religio-political alliance that Charlemagne's father, Pippin III, and Pope Stephen II, solemnized memorably at the monastery of Saint-Denis in 754 when the pope anointed Pippin; his wife, Bertrade; and their two sons, Charlemagne and Carlomann.[7] Pope Stephen thus became, with King Pippin, a spiritual *co-father* of the king's sons and everyone concerned became part of a single "family." The resulting pact became the cornerstone of Frankish royal-papal politics from that moment onward.[8] Three years later, in 757, the papal brothers built a major oratory or chapel at St. Peter's in Rome to enshrine and help establish this Franco-papal accord. Stephen II began the work during his last year in office, and Paul I finished during his first, converting the former imperial, Honorian mausoleum at the south end of St. Peter's transept into a "basilica" dedicated to Petronilla, the spiritual daughter of Peter (that is, baptized by him), whose body (with its marble sarcophagus) Pope Paul I removed from the Catacomb of Domitilla, brought to St. Peter's, and set up as a reliquary altar in the new chapel.[9] This is not the place to detail how Constantine's old Vatican cemetery with its martyrium for Peter became, during the eighth century, a full-fledged church, Rome's prime sanctuary for worship of the saints, and the city's main theater of papal representation (that is, the city's most important cathedral). Suffice it to say that Stephen's and Paul's new chapel joined with others there to provide an impressive stage set for papal liturgy – for papal representation – focused by saints' cults.[10] But key here is that Petronilla's oratory also staged and displayed the shawl (*sabanum*) that Charlemagne's sister Gisela wore at her baptism in 757, the very cloth having been sent by Pippin to Paul for the purpose. The chapel thus promoted the newly established Franco-papal alliance by advertising the "family relations" that obtained between the Frankish king and the Roman pope, both co-fathers of Gisela. In his letter to Pippin of October 757, Paul told the king how the shawl had been installed in all pomp in the chapel of Petronilla and how thus the chapel had become the king's *aeterna memoria*.[11] It is, then, fascinating to

learn that the mid–eighth-century monument *may* also have promoted papal hopes that the monarch, Pippin, would support the priest, Paul, just as Emperor Constantine in legend had supported Pope Silvester. A most suggestive notice – from a fifteenth-century chronicle – tells how a niche (*tribuna*) in the chapel of Petronilla had been painted in "olden times" (*anticamente*) with "the history of Emperor Constantine."[12] Did Hadrian's predecessor, Paul, want to see Pippin as a new Constantine too?[13]

The fresco cycle in question could have dealt with the legend of Pope Silvester and Emperor Constantine from the famous *Actus Silvestri* that recounted, *inter alia*, how the confessor, Silvester, healed the emperor of leprosy by baptizing him, and how in return the emperor had granted the Roman church and its papal leader special privileges.[14] The *Actus* formed by stages during the fifth and sixth centuries from various materials from across the Mediterranean world,[15] but recently Paolo Liverani argued that Romans knew it well already in the second quarter of the fifth century, and that it played an important role in Pope Leo the Great's political program to establish Rome's primacy among the apostolic sees.[16] Of course, the legend in question formed the backbone of the *Constitutum Constantini*, the much discussed, early-medieval forgery known widely as the Donation of Constantine.[17] The document pretends to be an imperial decree issued by the emperor to Pope Sylvester "and to all his successors" in which the emperor, grateful for having been converted to Christianity, baptized, and cured of leprosy by the pope, provides many gifts to the Roman church and her leader, namely, vast properties across the Mediterranean, the imperial palace at the Lateran, primacy among the world's apostolic sees, and even the "imperial power and dignity" in "all provinces, places and cities of Italy, and the western regions."[18] Forty and more years ago, Horst Fuhrmann, editor of the document, argued that it was likely to have been a product of the papal curia at the Lateran datable sometime during the last half of the eighth century. He found stylistic parallels between its text and the letters of Pope Paul I. He judged too that the famous forgery had left its traces in Pope Hadrian's letter to King Charlemagne of 778 that I cited at the start of this essay, the one in which Hadrian, a new Silvester, reminded Charlemagne that he might emulate Constantine by providing the Roman church great gifts.[19]

Most scholars have accepted Fuhrmann's dating of the forged Donation linking it firmly to key events unfolding in Rome during the Carolingian Renaissance.[20] Presided over by Popes Hadrian I (772–795) and Leo III (795–816), and culminating in Leo's crowning of Charlemagne as emperor on Christmas Day, 800, the Renaissance in question has always seemed to come into sharp focus in a famous mosaic decoration – in the main apse conch and apsidal wall of the reception hall, that is, the Triclinium or state dining room that Pope Leo III built at the Lateran in the late 790s.[21] Patterned closely upon reception halls in aristocratic, Mediterranean, late-antique villas and palaces, the *aula* had three apses set out in clover-leaf form as a triconch. Leo's throne occupied the central apse, and sofas for diners to recline upon lined the other two.[22] The banquet hall in question no longer survives,[23] but a reproduction of its main apse wall

with its mosaic, set up at the Lateran opposite the Scala Sancta by Pope Benedict XIV in 1743 purports to record its former appearance (Figure 8.1).[24] The eighteenth-century monument was based upon an early seventeenth-century one: in 1624–1625 Cardinal Francesco Barberini enshrined the remains of Leo III's Triclinium, that is, its still standing main apse wall, by building an aedicula over it and restoring its mosaic extensively. This project formed part of a program sponsored by the Barberini Pope Urban VIII (1623–1644) to mark and preserve Rome's "early Christian" history in its built monuments, especially any that might be construed as linked with Emperor Constantine and Pope Silvester.[25]

Benedict XIV's 1743 version of the monument in question shows that the apse conch had a mosaic depicting Christ's mission to the eleven apostles (Matthew 28:16–20). Two investiture scenes flanked the conch on the surrounding apsidal wall. The one at the viewer's right showed Peter enthroned, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven in his lap, conferring a pallium upon a kneeling Leo (at Peter's right) and a banner to a kneeling Charlemagne (at Peter's left). Both kneeling figures had square haloes, and both were named in the mosaic, LEO P.P and CARVLO REGI. Since the Frankish ruler has the title of "king" not "emperor," scholars have always supposed that the original Triclinium mosaic

Figure 8.1 Rome, Lateran Palace, Pope Benedict XIV's restoration (1743) of the mosaic of 799–800 decorating the main apse in Pope Leo III's triclinium or banquet hall (Photo: author)

must predate Leo's crowning of Charlemagne as emperor at the end of the year 800. The investiture scene on the viewer's left presently shows Christ enthroned transferring the keys to Peter (Peter kneeling at Christ's right) and offering a banner to Constantine (the emperor kneeling at Christ's left). Peter, haloed, has no inscription, but of course it must be he (Christ transferred the keys to *Peter*, Matthew 16:19). Constantine, however, distinguished by a square halo, has an inscription in mosaic reading. R. / COST / NTI / NVS, unusual because it designates him as "king" not "emperor." While art historians can point to many examples of the transfer of the keys by Christ to Peter (a widely used image of papal authority that reveals Peter and his successors as mediators of human salvation), in none of these does Constantine also appear alongside Christ to share the stage with Peter.[26]

Whether the eighteenth-century restoration of the Triclinium mosaic comes close to the Leonine original remains a vexing question. The engraving published in 1625 purporting to show the main apse decoration from Leo III's Triclinium at the Lateran before its restoration by Cardinal Francesco Barberini[27] reveals that the mosaic on the left side of the apsidal wall had quite fallen away. Thus the investiture scene with Christ, Peter, and Constantine that we see today is a modern *interpolation*.[28] Was it invented for Cardinal Francesco Barberini's restoration in 1624–1625 as a prototype for the scene with Peter, Pope Leo III, and Charlemagne on the right? Did the early modern restorers try thus to link Leo-and-Charlemagne with Silvester-and-Constantine in the spirit of the Donation of Constantine? Indeed, the seventeenth-century restorers thought the investiture scene on the left must originally have depicted Christ enthroned flanked by *Pope Silvester* and Emperor Constantine.[29] But Christ transferring the Keys of Heaven to Pope Silvester does not appear in early Christian or medieval art.[30]

In their recent review of Johannes Fried's book on the *Constitutum Constantini*, Carolyn Goodson and Janet Nelson argue that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century restoration of Leo III's Triclinium mosaic must be correct on grounds that both the textual evidence (poems; letters; the forged Donation) and Roman papal patronage of the arts in the eighth century provide it a rich context.[31] Despite the arguments of Ingo Herklotz, Manfred Luchterhand, and Frans Alto Bauer noted earlier, most scholars today still see the early modern restoration as an accurate reflection of the Leonine original and as having been inspired by Rome's long preoccupation with the legend of Silvester. But more than that, they go on to claim the mosaic as marking just that moment when the basic ideology of the Carolingian Renaissance, in preparation during the last third of the eighth century, truly burgeoned. The mosaic documents (for most scholars) just that moment when Charlemagne's promise and accomplishments came into the sharp focus – when the ideology of a new western, Latin, Rome-centered, Christian state led by the Frankish monarch in close alliance with the bishop of Rome took clear shape, that is, when Charlemagne himself came to Rome in August 800 to provide the

beleaguered Leo crucial political support and then, in return, in December of the same year, when Leo crowned him emperor in his (Leo's) great cathedral at the Vatican dedicated to St. Peter. Thus nearly everyone sees the Triclinium mosaic of 798–799 as documenting a key turning point, really a kind of summing up of thirty years of Charlemagne's reign, a kind of culmination.[32] And here, they insist, at this moment, the Frankish king appeared clearly as a new Constantine.

