

THE PRESBYTER IN CAROLINGIAN SOCIETY

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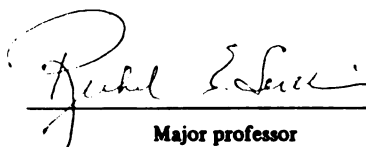
THE PRESBYTER IN CAROLINGIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

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By

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In the period from 742 to 814, the reformation of the Frankish Church was a state policy consistently pursued by the Carolingian leadership. The religious inspiration of that great "Apostle of Germany," St. Boniface, found the vehicle for its fullest expression in the person and policies of Charlemagne who saw Christianity as the best hope for the unification of his empire. Both he and his immediate predecessors in the monarchy recognized the necessity, urged by St. Boniface, of restoring canonical discipline and creating a clergy that would be capable of providing moral and religious leadership. Especially important to the Carolingians was a reformed secular priesthood operating at the parish level which could by precept and example give moral and religious guidance and be a general civilizing agency in a semi-barbaric society.

This paper first presents the Carolingian ideal of what the secular presbyter or priest should be as that ideal

is set forth in the De clericorum institutione of Rabanus Maurus. The evidence of civil and ecclesiastical sources dealing with priestly life in France and Germany in the period beginning with the Bonifacian reform councils and ending with the death of Charlemagne is then examined to see how closely the actual character of the priest conformed to the ideal. When the comparison is made, it is concluded that in this area of reform, as in others, the Carolingians pursued lofty ideals but fell far short of achieving them in practice. Effective reformation of the secular priesthood could only have been realized by a total commitment of the Carolingians to a practical program of ecclesiastical reform. This total commitment was not made. The exigencies of political and military life led to the preservation and extension of the proprietary church regime with all of its baneful consequences for church discipline and organization. As revealed in the bulk of legislation dealing with the clergy, the Carolingian attempt to regularize the proprietary church system so as to minimize its deleterious effects on ecclesiastical life failed. As a result, the efforts to achieve canonical discipline inaugurated by St. Boniface failed also. The secular priests remained, despite all reform efforts to legislate to the contrary, not far removed from the laity in the conduct of their lives and thus were unable to provide effective spiritual leadership.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Boniface, Ep.</u>	<u>Monumenta Germaniae historica, Epistolae Selectae, Tomus I: Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus</u> , ed. M. Tangl, Berlin, 1955.
<u>DACL</u>	. . . . .	<u>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</u> , ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, Paris, 1907-1953.
<u>DTC</u>	. . . . .	<u>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</u> , ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, É. Amann, Paris, 1908-1950.
<u>MGH</u>	. . . . .	<u>Monumenta Germaniae historica</u> , ed. G. Pertz, T. Mommsen, et al., Berlin, 1826ff.
<u>Capit.</u>	. . . . .	<u>Leges, Legum Sectio II: Capitularia regum francorum</u> , Tomus I, ed. A. Boretius, Hanover, 1883.
<u>Conc.</u>	. . . . .	<u>Leges, Legum Sectio III: Concilia aevi Karolini</u> , Tomus II, Pars I, ed. A. Werminghoff, Hanover, 1906.
<u>Ep.</u>	. . . . .	<u>Epistolae</u> , ed. P. Ewald, et al., 8 volumes, Berlin, 1887-1939.
Migne, <u>PL</u>	. . . . .	<u>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina</u> , ed. J. P. Migne, 221 volumes, Paris, 1844-1864.

INTRODUCTION

In any age the ideals of a society are indicative of its character. It is equally true that the realities of a society never fully measure up to its ideals. There is always a greater or lesser discrepancy between the two and it may be said that the viability of a society depends in large part on the degree to which the two converge. Viewing the Carolingian Empire in this context, it seems apparent that one explanation for its swift disintegration can be found in the fact that the Carolingians overreached themselves by pursuing lofty and unrealistic ideals in such areas as government and religion while neglecting the practical considerations of organization and the implementation of policy. This seems especially to have been the case with reference to the religious life of the Carolingian society in the eighth and ninth centuries. An attempt was made by the ruling elite at religious reform of the clergy and the imposition of Christian norms of behavior on a not overly receptive population. It will be the object of this dissertation to examine the ideal and the actuality with respect to one institution of Carolingian religious life--that of the priesthood. The question that will be asked is what

was the real character of the presbyter or priest and how did it conform to the Carolingian ideal in the period from 742 to 814, from the age of the Bonifacian reform councils to the death of Charlemagne.

To get a conception of the Carolingian ideal of the priest, perhaps no better source can be used than the treatise in three books, De clericorum institutione (Concerning the education of the clergy), written in 819 by Rabanus Maurus, the "primus praeceptor Germaniae," in response to numerous demands made by the clergy.¹ Rabanus, who became abbot of Fulda and archbishop of Mainz, was a faithful disciple of Alcuin and a product of the educational reforms instituted by Charlemagne. His work, a manual of instruction on what the cleric should know, is therefore in the Alcuinian tradition of scholarship and is representative of the Carolingian renaissance in learning. In keeping with this tradition, Rabanus contributes little that is original. He borrows heavily from earlier writers, most notably the De doctrina Christiana of Augustine and the Regula pastoralis of Gregory I and the works of Isidore of Seville and Bede.²

¹Rabanus Maurus, De clericorum institutione, Migne, PL, CVII, 293-419; Critically edited in Rabani Mauri De institutione clericorum libri tres, ed. A. Knoepfler, Munich, 1901 (hereafter cited as De. cl. inst.).

²M.L.W. Laistner, Thought and Letters in Western Europe A.D. 500 to 900 (Ithaca, 1957), pp. 306-308 (hereafter cited as Laistner, Thought and Letters).

For the reality of the priesthood, the evidence from both the secular and the ecclesiastical sources for Carolingian history must be consulted. Here the most abundant references to the priest are to be found in the legislative and administrative edicts embodied in the royal capitularies and in the decrees of church councils. Sources such as correspondence, charters, annals, vitae, and gesta, though of great importance in understanding the life of the priest, are, it must be noted, rather meager when it comes to giving specific detail. Moreover, those priests who are named in the sources or who were important enough to have rated a vita, cannot, for the purposes of this paper, be viewed as typical.

Despite the difficulties, however, it is felt that valid use can be made of the evidence regarding the priestly condition in the Carolingian kingdom in the eighth and the ninth centuries. This paper, then, will first present the ideal of the priest using the De clericorum institutione of Rabanus Maurus as a guide. Subsequent chapters will be devoted to an examination of the priest as he is revealed in the sources. By proceeding in this fashion, it will be possible to gain an appreciation of the Carolingian ideal of the priest and a clearer elucidation of the working out of that ideal in practice.

CHAPTER I

THE IDEAL PRIEST ACCORDING TO RABANUS MAURUS

For Rabanus, there is no question that of the three orders which constitute the Church, i.e., the laity, the monks, and the clergy, the clerical order is to be set above the others. He asserts that the priests of the "present Church" are thus exalted because they were especially chosen by God to offer sacrifices, give judgment between the just and the unjust, decide between the sacred and the profane, and instruct the people of God in all His laws and precepts which He had sent to them.¹ Accordingly, to assume such awesome responsibilities, candidates for the priesthood are selected neither for their youth or decrepit old age but because they possess honor and merit and wise doctrine. As stewards of God, their conduct must be above reproach. Those given to riotous or unruly behavior, the drunkard, the avaricious, the self-willed, the distempered, and the homicidal are unacceptable. Only men of the best character, therefore, can qualify to perform the functions of the priest which are to administer the Holy

¹De. cl. inst., I, 2, Migne, PL, CVII, 297-298.

Sacrament, give baptism, and conduct the office of preaching.²

Ideally one attains to the priesthood by proceeding through the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. After undergoing the rite of tonsure which admits him to the clerical order, the candidate for the priesthood serves in the various degrees of holy orders, that is, ostiarius, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, and finally, priest.³ He accedes to this last named position, however, only at the canonical age of thirty and providing that he is of blameless character, not having entered the clericate either as a bigamist or a penitent or a neophyte in the faith.⁴

Ordination to the priesthood, however, can come about only after the candidate for priestly office has undergone extensive training and preparation. This is implicit in the very title of Rabanus' treatise, Concerning the education of the clergy, and receives his strongest emphasis. As Rabanus sees it, no one can fulfill the duties of the clerical office involving the care of souls unless he be a man who possesses a "plenitude of knowledge," has led a life of rectitude, and has achieved a perfection in erudition. For unless a man be trained in his vocation, he is of no use to others. Using

²Ibid., I, 6, Migne, PL, CVII, 301-302.

³Ibid., I, 4-12, Migne, PL, CVII, 299-305.

⁴Ibid., I, 13, Migne, PL, CVII, 306.

quotations from many apposite scriptural passages, Rabanus argues that the blind are not to lead the blind and states categorically that no one is to attempt to teach any art unless he has first mastered it through long study. It would, he asserts, be an evil thing to give the charge of pastoral care and the responsibility of teaching others to one who has newly acquired the desire to learn. Indeed it would be perilous to entrust such a one with the burdens of a ruler when he is unsustained by the necessary wisdom.⁵

Of necessity, then, a candidate for the priesthood must undergo careful educational preparation before his assumption of the sacred priestly duties. While he has the leisure, the future priest must arm himself, so to speak, with the necessary weapons so that he may conquer the enemies of the faith and defend the flock entrusted to his care.⁶ Rabanus devotes the larger part of the third book of his treatise to teaching the clergy how everything that is written in the Sacred Books and all that is useful in the arts and studies of the pagans should be investigated and learned.⁷ His view in this area, therefore, is broad and comprehensive. According to this view, the end product of clerical education should be the well-rounded

⁵Ibid., III, 1, Migne, PL, CVII, 377-378.

⁶Ibid., III, 1, Migne, PL, CVII, 377.

⁷Ibid., Preface, Migne, PL, CVII, 296.

man--one who would not be ignorant of anything in which he ought to instruct both himself and those subject to him.⁸

More particularly, the priest must have a thorough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, for in that knowledge lies the foundation, the establishment, and the perfection of wisdom. The priest must know that all the truth of this world has its source in the eternal wisdom of God which comes to us in its highest form, in His very words as recorded in the Scriptures. Keeping in mind, then, the superior truth of Scripture and realizing that all truth has one source, the priest should seek it wherever it is to be found whether it be in or outside Church tradition. His goal should be the perfect knowledge of truth and the highest degree of wisdom and this is to be attained, not only by the study of the Sacred Books and the writings of Christians, but also by extracting all the knowledge that is useful from the books of pagan authors. This seeming liberality on the part of Rabanus in recommending the study of heathen literature is understandable in the light of his dictum that all truth stems from God. Pagan authors, although not originators of truth, embodied truth in their writings. They can, therefore, be read with profit by the clergy. The latter, however, must be selective and ignore what is dross and idolatrous. Above all,

⁸Ibid., III, 1, Migne, PL, CVII, 377.

they must be sure to test the truth of pagan knowledge against revealed truth before accepting it.⁹

Thus the ideal priest, Rabanus tells us, recognizes the great utility of having a thorough knowledge of the seven liberal arts, the trivium and the quadrivium, for a mastery of these disciplines provides the indispensable tools for those who would seek knowledge of the Scriptures and pursue learning in general. For Rabanus, the study of theology is the task to which all learning must be directed. He devotes some thirteen chapters to an explanation of the manner and method of studying the Scriptures, using the De doctrina Christiana of Augustine as his authority. Included is an extensive discussion of the three levels of meaning embodied in literal, figurative, and mystical language. The priest, ideally, should master all these modes of expression if he is to be conversant with Scripture. Rabanus' emphasis can be seen in his advice with reference to figurative expressions. In order to avoid the perplexities of figurative usage, Rabanus urges that the priest must have a knowledge of languages and things. He thus should have an acquaintance with Hebrew and Greek in addition to Latin and must not be ignorant of the nature of animals, minerals, and plants. A

⁹Ibid., III, 2, 16-17, Migne, PL, CVII, 379-380, 392-395.

failing on the part of the reader in any of these areas, Rabanus teaches, causes figurative passages to be obscure.¹⁰

Rabanus then follows with a lengthy discussion of the use that is to be made of secular learning, including a survey of the seven liberal arts. He is careful to point out what in pagan literature is fundamentally true and therefore proper for priestly study. In this category, he includes all knowledge that is essential to human existence. That which the priest must shun at all costs are the false inventions of pagan authors, namely, their pernicious superstition in such things as idol worship and the taking of omens. Throughout, Rabanus stresses the necessity of having a thorough knowledge of the seven liberal arts, not only for their practical educational value, but more importantly, as an aid to the study of the ultimate science--theology. Thus he urges the study of grammar and rhetoric as essential to any comprehension of the three levels of meaning to be found in Scripture. In this connection, the priest must have an acquaintance with music and arithmetic if he is to understand fully the mystical use of numbers. Rabanus goes on to state that geometry and astronomy, as they reflect divine creation, give the student a clearer perception of God's wisdom and omnipotence. Finally, the true priest must have a facility for explicating church doctrine and also

¹⁰Ibid., III, 1, 3-15, Migne, PL, CVII, 377, 380-392.

possess the cures necessary to combat the various afflictions that may beset his flock. For this, he must have a knowledge of that discipline of disciplines, as Rabanus puts it, dialectic, which teaches the priest reason and right thinking so that he may put the arguments of the Church's enemies to confusion.¹¹

The essential object of the priestly office is the pastoral care of souls leading to their salvation. Accordingly, the priestly ideal is exemplified in the preparation that the individual priest must undergo so that he can provide for the maintenance of divine worship, administer the sacraments, give inspirational guidance, and afford charity to the needy.¹² Providing for divine worship entails on the part of the priest a wide range of liturgical knowledge. Thus ten chapters of De clericorum institutione are devoted to the instruction of the clergy in the refinements of sacerdotal dress. The priest must know the sacred character and significance of the liturgical vestments related to his office.¹³ The priest must also be schooled in the ecclesiastical duties associated with the seasons or times of the liturgical year,

¹¹Ibid., III, 1, 18-26, Migne, PL, CVII, 377, 395-405.

¹²Henry G. J. Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France During the Sixth Century (Romae apud Aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1950), p. xiv (hereafter cited as Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls).