Regnum davidicum

But could the legend of Silvester have loomed so large during the last half of the eighth century in Rome and Francia? Does the forged *Constitutum Constantini* that originated during these years in Rome provide so fundamental a key to understanding the Carolingian Renaissance? Despite Pope Paul I's chapel for Petronilla at the Vatican (with its possible paralleling of the Frankish King Pippin I and Constantine), despite Pope Hadrian's auspicious, even encomiastic linking of himself as a new Silvester and Charlemagne as a new Constantine in 778, despite this trope's possible political underpinning in the Carolingian royal–papal friendship pact as displayed in Leo III's Triclinium mosaic, and despite moreover, the trope's echo of the legend that tells how the first, Christian, Frankish monarch, Clovis (d. 511), went to his baptism as *novus Constantinus* under the guidance of Saint Remigius, bishop of Reims, said to be "the equal of Silvester,"[33] it (the trope in question) never came up again during Charlemagne's reign.[34] Not even after Christmas 800 when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor. We should not forget that while the papal curia produced the Donation of Constantine, no curial figure and certainly no pope ever produced the document in public for any political purpose during the entire period in question, a point made by Thomas Noble forcefully in his 1984 book on the formation of the Republic of St. Peter.[35] In fact, more than others, Noble has long argued against thinking that the Renaissance/Renascence/*Renovatio* that Charlemagne sponsored culminated with his crowning in Rome, or that the crowning put him in the public eye in any special way as a new Constantine.[36] Let me now follow this thread further here.

Rather than see their leader as a new Constantine, the Carolingian court and its clients sought throughout the eighth century to present their kings, first Pippin III, then his son Charlemagne, as mirrors of heroic, biblical, *Israelite* prophets, leaders, and rulers – to treat them (the Carolingian kings) as images of Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and Josiah, and especially David. Indeed, during the reign of Charlemagne, casting the Frankish ruler as a new King David became normal, and between 780 circa and 800, as I will show, took on new layers of meaning. Popes addressed Pippin (751–768) as a Moses, Joshua, and/or a David in seven of the letters they wrote to the Frankish court in the 750s and '60s gathered in the *Codex Carolinus*.[37] In an eighth (*CC*, no. 33), datable between 761 and 766, Pope Paul I wrote to

Pippin's sons, Carlomann and Charlemagne, and urged them too to follow the *exempla* of Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon.[38] It is true that Popes Stephen III (768–772) and Hadrian (772–795) do not speak of the Frankish kings as types of Old Testament leaders, or at least not in any of their now extant letters.[39] But from the earliest moment, as Charlemagne took over as sole king of the Franks in 771 (upon the death of Carlomann), other of his clients look to have carried on. In 775, the insular scholar and member of Charlemagne's court, Cathwulf, compared the young King Charlemagne in knowledge of God's law to both David and Solomon.[40] In 789 when Charlemagne issued the *Admonitio Generalis*, the principal legislation of his reign directed to bishops and abbots and devoted to reform of the Frankish church, he presented himself as a new Josiah – as the Old Testament king who had "visited, admonished, corrected, and tried to call back" the faithful to the true worship of God (II Kings 22, 23).[41] By the 790s, "David" had become Charlemagne's customary pseudonym. In the two dedicatory poems at the beginning of the Dagulf Psalter (fols. 4ᵛ and 4ʳ), an illuminated manuscript from the Court School written in golden letters dating to 794–795, and one that Charlemagne had had prepared as a gift for Pope Hadrian in Rome,[42] the Frankish king appears as a learned and eloquent "harp player" right along with the Israelite King David.[43] In a famous contemporary poem by Angilbert, written in praise of the Carolingian court, the writer addresses his patron, Charlemagne, as David in a frequent refrain: "David loves poets; David is the poets' glory."[44] In a letter dating to 794–795, Alcuin, the great English monk at Charlemagne's court and the king's principal advisor, praised his ruler as David, defender of the Lord's people against heresy,[45] and in a poem of ca. 799 acclaimed him "pious David whom people praised across the world" (. . . *ad laudem populi David in orbe pius*).[46] The great Visigothic intellectual, Theodulf, likewise one of Charlemagne's trusted advisors, might send the king a verse/letter in 796 in which he praised him even more effusively, comparing him to Solomon for his wisdom, David for his strength, and even Joseph – for his beauty.[47]

The *figura* of the Carolingian king as a new Moses, David, Solomon, or Josiah extended at the same time to the people the kings claimed to lead. In the 760s, in a letter to Pippin III, Pope Paul I (757–767) might address Franks who had acted to protect Rome militarily as follows:

> . . . *vos quidem, carissimi, 'gens sancta, regale sacerdotium,*
> *populus adquisitionis'* [1 Peter 2 :9], *cui benedixit dominus*
> *Deus Israhel, gaudete et exultate* . . .

> . . . you indeed, most dear, 'a holy nation, a royal priesthood, God's own people', whom the lord God of Israel blessed, you rejoice and exult . . .[48]

Franks under Carolingian leaders could be presented as a new Chosen People, a new Israel.[49] In 763–764 Pippin III published a new edition of the ancient

Germanic/Frankish law code, the *Lex Salica*, providing it with a new pro-
logue that fulsomely proclaimed the *gens Francorum* as God's people.[50] Then
just ten years later, in the letter mentioned earlier, Cathwulf might salute the
thirty-year-old Charlemagne as ruling "a kingdom of Europe in all glory and
honor,"[51] and present him not just as leader of the Franks but of all believers, a
leader of the "*populus Dei.*"[52] The encomium seemed all the more appropriate
as Charlemagne, having just conquered the *regnum Langobardorum*, had imme-
diately taken the dignity (the title) of king to both Franks and Lombards.
But one waits a decade and more (in the documentary record) for the next
such claims for royal rule to appear. The notion that Charlemagne, the new
David, steered the *populus Christianus* toward salvation stood at the heart of
the king's capitulary in the *Admonitio generalis* (789).[53] In the Royal Frankish
Annals for the year 791, Franks were said to have acted to redress the harm
brought to the "holy church and indeed, the Christian people" by the per-
fidious Avars.[54] In his letter to Charlemagne of 794–795, already cited, Alcuin
might praise the king as a new David chosen by God to rule, a triumphant
sword in his right hand to defend the *populus christianus* against heresy, his
tongue proclaiming (preaching/trumpeting!) the catholic faith, and thereby
bringing heavenly light to the world as its helmsman (guide) and teacher (*rec-
tor et doctor*).[55]

Imperial ceremony and Frankish royal prerogatives

Now it is striking how all these dignities that Charlemagne assumes in
Alcuin's writing echo those enjoyed, and constantly insisted upon, by
Christian Roman emperors in *Nova Roma* – in the new Rome founded by
Emperor Constantine, in Constantinople.[56] Very soon after Constantine's suc-
cess over Maxentius on the Milvian Bridge, the new Christian ruler was
being compared to Moses: he (Constantine) triumphed over Maxentius (who
drowned in the Tiber) just as Moses saved the Israelites by conquering the
pharaoh (who drowned in the Red Sea).[57] By extension, and after Constan-
tine defeated Licinius in Asia Minor in 324 to succeed to sole leadership in
the Empire, the first Christian emperor also became the successor to the Old
Testament kings, David and Solomon.[58] We can fully appreciate the result in a
mid-fifth-century acclamation for Emperor Marcian (and Empress Pulcheria)
provided by the bishops gathered at Chalcedon for the Fourth Ecumenical
Council in 451:

> To Marcian, the new Constantine, the new Paul, the new David: [many]
> years to the emperor David. . . . You are the peace of the world. . . . May
> Christ . . . protect you. You have strengthened the orthodox faith . . .
> [so that] peace reigns everywhere. Lord, protect the lights of peace. Lord,
> protect the lights of the world. . . . You have destroyed the heretics . . . Mar-
> cian, the new Constantine; Pulcheria the new Helena . . .[59]

Or at least the praises that Alcuin meted out to Charlemagne do resemble such Byzantine imperial acclamations – excepting, of course, that the Christian Roman emperor in Constantinople might also be acclaimed as a new Constantine and even a new Paul. What did Franks know of such acclaim for the putative ruler of all the Christians? And for that matter did they also know how, during the reign of the Heraclian dynasty in Constantinople (610 to the early eighth century), the Christian emperor came to be seen not only as a new David, a new Constantine, and so forth, but also, emphatically, as an image of God on earth?

The development of this super-Christianized early Byzantine rhetoric of statecraft has long been the object of intensive study: it coincided with, exploited, and spurred on icon worship in Byzantium. This is, of course, a huge topic beyond the scope of this chapter.[60] But let me note anyway that the Heraclian emperors used icons effectively to establish their rule, and among them, especially an icon of Christ, a miraculous image not-made-by-human-hands, famous already in the later sixth century: the so-called Christ Pantocrator.[61] An icon, a painting on a board, differs from a painting on a wall in that the former is portable and thus can play important roles, mostly theatrical, in public presentations and processions. Let me cite just two documents from many to suggest how this new Greek, seventh-century way of giving biblical or religious sanction to the Byzantine emperor worked.

In a panegyric of 622–623, a poem of some thousand and more lines praising Heraclius's victory over the Sassanian Persians,[62] the emperor's court poet, George of Pisidia, told how the ruler, who fought against the barbarians as a new Moses and in the name of Christ, bore with him a "fearful image" of the *Logos* (= Christ), a miraculous icon "not-painted-by-hands, but by God Himself," from which, said George, the ruler derived all his power, and to which (that is, to God) he (Heraclius) would offer the "first fruits" of battle (lines 19–20, 135, 139–45). George continued: when the Greek troops acclaimed Heraclius in the field before battle, the emperor addressed them holding the icon aloft and said, "This One is the universal emperor and lord and general of our armies" (lines 86–100). Then later in the poem, George described how Heraclius led in battle as God's lieutenant and how, as second-in-command, emperors were "images of God the Father" (lines 401, 433). And one further document to show how during the seventh century people identified the Byzantine emperor with an icon of Christ. The icon in question, "Christ Pantocrator," appeared strikingly on the obverse of a beautifully crafted gold solidus issued by the last Heraclian emperor, Justinian II (Figure 8.2). Solidi, historically used to pay soldiers, always presume a context of military victory. This solidus, minted at Constantinople during Justinian II's first reign (685–695), featured "Christ Pantocrator" on its *obverse* instead of the customary bust-portrait of the emperor, and did that here for the first time in Byzantine coinage. The portrait of the emperor standing robed at full length and holding a cross-staff mounted on a podium with three steps appears on the *reverse*, a most emphatic and effective way to establish the

Figure 8.2 Solidus of Justinian II (685–695), obverse of gold coin (Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC)

earthly imperial ruler as an image of God – as a holy person (Figure 8.3).[63] In the next century, as emperor Leo III (717–741) and Constantine V (741–775) hunkered down to save and maintain what remained of the Christian Roman Empire after the loss of Syria and Egypt to Muslim/Arab conquest in the seventh century, and as "image worship" (as a component of the cult of the saints) came by stages to be questioned then actually proscribed (first, officially, at the council of Heireia in 754),[64] the rulers of *Nova Roma* continued to stage themselves as "holy persons" and as God's lieutenants on earth just as any Heraclian leader had ever done. This much, at least, is shown by the famous *Book of Ceremonies* compiled under emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959) to codify and fix the traditional forms of imperial acclamation. In the many rituals of imperial display there described, palace and church come together in the capital as setting for a ruler who, sitting in pomp upon the throne of

Figure 8.3 *Solidus* of Justinian II (685–695), reverse of gold coin (Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC)

Solomon, often played the role of Christ.[65] From the late 620s onward, the Byzantine ruler, no longer addressed as *imperator* in ancient Roman Imperial style but as *basileus Romaion*, was to stand at the pinnacle of all earthly rulers as king of kings, that is, as an image of Christ.[66]

The question of whether western European Latin-speaking people knew about these developments in the Byzantine ruler cult still looms. During the seventh and the early eighth centuries commerce and communication across the Mediterranean from east to west and vice versa diminished sharply. The Arab/Islamic takeover in the Levant and North Africa first disrupted then killed the ancient Roman Imperial *annona* system (that is, the transfer of oil and grain by ship from North Africa, especially Egypt, to the two capitals, Rome and Constantinople). The seventh-century Slavic invasion of the Balkans, moreover, closed the ancient Roman roads running east and west across the top of the

Mediterranean world. Preoccupied by its struggle with both the Avaric/Slavic and Arab challenges to its rule, Byzantium's sphere of influence shrank sharply, and its western European provinces were left to fend for themselves in relative isolation. There can be no doubt that the seventh-century stoppage of long-distance trade and communication in the Euro-Mediterranean world did cut off the "West" (Spain, Italy, and transalpine Europe) from the Empire in the "East" and that this had deep cultural consequences.[67] For one thing, it helped set the stage for the transformation of the Byzantine Duchy of Rome into the capital of a new, western, papally led Republic of St. Peter closely allied with Frankish Carolingian monarchs. It undoubtedly spurred the rise of the Carolingian Christian Empire as a competitor to the Byzantine.[68]

Nevertheless – and this can seem paradoxical – during this period of stoppages and closings down, some political and cultural links between the "West" and "East," the Latin-speaking and Greek-speaking Christian worlds, remained quite intact. Not long ago Paolo Delogu argued that the seventh- and early eighth-century papacy continued to engage in a wide, trans-Mediterranean, politico-theological process to assert its primacy among the apostolic sees, and did so much as it had ever done, say, under Pope Leo the Great in the mid-fifth century.[69] Delogu saw the Roman church's full engagement in "the world" (in a unified Greco-Latin Christendom) during the seventh-century Monothelite controversy. Pope Martin I, for example, had mounted so compelling a defense of Chalcedonian Christology versus the newly introduced and imperial-supported Monothelite doctrine, that in 653 the emperor had been forced to have Martin physically deposed, brought to the capital, humiliated publicly, imprisoned, then sent into exile (in the Crimea where the pope died in 655). In the eighth century, Delogu went on, popes defended the role of images in worship versus the Byzantine emperors' push to ban them with the same vigor and sophistication, and in the same Mediterranean-wide frame. Thus when Empress Irene as regent for her son Constantine VI arranged the second ecumenical council in Nicaea in 787, which she used to revoke the iconoclastic decrees of the Council of Hiereia held in 754, Pope Hadrian I sent a treatise supporting the veneration of images that was read out in full at the start of deliberations as a keynote.[70] In the seventh and eighth centuries, moreover, the bishops of Rome opened the city to Greek-speaking refugees from the "East," mainly monks, fleeing the Persians, Monothelitism, and the Arab conquest. Seventh- and eighth-century Rome had a virtually hybrid Greco-Latin Christian culture. Consider, too, said Delogu, how the Roman church in this period stayed in contact with transalpine Christians. In 668–669, for instance, Pope Vitalian sent the refugee and Greek intellectual, Theodore of Tarsus, to Canterbury as archbishop. In the eighth century, moreover, Popes Gregory II (715–731) and Gregory III (731–741) sponsored the mission of the Insular monk, Boniface, to the Saxons. If Latin-speaking, early-medieval, Christian Europe featured many distinct, nearly autonomous "ethnic churches" (the Visigothic, Frankish, and Anglo-Saxon among them), then papal Rome might still claim them all as parts of its larger Euro-Mediterranean world and knit them together.