¹³De. cl. inst., I, 14-23, Migne, PL, CVII, 306-309.

especially with the proper observances of the feasts and fasts of the temporal cycle centering as it did by the Carolingian era on the two great feasts of the Nativity and the Resurrection. The greater portion of Book II is given over to a review of the obligatory fasts, the major Christian festivals, and the occasions of particular liturgical observances.¹⁴

The liturgical year provides the broad framework in which the priest must perform the two major acts of divine worship--celebrating the Mass and chanting the divine office. The celebration of the Mass centering in the consecration of the Body and Blood of Christ, as a direct legacy from the Lord Himself, is the most important ecclesiastical duty of the priest. The necessity of communicating this sacrament to other Christians dictates that the priest not only know the office and the order of the Mass according to the Roman rite, but also that he understand the significance of the eucharistic sacrifice. For Rabanus, this significance is twofold; it includes both the commemoration of the Last Supper and the Sacrifice of the Cross and the higher significance whereby the Christian upon worthily receiving the Eucharist is mystically incorporated in the body of Christ.¹⁵ Similarly, regarding

¹⁴Ibid., II, 17-46, Migne, PL, CVII, 333-361.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 31-33, Migne, PL, CVII, 316-326; cf. A. Gaudel, "Messe dans l'église latine, Raban Maur," in DTC, X, 1 (1928), 1005-1006.

the other important area of public prayer, the divine office, the priest must know the cursus and the significance of the canonical hours along with the elements of liturgical prayer--the psalms, hymns, responsories, antiphons, and the appropriate readings from the Scriptures.¹⁶

Divine worship also includes the various kinds of private prayers and devotions for individual communion with God. The priest must not only know the legitimate prayers to be said at the inception of any task and such set forms of verbal prayer as the Pater Noster, but also the most efficacious kinds of prayer for particular occasions.¹⁷ Finally, all prayer comes to nothing if the priest does not know the fundamental tenets of the faith as embodied in the Creed. Above all in this regard, he must be knowledgeable about the various ancient heresies so as not to fall victim to doctrinal error and create schism.¹⁸

In his discussion of the sacraments, Rabanus uses Isidore of Seville's seventh century classification which had considerable vogue in the ninth century and was dominant in the Carolingian period as a whole. In addition to the Body and

¹⁶De. cl. inst., II, 1-9, 47-54, Migne, PL, CVII, 325-329, 361-367.

¹⁷Ibid., II, 10-16, Migne, PL, CVII, 329-333.

¹⁸Ibid., II, 56-58, Migne, PL, CVII, 368-378.

Blood or the Eucharist already discussed, there were the initiatory rites of baptism and confirmation.¹⁹ The priest, according to Rabanus, in addition to knowing the meaning and significance of baptism and confirmation, must be able to prepare the catechumens for entrance into the Church following the Roman ritual. The catechumenate necessitates that the priest be able to conduct canonical examinations or scrutinies involving exorcisms and instructions, the delivery and recital of the Creed, the process of anointing, and the renunciation of the devil. He then must be able to follow with the proper rites of baptism leading to confirmation at the hands of the bishop.²⁰

The priest must also be knowledgeable about penance or the penitential discipline, although it was not yet considered to be an official sacrament of the Church. Here again he should know the meaning and significance of confession²¹ and penance²² and how satisfaction and reconciliation can be effected.²³ A knowledge of the methods of redeeming sins is necessary, including such things as the different types of penitential

¹⁹André Lagarde, The Latin Church in the Middle Ages, trans. Archibald Alexander (New York, 1915), pp. 32-33 (hereafter cited as Lagarde, The Latin Church).

²⁰De. cl. inst., I, 24-30, Migne, PL, CVII, 309-316.

²¹Ibid., II, 14, Migne, PL, CVII, 331-332.

²²Ibid., II, 29, Migne, PL, CVII, 341-342.

²³Ibid., II, 30, Migne, PL, CVII, 342-343.

alms²⁴ and the cure of sins by their contrary penalties.²⁵ Reconciliation can only take place after the completion of penance and, except for those who are seriously ill, at the canonical time before Easter. Finally, Rabanus teaches, the priest must use discretion and assign public penance for public sins and give secret penance for secret sins which are to be disclosed only to the priest or bishop so that the weak may not be tempted by examples of sin of which they were entirely ignorant.²⁶

In the area of inspirational guidance, or more specifically, the office of preaching, Rabanus envisions a Cicero-nian preparation on the part of the priest. As the defender of the true faith and the conqueror of error, the priest must teach right and correct wrong. In this task, he must overcome opponents, arouse the neglectful, and instruct the ignorant. And for this, he must be wise in argument, persuasive in exhortation, and skillful in exposition.²⁷ To attain the ends of good preaching, that is, teaching, pleasing, and persuading, the priest can do no better than learn the three styles of eloquence as elucidated by Cicero, namely, the subdued style for

²⁴Ibid., II, 28, Migne, PL, CVII, 340.

²⁵Ibid., III, 38, Migne, PL, CVII, 415-418.

²⁶Ibid., II, 30, Migne, PL, CVII, 342-343.

²⁷Ibid., III, 28, Migne, PL, CVII, 406.

dealing with trivial matters, the moderate style for discussing ordinary topics, and the grand style for the treatment of noble subjects.²⁸ The priest, then, will be able to communicate with eloquence and effectiveness to his auditors when he has mastered these styles so that he can use them both singly and in combination as occasion demands.²⁹

Rabanus cautions, however, that eloquence without wisdom can be harmful and is never beneficial. Since the principles of eloquence can be poorly learned, it is more important that the priest speak wisely than that he speak eloquently. And he can speak more or less wisely according to whether he has become more or less learned in the Holy Scriptures, not through rote memorizing, but by careful searching and a thorough understanding.³⁰ The biblical authors, manifestly inspired by God, were pre-eminently the wisest and most eloquent of men. Priestly interpreters of the Bible, as lesser beings, cannot hope to understand and appreciate it fully. They must, therefore, in their teaching dwell on those passages which they do understand and can present most clearly.³¹

Rabanus is insistent that inspirational guidance can

²⁸Ibid., III, 32, Migne, PL, CVII, 409.

²⁹Ibid., III, 35, Migne, PL, CVII, 412.

³⁰Ibid., III, 28, Migne, PL, CVII, 406-407.

³¹Ibid., III, 29, Migne, PL, CVII, 407-408.

only be accomplished by priestly attention to the techniques of good communication. If necessary, to avoid obscurity and ambiguity when speaking to the people, the priest should deliberately use language that will be easily understood even if this means the use of poorer words and idiomatic speech. Rabanus concludes in this practical vein with the injunction that the priest avoid all words that do not teach.³² Finally, he advises that there is a third alternative, if a priest cannot master the canons of good speaking and can speak neither wisely nor eloquently. He can conduct his priestly office in such a way as not only to win eternal reward but set an example of Christian conduct for others. In this way, the very beauty of the life that the priest may lead will be in itself a powerful sermon.³³

Pastoral care, as stated earlier, includes, in addition to conducting divine worship, administering the sacraments, and preaching, a fourth duty, that of providing material support for the needy. Rabanus, however, in this and in other important practical matters of sacerdotal life, has nothing to say. And it is important to note, at this point, that what Rabanus does not say is as significant for our conception of the Carolingian ideal of the priest as what he does say. In the pages

³²Ibid., III, 30, Migne, PL, CVII, 408.

³³Ibid., III, 36, Migne, PL, CVII, 413.

of Rabanus' treatise, the ideal priest emerges as a man of flawless character; a scholar trained in the liberal arts of the classical tradition; a theologian knowledgeable about the mysteries of the Holy Sacrament, the Scriptures, and the ancient heresies; and a pastor of souls schooled in the liturgical usages of the Church and able to maintain divine worship, to administer the sacraments, and to preach the word of God effectively. From this summary of what Rabanus does say, it can be gathered that he presents an impossible ideal of the priest which presupposes a degree of sophistication that Carolingian society had not yet attained and which had little hope of fulfillment. Equally important, however, is the fact, that, except in only the most general way, as in his advice on preaching and combatting sin, it appears that Rabanus does not speak to the actual conditions confronting the Frankish priest in the semi-barbaric world in which he lived and worked. It may therefore be expected that there was a considerable gap between Rabanus' ideal of the priest and the reality. It is to the reality of the priestly condition that we must now turn.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THE PRIEST: PATRONAGE AND THE PROPRIETARY CHURCH

The sources for the period under discussion reveal that the social classes from which the lower clergy ultimately derived included the noble, the minor freeman, and the servile. What the sources do not tell us is the proportion of the lower clergy that came from each of these social classes. At best, they admit only of an inferential answer. Beck, in his examination of pastoral care in southeastern Gaul, one of the more recent studies of early parochial development, has estimated that the great bulk of the lower clergy in the sixth century was recruited from the large class of minor freemen. He bases his estimate largely on the fact that it was "the broad belt of minor freemen" who populated the ranks of the Merovingian armies. This fact and the prohibition against young laymen entering the clericate without royal consent embodied in a synodal decree issued at Orleans in 511, according to Beck, suggest that the crown lost the services of a soldier whenever a man became a cleric. The implication from this, Beck reasons, is that the clerical candidate in southeastern Gaul

was normally chosen from the class of minor freemen which supplied men for the army with only a few selected from the nobility or the serf population.¹

At Thionville in 805, the Emperor found it necessary to re-enact the decree of 511 very explicitly in the form of a royal capitulary and with the same end in view of preventing the loss of manpower for his armies. Thus he decreed:

Concerning freemen who wish to enter the service of God, let them first seek our permission. For we have heard that some do so, not for reasons of piety, but in order to avoid military service and other public obligations.²

It would be an error, however, to conclude from this new prohibition that the lower clergy throughout Charlemagne's dominions was largely recruited from the class of minor freemen. Two important and related factors would militate against this conclusion: the extension of patronage with the concomitant reduction in the absolute number of freemen, and secondly, the rapid increase in the number of proprietary churches located

¹Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls, pp. 58-59. For a different conclusion, cf. Sir Samuel Dill, Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age (London, 1926), p. 480: ". . . as the clergy were exempt from military service, no bishop could ordain a freeman without royal permission, with the result that the priesthood was largely recruited from the servile class."

²MGH, Capit., no. 44, c. 15, p. 125: "De liberis hominibus qui ad servitium Dei se tradere volent, ut prius hoc non fatiant quam a nobis licentiam postulent. Hoc ideo, quia audivimus aliquos ex illis non tam causa devotionis quam exercitu seu alia funcctione regali fugiendo"

in the villas or private estates of the rural areas. It will be necessary both for our discussion of the social origins of the priest and for the general purposes of this paper to give some attention to the influence of these factors on the Frankish Church.

That the patronate became more pervasive during the course of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries is generally accepted by historians. In fact, they are nearly unanimous in viewing the villa or great estate as the predominant institution of landholding in the Carolingian period, relying basically on such evidence as the Capitulare de Villis, charters, and the polyptyques of a few great abbeys.³ The axiomatic acceptance of this interpretation, however, has been rightly questioned by Latouche, who has pointed out that in Charlemagne's time only a small fraction of the area of the Frankish Empire was occupied by the great ecclesiastical and lay estates. On the remaining land, well into the ninth century, there were independent mansi and a great many vici or villages populated by small independent farmers. In addition to those farming a single mansus, there were medium landowners who held several mansi.⁴ This is precisely what is

³Robert Latouche, The Birth of Western Economy, Economic Aspects of the Dark Ages, trans. E. M. Wilkinson (New York, 1966), pp. 176-177 (hereafter cited as Latouche, The Birth of Western Economy).

⁴Ibid., pp. 177-178.

revealed in the capitularies relating to Charlemagne's armies where the heribannum and military service were made dependent upon property ownership. The graded payments and fractional holdings there listed in royal edicts are truly indicative of the presence of a large number of minor freemen upon whom the Emperor placed no small importance.⁵ Unfortunately, due to the lack of documentation, little or nothing is known of these minor freemen in the period under discussion.⁶ But that they continued to exist in considerable numbers must be noted in making some estimate of the social origins of the priest.

Despite the above caution, the fact seems established that there existed in our period numerous great estates owned by the crown and the lay and ecclesiastical lords. This was true already in Merovingian times, with the churches and monasteries possessing great wealth in land and competing with the powerful secular aristocracy for more.⁷ The disorders and uncertainties of life in this early period induced many freemen, for the purposes of securing life and property, to commend themselves to the rich and powerful for their protection. This was particularly true of the rural clergy established in the vici whose churches were especially

⁵See MGH, Capit., no. 44, c. 19, p. 125; no. 48, c. 2, pp. 134-135; no. 49, cc. 2, 3, p. 136; no. 50, c.1, p. 137.

⁶Latouche, The Birth of Western Economy, p. 177.

⁷Ibid., pp. 178-179.

vulnerable to covetousness and abuse. Increasingly in the sixth and seventh centuries, the free priests of the villages placed themselves and their churches under the domination of a lord.⁸

Along with the steady diminution of free churches in the rural areas, there was a significant increase in the number of proprietary churches built on the lands of the seignior.⁹

⁸Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales dans l'ancienne France du IV^e au XI^e siècle," Revue historique, LXVII (1898), 10-14 (hereafter cited as Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales"); H. Leclercq and F. Martroye, "Patronage," in DACL, XIII, 2 (1938), 2565 ff.; Paul Thomas, Le droit de propriété des laïques sur les églises et le patronage laïque au moyen âge (Paris, 1906), p. 20; Émile Lesne, Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France, Tome I: Époques romaine et mérovingienne (Lille-Paris, 1910), pp. 72-73 (hereafter cited as Lesne, La propriété ecclésiastique).

⁹As Dom David Knowles has noted in The Monastic Order in England, A History of Its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943-1216 (Cambridge, 1941), p. 562, n. 1 (hereafter cited as Knowles, The Monastic Order in England), modern research on the proprietary church begins at the turn of the century with the pioneer studies of Ulrich Stutz, Die Eigenkirche als Element des mittelalterlich-germanischen Kirchenrechtes (Berlin, 1895) and Geschichte des Kirchlichen Benefizialwesens von seinen Anfängen bis auf die Zeit des Alexanders III, Tome I (Berlin, 1895). The first essay has been translated by Geoffrey Barraclough, "The Proprietary Church as an Element of Mediaeval Germanic Ecclesiastical Law," in Mediaeval Germany, 911-1250, Essays by German Historians (Oxford, 1938), II, 35-70 (hereafter cited as Stutz, "The Proprietary Church"). In the same period, Imbart de la Tour, in "Les paroisses rurales," Revue historique, LX (1896), 241-271, LXI (1896), 10-44, LXIII (1897), 1-41, LXVII (1898), 1-35, LXVIII (1898), 1-54, was pursuing a parallel line of research. Since these early works of Stutz and Imbart de la Tour have appeared, an extensive literature has developed on the subject. The pertinent bibliography may be found in Stutz's article, "Eigenkirche, Eigenkloster," in Real-Enzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, ed.

This development was very evident in southeastern Gaul in the sixth century, a time when there was a decided increase in the number of churches, both there and in other regions west of the Rhine.¹⁰ Beck cites Chaume's study of the diocese of Auxerre¹¹ and the evidence from inscriptions to show that the tendency was for the villa churches to multiply more rapidly and to predominate numerically over the churches of the episcopal cities and the vici.¹²

In the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, the number of proprietary churches established on the lands of the crown, the bishops, the monasteries, and the secular lords grew apace.¹³ This numerical increase of privately-owned churches and the extension of patronage over the free churches had already in the seventh century placed the majority of

Albert Hauck (Third Edition, Leipzig, 1913), XXIII, 364 ff., and in H. Leclercq's article, "Paroisses rurales," in DACL, XIII, 2 (1938), 2198-2235. According to Knowles, while the latter research has given more precision as to details, it has done little to alter the basic conclusions that are set forth in the earlier works of Stutz and Imbart de la Tour.