Histories that present the rise of the Carolingian empire and the Carolingian-Roman papal political alliance as chiefly a product of western Europe's relative isolation from this larger world do not, of course, ignore the papal initiatives just mentioned.[71] Nor do they overlook the various eighth-century Greco-Frankish diplomatic exchanges either. During the 750s and 760s the Greeks tried to gain back control over their central Italian holdings, that is, in Ravenna and the Exarchy, not by treating with the Lombards and the pope who by turns had taken over there, but by seeking support from the new power in the peninsula, the Carolingian King Pippin III. They hoped to enlist the Franks in an Italian adventure versus both Lombards and the popes. Evidence that Greeks and Franks were talking can be found in the Royal Frankish Annals for the year 757 where one reads that Constantine V gave Pippin the gift of a musical instrument, an organ.[72] Ten years later, the same emperor even floated the offer of his son's hand in marriage to Pippin's daughter Gisela.[73] But these Byzantine initiatives can seem to have gone nowhere – with Pippin III's death in 768 cutting off further such Greco-Frankish contact. Only after Charlemagne conquered the Lombard *regnum* in 772–774, that is, took up his father's role as protector of the popes, did relations between the Greeks and Franks appear to resume. With Empress Irene's rise to power in Byzantium after 780 and her great need to maintain secure borders with the Carolingian kingdom in southern Italy – by that time the Greeks no longer had any plausible claim to Ravenna and the Exarchy in the north – she sent ambassadors in 781 to arrange a new marriage alliance with the Frankish king: Charlemagne's young daughter Rotrud became engaged to Irene's equally young son, Constantine VI. This pact, which brought great distinction to the Carolingian royal house, held for some six and more years until, in 787, Charlemagne nullified it as he moved militarily against the Lombard Duchy of Benevento in 787, a Byzantine ally.[74] But as I say, if the classic histories of Charlemagne's rise to power treat these Greco-Frankish exchanges, they still set them against the deep background of the relative isolation of the "West" from the "East."

This view now changes thanks in large part to the work of Michael McCormick, who has pressed hard for some twenty-eight years[75] to refine and extend our knowledge about Byzantine-Carolingian relations.[76] Let me summarize some key results. First of all we must understand, said McCormick, that the two halves of the Christian world, Byzantine and Carolingian, constituted "sibling cultures" that emerged from the same antique and late-antique Euro-Mediterranean matrix. When, for example, each of these cultures simultaneously introduced and exploited a new minuscule script, or when, in both, rulers' ceremony came strikingly to focus upon the aristocratic elites in the imperial/royal court and not as formerly in antiquity upon a general public, we deal not with engines of influence and exchange, but with parallel developments that go to the deep structure of a shared civilization.[77]

Second, in his 1,100-page tome *Origins of the European Economy, Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900*, published in 2001, McCormick argued persuasively that exchange on all fronts, religious, political, and commercial,

between the early-medieval Latin- and Greek-speaking worlds rebounded in the Mediterranean after 750 and then surged significantly between ca. 770 and ca. 820, that is, during Charlemagne's and Louis the Pious's heydays.[78] Wrestling with the paucity of evidence and massaging every surviving record (mainly prosopographical), he tirelessly documented some 169 events during the reigns of Pippin III and Charlemagne (12 implicating Pippin directly; 55 for Charlemagne) that revealed close trans-Mediterranean contact, that is, diplomatic exchanges between the Byzantine and Carolingian courts, and proofs of trans-Mediterranean long-distance trade and correspondence.[79] Sea routes burgeoned, and if the roads between the "East" and "West" that crossed the top of the Mediterranean remained closed (opening only toward the end of the ninth century), sea commerce with the Arab north African world opened new north African land routes to travelers going in both directions. From the 750s onward the "West" did *not* flourish in any kind of isolation from the "East."

McCormick emphasized how from the first moment that the papal-Carolingian friendship pact began in the 750s under Pippin III cultural exchange, "East" and "West" could not help but proceed apace as both cultures, Frankish and Byzantine, met and mingled in Italy – in other words, mixed at their respective borders. Rome, the capital of the Republic of St. Peter, McCormick correctly rehearsed, constituted a hybrid Greco-Latin entity at this moment. Ravenna and the Exarchy, that is, the whole region north of the Appenines and south of the Po river valley, had been a Byzantine province right on down into the 750s. The transalpine Carolingian *missi*, the various embassies packed with Frankish abbots, bishops, and courtiers who traveled between Francia and the papal curia during the last half of the eighth century, and then, during the last quarter of the eighth century, the scions of aristocratic Frankish families that Charlemagne appointed to high office in the former Lombard *regnum* and Duchy of Spoleto, all thus became intimately acquainted with Byzantine civilization.[80]

One of McCormick's most startling revisions concerned his reading of the documentary evidence showing how closely the first Carolingian king, Pippin III, worked with ambassadors from the court of Emperor Constantine V and did so throughout his reign.[81] Pippin III's contact with Byzantium started in the mid-750s just as Frankish armies moved onto the Italian stage and confronted the three parties struggling there for control over the central part of the peninsula, that is, the Greeks, Lombards, and "Romans-from-Rome" led by the popes. McCormick showed that emperor Constantine V's gift of an organ and his offer to marry his son Leo IV to Pippin III's daughter, Gisela, were all aspects of a complex, carefully orchestrated, multi-year Byzantine push to separate the pope and the Frankish king from their alliance. (It almost worked. Pippin III's military support for Popes Paul I and Stephen III diminished notably toward the end of his reign. The Franco-Byzantine rapprochement, however, came to an abrupt halt with Pippin's death in 768 and the ensuing three-year struggle for succession between Charlemagne and Carloman, Pippin's sons.)

So if Carolingian civilization did *not* arise in relative isolation from the Greek, if indeed Franks could not help but have treated closely with the Byzantines during the second half of the eighth century, we have good reason indeed to claim that elites in the Carolingian court must have known how the ruler of *Nova Roma* presented himself to the world. That Franks understood that the earthly ruler of Christendom might well pretend to Christ-like holy status just as we have seen the Byzantine emperors did from the early seventh century onward is shown clearly in a famous and precious early Carolingian document, namely, in the second, longer preamble that King Pippin III added to the *Lex Salica* when he repromulgated this old Salian, Merovingian law code in 763–764.[82] The preamble begins with great praise for the "celebrated Frankish people . . . bold, swift, and stern, firmly converted to the Catholic faith" (*Gens Francorum inclita . . . audax, velox, et aspera, ad catholicam fidem firmiter conversa*), then names the first Merovingian king to have been baptized, Clovis, decribing him as "spirited and noble" *(torrens et pulcher)*, then erupts in a fervent litany-like acclamation:[83]

> *Vivat qui Francus [Francos] diligit,*
> *Christus eorum regnum costodiat,*
> *rectores eorundem lumen suae graciae repleat,*
> *exercitum protegat,*
> *fidem [fidei] munimenta tribuat;*
> *paces [pacis, pacem] gaudia*
> *et felicitatem [felicitatis] tempora*
> *dominancium dominus*
> *Iesus Christus*
> *pietatem [pietate] concedat.*[84]

> Long live Christ who holds the Franks dear,
> May he guard their kingdom,
> May he fill their rulers with the light of his grace,
> May he protect the army,
> May he provide the bulwarks of faith;
> And may Jesus Christ, Lord of lords, grant peace, joy,
> happiness, opportunity, and virtue.[85]

In this prayer where the Frankish king (Clovis as ideal model) is paired with Christ, we may find a direct parallel to the *solidus* of the Byzantine emperor Justinian II, discussed earlier, where an image of the ruler at the back of the coin is paired with a famous icon of Christ on the front (Figure 8.2). Filled with Christ's grace, presented in the prayer as the very locus of joy and happiness for the people he leads, the ideal Clovis and his sponsor, the real Pippin, take on dimensions as holy persons much in the manner of contemporary rulers in Constantinople – much in the manner of emperor Constantine V with whom Pippin treated throughout his reign.