¹⁰Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls, p. 80; Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales," Revue historique, LX (1896), 257.

¹¹Maurice Chaume, "Le mode de constitution et de délimitation des paroisses rurales aux temps mérovingiens et carolingiens," Revue Mabillon, XXVII (1937), 65.

¹²Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls, pp. 81-82.

¹³Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales," Revue historique, LXVIII (1898), 52; Lesne, La propriété ecclésiastique, I, 73; Stutz, "The Proprietary Church," p. 45.

rural churches under the control of the aristocracy. The proprietors of the formerly free churches enjoyed rights similar to those possessed by the founders of churches in the villas.¹⁴ In effect, these rights reduced the rural church to the status of private property. Not only the physical assets of church property, but also the revenues including the oblations and the tithes, were in the control of the proprietor. As a species of private property, the rural churches, though they could not be diverted from their religious purposes, could be sold, given away, bestowed, and otherwise exchanged.¹⁵

One example of the complications that arose under such circumstances may be seen in the fact that situations developed where multiple heirs laid claim to the rights of income and property of individual churches and forced their division into two, four, and even a dozen parts.¹⁶ This was but one

¹⁴Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales," Revue historique, LXVII (1898), 13-14; Lesne, La propriété ecclésiastique, I, 76; Thomas, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁵Stutz, "The Proprietary Church," p. 43; Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales," Revue historique, LXVII (1898), 15; Lesne, La propriété ecclésiastique, I, 73-74.

¹⁶Knowles, The Monastic Order in England, p. 564. Louis the Pious made the correction of this serious and widespread abuse the subject of his earliest legislation (MGH, Capit., no. 138, c. 1, pp. 275-276). The paralyzing effects of rivalry and discord on the governance of a parish caused by division of a church into four parts by multiple heirs with each part having its own priest is described in MGH, Conc., no. 37, c. 26, p. 278.

aspect of the more basic problem which was the threat to episcopal government and to ecclesiastical discipline. As the regime of private ownership developed, the canonically recognized proprietary right of presentation tended to become a right of appointment; and the episcopal authority to examine and approve clerical candidates was seriously compromised, becoming a mere formality or disappearing entirely. In inverse proportion, the strength of the ties between lord and priest was increased while the bond between priest and bishop became ever weaker.¹⁷

The negative consequences of these changes are no more clearly revealed than in an often-cited letter of St. Boniface to Pope Zacharias in 742. In it, Boniface vividly describes for that pontiff's edification the anarchic state of ecclesiastical discipline at the end of Charles Martel's reign. Regarding the Frankish clergy, he asks:

If I find among these men certain so-called deacons who have spent their lives since boyhood in debauchery, adultery, and every kind of filthiness, who entered the diaconate with this reputation, and who now, while they have four or five concubines in their beds, still read the Gospel and are not ashamed or afraid to call themselves deacons--nay rather, entering upon the priesthood, they continue in the same vices, add sin to sin, declare that they have a right to make intercession for the people in the priestly

¹⁷Knowles, The Monastic Order in England, pp. 564-565; Stutz, "The Proprietary Church," pp. 46-47; H. Leclercq and F. Martroye, "Patronage," in DACL, XIII, 2 (1938), 2566-2567.

office and to celebrate Mass, and, still worse, with such reputations advancing from step to step to nomination and appointment as bishops--may I have the formal prescription of your authority as to your procedure in such cases so that they may be convicted by apostolic judgment and dealt with as sinners?¹⁸

As the letter and the great reforming councils called by Carloman¹⁹ and Pippin²⁰ reveal, the Frankish Church had come near to dissolution. In part, responsibility for this chaotic state of affairs can be attributed to the secularizations of church property carried out previously by the mayor of the palace and to the practice of appointing warlords to head bishoprics and abbeys. It was the extension of patronage and the proprietary church system, however, that led to the general collapse of ecclesiastical discipline, especially in the

¹⁸Boniface, Ep., no. 50, pp. 82-83: "Si invenero inter illos diaconos quos nominant, qui a puerita sua semper in stupris, semper in adulteriis et in omnibus semper spurcitiis vitam ducentes sub tali testimonio venerunt ad diaconatum et modo in diaconatu concubinas IIII vel V vel plures noctu in lecto habentes evangelium tamen legere et diaconos se nominare nec erubescunt nec metuunt et six in talibus incestis ad ordinem presbiteratus venientes in hisdem peccatis perdurantes et peccata peccatis adicientes presbiteratus officio fungentes dicunt se pro populo posse intercedere et sacras oblationes offerre, novissime, quod peius est, sub talibus testimoniis per gradus singulos ascendentes ordinantur et nominantur episcopi: ut habeam preceptum et conscriptum auctoritatis vestrae, quid de talibus diffiniatis, et per responsum apostolicum convincantur et arguantur peccatores." Text: The Letters of Saint Boniface, trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York, 1940), p. 80 (hereafter cited as Emerton, The Letters of Saint Boniface).

¹⁹MGH, Capit., no. 10, pp. 24-26; no. 11, pp. 26-28.

²⁰Ibid., no. 12, pp. 28-30.

rural areas.²¹

Thus one of the essential objects of the reform movement set under way by Boniface and the Carolingian monarchy was to seek a solution to the proprietary church problem. Since the monarchy itself as the largest owner of private churches had a clear interest in preserving the system, there could be no question of eliminating the institution entirely. A compromise had to be reached that would restore church discipline while not violating the cherished rights of property. It is only in this context that the extensive ecclesiastical legislation embodied in the royal capitularies and conciliar decrees of our period can be understood. The direction that this legislation took was to regularize the proprietary church system so as to minimize its divisive effects, to improve the lot of the priests, and to subordinate them to the authority of the bishop.²² In the subsequent pages of this paper, the character of this legislation will be revealed in more detail.

Having traced in broad outline the influence of patronage and the proprietary church regime on the Frankish Church, it is now possible to conclude our discussion of the social origins of the priest. When the sources for the period under discussion are read in the context of the developments

²¹Stutz, "The Proprietary Church," pp. 46-47.

²²Ibid., pp. 47-48.

just described, the judgment as to the social class, or classes, from which the priests were recruited seems clear. The priests were normally chosen from the class of minor freemen and from the serf population with only a few coming from the nobility. That many priests were freemen is an inference that can be made from Charlemagne's edict of 805 and from other enactments involving freemen attempting to avoid military service.²³ Also, in line with what has been said previously about the survival of a sizable body of minor freemen, not all of the free churches fell under the control of the seignior. The often-repeated acts of Carolingian legislation embodying the canonical prohibition against the reception of stranger clerics reveal that there was a large floating body of priests, both free and unfree, wandering or fleeing from place to place seeking positions of advantage.²⁴ The numerous instances of ordinations involving simony²⁵ and references to

²³MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 26, p. 56; no. 35, c. 12, p. 102; no. 43, c. 10, p. 122; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 44, p. 212.

²⁴With respect to Carolingian ecclesiastical legislation as a whole, the enactments relating to stability of the clergy are by far the most often repeated. To cite but a few examples of these enactments covering the period 742-813, see MGH, Conc., no. 1, c. 4, p. 3; no. 36, c. 22, p. 267; no. 37, c. 41, p. 282; MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 4, p. 25; no. 14, c. 12, p. 35; no. 19, c. 4, p. 45; no. 22, c. 3, p. 54; no. 78, c. 23, p. 174; no. 123, c. 18, p. 244.

²⁵Reiterating previous prohibitions, the regional synods of 813 make especial note of this frequent abuse by

the recruitment of freemen by bishops and abbots for purposes of acquiring their property²⁶ indicate that many freemen were entering the ranks of the priesthood.

The extensive body of Carolingian legislation seeking to establish a balance between the rights of private ownership of churches and the needs of ecclesiastical discipline gives abundant evidence regarding priests who derived from the servile population. Of these enactments, those affecting stability²⁷ and servile ordination,²⁸ if taken alone, are enough to demonstrate that a very great proportion of the priesthood came from the lowest class of Carolingian society.²⁹ Finally, regarding priests who were of noble lineage, little can be

what could only be freemen with the necessary wealth to buy lucrative livings; see MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 5, p. 251; no. 35, c. 21, p. 255; no. 36, cc. 29-30, p. 268; no. 37, c. 42, p. 282; no. 38, c. 15, p. 288; MGH, Capit., no. 78, c. 3, p. 173.

²⁶MGH, Capit., no. 37, cc. 6, 7, p. 275.

²⁷See above n. 24. Pope Zacharias, in a letter of 748 (Boniface, Ep., no. 83, p. 186), admonishes Frankish lay proprietors not to receive stranger priests because these are often escaped bondsmen who are passing themselves off as ordained priests.

²⁸MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 31, p. 211; MGH, Capit., no. 22, cc. 23, 57, pp. 55, 57; no. 28, c. 23, p. 76; no. 35, c. 26, p. 103; no. 114, c. 4, p. 232. Cf. Boniface, Ep., no. 83, pp. 186-187.

²⁹The Admonitio generalis of 789 (MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 72, pp. 59-60) accurately reflected the social origins of the priest, when it ordered the ministers of the altar of God to "join and associate to themselves" not only the children of servile condition, but also the sons of freemen.

said. That their relative numbers must have been small can be inferred from the fact that there is only one piece of evidence, and that an enactment of a Bavarian church council held in 800, that is of general application to nobles entering the priesthood. It states:

No noble should be tonsured as abbot or as priest before the question of his ordination has been examined in the presence of the bishop of the diocese to which he belongs. If he gives a part of his property to the church or to the monastery where he has received the tonsure, he can remain there and live there according to the canonical or monastic rules. If, however, he later quits this condition, he must serve again in the army as the laity do.³⁰

The remaining references, few in number, are of a particular nature, such as those found in the biographies of saints.³¹

³⁰MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 44, p. 212: "Ut nullus de nobilibus neque abbas neque presbiter tonderi audeat, antequam in praesentia episcopi examinetur eius causa, ad cuius diocesim pertinet. Et si aliquas res vel ad monasterium vel ad ecclesiam tradiderit, ubi tonsuratus est, ibi sub canonica vel regulari maneat vita. Si autem postea in propria sua residere vult, faciat hostem ut ceteri laici."

³¹Thus of noble origin was the priest Gregory who had charge of the church at Utrecht and was fulfilling the duties of a bishop as we are told by an anonymous writer in his "Life of St. Lebuin" in The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany, Being the Lives of SS. Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba and Lebuin, together with the Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald and a selection from the correspondence of St. Boniface, trans. and ed. C. H. Talbot (New York, 1954), p. 229 (hereafter cited as Talbot, The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany).

CHAPTER III

EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION AND ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

The fact that the priests were generally chosen from the serf population and from the class of minor freemen meant that in most instances their initial educational preparation was minimal. To perform the duties of the priestly office, they would need formal instruction prior to ordination. In the Gallo-Roman era, candidates for the priesthood normally had served an apprenticeship in the lower ranks of the clericate before receiving ordination.¹ The conciliar legislation of Merovingian times reveals the continued existence of the lower orders in the greater churches of the episcopal cities and the vici. In addition to the regular practice of progression from the minor to the major orders, provision had been made for the ordination of laymen to the diaconate or to the priesthood after a probationary year of preparation, which included observing continence and acquiring the necessary

¹H. Leclercq, "Ordinations irregulieres," in DACL, XII, 2 (1936), 2397-2398; Pierre Riché, Éducation et culture dans l'occident barbare, VI^e-VIII^e siècles (Paris, 1962), p. 163 (hereafter cited as Riché, Éducation et culture).

knowledge to perform baptism and celebrate the holy mysteries. This concession had been made in an effort to combat the increasingly common abuses stemming from the installation of untrained priests, especially in the proprietary churches.²

By the time of St. Boniface, with the steady decline of the old canonical discipline, training in the lower orders before priestly ordination was far from normal practice.³ There were clergy in the lower orders to be sure, but, except for the diaconate, references to them are few; and, as exemplified in ecclesiastical legislation, not descriptive of their

²Louis Bréhier, et René Aigrain, Grégoire le Grand, les États barbares et la conquête arabs (590-757), Vol. V of Histoire de l'Église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, ed. Augustin Fliche et Victor Martin (Paris, 1947), pp. 375-376 (hereafter cited as Bréhier et Aigrain, Grégoire le Grand); Ellen Perry Pride, "Ecclesiastical Legislation on Education, A.D. 300-1200," Church History, XII (1943), 236-237 (hereafter cited as Pride, "Ecclesiastical Legislation"); Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 70-71; Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls, p. 46.

³How far this deterioration had gone by the end of the seventh century is evidenced by the diocesan synod held at Auxerre in 695 (probably the last Frankish church council to be held before 742). The diocesan priests were ordered to take turns in celebrating the Mass in the cathedral church which no longer had priests of its own. See Gustav Schnürer, Church and Culture in the Middle Ages, Vol. I: 350-814, trans. George J. Undreiner (New Jersey, 1956), p. 331 (hereafter cited as Schnürer, Church and Culture).

status or condition.⁴ The decline of this discipline is most clearly revealed in a letter of Archbishop Leidrad to Charlemagne in the opening years of the ninth century. Leidrad gives the Emperor an account of his progress in restoring the ancient see of Lyons, a bishopric that had always been one of the most considerable in southern Gaul. The enumeration of the ecclesiastical buildings, including churches, monasteries, and nunneries that he repaired is indicative of the disruption and decay that had demoralized the Frankish Church, and, it should be noted, the slowness with which Carolingian reform and restoration were being accomplished. Of particular interest here, however, is Leidrad's mention of the fact that he had to repair many domus episcopales, or episcopal houses, one of which had been all but destroyed. It was in the episcopal houses that training of the lower secular clergy took place.⁵ Finally, Leidrad also notes that he reinstituted schools of singers and readers in the episcopal church. The

⁴The term "clerici" is generally used in reference to clergy in minor orders. See MGH, Capit., no. 33, c. 23, p. 96; no. 118, c. 4, p. 236; MGH, Conc., no. 1, c. 6, p. 4; no. 2, c. 1, pp. 6-7; no. 37, c. 3, pp. 274-275; Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 15, Migne, PL, CV, 195.