Charlemagne's claims to authority

But if Pippin ever saw himself as parallel in some way to an emperor in Constantinople, if his court and advisors ever entertained any such possibility, it evaporated with his death in 768. Thereupon followed some years of uncertainty about Frankish kingship as Pippin's sons and successors, Carloman and Charlemagne, struggled for hegemony, and as Charlemagne, sole ruler after Carloman's death in 771, pressed to stabilize his realm. Charlemagne's defeat of the Lombard king in 774 brought him much prestige, but those parts of northern and central Italy under Lombard control submitted to him only slowly. Even after having renewed his father's Franco-papal friendship pact with Pope Hadrian in Rome in 774, Charlemagne would delay for some seven to eight years to arrange the borders between his own Italian possessions and those of the Republic of St. Peter. In the 770s Charlemagne campaigned constantly – and inconclusively – in Aquitaine, Gascony, the Spanish March, and Saxony. The youthful Charlemagne had constantly to be on the lookout for rebellious magnates. The outright defeat of his army in Spain in 778 presented a genuine crisis. And as I say, during these years, the rhetoric of royal rule, the fixing of notions of Carolingian kingship did not come into sharp focus. Charlemagne's clients might have tried to shape his role in the 770s – as the Anglo-Saxon monk, Cathwulf, did in his famous letter to Charles in 775 where he declared the king a new David and a new Solomon,[86] or as Pope Hadrian did when he wrote to the Frankish king in 778 addressing him as a new Constantine.[87] But Charlemagne himself remained silent.

That changed dramatically in the next decade.[88] In March 779 at an assembly of bishops, abbots, and counts at the king's palace in Herstal (near Aachen) Charlemagne issued a series of ordinances, the first such *capitula* to have been distributed widely, and thus the first to have shaped his realm legally (abstractly, rhetorically) and in his own voice, his own words – in royal decrees.[89] The Herstal Capitulary formed the basis of the far more comprehensive *Admonitio Generalis*, Charlemagne's most important such legislation issued ten years later, in March 789, from his palace at Aachen, and distributed via royal *missi* to all of high rank, lay and clerical, throughout the realm.[90] For the first time, in this great capitulary, ideology and governmental practice came together compellingly.[91] And it was in the *Admonitio*, as I already noted, that Charlemagne himself claimed, in the prologue, to be acting as "the holy King Josiah" (*sanctus Josias*) named in the Bible (*in regnorum libris* = II Kings 22–23 or *IV Regum 22–23*), that is, as the Israelite monarch who visited among his people, admonished them, corrected their worship, and thus called them back to God's kingdom.[92] Here Charlemagne appeared emphatically as leader of the Franks as a new Chosen People, a new Israel.

But Charlemagne's claim to authority in 789 differs sharply from the one his father proposed (or experimented with) in 763–764 some twenty-five years previously. As we have seen, in his prologue to the *Lex Salica*, Pippin III might present himself as virtually or almost Christ-like. Now if, in the prologue to the

Admonitio, Charlemagne did indeed liken himself to the biblical King Josiah, in the very next sentence he backtracked in a hurry:

> *. . . non ut me eius sanctitate aequiparabilem faciam, sed quod nobis sunt ubique sanctorum semper exempla sequenda, et, quoscumque poterimus, ad studium bonae vitae in laudem et in gloriam domini nostri Iesu Christi congregare necesse est.*

> . . . I say this not to compare myself with his holiness, but because it is our duty, at all times and in all places, to follow the examples of the holy, and necessary for us to gather together whomsoever we can for the study of a good life in praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.[93]

If Pippin might have flirted with assuming rule of a Christian kingdom in a way parallel to that of a Byzantine emperor in Constantinople, Charlemagne refused any such pretension.

King and rector

In the very first sentence of the *Admonitio*, Charlemagne spoke in the first person as "king and *rector* of the Franks and devout defender and humble facilitator of the holy church" (*rex et rector regni Francoum t devotus sanctae aeclesiae defensor humilisque adjutor*). Again, in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789, Charlemagne fused ideology and administrative practice in a way he had not done formerly. If in the Herstal Capitulary he addressed both clerics and laymen and treated issues both clerical and secular separately, he addressed the *Admonitio* to *pastores* and dealt there chiefly with matters ecclesiastical, or better, he addressed everyone, not just priests and bishops, presuming that all had responsibility "to shepherd" God's flocks. Considering "with his priests and counselors" (*cum sacerdotibus et consiliaribus nostris*) how God's people might continue under His protection, the king called ringingly upon the "pastors of Christ's churches, leaders of His flock, the brightest luminaries of the world" (*O pastores ecclesiarum Christi et ductores gregis eius et clarrissima mundi luminaria*) and asked "that they strive with great energy and constant preaching to lead the people of god to the pastures of eternal life" (*ut vigili cura et sedula ammonitione populum Dei ad pascua vitae aeternae ducere studeatis*). Here we find a Christian monarch of a different stripe than a Byzantine emperor, one who takes a more humble role – a *para-episcopal* role – one who assumes responsibility like a bishop for both the moral guidance and eternal salvation of the people of God.[94] In a revealing passage in Alcuin's *Four Books against Elipandus* (Elipandus = the bishop of Toledo who took sides, wrongly, in an early-medieval, western, Christological controversy[95]), Charlemagne's most trusted and (arguably) most eloquent advisor responded to a taunt by his opponent that he (Alcuin) had betrayed his king and sponsor saying:

> *Impossibile est enim, ut corrumpatur a quoquam, quia catholicus est in fide, rex in potestate, pontifex in praedictione, judex in aequitate, philosophus in liberalibus studiis, inclytus in moribus, et omni honestate praecipuus.*

> It is indeed impossible that he [Charlemagne] could be corrupted by any-
> one because he is a Catholic with regard to his faith, a king with regard to
> his power, a pontiff with regard to his preaching, a judge with regard to his
> fairness, a philosopher with regard to his liberal pursuits, outstanding with
> regard to his morals, and excellent with regard to every honor.[96]

Rex et rector? Rex in potestate . . . pontifex in praedictione? Charlemagne did emp-
hatically claim, as king, a pastoral (para–episcopal) role.

In a series of essays that charted the slow development of Charlemagne's
court during the king's first two decades of maturity in the 780s and '90s, Don-
ald Bullough argued cogently that Charlemagne and his most trusted advisors
dealt with the whole idea of the *orbis romanus christianus* established by Constan-
tine very casually, and that they remained unimpressed by, and un-envious of,
imperial leadership in *Nova Roma*.[97] Charlemagne's closest advisors, and chief
among them, Alcuin of York, might treat the concept of *regnum imperiale* quite
indifferently – not identify it automatically, or even very readily with the Byz-
antine Empire ruled from Constantinople.[98] Thus, Bullough noted, in a letter to
Charlemagne that Alcuin wrote just shortly after he became abbot of St. Mar-
tin's at Tours – he had moved to Tours from the palace at Aachen in 796 – he,
Alcuin, might tell Charlemagne that he had many pupils he hoped to teach "to
honor your imperial realm" (*ad decorum imperialis regni vestri erudiam*),[99] but then
shortly afterward, Alcuin could also write to the people of Kent, subjects at that
time of the king of Mercia, and address *them* as members of a *regnum imperiale*.[100]
In an oft-cited letter of June 799 to Charlemagne,[101] Alcuin might outline the
"three great authorities of supreme standing in the world" and name, first, the
pope (*apostolica sublimitas*), *rector* of the apostle Peter's see in Rome; then second,
the emperor (*imperialis dignitas*), the secular power of "second Rome" (*secondae
Romae saecularis potentia*); and third, the royal office (*regalis dignitas*),

> *in qua vos domini nostri Iesu Christi dispensatio rectorem populi christiani disposuit,
> ceteris praefatis dignitatibus potentia excellentiorem, sapientia clariorem, regni dig-
> nitate sublimorem. Ecce in te solo tota salus ecclesiarum Christi inclinata recumbit.*

> in which you [Charlemagne] have been ordained as the *rector* of the Chris-
> tian people by the dispensation of our Lord Jesus Christ, surpassing the
> aforementioned dignitaries in the excellence of your power, the lustre of
> your wisdom and the loftiness of your dignity as a ruler. Behold, upon
> you alone rests the entire health, deteriorated as it is,[102] of the churches of
> Christ.[103]

Alcuin used the same words to characterize both the clerical and royal dignities:
both popes and kings functioned as "rectors," both had spiritual "sublimity," and
both differed in this way from emperors who had (merely) secular authority.
Charlemagne emerged as responsible like a bishop for the defense of the church
and the spread of the faith; Alcuin simply ignored the universal command of

emperors. Bullough concluded ringingly: for Alcuin, as for other courtly writers, Charlemagne reigned as a "new David," *not* a "new Constantine."[104]

But Alcuin's de-emphasis of the imperial office in the letters Bullough cited did not stem from any real lack of interest in the *orbis romanum christianarum* founded by Constantine. That indifference was studied and assumed, part of a program that Alcuin and the Carolingian court had worked hard to create in just the years he was writing. In 775 Cathwulf could praise the Frankish king as ruler of a single state-like entity, the *populus Dei.*[105] But it took many years (about a generation) for Charlemagne and his advisors to bring the (rhetorical) "state-in-embryo" that Cathwulf was searching for into any kind of focus. That focus sharpened considerably in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789 and in Alcuin's letters of the 790s just discussed. One sees immediately in them that Charlemagne and his advisors had quite abandoned Pippin III's experiment (Charlemagne was not to be a holy person, an image of Christ on earth). But if Pippin's initiative was inspired by a Byzantine model, so also, in an important sense, was the new pastoral, humble role Charlemagne had assumed: Charlemagne's court advisors designed it specifically to correct and *supplant* imperial rulership in *Nova Roma*.