⁵Edwin Hatch, The Organization of the Early Christian Churches (London, 1881), p. 202. Cf. Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque de Clovis a Charlemagne, étude sur les actes de conciles et les capitulaires les statuts diocésains et les règles monastiques, 507-814 (Paris, 1936), p. 155 (hereafter cited as Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque).

belated re-establishment of these very basic educational institutions of the Church in an important diocese of the Carolingian realm adds to our appreciation of the extent to which the minor orders had declined.⁶

The verdict of St. Boniface, writing in 742, is that the Franks had been trampling upon and despoiling ecclesiastical discipline for several generations. Though an episcopal and monastic organization still existed, the upper ranks of the church hierarchy were filled with greedy laymen and unscrupulous clergymen. The provincial organization of earlier times had collapsed and national church synods had not met for over eighty years. Consequently, the canon law of the Church had neither been established nor restored anywhere.⁷ As Fournier and Le Bras put it in describing the disintegration of the Frankish Church: "La crise de l'Église mérovingienne entre 680 et 740 peut se resumer d'un seul mot:

⁶MGH, Ep., IV, no. 30, pp. 542-544. It is true that an enactment of the Council of Tours in 813 (MGH, Conc., no. 38, c. 12, p. 288) states that candidates for the priesthood should first spend a formative period of training with the clergy of a cathedral. But this isolated reference can only be viewed as an anacronism borrowed from earlier church canons of which the Council made heavy use. See Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque, p. 246.

⁷Boniface, Ep., no. 50, pp. 82-83.

mepris de l'ancien droit."⁸

As we have seen, the contempt that the Franks had for the canon law of the Church with respect to priestly ordination is vividly described by St. Boniface. He reveals that the impediments to ordination laid down by the ancient canons regarding character, deportment, and preparation⁹ were clearly ignored. Men were entering the diaconate with reputations for debauchery and every kind of crime and were progressing to priestly rank and were even becoming bishops while still

⁸Paul Fournier and Gabriel Le Bras, Histoire des collections canoniques en occident depuis les fausses décrétales jusqu'au décret de Gratien, Tome I: De la réforme carolingienne à la réforme grégorienne (Paris, 1931), p. 82: "La hiérarchie est ruinée: cadres détruits, longues vacances des sièges, deux évêques dans certaines villes, et parfois un seul évêque pour deux sièges" (hereafter cited as Fournier and Le Bras, Histoire des collections canoniques). Cf. Bréhier et Aigrain, Grégoire le Grand, p. 361 ff.; Riché, Éducation et culture, pp. 477-478.

⁹Included in the ancient canons and frequently repeated in Frankish ecclesiastical legislation are prohibitions against the ordination of those who had married twice or had married a divorced woman, of those who were neophytes in the faith and of those who had lapsed, of those who were insane or who were defective in body, of those who had not been examined for their faith and conduct and of those who were illiterate, of those who were bond servants, of those who were penitents or under court order, of those who had not reached the age of thirty, and of lower clergy from another diocese who had not received dimissory letters. See The Seven Ecumenical Councils, ed. Henry R. Percival, Vol. XIV of A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Second Series; Grand Rapids, 1956), pp. 10, 23-24, 46, 84, 363, 374, 595, 599; Boniface, Ep. no. 18, p. 32; no. 80, p. 178; no. 83, p. 187; no. 87, pp. 198-199; Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls, pp. 45-46.

continuing in their vices. St. Boniface implies that the priesthood had in large part been vitiated by the admission of those who not only were morally unqualified but who also had little or no preparation for their ministry.¹⁰ Letters written in 748 and 751 by Pope Zacharias to St. Boniface reveal that the situation had not improved. Reiterating earlier reports made by St. Boniface, the Pope states that false priests, including those who were adulterers, murderers, pederasts, and fugitive serfs, outnumbered the true catholics. These miscreant clerics led people astray and brought the work of the Church to confusion. They were, in Pope Zacharias' words:

Servants of the devil transformed into ministers of Christ, who, subject to no bishop, live according to their own caprice, protected by the people against the bishops, so that these have no check upon their scandalous conduct. They gather about them a like-minded following and carry on their false ministry, not in a catholic church, but in the open country in the huts of farm laborers, where their ignorance and stupid folly can be hidden from the bishops. They neither preach the catholic faith to pagans, nor have they themselves the true faith. They do not even know the sacred words which any catechumen old enough to use his reason can learn and understand, nor do they expect them to be uttered by those whom they are to baptize, as, for instance, the renunciation of Satan, and so forth. Neither do they fortify them with the sign of the cross, which should precede baptism, nor do they teach them belief in one God and the Holy Trinity; nor do they require them to believe with the heart for righteousness or

¹⁰Boniface, Ep., no. 50, pp. 82-85.

to make confession with the lips for salvation.¹¹

The serious problem of the entrance into the priesthood of laymen without undergoing a period of probation is also revealed by the Pope's order that all such priests who had concealed criminal records in securing their ordination were to be unfrocked and put to penance.¹²

It would be unwise to conclude from the evidence of St. Boniface alone that many of those ordained to the priesthood were lacking in the necessary educational preparation. The truth of his observations, however, both with respect to the situation at the time of his writing and in the subsequent period, is well attested to by other evidence which in great part reflects the baneful influences of the proprietary church

¹¹Ibid., no. 80, pp. 175-176: ". . . servos diaboli transfigurantes se in minystros Christi, qui sine episcopo proprio arbitrio viventes populares defensores habentes contra episcopos, ut sceleratos mores eorum non confringant, seorsum populum consentaneum congregant et illum erroneum minysterium non in aecclesia catholica, sed per agrestia loca, per cellas rusticorum, ubi eorum imperita stultitia celari episcopis possit, perpetrant nec fidem catholicam paganis predicant nec ipsi fidem rectam habent, sed nec ipsa sollempnia verba, quae unusquisque caticuminus, si talis aetatis est, ut iam intellectum habeat, sensu cordis sui percipere et intellegere, nec docent nec quaerent ab eis, quos baptizare debent, id est abrenuntiatione satane et cetera, sed neque signacula crucis Christi eos muniunt, quae precedere debent baptismum, sed nec aliquam credulitatem unius deitatis et sanctae trinitatis docent, neque ab eis quaerent, ut corde credant ad iustitiam et oris confessio fiat illis in salutem" Text: Emerton, The Letters of Saint Boniface, pp. 144-145.

¹²Ibid., no. 87, pp. 199-200.

system. The royal and conciliar enactments, prohibiting the ordination of priests before they had been properly examined for their knowledge of the faith¹³ and exhorting the bishops to see to the instruction of their clergy,¹⁴ demonstrate by their endless repetition that many were receiving priestly ordination without adequate preparation. This conclusion is strongly reinforced when the legislation dealing with servile and simoniacal ordinations is taken into consideration.¹⁵ It cannot be doubted that both practices insured the entrance into the priesthood of many individuals who were doctrinally uneducated for their office.¹⁶

There are a good number of other irregularities

¹³MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 2, p. 54; no. 35, c. 1, p. 102; no. 37, c. 10, p. 108; no. 38, cc. 1-17, pp. 109-111; no. 40, c. 2, p. 115; no. 68, c. 7, p. 158; no. 177, c. 1, p. 363; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 35, p. 211; no. 35, c. 3, p. 254; no. 38, c. 12, p. 288. Especially admonished is the examination of stranger priests. See MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 4, p. 25; no. 19, cc. 4, 15, 16, pp. 45-46; MGH, Conc., no. 1, c. 4, p. 3; no. 34, c. 24, p. 253; no. 37, c. 41, p. 282.

¹⁴MGH, Capit., no. 28, c. 29, p. 77; no. 33, cc. 21, 22, pp. 95-96; no. 119, cc. 1-5, pp. 236-237; MGH, Conc., no. 22, cc. 2, 3, 8, pp. 198-199; no. 37, c. 3, pp. 274-275.

¹⁵See above Chapter II, notes 25 and 28.

¹⁶The Council of Arles in 813 saw simoniacal ordination as very prevalent in the proprietary churches and stated the consequences very clearly. See MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 5, p. 251: "Ut laici omnino a praesbiteris non audeant munera exigere propter commendationem ecclesiae, quia propter cupiditatem plerumque a laicis talibus presbyteris ecclesiae dantur, qui ad peragendum sacerdotale officium indigni sunt."

connected with ordination that can be cited to show the general decline or absence of canonical discipline affecting the priest. Mention may be made of the repeated strictures against the practice of ordaining priests before they had reached the lawful age of thirty,¹⁷ and also those prohibiting ordination except at canonically prescribed times.¹⁸ As late as 813, the Council of Chalon found it necessary to deal with an important problem that had vexed St. Boniface in earlier times--that of illegal ordinations involving the suspicion of simony and other errors committed by men of Celtic origin posing as bishops in certain areas of the realm.¹⁹ We may also note the frequent usurpation of episcopal authority by laymen in installing and removing priests from office.²⁰ The important consequences this practice held for the state of priestly

¹⁷MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 50, p. 57; no. 28, c. 49, p. 78; no. 35, c. 24, p. 103; no. 37, c. 14, p. 108; MGH, Conc., no. 38, c. 12, p. 288.

¹⁸MGH, Capit., no. 42, c. 4, p. 119; MGH, Conc., no. 3, c. 11, p. 17; no. 24, c. 7, p. 208; no. 37, c. 23, p. 278. St. Boniface was mildly censured by Pope Zacharias for ordaining priests at irregular times. See Boniface, Ep., no. 87, p. 199. Ordinations of priests and deacons were permitted only at the start of Lent, the Saturday evening after mid-Lent, and on the fast days in the fourth, seventh, and tenth months. See ibid., no. 18, p. 32.

¹⁹MGH, Conc., no. 37, c. 43, p. 282.

²⁰MGH, Capit., no. 78, c. 2, p. 173; no. 81, c. 2, p. 178; no. 83, c. 7, p. 182; MGH, Conc., no. 36, c. 29, p. 268; no. 37, c. 42, p. 282.

preparation are clearly enunciated in a decree of the Council of Arles of 813:

Let the laity not eject priests from churches or install others without the assent of their bishops, because when priests are installed in parishes by the bishops, they are first given diligent instruction before receiving their assigned churches lest through ignorance they improperly administer the holy sacraments, and because it was instituted by the holy fathers that when the priests attend the synod they shall give account to their bishop of their manner of celebrating the office and administering baptism.²¹

Also adding to priestly instability was the canonically forbidden practice of absolute ordinations, i.e., ordinations at large in which priests were ordained without being assigned a benefice or a patrimony for their support. These illegal ordinations insured that there would be a sizable body of priests who were without assignment of a church or an oratory for their maintenance.²² Finally, reflecting the complications arising from private ownership, bishops did not hesitate to ordain priests to churches which they owned but which were located in

²¹MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 4, pp. 250-251: "Ut laici presbyteros absque iudicio proprii episcopi non eiciant de ecclesiis nec alios mittere praesumant, quia, quando presbyteri ab episcopis in parrochiis ordinantur, necesse est, ut ab ipsis episcopis diligenter instructi ecclesias sibi deputatas accipiant, ne per ignorantiam, quod absit, etiam in ipsis divinis sacramentis offendant, quia a sanctis patribus institutum est, ut quando ad concilium venerint, rationem episcopo suo reddant, qualiter susceptum officium vel baptismum celebrent."

²²MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 25, p. 55; no. 28, c. 28, p. 76; no. 35, c. 11, p. 102.

another's diocese.²³

It may reasonably be inferred from the foregoing evidence relating to irregular ordinations that men qualified by moral character and education for the priesthood were in short supply. St. Boniface, pressured by the need for competent priests, asked for and received special permission from Rome in 751 to ordain men who had not yet attained the age of thirty.²⁴ At the accession of Charlemagne, this situation had not materially improved and the prevailing ignorance of the Frankish secular clergy made it extremely difficult to find priests who could preach Christianity to the people and perform the task of pagan conversion.²⁵ This conclusion is validated by the testimony of Charlemagne himself. In a letter to an archbishop (most probably Lull), he complains that his clergymen are shackled by ignorance and strongly urges the necessity of clerical study and application. Revealing his deep concern and perplexity, Charlemagne admonishes:

Since you are, with God's help, zealously attentive to winning over the souls of the faithful, it seems very astonishing to us that you have manifested no solicitude for educating your clergy in the study of letters. For you perceive that everywhere the

²³Ibid., no. 16, c. 14, p. 41; no. 22, cc. 11, 12, p. 55.

²⁴Pope Zacharias permitted St. Boniface to ordain priests at age twenty-five in cases of extreme necessity. See Boniface, Ep., no. 87, p. 198.

²⁵A. Kleinclausz, Charlemagne (Paris, 1934), p. 253.

darkness of ignorance enshrouds the hearts of your subjects; and while you are capable of infusing into them the light of knowledge, you permit them to remain under their cloud of ignorance. . . . One of two things is certain: either they, in their unyielding pride, consider it an indignity to be subjected to your guidance or, a thing which we do not wish to occur, you, on your part, deal with them too gently. But whichever it is, Venerable Father, it is your responsibility; and you, notwithstanding their pride, ought to correct them with fatherly admonition or constrain them with your pastoral staff. Further, in as much as it concerns your zeal, they ought at times by mild persuasion, at times by stern rebuke be stirred to the desire for learning; if any of them are without sufficient means, they should be encouraged and assistance sought for them. Assuredly, although you cannot attract others to learning, at least, you are able to educate those of your ecclesiastical household who, in your view, are capable of learning.²⁶

Like St. Boniface and much more clearly than his predecessors in the monarchy, Charlemagne saw the creation of an

²⁶MGH, Ep., IV, no. 22, p. 532: "Cum in acquirendis fidelium animabus studiose Deo favente invigiles, mirandum nobis valde videtur, cur in crudiendo clero proprio litterarum studiis nullam sollicitudinem geris. Cernis namque undique in subditorum cordibus ignorantiae tenebras circumfundi; et cum possis eruditionis radium eorum sensibus infundere, in suae illos caecitatis caligine latere permittis. . . . Unum certe est e duobus: aut enim contumaci ipsi superbia vestro magisterio subdi dedignantur, aut a vestra, quod evenire nolumus, parte cum eis remissius agitur. Sed quodlibet horum sit, ad vestram, pater venerabilis, curam respicit; a quo, etsi tumentes corde sunt, debent vel paterna ammonitione corrigi vel pastoralis baculo coherceri. Iam vero, quantum ad vestrum studium attinet, debent modo blandis persuasionibus modo duris etiam increpationibus ad eruditionis lumen excitari; si qui vero ex eis inopes existunt, etiam conlatis subsidiis invitari. Et certe, etsi alios ad discendum adtrahere non vales, saltem de tuae ecclesiae famulis, quos capaces esse perspexeris, erudire potes. Illud vero credere iam quis possit, quod in tanta multitudine, quae vestro est subiecta regimini, ad crudiendum aptus nemo valeat inveniri?"

educated body of clergy living in accordance with canon law as one of the prime objects of church reform. The task of achieving this goal, however, was considerable for the turmoil of foreign invasions and civil war in the first half of the eighth century had led to a general disruption of society and had dealt a serious blow to culture. The regions of Aquitaine, Provence, and Burgundy, which had traditionally been places of refuge for learning after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, had been especially devastated. With the destruction of churches and monasteries such as those that Archbishop Leidrad gives witness to and the disruption of religious life, the maintenance of a formal system of education for the secular clergy was impossible.²⁷

The demoralized state of Frankish education in the early eighth century was clearly reflected in the condition of the libraries. Everywhere there was a paucity of books. The churches and monasteries of Gaul possessed only a fraction of their former collections, the rest having been abandoned or dispersed or lost entirely. As a consequence, books, especially those in the newly established churches, were regarded as particularly precious to be numbered with the most valuable items of movable wealth. Liturgical works were inventoried along with sacerdotal vestments and plate as an important part

²⁷Riché, Éducation et culture, pp. 473-478.

of church treasure.²⁸

When the literary productions of the early Carolingian period are considered, the picture of Frankish educational decline is further accentuated. Little that deserves to be called literature was produced in Gaul. Worthy of note are a few lives of saints and rhythmical poems and the brief work, Liber historiae Francorum. Characteristically, written Latin was corrupted with idioms and otherwise barbarized by error. Misreadings and misspellings were common in books copied from earlier works. Especially indicative of the low level of knowledge is an anonymous sermon portraying Venus as a man. Across the Rhine no written literature as yet existed. How ignorant the clergy there were of even elementary Latin can be ascertained from the comments of Pope Zacharias²⁹ who states that a Bavarian priest had been reportedly performing baptism incorrectly using feminine inflections in the baptismal formula.³⁰

²⁸Émile Lesne, Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France, Tome IV: Les livres "scriptoria" et bibliothèques du commencement du VIII^e à la fin du XI^e siècle (Lille, 1938), pp. 1-2, 28-29, 465, 762. Alcuin, at the beginning of the ninth century, was much perplexed by the want of good books at Tours. See MGH, Ep., IV, pp. 176-178.

²⁹Boniface, Ep., no. 68, p. 141.

³⁰Wilhelm Levison, England and the Continent in the Eighth Century (London, 1949), pp. 150-151 (hereafter cited as Levison, England and the Continent); Laistner, Thought and Letters, pp. 176-178; Riché, Éducation et culture, p. 478. After describing the disappearance of instruction affecting

Unfortunately, the necessary internal reform that would have ameliorated the conditions of educational impoverishment affecting the secular clergy in the Frankish realm did not immediately result from the legislation enacted by the great reforming councils inspired by St. Boniface. The emphasis of these councils was on the moral regeneration of the Frankish Church and a restoration of clerical discipline. In the event, the missionizing efforts of St. Boniface and those of his countrymen not only produced conditions more favorable to the revival of canonical discipline, but also to the revival of letters.³¹ Subsequent to the passing of

the laity, Riché characterizes the culture of the secular clergy by stating "Les clercs remplacent donc définitivement les laïcs dans les modestes charges de notaire. C'est à vrai dire la seule manifestation de leur culture en cette première moitié du VIII^e siècle." See ibid., p. 477.

³¹Laistner, Thought and Letters, pp. 181-182; J. Bass Mullinger, The Schools of Charles the Great and the Restoration of Education in the Ninth Century (New York, 1932), pp. 46-47 (hereafter cited as Mullinger, The Schools of Charles the Great); Pride, "Ecclesiastical Legislation," p. 239; Riché, Éducation et culture, pp. 496-497. For a discussion of the beginnings of the Carolingian renaissance in the first half of the eighth century based on the activities of the monastic establishment and the Carolingian monarchy, see ibid., pp. 478-498. It should be noted that Riché clearly separates the religious from the secular clergy and states that the latter were sunk in ignorance and that monks were the only literate men. See ibid., pp. 479, 484. In summarizing the over-all effects of monastic revival, Riché states that "Le renouveau des études monastiques va bientôt gagner toute l'Église, mais indirectement. Si les moines cultivés ont eu une influence à cette époque, c'est d'abord sur les princes, et en particulier sur les princes carolingiens." See ibid., p. 491. Cf. Albert Hauck, Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands (eighth edition; Berlin, 1954), II, 173-177 (hereafter cited as Hauck, Kirchengeschichte).

St. Boniface, church councils did meet and both conciliar and royal legislation was enacted seeking to restore canonical discipline and to upgrade clerical education.³² After the middle of the century, Archbishop Chrodegang of Metz can be cited as an able prelate bending every effort to improve the lot of his clergy. Notable are his achievements in establishing a common life for his cathedral canons based on a modified version of the Benedictine rule and a school for singers using the Roman chant which quickly became famous.³³ The efforts of Bishop Remedius of Rouen to introduce the proper singing of the psalms according to Roman practice may also be mentioned.³⁴ These developments, however, though auspicious of church betterment, had only a limited effect on the education of the generality of priests. They can only be regarded as favorable tendencies. Serious internal reform that would raise the general level of education affecting the priest would have to await more settled times. For both Pippin in the last years

³²MGH, Conc., no. 7, pp. 51-53; no. 10, pp. 56-58; no. 15, pp. 93-97; MGH, Capit., no. 13, pp. 31-32; no. 14, pp. 32-37; no. 15, pp. 37-39; no. 16, pp. 39-41; no. 18, pp. 42-43.

³³Laistner, Thought and Letters, p. 192; Riché, Éducation et culture, p. 497; Hauck, Kirchengeschichte, II, 54-58, 64-69.

³⁴Eleanor Shipley Duckett, Alcuin, Friend of Charlemagne: His World and His Work, (New York, 1951), p. 123 (hereafter cited as Duckett, Alcuin).

of his reign and Charlemagne in his early years on the throne were distracted by political and military preoccupations.³⁵

Under Charlemagne, the propitious moment for internal reform did arrive. With the aid pre-eminently of his "minister of education," Alcuin, but also with the indispensable assistance of a host of other able men that he had appointed to the higher ecclesiastical offices--Theodulf of Orleans, Arno of Metz, Leidrad of Lyons, and Angilbert of St. Riquier immediately come to mind--Charlemagne did much to restore and to improve education in the cathedral and monastic centers and even at the parish level. This education was geared primarily toward the training of secular and religious clergy. It comprehended not only the important and necessary first step of amending and copying texts to provide sound materials for instruction, but also the study of the Scriptures, liturgy, religious music, and the liberal arts.³⁶

By the year 814, as compared with the situation that had obtained in preceding centuries, remarkable progress had been made in the availability of education to the prospective priest. But we must not be misled in our assessment of the impact of Charlemagne's educational reforms in the period

³⁵Mullinger, The Schools of Charles the Great, p. 47.

³⁶Émile Lesne, Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France, Tome V: Les écoles de la fin du VIII^e siècle à la fin du XII^e (Lille, 1940), pp. 15-22; Laistner, Thought and Letters, p. 194.

under consideration. The primary documents which are most important for the historian in evidencing the progress of education and the restoration of schools affecting the training of the secular clergy nearly all date from the last decade of the eighth century and the early years of the ninth.³⁷ Not only do these reforms come late, they also urge, for the most part, only the most elementary instruction and thus reveal

³⁷The great period of Charlemagne's religious legislation extended from the year 789 to 802. It begins with the legal compendium, Admonitio generalis (MGH, Capit., no. 22, pp. 52-62), which incorporates many borrowings from the collection of canons (Dionysio-Hadriana) sent earlier from Rome. Chapter 72 of this important capitulary urging the establishment of rural parish schools and reforms in the episcopal and monastic schools is a key document for any discussion of Charlemagne's educational policies. Other significant documents are the Karoli epistola generalis issued between 789 and 800 (MGH, Capit., no. 30, pp. 80-81) and the Karoli epistola de litteris colendis (MGH, Capit., no. 29, pp. 78-79). For the dating of the former epistle in the period 800-801, see Gerald Ellard, Master Alcuin, Liturgist: A Partner of Our Piety (Chicago, 1956), pp. 88, 191 (hereafter cited as Ellard, Master Alcuin); for the latter epistle, Luitpold Wallach in "Charlemagne's De Litteris Colendis and Alcuin, A Diplomatic-Historical Study," Speculum, XXVI (1951), 302 gives the dates 794-796. The significant pieces of evidence that show the application of Charlemagne's educational reforms at the local level include chapter eight of the pastoral instruction of Archbishop Arno issued at the Council of Riesbach in 798 (MGH, Conc., no. 22, pp. 199), chapters nineteen and twenty of the precepts of Bishop Theodulf to his priests issued in the opening years of the ninth century (Migne, PL, CV, 196), the letter of Archbishop Leidrad to Charlemagne written in either 813 or 814 (MGH, Ep., IV, no. 30, pp. 542-544), and finally, an enactment of the regional Council of Chalon in 813 (MGH, Conc., no. 37, c. 3, pp. 274-275). For convenient summaries and discussion of Carolingian religious legislation, see Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque.

that the level of clerical education was still very low. As Charlemagne rightly fears in his famous epistle on education, De litteris colendis, the barbarized letters that he had received from various monasteries were indicative of a general neglect of study which precluded, among other things, the correct understanding of the Holy Scriptures.³⁸ Thus at the close of the eighth century, a long and arduous road yet remained to be traveled before the desire that his churchmen be "devout in mind, learned in discourse, chaste in conduct, and eloquent in speech"³⁹ would be fulfilled.⁴⁰

It is against a background, then, of marginal instruction for the generality of the secular clergy and a near absence of canonical discipline affecting ordination that the state of educational preparation for the priesthood must be appraised. When placed in this context, Carolingian ecclesiastical legislation permits us to get some conception of the level of priestly education prior to ordination. Contained in this body of evidence are repeated enactments requiring a minimum of knowledge requisite to the conduct of the priestly

³⁸MGH, Capit., no. 29, p. 79. In the view of this writer, the evidence of this document, especially if we accept Wallach's late dating of it, would make it appear that Riché's assessment of the "vigueur" of monastic culture in the eighth century (see above note 31) is a bit overdrawn.

³⁹MGH, Capit., no. 29, p. 79.

⁴⁰Cf. David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (Baltimore, 1962), pp. 71-72.

office. Included in the list of things that the priest was required to know and pass examination on are the Athanasian and the Apostles' creeds, the Lord's Prayer with a commentary, the sacramentary, the Gospels and the lesson of the Comes (a lectionary), the conduct of baptism and the last rites of the Church, the office of the Masses, the computus or ecclesiastical calendar, prayers for the dying, the penitential, the Roman chant, homilies for Sundays and feastdays, and exorcisms. The canons, in addition, were to be acquainted with the Liber pastoralis of Gregory the Great, the Liber officiorum, and the Epistola pastoralis of Gelasius.⁴¹

The evidence, however, indicates that even this minimum knowledge, directed as it was to the essentials necessary for the conduct of the priestly office, was in many instances not attained. The very fact that access to even rudimentary education was difficult would insure that many priests would not have the necessary comprehension of Latin to meet the demands

⁴¹MGH, Capit., no. 117, cc. 1-15, p. 235. Cf. MGH, Capit., no. 116, cc. 1-8, p. 234; no. 119, cc. 1-12, pp. 236-237; Hauck, Kirchengeschichte, II, 251-253. As Hauck states, this religious education was not much, but compared to the education demanded of the secular clergy at the time of St. Boniface, it was an important step forward. See ibid., p. 252; Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque, pp. 299-300; Émile Amann, L'époque carolingienne, Vol. VI of Histoire de l'Église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, ed. Augustin Fliche et Victor Martin (Paris, 1947), pp. 82-83 (hereafter cited as Amann, L'époque carolingienne).

placed upon them. The fact that irregular ordinations were frequent could only exacerbate the problem. Not only the repeated calls for examination prior to ordination,⁴² but also the many exhortations that priests be regularly examined on the state of their learning and the conduct of their ministry, bear witness by their repetition to a low level of educational preparation.⁴³ Untrained secular priests and cathedral canons drew the special ire of Charlemagne who on more than one occasion threatened them with removal from office if they would not consent to be taught.⁴⁴ Finally, numerous enactments of the reforming church councils of 813 urging better instruction of the clergy and restoration of canonical discipline point up the existence of many priests who were ignorant of the basic duties of their office and the fundamentals of their faith.⁴⁵

⁴²See above note 13. Cf. Amann, L'époque carolingienne, p. 83.

⁴³Boniface, Ep., no. 78, p. 163; MGH, Capit., no. 12, c. 4, p. 29; no. 22, c. 70, p. 59; no. 35, c. 28, p. 103; no. 38, cc. 1-9, p. 110; MGH, Conc., no. 6, p. 47; no. 22, p. 200.

⁴⁴MGH, Capit., no. 19, cc. 15, 16, p. 46; no. 33, c. 21, p. 95; no. 38, c. 1, p. 110. Cf. A. Kleinclausz, Charlemagne (Paris, 1934), p. 228.

⁴⁵See, for example, MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 3, p. 250; no. 35, cc. 1-13, pp. 254-255; no. 37, c. 3, pp. 274-275; no. 38, c. 18, pp. 288-289. Cf. Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque, pp. 299-300.

CHAPTER IV

THE PASTORAL CARE OF SOULS

Ultimately the state of priestly preparation and competence is reflected in the general ministry of religion in the care of souls. The pastoral care of souls leading to their salvation is, as has been stated, the essential object of the priestly office. To get some appreciation of the quality of pastoral care in the period under consideration, an examination must be made of how priestly responsibility was discharged in maintaining divine worship, administering the sacraments, providing inspirational guidance, and affording charity to the needy.

The educational renaissance under Charlemagne was primarily directed, as has been noted, toward the training of the clergy. The clergy, both secular and religious, were to understand Holy Scripture and be able to recite the divine office, celebrate the Mass, and administer the other sacraments correctly. Divine worship was especially to be conducted on sound liturgical lines. Clearly, the marginal educational attainments of the bulk of the secular clergy, especially those

in the small rural churches, did not conduce to the goal of securing correct liturgical practice and we must, in what follows, continually allude to this decisive factor. The conduct of divine worship also suffered from the fact of liturgical anarchy in the Carolingian realm. The Frankish Church under the Merovingians had been ruled by what Duchesne has characterized as an "acephalous episcopate." The Frankish bishops had long acted independently of any higher authority and individual churches pursued a great variety of liturgical practices. The result of this lack of regulation was that the same decadence that affected Christian life and manners in the latter seventh and early eighth centuries was also manifest in the performance of the sacred rites of the Church.¹

Before discussing pastoral care as it relates to the maintenance of divine worship and the communication of the sacraments, some attention must be given to the program of liturgical reform initiated by the Carolingians. The most

¹L. Duchesne, Christian Worship: Its Origins and Evolution. A Study of the Latin Liturgy Up to the Time of Charlemagne, trans. M. L. McClure (New York, 1910), p. 103 (hereafter cited as Duchesne, Christian Worship); F. Cabrol, "Charlemagne et la liturgie," in DACL, III, 1 (1913), 823. Cf. Duckett, Alcuin, pp. 190-191; Arthur Kleinclausz, Charlemagne (Paris, 1934), pp. 225-226, 233; Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., "The Effect of the Barbarian Invasions Upon the Liturgy," in Environmental Factors in Christian History, ed. John Thomas McNeill, Matthew Spinka, Harold R. Willoughby (Chicago, 1939), pp. 167-186 (hereafter cited as Shepherd, "The Effect of the Barbarian Invasions").

important impetus to liturgical uniformity in Francia came with the reforming synods of the 740's instigated by St. Boniface. The great work of church reorganization and restoration of canonical discipline undertaken by these councils included the issuance of many decrees outlining liturgical uniformity in accordance with Roman usage.²

The activities of St. Boniface and the work of the reforming synods resulted in closer ties between the Frankish Church and Rome. Like Boniface, both Pippin and Charlemagne were organizers who felt the need for order and uniformity. Again, like Boniface, they both looked to Rome for liturgical models; and their ecclesiastical policy, as it embraced reform, can be seen as a continuation of the work of that great saint.³ As a decree of 789 tells us,⁴ it was King Pippin who began the suppression of the Gallican and Romano-Gallican liturgies in favor of the current Roman rite by a decree presumably made in 754 as an accompaniment to his political alliance with the

²MGH, Conc., no. 1, cc. 1-5, pp. 3-4; no. 2, cc. 1, 3, pp. 6-7; no. 4, cc. 3-4, pp. 34-35; no. 6, pp. 46-48. Cf. Josef A. Jungmann, Public Worship: A Survey, trans. Clifford Howell (Collegeville, Minnesota, n.d.) p. 24ff. (hereafter cited as Jungmann, Public Worship).