This is amply evident in the writing of Charlemagne's other great advisor, Theodulf, the Visigoth from Spain, educated in Acquitaine, who joined Charlemagne's court in the later 780s and who collaborated closely with his colleague Alcuin (whom Charlemagne had called to his side only a few years previously). Theodulf's first key contribution was his *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* written between 790 and 793.[106] In this work, commissioned by the king, Theodulf critiques and corrects the *acta* of the Second Nicene Council of 787 which overturned the decrees of the iconoclastic synod of Heireia convened by Emperor Constantine V in 754,[107] and spelled out anew how images were to be used in worship. Frankish churchmen were not invited to attend II Nicaea, which already for them was a strike against the council (How could it pretend to ecumenical status?). The document they received toward the end of the 780s purporting to be the Latin version of the council's Greek proceedings had obvious syntactical and grammatical defects.[108] The Franks were unimpressed. And ready, too, to be unimpressed. By the late 780s Byzantine-Frankish relations had gone sour. The negotiations between Empress-regent Irene and Charlemagne concerning the marriage of her son Constantine VI to Charlemagne's daughter Rotrud, begun hopefully in 781, had been definitively broken off in 787 as Charlemagne led an army against Benevento, a Byzantine ally. In 788, Irene had sent a large army to southern Italy in the hope of bolstering Beneventan resistance to any Frankish encroachments, which only heightened hostility between the two parties. Little wonder that the Carolingian king and his advisors would seize this moment to press Frankish royal claims to hegemony in the Christian Euro-Mediterranean world.[109] Thus, in the *Opus Caroli regis*, Theodulf had Charlemagne address the world as the new David,[110] as leader of the Franks "who are a spiritual Israel,"[111] and accordingly as the sole *orthodox* world leader, that

is, rector, leader of the *populus christianus* to salvation. Setting out his program in the preface to the *Opus*, and concluding forcefully, Theodulf had the new David recall how the old David "hated the congregation of evil doers and would not sit with the wicked,"[112] which amounted to a very thinly veiled rejection of the leadership of Second Rome – of Irene and her son Constantine VI, who had convoked II Nicaea, and from the Franks' point of view had promulgated heresies.

Thanks to Thomas Noble, whose 2009 book, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, unfolds Theodulf's *Opus* magisterially,[113] it has now become clearer than ever that we deal with a Carolingian political tract – with a document treating the role of images in Christian worship to be sure, but one that also incorporated integrally the latest Frankish thinking on the nature of royal leadership – on how God institutes earthly rulers.[114] If, in the *Opus*, Theodulf carefully and shrewdly took up the decrees and positions of II Nicaea in elaborate detail, he also wrote a polemic against the Byzantine empire of "white-hot intensity."[115] Noble provides a detailed summary of the document going blow-by-blow through Theodulf's argument.[116] For the purposes of this essay two poignant moments stand out.

The first comes quickly in Book I, chapters 1–4,[117] which deal with the arrogant claims that Theodulf construed the Empress Irene and Emperor Constantine VI to make as they vaunted their positions as leaders (as Theodulf found them doing in the letter they had sent to Pope Hadrian to invite him and his representatives to attend II Nicaea in 785).[118] In Book I, chapter 1, Theodulf starts by observing that no earthly ruler can claim, as Irene and Constantine VI had done, that they might "co-reign with God."[119] Citing Psalm 112:5, "Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,"[120] he argued that Byzantine rulers lacked all proper humility by not acknowledging the gulf separating human and divine. The psalmist, King David, had never so exalted himself, Theodulf observed. I have already discussed how during the Heraclian dynasty in the seventh century imperial ceremony had been super-Christianized, and how Heraclius and his successors had posed in public as God's lieutenants on earth. We deal here (in the *Opus Caroli regis*) with a key piece of evidence that the Franks were well acquainted with Byzantine statecraft and just as well able to spin that knowledge to dismantle Byzantine imperial pretensions and magnify their own king.

The second poignant moment comes in Book III, 15,[121] where Theodulf took up the notion discussed at II Nicaea that the honor people pay to imperial images, the respect they confer with the burning of lights and incense before them, resembles that they pay to images of Jesus, his Mother, and the saints in churches and so legitimizes such adoration there. This act evoked Theodulf's towering scorn. He censured those gathered at the synod as having disastrously and heretically transferred imperial ceremonial practice (the adoration of rulers' images) to the domain of Christian worship: where in the Bible did it say that we might adore the images of emperors? Here Theodulf zeroed in to condemn the synod's act by observing that the only people he had ever heard of who

worshiped their rulers were the Babylonians and the Romans! Paraphrasing Orosius,[122] Theodulf wrote:

> *Nam omnem, ut aiunt historiae, Babylonii regni hereditatem et apicis cumulum Romanum suscepit imperium, et inter haec duo regna quasi inter patrem senem, qui iam posse desierit, et filium parvulum, qui aedum dominandi vires acceperit, duo regna vice tutoris, Persarum videlicet sive Macedonum fuisse traduntur.*

> For as the histories say, the Roman Empire received the whole inheritance of Babylon, and between these two kingdoms, as between an old father who was already losing his strength and his young son, who had not yet acquired the power of domination, much was transmitted by two other kingdoms as tutors, that is Macedon and Persia.[123]

Christ's coming should have swept all residue of such idolatry from the world. With this argument Theodulf effectively stripped authority away from the Second Rome now revealed as a new Babylon. In thus rewriting his world's history, that is, by "showing" that the rulers of Byzantium could not claim leadership of the Christian people, Theodulf provided his patron, King Charlemagne, the foundation he needed to proclaim sole orthodox leadership of the people of God.

Conclusion

In 778 when Pope Hadrian wrote to Charlemagne to remind him of his obligations in his new alliance with the Republic of St. Peter, even address him as a new Constantine to suggest that he, like the first Christian emperor, might confer great gifts upon the Roman See, the papal ploy probably bore considerable persuasive value. Charlemagne had been sole king of the Franks for only some seven years at that moment (Carlomann, his brother, having died in 771). If Franco-Byzantine relations were "on hold" during the 770s, the memory of Pippin III's negotiations with Emperor Constantine V were still fresh. And in 781, three years later, Charlemagne would enter into a marriage alliance with Empress/regent Irene (to marry his daughter Rotrud to Irene's son Constantine VI). The prestige that the marriage alliance gave the Frankish king consisted in the suggestion that he might thus pretend to a parallel relationship with the emperor of Second Rome.