³Levison, England and the Continent, pp. 94-95; Ellard, Master Alcuin, p. 18.

⁴MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 80, p. 61.

papacy.⁵ The acquisition of Roman liturgical works and their application in the Frankish realm were now accelerated. Earlier, probably in 747, upon Frankish request for guidance in reform efforts, Pope Zacharias had sent a collection of church canons.⁶ With papal blessing, Pippin now ordered that the Roman chant be instituted in Francia; and those great promoters of liturgical Romanization, Archbishop Chrodegang of Metz and Bishop Remedius of Rouen, as have been seen, took important initiatives in this area. Capping Pippin's efforts towards religious uniformity were his importation and imposition of such liturgical works as an antiphonary, a lectionary, a sacramentary and an ordinal--all necessary to the conduct of the Mass.⁷

As in the many other areas of Carolingian reform, the most concentrated and systematic attempts at achieving liturgical uniformity came with Charlemagne. In his view, Christendom was, or should be, one in faith and doctrine and no

⁵See Theodor Klauser, The Western Liturgy and Its History: Some Reflections on Recent Studies, trans. F. L. Cross (London, 1952), p. 34; Joseph A. Jungmann, The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia), trans. Francis A. Brunner (New York, 1951), I, 74-75 (hereafter cited as Jungmann, The Mass); Levison, England and the Continent, p. 97; Duchesne, Christian Worship, pp. 102-103.

⁶MGH, Ep., III, no. 3, pp. 479-487.

⁷Ellard, Master Alcuin, pp. 18-22, 29; H. Leclercq, "Rome. liturgie," in DACL, XIV, 2 (1948), 3021-3022.

differences in ritual practice could be countenanced between the Roman and Frankish churches. In the Admonitio generalis of 789 which incorporated many of the canons contained in that great collection, the Dionysio-Hadriana, carried from Rome in 774, Charlemagne decreed an inclusive program of liturgical uniformity in accordance with Roman usage. The bishops, abbots, and lesser clergy were to observe, among other things, the Roman forms of the sacramentary, the chant, the calendar, and baptism.⁸ In succeeding years, much ecclesiastical legislation was passed seeking to implement this program.⁹

To obtain liturgical books that would be correct and uniform, Charlemagne turned to such scholars as Paul the Deacon who put together a book of homilies. More important were the liturgical labors of Alcuin who, in addition to preparing a homiliary, a lectionary, and a book of votive Masses, made the famous recension of the Gregorian Sacramentary which had

⁸MGH, Capit., no. 22, cc. 70, 72, 78, 80, 82, pp. 59-62. Cf. Ellard, Master Alcuin, p. 54ff.; F. Cabrol, "Charlemagne et la liturgie," in DACL, III, 1 (1913), 807-824; Cyrille Vogel, "La réforme liturgique sous Charlemagne," in Karl der grosse. Lebenswerk und Nachleben, hrsg. Wolfgang Braunsfels (Dusseldorf, 1965), Bd. II, pp. 217-232. For a discussion of the importance and influence of the Dionysio-Hadriana, see Fournier and LeBras, Histoire des collections canoniques, I, 92-120.

⁹To cite a few examples of this legislation, see MGH, Capit., no. 23, c. 23, p. 64; no. 35, c. 28, p. 103; no. 36, c. 10, p. 106; no. 38, cc. 2-3, p. 110; no. 43, cc. 2, 5, p. 121; no. 78, c. 1, p. 173; no. 116, cc. 4, 6-8, p. 234; no. 117, cc. 4, 8-11, p. 235; no. 177, c. 24, p. 366.

earlier been sent from Rome by Pope Hadrian at Charlemagne's request. This Mass book, with Alcuin's corrections and additions, was completed shortly after 800 and, by Charlemagne's order, was to be used by all of the clergy.¹⁰ Charlemagne constantly admonished his bishops and abbots to commit their most mature men to the task of multiplying these needed liturgical works.¹¹ At the same time, he actively sought the suppression of the many uncanonical books and spurious writings which in this credulous age passed as Scripture.¹² He also instructed his missi to see that the churches and other religious establishments carried out his wishes and acquired the necessary texts, uncorrupted by error, for the conduct of the liturgy.¹³

In closing this brief survey of Carolingian liturgical reform, it should be noted that the products of Alcuin's labors

¹⁰Duckett, Alcuin, pp. 190-197; Levison, England and the Continent, pp. 158-159; C. J. B. Gaskoin, Alcuin: His Life and His Work (New York, 1966), pp. 220-234 (hereafter cited as Gaskoin, Alcuin). Cf. Jungmann, The Mass, I, 74ff.

¹¹MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 72, p. 60; no. 29, pp. 78-79; no. 30, pp. 80-81; no. 43, c. 3, p. 121.

¹²Ibid., no. 22, cc. 20, 78, pp. 55, 60; no. 35, c. 7, p. 102; no. 60, c. 1, p. 147.

¹³Ibid., no. 43, cc. 1-3, 5, p. 121; no. 46, c. 3, p. 131; no. 49, c. 4, p. 136; no. 62, c. 1, p. 150. A capitulary (ibid., no. 120, c. 6, p. 238) issued to the missi, perhaps in 809, instructs them to see to the correction of priests who were using their parish revenues to enrich themselves and neglecting the acquisition of books and holy vessels.

were completed late in the period under discussion. And when the many royal and conciliar decrees ordering the adoption of Roman usages are also considered, it must be concluded that the reformation of the liturgy was only partially achieved in the Frankish realm by the end of Charlemagne's reign. Pastoral care in the maintenance of divine worship and in the communication of the sacraments, then, must be viewed in the context of Carolingian attempts at liturgical reform which were but imperfectly realized.¹⁴

We may now turn to an examination of priestly solicitude in the maintenance of divine worship as it relates especially to the two major liturgical practices--the divine office and the Mass. In initiating his reform of the liturgy in 789, Charlemagne decreed:

Let all clerics learn thoroughly the Roman chant and let this be observed in all Offices of night and of day, in accordance with the ordinance of our father, King Pippin of blessed memory, when he abolished the Gallican chant for the concord of the Apostolic See and the peace of God's holy Church.¹⁵

According to this decree, then, every cleric was to learn and

¹⁴Cf. Ellard, Master Alcuin, p. 58ff.; Laistner, Thought and Letters, p. 311.

¹⁵MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 80, p. 61: "Omni clero. Ut cantum Romanum pleniter discant, et ordinabiliter per nocturnale vel gradale officium peragatur, secundum quod beatae memoriae genitor noster Pippinus rex decertavit ut fieret, quando Gallicanum tulit ob unanimitatem apostolicae sedis et sanctae Dei aeclesiae pacificam concordiam." Text: Duckett, Alcuin, p. 123.

practice the cursus for the diurnal and nocturnal hours. This complete cursus which included the lengthy matins was that which had been introduced at mid-century under Pippin. It reflected the liturgy that had evolved in the religious communities of Roman basilicas. From the sixth century, the liturgy of the basilica had spread northward to Gaul, England, and Germany, propagated especially by Benedictine monks.¹⁶

What Pippin and Charlemagne, in effect, wanted to do in their reformation of the liturgy, was to impose the office of the Roman basilica in its entirety upon all of the Frankish clergy.¹⁷ Clearly, this would be a difficult task for clergy not living in community. For the generality of the secular clergy, to celebrate the Roman office in its entirety, a canonical life such as that instituted by Archbishop Chrodegang at Metz was needed. And indeed, it may be argued that this is exactly what Charlemagne envisaged. He saw that the best way to insure canonical discipline and achieve proper liturgical practice was to demand that all the clergy, where possible, follow a common life. A certain number of the greater Frankish churches did adopt the common life for their clergy, following

¹⁶Jungmann, Public Worship, pp. 154-158; Knowles, The Monastic Order in England, pp. 546-548.

¹⁷Much legislation was passed seeking to accomplish this goal. See MGH, Capit., no. 36, c. 8, p. 106; no. 38, c. 2, p. 110; no. 43, c. 2, p. 121; no. 116, c. 7, p. 234; no. 117, cc. 9-10, p. 235; no. 119, c. 5, p. 237; no. 120, c. 4, p. 238.

either Chrodegang's rule or some other regimen. Charlemagne legislated that canonical life be instituted also by the priests and their subordinate clergy in the rural churches.¹⁸

The extension of the proprietary church system, however, did not favor the spread of community living to the bulk of the secular clergy. The rural priest who derived from servile origins or from the class of minor freemen often performed his pastoral duties in isolation. He would have done well if, as urged by Charlemagne, he had any subordinate clergy that he had taught or who were educated enough to carry on the divine office in his absence.¹⁹ Nor does it appear that the institution of canonical life in the greater churches was overly rigorous. Royal and conciliar legislation, dating mostly in the early years of the ninth century, reveal serious concern about the kind of religious life led by canons.²⁰ Despite the existence of the rule of Chrodegang,²¹ canonical life for the

¹⁸MGH, Capit., no. 33, c. 23, p. 96; P. Salmon, "Roman Divine Office," in New Catholic Encyclopedia, IV (1967), 919; F. Cimetier, "Office divin," in DTC, XI, 1 (1931), 957; Amann, L'époque carolingienne, pp. 83-84.

¹⁹MGH, Capit., no. 120, c. 5, p. 238.

²⁰Ibid., no. 22, cc. 73, 77, p. 59; no. 33, c. 22, pp. 95-96; no. 78, c. 4, p. 173; no. 79, c. 3, p. 175; MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 6, p. 251; no. 35, c. 25, p. 256; no. 36, c. 21, p. 267.

²¹See S. Chrodegang, Regula Canoniorum, Migne, PL, LXXXIX, 1057-1120. For a critical analysis of Chrodegang's rule, see Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque, pp. 146-155.

secular clergy was in many instances not well regulated.²²

In a letter to Archbishop Arno, written in 802, Alcuin urged that a careful inquiry should be made as to the proper life for canons and monks.²³ But in a memorandum of 811 concerning matters to be discussed with his counts, bishops, and abbots, Charlemagne reveals that the problem still awaited solution by asking: "How ought those who are called canons to live?"²⁴ It would appear, then, that the program for propagating the common life among the secular clergy was ineffectual. It also seems evident that the attempt to implement the full cursus for all the clergy was unrealistic and revelatory of the Carolingian penchant for pursuing impossible ideals in the face of insuperable obstacles.

²²Thus we find Charlemagne in great anger at the habitual indiscipline and bad reputation of an important religious house, St. Martin of Tours, stating that the brethren had variously declared themselves to be monks, canons, and sometimes neither (MGH, Ep., IV, no. 247, p. 400). Cf. Duckett, Alcuin, p. 290ff.; H. Leclercq, "Chanoines," in DACL, III, 1 (1913), 240-245.

²³MGH, Ep., IV, no. 258, p. 416. In an earlier letter to Arno, we find Alcuin plaintively replying to that prelate's query as to what was the proper life to be led by the canons and monks that they both were too busy to handle the problem (ibid., IV, no. 254, p. 411).

²⁴MGH, Capit., no. 71, c. 11, p. 161: "De vita eorum qui dicuntur canonici, qualis esse debeat." The reforming councils of 813 gave serious attention to the problem of undisciplined canons and monks who lived according to no fixed regimen. See MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 6, p. 251; no. 35, c. 25, p. 256; no. 36, c. 21, p. 267; no. 38, c. 23, p. 289.

As we have seen, one of the most difficult problems confronting Carolingian reformers was that of liturgical anarchy. But discordant usages were not the major concern. More important for the practice of divine worship in the Frankish Church was the fact that secular priests were too poorly equipped and educated to perform the task adequately. This was especially true in their practice of the divine office as Charlemagne indicated in his legislation and correspondence. He often decried the fact that the clergy were not conducting prayer properly because of faulty learning and uncorrected texts. Thus in the Admonitio generalis he admonished:

Correct, we command you, with due care the copies of the psalms, the written signs, the chants, the calendar, the grammar in each monastery and diocese, and the Catholic books, because often people wish to pray to the Lord, but do so badly, because the books are at fault. And do not allow your boys to corrupt the books by their own reading or writing. If a copy be needed, of the Gospel, or Psalter or Missal, let men of ripe age write it out with all diligence.²⁵

This admonishment was repeated in a later instruction to his missi.²⁶ In his De litteris colendis, he addressed a long

²⁵MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 72, p. 60: "Psalms, notes, cantus, compotum, grammaticam per singula monasteria vel episcopia et libros catholicos bene emendate; quia saepe, dum bene aliqui Deum rogare cupiunt, sed per inemendatos libros male rogant. Et pueros vestros non sinite eos vel legendo vel scribendo corrumpere; et si opus est euangelium, psalterium et missale scribere, perfectae aetatis homines scribant cum omni diligentia." Text: Duckett, Alcuin, p. 122.

²⁶MGH, Capit., no. 43, c. 3, p. 121.

exhortation on the same clerical deficiencies.²⁷ And again in his Epistola generalis, Charlemagne explained that he had Paul the Deacon put together a collection of breviary homilies because:

We have found the lectionaries for the nocturnal offices, compiled by the fruitless labor of certain ones, in spite of their correct intention, unsuitable because they were written without the words of their authors and were full of an infinite number of errors, we cannot suffer in our days discordant solecisms to glide into the sacred lessons among the holy offices, and we purpose to improve these lessons.²⁸

In these unhappy comments, Charlemagne clearly reveals to us that, even in the monasteries,²⁹ Latin learning affecting the practice of prayer and the understanding of Scripture was decadent. The conduct of the divine office of matins suffered particularly because the liturgy called for the reading or singing of extracts from patristic writings and scriptural passages in Latin.³⁰

²⁷Ibid., no. 29, pp. 78-79.