But as his reign matured, Charlemagne's relations with Byzantium became less friendly, and then by military necessity after 787–788, openly hostile. During the 780s and especially toward the end of that decade, Charlemagne took giant steps toward formulating a new religio-political rhetoric of rule in consultation with his new courtly think tank dominated by the clerics from Northumbria and Spain, Alcuin and Theodulf, respectively. Two great documents mark the turning point, the *Admonitio generalis* of 789 and the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* of 790–793, the first issued as royal decree and distributed

widely in the kingdom, the second as a royal manifesto and kept privately within the king's library.[124] This great European creative moment – and I paraphrase Thomas Noble as I write – brought not a new Constantine to the fore, but a Frankish new David, a supreme pastor, fully responsible for the moral integrity of the Christian people, their teacher on their way to salvation, and the Christian world's sole orthodox leader. The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor in Rome on Christmas 800 was anticlimactic in nearly every way. Rather than highlight that event as a culmination of Carolingian Renaissance thinking about, and staging of, the ruler that had formed during the last third of the eighth century and was then fulfilled during Charlemagne's 'Aachen years' after 800,[125] I would see the crowning as an interruption that marked the start of a new chapter altogether.[126]

Notes

1 Noble, 1984, pp. 291–99; Nelson, 2007.
2 Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 60 on pp. 585–87, and here p. 587, lines 9–18. Cf. King, 1987, p. 287 (English translation).
3 Noble, 1984, pp. 138–48.
4 Noble, 1984, p. 147; Hack, 2006–07, p. 420.
5 The letter was read out at the start of II Nicaea's second session: Mansi, vol. 12, col. 1056 ff. Discussed by Delogu, 2000, pp. 218–20, and now esp. Noble, 2009, pp. 149–56.
6 Mansi, vol. 12, col 1057A.
7 For the annointing see *LP*, *Vita Stephani*, 94, c. 27 (Davis, 2007, p. 63); and Kurze, 1895, *Annales regni francorum, ab anno* 754, p. 12. For Paul's early engagement with the politics of the Franco–papal friendship pact as Stephen II's envoy see *LP, Vita Stephani*, 94, cc. 5, 8, 49.
8 Angenendt, 1980; Noble, 1984, pp. 80–7 and ch. 8; McKitterick, 2000, pp. 15–6; McKitterick, 2004, ch. 6.
9 *LP*, *Vita Stephani*, 94, c. 52 (Davis, 2007, pp. 74–5); *LP, Vita Pauli*, 95, c. 3 (Davis, 2007, pp. 79–81). For analysis of these documents, see McKitterick, 2004, pp. 145–48, and Bauer, 2004, pp. 91–4.
10 Emerick, 2005.
11 Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 14 on p. 511. For the date of the letter, see Hack, 2006–2007, p. 124.
12 De Rossi, 1878, p. 142, notice for the year 1458 in the *Cronaca di Niccolò della Tuccia viterbese*; De Blaauw, 1994, p. 639, n. 127.
13 Did the mid eighth-century chapel builders set out Pippin's memorial in a former *imperial* (Honorian) mausoleum on purpose? Cf. Bauer, 2004, p. 92.
14 Ewig, 1956, pp. 14–6.
15 Canella, 2006. The *Actus* left their trace in the *LP, Vita Silvestri*, 34, c. 2 (Davis, 2000, p. 14).
16 Liverani, 2008, pp. 165–72.
17 Ewig, 1956, pp. 29–37. Fuhrmann, 1968, *Constitutum Constantini*, pp. 56–98 (Latin text); Fried, 2007, pp. 129–37 (Latin text after Fuhrmann) and 138–45 (English translation).
18 For grants of "imperial power" and authority in the "West", see Fuhrmann, 1968, *Constitutum Constantini*, cc. 11 and 17, pp. 80–2 and 93–4.
19 Fuhrmann, 1973, pp. 273 ff.
20 For example, as Krautheimer, 1980, pp. 114–17, did in his famous *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308*. But recently, Fried, 2007, has argued that the forgery emerged in ninth-century, transalpine Francia, not eighth-century Rome, triggered by the rebellion of

Louis the Pious's three older sons in 833. See, now, Goodson and Nelson, 2010, who rebut Fried and reaffirm the consensus position.

21 On Leo III's Lateran Palace and Triclinium, see now Luchterhand, 1999a and 1999b; Bauer, 2004, chap. 5; and Luchterhand 2014.

22 The *cathedrae* or papal thrones in the apses of Rome's great patriarchal basilicas (the Lateran included) and titular churches helped present popes as high priests – as mediators of human salvation. The throne in Pope Leo III's new Triclinium did almost the same work, but it also helped stage the pope in his more temporal role as leader of the Republic of St. Peter, that political entity having quite replaced the old Byzantine Duchy of Rome in the course of the eighth century.

23 After the popes moved from the Lateran to the Vatican in the mid-fifteenth century, the former palace languished, then slowly became ruinous; Luchterhand, 1999b. What remained was mostly dismantled after 1585 when Pope Sixtus V built a new papal palace at the Lateran; Herklotz, 1995, pp. 178–79.

24 Luchterhand, 1999a, pp. 58 ff.; cf. Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 460 ff.

25 Nicolò Alemanni, 1625. See Luchterhand, 1999a, figs. 5 and 6 (showing Alemanni's engravings of the main apse wall of the Triclinium before and after Cardinal Barberini built his aedicula).

26 See Luchterhand, 1999a, p. 62.

27 See n. 25 above.

28 The point has been argued persuasively by Herklotz, 1995 (see his summary on p. 183), Luchterhand, 1999a, and Bauer, 2004, pp. 109–15.

29 Alemanni, 1625; Herklotz, 1995, p. 179.

30 Luchterhand, 1999a, p. 62.

31 Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 455 ff. They claimed cogently, for example, that the right-hand investiture scene from the Triclinium mosaic had a literary forerunner in the poem that Pope Hadrian I had had inscribed upon a splendid votive crown for St. Peter's at the Vatican; see Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 457–58.

32 For example, ringingly in Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 465–66. See also Nelson, 2007, who argued that Charlemagne's coronation in 800 marked a culmination; see esp. her conclusion, pp. 20–2.

33 Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 2.31; Krusch and Levison, 1951, pp. 76–7.

34 E.g., not one other time in all ninety-nine letters sent by the Popes to the Frankish court between 739 and 791 and collected by order of Charlemagne in the *Codex Carolinus*; see Hack, 2006–07, pp. 409–24.

35 Noble, 1984, pp. 134–37.

36 See, esp. Noble, 1992, and Noble 2009.

37 See the letters of Popes Zacharius, Stephen II, Paul I, and the Antipope Constantine II in Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, nos. 3, 11, 39, 42, 43, 98, and 99. In four of these, nos. 11, 39, 42, and 98, King Pippin appears specifically as a "new Moses" or "new David". See Hack, 2006–2007, pp. 409–13.

38 Hack, 2006–2007, p. 411.

39 Bullough, 1991, p. 54.

40 Dümmler, 1895, no. 7, p. 503, lines 14–15; Story, 1999, pp. 1–3.

41 Boretius, 1883, no. 22, p. 54; Jong, 2005, pp. 115–16. For an English translation of the *Admonitio generalis*, see King, 1987, pp. 209–20.

42 Nees, 1985, pp. 681–90, esp. p. 687; Bullough, 2005, p. 145. Hadrian (772–795) had died before the gift could be delivered.

43 Dümmler, 1881, no. 4, pp. 91–2.

44 Dümmler, 1881, no. 2, pp. 360–63: "*David amat vates; vatorum est gloria David*". *Vates* = prophet, oracle, poet (divinely inspired); Godman, 1985, pp. 5 and 112–18.

45 Dümmler, 1895, no. 41, p. 84, lines 12–24.

46 Dümmler, 1881, no. 45, p. 257, line 12.

47 Dümmler, 1881, no. 25, p. 484, lines 29–30; Godman, 1985, pp. 11–3 and 150–52.

48 Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 39, pp. 551–52, here 552, lines 12–14; Hack, 2006–2007, pp. 411–12.

49 Although the phrases, "new Chosen People" and "new Israel" do not, to my knowledge, actually appear in Carolingian written records, Theodulf did write in the early 790s that the Franks constituted 'a spiritual Israel'; cf. de Jong, 2005, p. 113.

50 Eckhardt, 1969, *Lex Salicae*, pp. 3–9.

51 Dümmler, 1895, no. 7, p. 503, line 1.

52 *Ibid.*, lines 6–7.

53 E.g., cap. 62, which begins, "So that peace, concord, and unanimity with every Christian people may exist . . ." (*Ut pax sit et concordia et unanimitas com omni populo christiano . . .*); Boretius, 1883, no. 22, p. 58; King, 1987, p. 214.

54 Kurze, 1895, p. 88.

55 See n. 45 above.

56 See still Kantorowicz, 1946, chap. 3 on the similarities between Carolingian and Byzantine acclamations of the ruler (esp. pp. 68–70 and nn. 15–18); and more recently, McCormick, 1990, chap. 9, "Frankish victory celebrations."

57 Van Dam, 2011, pp. 70–2, 80–118.

58 Dvornik, 1966, 644–45.

59 Mansi, vol. 7, cols. 169–71, cited by Dvornik, 1966, pp. 780–81. My translation follows that of Dvornik, but with revisions; the acclamation closes Session 6 of the council.

60 For more, see Cormack, 1985, pp. 9–140; Herrin, 1987, chap. 8; Cameron, 1992; Belting, 1994, chaps. 4–7; Haldon, 1997; and now Brubaker and Haldon, 2011, pp. 9–66.

61 In it God incarnate appears as if he were Zeus/Jupiter in Greco-Roman illusionistic style, at bust length, turned to the picture plane in a slight three-quarter view, shown holding a jeweled book in his left hand, and blessing with his right. A very early example of such an icon, an encaustic, still survives at the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, datable to the sixth or seventh century; see Weitzmann, 1976, cat. B.1 on pp. 13–15; Emerick, 1998, pp. 331–33.

62 Pertusi, 1959, *Expeditio Persica*, pp. 84–136 (Greek text with Italian translation); Belting 1994, Appendix 3A, pp. 496–97.

63 Breckenridge, 1959; Belting, 1994, pp. 134–39.

64 Brubaker and Haldon, 2011, chaps. 2–5; pp. 189–97 for the council of Heireia.

65 Moffat and Tall, 2012.

66 Chrysos, 1978.

67 Pirenne, 1937; see now, McCormick, 2001, Part I, pp. 25–119, whose research has confirmed this aspect of the famous Belgian historian's hypothesis that the seventh- and eighth-century Arab conquests closed off Euro-Mediterranean communication – or at least for a while (see below in the text).

68 See, for example, the classic study by Classen, 1965, and these "new classics," Noble, 1984, and Herrin, 1987; recently Smith, 2005, offered yet another cultural history of early-medieval Europe that started from the premise that a Latin-speaking Christendom proceeded or developed in isolation, or relative isolation from a Greek-speaking one.

69 Delogu, 2000.

70 See above, n. 5; Hadrian did not attend the council but sent representatives and this treatise instead.

71 See n. 68.

72 Kurze, 1895, *Annales regni francorum*, an. 757, p. 15.

73 Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 45, p. 562, lines 10–12.

74 Kurze, 1895, *Annales regni francorum*, an. 781; de Boor, 1883, *Theophanis Chronographia*, pp. 455 and 463.

75 Starting with McCormick, 1987, pp. 207–20.

76 See especially McCormick, 1994a; McCormick, 1994b; McCormick, 1995, McCormick, 2001; McCormick, 2004.

77 McCormick, 1987, pp. 214–16.
78 McCormick, 2001, pp. 442–43 and map on p. 567 showing the new Mediterranean sea routes that emerged during early Carolingian times (750–800); Marseilles in the Rhone valley was thus linked via the Tyrrhenian southwestward to Tunis in North Africa, or going around Italy's boot and across the Adriatic, connected to Constantinople; in the Adriatic, new routes connected the newly founded trading center, Venice, to Constantinople and Alexandria.
79 McCormick, 2001, Appendix 4; this "register of Mediterranean communications, 700–900" comprises 828 distinct items; the work has gone far to change views of the early-medieval Mediterranean economy; see, e.g., Costambeys, Innes, and Maclean, 2011, pp. 358–78.
80 McCormick, 1994b; McCormick, 1995.
81 McCormick, 1994b.
82 See above, n. 50; also Kantorowicz, 1946, pp. 57–9; Bullough, 1985 (reprinted 1991), p. 125.
83 Eckhardt, 1969, *Lex Salica*, D and E, pp. 6–7.
84 I follow Eckhardt's punctuation, but present the lines in verse format following Kantorowicz, 1946, p. 59; the words in brackets = copyists' variants (see Eckhardt); my translation tries to follow Eckhardt's reconstruction of the text as closely as possible (my thanks to my colleague at Pomona College, Kenneth Wolf, for his help).
85 Or alternately, in the last verse: "And may Jesus Christ, Lord of lords, piously grant the joys of peace and times of happiness."
86 See n. 40 above.
87 See n. 2 above.
88 See still Ganshof, 1949, for analysis of the turning points in Charlemagne's reign.
89 Boretius, 1883, no. 20, pp. 46–51; tr. King, 1987, 203–5. Boretius noted the wide distribution of the Herstal Capitulary not only in Francia but in central and northern Italy as well.
90 Boretius, 1883, no. 22. pp. 52–62; tr. King, 1987, pp. 209–20.
91 Bullough, 1991, p. 141–42; Noble, 1992, pp. 55–60.
92 See above, nn. 41 and 53.
93 Boretius, 1883, no. 22, p. 54, lines 4–6; for the English translation, see King, 1987, p. 209.
94 The *rector* in question was modeled on the bishop described by Pope Gregory the Great in his widely read book, *Pastoral Care*; see Noble, 1992, pp. 59 and 67; and following him, de Jong, 2005, pp. 114–16.
95 I.e., Adoptionism; see Frassetto (2013), vol. 1, pp. 2–3, with bibliography.
96 Migne, 1863, vol. 101, col. 251 = Alcuin, *Libri IV adversus Elipandum* 1.16; *Libri IV* dates toward the end of Alcuin's life (804), according to Chazelle, 2001, p. 54 (I thank Kenneth Wolf for help with the translation).
97 Bullough, 1991; Bullough, 1999; and Bullough, 2005.
98 Bullough, 1999, p. 45.
99 Dümmler, 1895, no. 121, p. 177, line 2.
100 Dümmler, 1895, no. 129, p. 191, line 17.
101 Dümmler, 1895, no. 174, pp. 287–89.
102 The health of Christ's churches having deteriorated? Alcuin had heard with great alarm only months before he wrote these words that Pope Leo III had been attacked in the streets of Rome by Roman aristocrats. Everyone knew, moreover, that, in 797, Emperor Constantine VI had been summarily deposed in Constantinople by his own mother, Irene, who had blinded her son, then taken over sole rule as empress in a most unconventional manner.
103 Dümmler, 1895, no. 174, p. 288, lines 17–26; for the translation, King, 1987, p. 321.
104 Bullough, 1999, pp. 45–6.
105 See above, n. 52.

106 Freeman, 1998.
107 See above, n. 64.
108 Freeman, 1998, pp. 1–85.
109 McCormick, 1994b, pp. 135–36.
110 Theodulf spoke throughout the *Opus Caroli regis* in the voice of Charlemagne; as the title of the document states, the *Opus* was a royal manifesto; see Freeman, 1998, p. 24. In Vat. lat. 7207, the actual manuscript of the *Opus* read out in court before the king, marginal "Tironian notes" (scribal shorthand) record Charlemagne's comments approving key passages; see Freeman, 1998, pp. 3 and 48–50.
111 Freeman, 1998, *Opus Caroli* I, 17, p. 183, line 24: "*nos, qui spiritalis Israel sumus.*"
112 Psalm 25:5 in the Visigothic-Mozarabic Psalter (= Vulg. Psalm 25:5; New International Version Psalm 26:5); see Freeman, 1998, *Opus Caroli regis, Praefatio*, p. 101, lines 32–4: "*Unde et David, quod societas malorum fugierit, Deo quasi purum sacrificium offert, cum dicit: Odio habui congregationis / malignantium et cum impiis non sedebo.*"
113 Noble, 2009, chaps. 4–5.
114 Noble, 1992 = an early version of chaps. 4–5 in the 2009 study making this point persuasively.
115 Noble, 2009, p. 180.
116 Noble, 2009, pp. 184–205.
117 Freeman, 1998, pp. 105–15; 115–20; 120–24; 124–28.
118 Freeman, 1998, p. 105, n. 61: the letter must have accompanied the Latin translation of Second Nicaea's *acta* that Theodulf was consulting.
119 The objectional phrase read: "Through Him, God, who coreigns with us . . ." *(Per eum, qui conregnat nobis Deus . . .)*
120 *Vulg*. Psalm 112 :5 = New International Version Psalm 113 :5.
121 Freeman, 1998, pp. 399–407.
122 *Historiae adversus paganos;* see Freeman, 1998, p. 404, lines 22–29.
123 Noble, 2009, pp. 198–99 for the summary of *Opus Caroli regis* 3.15, and the English translation.
124 The censure of Second Nicaea, however, did feature in public in the acts of Charlemagne's council of Frankfurt in 794; see Noble, 2009, pp. 169–80.
125 Nelson, 2007, pp. 20–22. See my discussion above, p. 138 (at n. 32).
126 As this chapter went to press, I discovered Hen, 2013, where the author swept over Frankish political rhetoric from the sixth through the ninth centuries, concluding that the image of Constantine was "significantly absent" or "marginalized" throughout.

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