²⁸Ibid., no. 30, pp. 80-81: ". . . ad nocturnale officium compilatas quorundam casso labore, licet recto intuitu, minus tamen idonee repperimus lectiones, quippe quae et sine auctorum suorum vocabulis essent positae et infinitis vitiorum anfractibus scaterent, non sumus passi nostris in diebus in divinis lectionibus inter sacra officia inconsonantes perstrepere soloecismos, atque earundem lectionum in melius reformare tramitem mentem intendimus." Text: Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1900), Vol. VI, no. 5, p. 14 (hereafter cited as Translations and Reprints).

²⁹See MGH, Capit., no. 29, p. 79.

³⁰Ellard, Master Alcuin, p. 88.

At the provincial and diocesan levels, a few documents, mostly from the early ninth century, permit us to see the attempts made by Charlemagne's prelates to carry out his dictates regarding divine worship. Thus we find Archbishop Arno of Salzburg, repeating Charlemagne's edict of 789,³¹ ordering his bishops to establish schools in which the full liturgy of the divine office would be taught according to Roman usage.³² At Liège, Bishop Ghaerbald ordered his priests, if they were able to do so, to equip their churches with such liturgical works as a missal, a lectionary, a martyrology, and a psalter.³³ Bishop Haito of Basel instructed his priests to observe the full cursus according to Roman usage. They were to take every precaution not to introduce novelty into their worship through the use of uncanonical texts and were to have a thorough knowledge of the sacramentary, lectionary, antiphonary and psalter.³⁴ An unknown diocesan synod of the period urged that all clerics memorize the entire psalter.³⁵ Finally, at Lyons, Archbishop Leidrad detailed the fact that, in addition to his labors at

³¹MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 72, p. 60.

³²MGH, Conc., no. 22, c. 8, p. 199.

³³MGH, Capit., no. 123, c. 9, p. 243.

³⁴Ibid., no. 177, cc. 6, 19, 24, pp. 363, 365-366.
Cf. ibid., no. 117, cc. 1-15, p. 235.

³⁵Ibid., no. 119, c. 2, p. 236.

church restoration, he had established schools of singers and readers following the example of the palace school. He boasted that his students were well enough instructed in the chant to teach others. He also noted that he was doing all that he could to acquire copies of needed texts.³⁶

Despite the conscientious efforts of Charlemagne and those of his prelates to reform liturgical practice, it appears that, at the parish level, there was left much to be desired in the conduct of the divine office. As has been intimated, there was little chance that the rural priest could practice the complete cursus of the Roman office. And given the low level of lay and clerical learning, it did little good to order the priest to instruct his flock in the proper manner and times of prayer so that they might be summoned by the church bell to recite the office.³⁷ Much more realistic, and probably reflective of wider practice, were the instructions that Bishop Theodulf of Orleans gave to his priests. For Theodulf, it was accomplishing a good deal if his priests could get their parishioners to pray at least twice a day in the morning and evening; and this prayer might consist of nothing more than a recitation of the Creed or of the Lord's Prayer. If a church was nearby, it was to be made use of, but if work or travel

³⁶MGH, Ep., IV, no. 30, p. 543.

³⁷MGH, Capit., no. 36, c. 8, p. 106.

interfered, the parishioner could pray anywhere in field or forest.³⁸ For the Lord's Day, Theodulf demanded that the faithful participate in the night office in preparation for Mass.³⁹

Celebrating the Mass was the central act of divine worship and the most important responsibility of the priest in his work of pastoral care. In the primitive Church, the Mass had been a corporate undertaking involving the participation of elected ministers acting in the name of a Christian community. However, with the great social and cultural changes that the barbarian invasions brought to western Europe, the Latin liturgy of the Mass came to be understood by only a small fraction of society. This consisted principally of an appointed clergy who alone knew the necessary formularies and who celebrated the Mass in behalf of the worshipping community. The way in which the Frankish clergy and laity were assembled at church clearly reflected their separation of roles in the celebration of Mass. The parishioners stood in the nave cut off from the altar by a chancel through which they were allowed to pass only to receive communion. A further barrier, the church choir, was placed between the chancel and the altar.⁴⁰

³⁸Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 23, Migne, PL, CV, 198.

³⁹Ibid., c. 24, pp. 198-199.

⁴⁰Shepherd, "The Effect of the Barbarian Invasions," pp. 169-172; Jungmann, The Mass, I, 81-84.

At the time of the Bonifacian reform councils, then, cultural poverty insured that the laity could neither understand nor play an active part in the Mass. And the decadent state of the Frankish Church gave a surety that far too many priests would not be able to perform this sacred task of pastoral care according to canonical prescription. As has been indicated, the Carolingian reform movement, from 742 on, sought to restore canonical discipline among the clergy and to subject their knowledge of their office to yearly examination.⁴¹ The reformers also sought to renew the religious life of the laity by ending their estrangement from the priests in liturgical matters. They required that pastors explain to their parishioners the necessary formularies of the Mass, as well as teach them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in language that they would understand.⁴² For as the enlightened Charlemagne put it: "Let no one believe that prayer to God may be made in only three tongues; but rather that He should be worshipped in all languages, and that He will hear the just

⁴¹See especially MGH, Conc., no. 4, c. 4, p. 35; no. 6, p. 47; MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 3, p. 25; no. 12, c. 4, p. 29; no. 19, c. 8, p. 45.

⁴²See MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 70, p. 59; no. 35, cc. 29-30, p. 103; no. 36, c. 5, p. 106: "Ut unusquisque sacerdos orationem dominicam et symbolum populo sibi commisso curiose insinuet ac totius religionis studium et christianitatis cultum eorum mentibus ostendat." MGH, Conc., no. 35, c. 2, p. 254; no. 36, c. 45, pp. 271-272.

prayers of men."⁴³ At Mass, the laity were to participate actively in the liturgical singing and in the Latin responses.⁴⁴ They were also to join in the offertory procession and to give the kiss of peace at the proper times.⁴⁵

Unfortunately our sources do not permit us to make a direct appraisal of pastoral care in the conduct of the Mass. And in what follows, we must perforce make use of indirect evidence, such as the physical condition of Frankish churches and the uses to which they were put, in order to make some assessment of Mass practice. When we look at the physical circumstances of Carolingian churches, especially in the rural areas, it is difficult to be optimistic about the efficacy of Carolingian ecclesiastical reform affecting the Mass. It appears that at mid-eighth century, Frankish churches, especially those in the countryside, were in very poor shape. As a result of the political anarchy that obtained in the early decades of the century and of Charles Martel's drastic spoliations, a great number of churches were destroyed or fell into decay and disuse because of poverty and neglect. Under the

⁴³MGH, Capit., no. 28, c. 52, p. 78: "Ut nullus credat, quod nonnisi in tribus linguis Deus orandus sit, quia in omni lingua Deus adoratur et homo exauditur, si iusta petierit."

⁴⁴Ibid., no. 22, c. 70, p. 59; no. 177, c. 3, p. 363.

⁴⁵Ibid., no. 22, c. 53, p. 57; MGH, Conc., no. 36, c. 44, p. 271.

first Carolingians, the rural churches, reflecting their origins as domainal oratories, were too small and too few to serve the population; and many of these were old and poorly built.⁴⁶

Carloman, Pippin, and Charlemagne regularized the process of secularizing of church lands instituted by Charles Martel. And in establishing the precarial system of landholding, they also decreed that benefice-holders pay a rent (census) and a double tithe (decima et nona) for the support and upkeep of the churches.⁴⁷ In addition, it was made mandatory upon all Christians that they remit the ordinary ecclesiastical tithe to their churches.⁴⁸ However, when we look at the endless canons and capitularies ordering the restoration of churches--which meant not only the rebuilding of walls and

⁴⁶Jean Chélini, "La pratique dominicale des laïcs dans l'église franque sous le règne de Pépin," Revue d'histoire de l'église de France, XLII (1956), 165-166; Riché, Éducation et culture, pp. 473-475. Cf. Émile Lesne, Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France, Tome II: La propriété ecclésiastique et les droits régaliens à l'époque carolingienne (Lille, 1922), pp. 1-32.

⁴⁷MGH, Capit., no. 11, c. 2, p. 28; no. 18, cc. 5, 11, p. 43; no. 20, cc. 7, 13, pp. 48, 50; Fournier and LeBras, Histoire des collections canoniques, I, 121.

⁴⁸See Catherine E. Boyd, Tithes and Parishes in Medieval Italy: The Historical Roots of a Modern Problem (New York, 1952), p. 37ff. (hereafter cited as Boyd, Tithes and Parishes); Giles Constable, Monastic Tithes: From Their Origins to the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, 1964), p. 28ff. (hereafter cited as Constable, Monastic Tithes).

roofs and the replacing of fixtures, but also the supplying of liturgical books, vessels, and vestments--we must conclude that in too many instances this support was not forthcoming.⁴⁹

As a result, church restoration proceeded slowly, if at all. And here we may allude again to the fact that it is only in the last few years of his reign that Charlemagne secured the necessary revenues to support Archbishop Leidrad in his work of restoring the devastated churches in the diocese of Lyons.⁵⁰ In his letter to Charlemagne, the good bishop showed that he well appreciated the temper of the times by expressing the hope that after his death his work would not be allowed to perish. As he expressed it: "I inform you of these matters so that, having been brought to your attention and weighed with your indulgence, if they are found to be suitable and according to your will, they may not be allowed to languish

⁴⁹To cite but a few, see MGH, Capit., no. 18, c. 1, p. 42; no. 24, c. 2, p. 65; no. 28, c. 26, p. 76; no. 35, c. 56, p. 104; no. 42, c. 1, p. 119; no. 43, c. 8, p. 121; no. 46, c. 3, p. 131; no. 49, c. 4, p. 136; no. 62, c. 1, p. 150; no. 63, c. 1, p. 152; no. 78, c. 24, p. 175; MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 25, p. 253; no. 36, c. 42, p. 271. How impressed Charlemagne was with the necessity of restoring churches can be seen in his decree urging the collection of alms to be sent to Jerusalem for that purpose (MGH, Capit., no. 64, c. 18, p. 154).

⁵⁰MGH, Ep., IV, no. 30, p. 543.

and die after my death but rather may grow and abide."⁵¹

To this negative picture of Frankish churches, we may add other activities of both clergy and laity that worked to the detriment of proper liturgical practice. The sources reveal that there were pastors devoted more to their own personal aggrandizement than to the upkeep of their churches. For the priests who originated from the serf and minor freeman classes, the temptation was often too great not to build small empires of allodia, slaves, and other property, using the donations of the faithful.⁵² With respect to the laity, a capitulary of 794 reveals that they were not above pillaging, for use on their own houses, the stone, wood, and tile of their local churches.⁵³

The uses to which churches were put in the Carolingian age also reflect on the nature of pastoral care in the conduct of the Mass. Many prohibitions were issued in this period seeking to prevent priests from celebrating Mass in private

⁵¹Ibid., p. 542: "Et ideo haec suggero, ut, cum benignissimis auribus vestris praesentata fuerint et clementer inspecta, in posterum divina vestra mansuetudo provideat, ut si qua bene et secundum voluntatem vestram gessi, post meum discessum non deficient aut pereant, sed potius proficiant et permaneant."

⁵²MGH, Capit., no. 18, c. 3, p. 43; no. 24, c. 3, p. 65; no. 81, c. 11, p. 178; no. 120, c. 6, p. 238.

⁵³Ibid., no. 28, c. 26, p. 76.

homes and on unconsecrated altars.⁵⁴ But if the clergy and the laity were charged with coming to churches consecrated to God for the celebration of Mass on Sundays and feastdays,⁵⁵ they came there also for many other purposes. For Carolingian churches, especially those in the rural areas, were in fact centers for social and civil life as well as places of worship. They were used as courthouses by the counts and their ministers, as well as by the priests, often for cases involving capital penalties. Accused criminals fled to them for asylum and the ceremonies for the emancipation of serfs were held near their altars. The churches and their consecrated grounds were not only used for secular meetings of all kinds, but also for all the exchanges of the marketplace. Finally, they were used as depots or storehouses for provisions and crops. Even arms were cached in them awaiting the time when the churches were converted into fortresses for the protection of the local population.⁵⁶

⁵⁴See ibid., no. 19, c. 14, p. 46; no. 23, c. 25, p. 64; no. 36, c. 9, p. 106; no. 81, c. 6, p. 178; no. 114, c. 5, p. 232; no. 177, c. 14, p. 364; MGH, Conc., no. 37, c. 49, p. 283.

⁵⁵MGH, Capit., no. 23, c. 25, p. 64; see below, note 59.

⁵⁶MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 71, p. 59; no. 35, c. 36, p. 103; no. 39, c. 3, p. 113; no. 42, c. 8, p. 120; no. 74, c. 10, p. 167; no. 78, c. 21, p. 174; no. 81, c. 5, p. 178; no. 83, c. 8, p. 182; no. 93, c. 4, p. 196, MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 22, p. 253; no. 36, cc. 39-40, p. 271; no. 38, c. 39, p. 291; Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 8, Migne, PL, CV, 194.

To the poor state of Frankish churches and to their irreligious usages, we may add the fact of cultural poverty and credulity of a semi-pagan population.⁵⁷ It is highly questionable that meaningful participation in the liturgy of the Mass, let alone its comprehension, was within the capacity of illiterate men and women prone to see an element of magic in every ritual practice. And surely the violated sanctity of churches put to a variety of secular uses did not conduce to religiosity on the part of the brethren. In churches in which stray animals might relieve themselves, where hay and armaments were stored, and where sacred vessels and altars were negligently cared for, the atmosphere was more like that of a mead hall than a place of worship.⁵⁸

It is little wonder, then, that a great number of canons and capitularies were issued prohibiting all servile work, marketing, and secular meetings so that the laity would be

⁵⁷It was necessary to legislate against pagan practices throughout the Carolingian period. See MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 5, p. 25; no. 11, c. 4, p. 28; no. 12, c. 6, p. 30; no. 19, cc. 6-7, p. 45; no. 22, cc. 18, 65, pp. 55, 58-59; no. 23, cc. 20, 26, 34, p. 64; no. 28, c. 43, p. 77; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 15, p. 209; no. 38, c. 42, p. 292. For an extensive list of proscribed pagan superstitions, see MGH, Capit., no. 108, cc. 1-30, p. 223. Cf. Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Missionary and the Pagan," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), 731ff.

⁵⁸MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 71, p. 59; no. 23, c. 33, p. 64; no. 35, c. 36, p. 103; no. 81, c. 7, p. 178; MGH, Ep., IV, no. 136, p. 210; Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, cc. 8, 18, Migne, PL, CV, 194, 196.

present at the Mass on Sundays. The faithful had to be constantly reminded to keep the spiritual significance of Sunday uppermost in their minds. This was to be accomplished by a dedication to prayer at vespers on Saturday, attendance at the office of matins and then at Mass, and a continuation of prayerful solicitude until the Sunday vesper hour.⁵⁹

It may be believed that this ideal practice found some degree of application in the churches that came directly under the purview of such able and reform-minded prelates as Theodulf, Arno, and Haito. But for the majority of churches, i.e., the rural and proprietary churches, the reality of the Mass must have been quite different. For these, legislation was needed to combat the irreligious commotions outside their doors on Sundays and feastdays caused by irreverent laymen accustomed to viewing the church environs as community centers.⁶⁰ Nor did this irreligiosity stop at the church door. Commonly men, women, and children stood in inattention during the solemn celebration of the Mass engaged in idle gossip and paying little

⁵⁹MGH, Capit., no. 14, c. 14, p. 36; no. 22, cc. 15, 81, pp. 55, 61; no. 28, c. 21, p. 76; no. 35, c. 46, p. 104; no. 78, c. 15, p. 174; no. 83, cc. 1-2, pp. 181-182; no. 84, c. 1, p. 182; MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 16, p. 252; no. 35, c. 35, p. 256; no. 36, c. 37, p. 270; no. 38, c. 40, p. 292; Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 24, Migne, PL, CV, 198-199.

⁶⁰MGH, Capit., no. 79, c. 2, p. 175; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 8, p. 208; no. 36, c. 48, p. 272.

heed to the incomprehensible gestures of their pastor. Often, they left the church before communion and the completion of the Mass.⁶¹ This infrequent reception of the Eucharist on the part of the laity offers the most convincing evidence of their lack of participation in the Mass. Attempts made to enforce more frequent communion on the part of the brethren failed completely. The general practice of the laity in the Carolingian period was to communicate, partaking of both the bread and the wine, at the three principal feasts of the year, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.⁶² Finally, lay participation in the Mass further suffered from the fact that along with neglect of communion came a concomitant neglect in offering the bread and wine. By the ninth century the offertory procession ceased to be general practice and the trend toward the use of unleavened bread prepared by the priest was well underway.⁶³

⁶¹MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 71, p. 59; no. 35, c. 36, p. 103; MGH, Conc., no. 38, c. 38, p. 291; Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 10, Migne, PL, CV, 194-195.

⁶²MGH, Conc., no. 7, c. 6, p. 52; no. 38, c. 50, p. 293; Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 46-47; Shepherd, "The Effect of the Barbarian Invasions," pp. 175-177. Theodulf instructed his priests to enforce the reception of communion on all Sundays in Lent, the three days at the close of Holy Week, and at Easter (Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 41, Migne, PL, CV, 204-205).

⁶³Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 49-50; Shepherd, "The Effect of the Barbarian Invasions," p. 177. The new belief coming into vogue among the clergy that the sacramental offerings of the laity were unfit for use is well illustrated by the teachings of Theodulf. See Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae

In concluding this sketch of pastoral care in the conduct of the Mass, we must inevitably come back to the parish priest himself. If the generality of the priests at the local level had been so many Bonifaces, Chrodegangs, Arnos, or Theodulfs, it would be difficult to accept the negative picture that has been presented of church conditions and lay religious practices that detracted from the proper celebration of the Mass. But they were not. Despite the thrust of Carolingian ecclesiastical reform reflected in an endless stream of legislation seeking to establish and maintain canonical discipline, the parish priests remained not far removed from the lay population in their quality of life and culture.

The poor condition of the churches and their liturgical equipment reflected the fact that far too many priests were mutilating the rite of the Mass because of ignorance, so that often the Eucharist was improperly administered and the correct order of the Mass not followed. Frequently, celebrants of the Mass themselves neglected to communicate.⁶⁴

suae, c. 5, Migne, PL, CV, 193: "Panis, quos Deo in sacrificium offertis, aut a vobis ipsis, aut a vestris pueris coram vobis, nitide ac studiose fiant, et diligenter observetur ut panis, et vinum, et aqua, sine quibus missae nequeunt celebrari, mundissime atque studiose tractentur, et nihil in his vile, nihil non probatum inveniatur . . ."

⁶⁴MGH, Capit., no. 19, c. 8, p. 45; no. 22, cc. 6, 54, pp. 54, 57; no. 28, c. 51, p. 78; no. 123, c. 13, p. 244; MGH, Conc., no. 38, c. 19, p. 289; Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 18, Migne, PL, CV, 196.

Very often those who possessed the necessary liturgical texts for celebrating the Mass could not use them intelligently. The sacramentary was especially misused by the priests who, because of their ignorance of Latin, could not properly adapt the Masses for special observances.⁶⁵ The demands of the liturgical year also taxed their competence. A good deal of legislation seeking to enforce correct observance of the major feasts and fasts of the year demonstrates that priests were often unable to make proper use of the church calendar.⁶⁶ By the end of Charlemagne's reign, the low quality of pastoral care in the conduct of the Mass revealed by these deficiencies was still very evident throughout the Frankish realm. For in the year 813, we find the great reforming church councils still urging that the most elementary instruction in the conduct of the liturgy be given to the parish priests.⁶⁷

In addition to administering the sacrament of the Eucharist, the priest was charged with the responsibility of

⁶⁵MGH, Capit., no. 38, c. 3, p. 110; no. 117, c. 4, p. 235; no. 177, c. 6, p. 363.

⁶⁶See MGH, Capit., no. 19, c. 11, p. 46; no. 22, c. 48, p. 57; no. 35, c. 23, p. 103; no. 38, c. 10, p. 110; no. 81, c. 19, p. 179; no. 119, c. 9, p. 237; no. 177, c. 8, pp. 363-364. MGH, Conc., no. 22, c. 2, p. 197; no. 24, cc. 5, 33-34, 41-42, pp. 208, 211-212; no. 36, cc. 32-36, pp. 268-270. Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, cc. 36-43, Migne, PL, CV, 203-205.

⁶⁷See MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 3, p. 250; no. 35, cc. 4-13, pp. 254-255.

communicating the sacred rite of baptism to the faithful. And though, in the Carolingian period, penance, matrimony, and extreme unction were not generally considered sacraments, they too came under the province of pastoral care. The correct performance of baptism was of pre-eminent concern to Frankish church reformers from the time of St. Boniface. The latter was extremely perplexed by the problems of false or heretical priests improperly administering the sacrament of baptism to pagans in such missionary areas as Hesse, Thuringia, and Bavaria. In the face of a critical shortage of trained priests, St. Boniface, with the sage advice of Rome, tolerated many irregularities in the performance of baptism so that the validity of the sacrament might not be brought into question.⁶⁸ After St. Boniface's passing, the same necessity dictated that irregular practices, such as baptisms conducted by unbaptized or unfrocked priests, be tolerated.⁶⁹

Reform legislation seeking to impose canonical discipline and uniform practice in the administration of the

⁶⁸Tolerated irregularities included the recognition of baptisms made by priests who were wholly ignorant of Latin and by priests who were adulterous and even heretical, so long as they properly invoked the Trinity. See Boniface, Ep., no. 26, p. 46; no. 28, p. 50; no. 60, p. 122; no. 80, pp. 174-177.

⁶⁹MGH, Capit., no. 15, c. 12, p. 38; no. 16, c. 15, p. 41. Cf. Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque, p. 306.

sacrament of baptism was passed in 742⁷⁰ and repeated by Charlemagne in 769.⁷¹ But it was not until Charlemagne initiated his program for liturgical uniformity in 789 that a concentrated effort was made to reform baptismal practice in the Frankish Church. The bishops were ordered to examine their priests diligently for their knowledge of the Roman baptismal rite.⁷² Adding to Charlemagne's concern that the proper liturgy of baptism be followed was the fact that many pagans were still undergoing conversion. And thus, despite the fact that, by the eighth century, infant baptism in settled areas of the Frankish realm was the norm, the priest had to know the lengthier liturgical procedures associated with adult baptism. And again it was Alcuin who filled the need for a correct text on the subject. By 798, he had put together a statement of Roman baptismal practice and Charlemagne ordered that all the clergy make use of it.⁷⁴ As evidenced in ecclesiastical legislation, Charlemagne's vigilance in the cause of baptismal

⁷⁰MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 3, p. 25; MGH, Conc., no. 1, c. 3, p. 3.

⁷¹MGH, Capit., no. 19, c. 8, p. 45.

⁷²Ibid., no. 22, c. 70, p. 59; no. 23, c. 23, p. 64.

⁷³MGH, Ep., IV, no. 304, pp. 203-204.

⁷⁴See Ellard, Master Alcuin, 75ff.

uniformity persisted until his death.⁷⁵ In his very last years, suspecting (and rightly it appears) that uniformity in the practice of baptism had not yet been attained, he wrote to his metropolitans asking them to report in what manner they and their suffragans were instructing the priests and the people in the matter.⁷⁶

The replies of Charlemagne's greater churchmen to his questions on baptism, as Hauck has remarked, reveal that they had absorbed a considerable amount of theological culture.⁷⁷ But this does not appear to be true of the lesser clergy. Despite the best efforts of Charlemagne and his prelates, pastoral care in administering the sacrament of baptism, at the parish level, suffered from priestly ignorance and negligence of correct baptismal procedures. The priests were required to memorize and comprehend the liturgy of baptism so that they

⁷⁵See MGH, Capit., no. 35, c. 28, p. 103; no. 36, c. 10, p. 106; no. 38, c. 3, p. 110; no. 78, c. 1, p. 173; no. 116, c. 8, p. 234.

⁷⁶Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 36-37; Schnürer, Church and Culture, I, 512-513; F. Cabrol, "Catéchuménat," in DACL, II, 2 (1925), 2611-2612; F. Cabrol, "Charlemagne et la liturgie," in DACL, III, 1 (1913), 821. For Charlemagne's correspondence and the replies made by his prelates, see MGH, Ep., IV, 533-541; ibid., V, 242-244, 273-274; MGH, Capit., nos. 125-126, pp. 246-248. An informative discussion on the efforts made by Charlemagne and Alcuin to secure baptismal uniformity in accordance with Roman usage is given in Ellard, Master Alcuin, pp. 68-85.

⁷⁷Hauck, Kirchengeschichte, II, 181.

might properly prepare the catechumens and the godparents by teaching them the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the proper baptismal responses.⁷⁸ They were ordered also to give baptism only at the canonical times of Easter and Pentecost, making exceptions only for those in danger of death. The repeated issuance of canons and capitularies in the effort to achieve correct practice, however, indicates that the priests not only failed to follow the prescriptions for the conduct of baptism, but also administered the sacrament at all times of the year.⁷⁹

When we turn to pastoral care in the administration of penance, we find that any discussion is complicated by the fact that a new penitential discipline was in process of formation. Long before the Carolingian period, the ancient system of public penance involving episcopal excommunication and reconciliation had fallen into decadence and disuse in the West. In the eighth century, when it was applied, it was used only

⁷⁸For the benefit of the laity, the baptismal vow was translated into the vernacular. See MGH, Capit., no. 107, p. 222.

⁷⁹See MGH, Capit., no. 36, cc. 10-11, p. 106; no. 37, c. 8, p. 108; no. 38, cc. 3, 14, p. 110; no. 78, c. 1, p. 173; no. 83, c. 5, p. 182; no. 119, cc. 3, 10, pp. 236-237; no. 123, cc. 8, 20, pp. 243-244; no. 177, cc. 5, 7, 25, pp. 363, 366; MGH, Conc., no. 34, cc. 3, 19, pp. 250, 252; no. 35, c. 7, p. 254; no. 36, cc. 4, 47, pp. 261, 272; no. 38, c. 18, pp. 288-289. Charlemagne himself in a letter of 803/811 to Bishop Ghaerbald, lamented the fact that his many edicts on the subject of baptism were being neglected by the priests in the diocese of Liège (MGH, Capit., no. 122, p. 241).

for persons convicted of capital and notorious crimes, such as murder, incest, and rape. Beginning in the late sixth century, Celtic missionaries, such as St. Columbanus, introduced private penance and auricular confession to the Frankish realm where it won wide acceptance, except in southern Gaul where Visigothic church traditions inhibited its progress. Anglo-Saxon missionaries, such as St. Boniface, were also very instrumental in the diffusion and development of this new discipline. The successful establishment of this new system of penance owed much to the use made of penitentials by the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionaries. These penance books, which were widely disseminated on the Continent, were compilations of the various sins and their appropriate punishments to be meted out by pastors. They thus envisioned the administration by priests of private confession, penance, and reconciliation whenever there were sins, whether venial or capital, to be repented.⁸⁰

⁸⁰Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 52, 57; Medieval Handbooks of Penance, A translation of the principal libri poenitentiales and selections from related documents by John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer (New York, 1938), pp. 20-29 (hereafter cited as McNeill and Gamer, Handbooks of Penance). Cf. Oscar D. Watkins, A History of Penance, Vol. II: The Western Church From A.D. 450 to A.D. 1215 (New York, 1961), 643ff. (hereafter cited as Watkins, A History of Penance); Sources of Christian Theology, ed. Paul F. Palmer, Vol. II: Sacraments and Forgiveness: History and Doctrinal Development of Penance, Extreme Unction, and Indulgences (London, 1960), 139ff. (hereafter cited as Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology); Bernhard Poschmann, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick, trans. Francis Courtney (New York, 1964), p. 122ff. (hereafter cited as Poschmann, Penance and Anointing).

During the course of the eighth and early ninth centuries, the new penitential discipline was supported and reinforced by legislation. Capitularies and conciliar decrees, while not making the practice mandatory for all Christians, ordered the priests to be active in their exercise of the pastoral office and to exhort the faithful to make frequent confession and do penance for their sins. To insure their qualification for their task, it was also decreed that priests know and be examined on their use of the penitentials.⁸¹ Alcuin was especially anxious to promote the new discipline and he is found repeatedly urging its practice by both the laity and the clergy.⁸²

By the beginning of the ninth century, however, many problems had arisen in connection with the system of private penance. There was a growing reaction among bishops against the new penitential discipline that gave so much authority and independence to the priests. The decrees of the reform councils of 813 reflect a grave concern on the part of Frankish prelates with the fact of widespread abuse of private penance

⁸¹MGH, Capit., no. 10, cc. 1-2, p. 25; no. 19, cc. 1, 7, 10, pp. 44-45; no. 23, c. 32, p. 64; no. 26, c. 14, p. 69; no. 36, c. 21, p. 107; no. 38, c. 4, p. 110; no. 81, cc. 12, 15, p. 179; no. 116, c. 3, p. 234; no. 117, c. 7, p. 235; no. 120, c. 1, p. 237; MGH, Conc., no. 7, c. 2, p. 52; no. 22, c. 5, p. 199.

⁸²MGH, Ep., IV, no. 131, p. 193ff.; ibid., IV, no. 138, p. 218; Watkins, A History of Penance, II, 688-697.

by priests.⁸³ In some parts of Austrasia, it was reported, priests were violating the secrecy of the confessional by extorting bribes from confessed criminals who otherwise might be revealed. And in the diocese of Basel, there were priests adjusting the severity of their assigned penances to the wealth and social rank of their parishioners.⁸⁴

Of much greater concern was the fact that the priests were using a variety of penitentials. The authority of these penitentials rested on their derivation, or alleged derivation, from reputable church authors. Because of the profuse errors made by copyists, these books varied considerably in the penance and commutations of penance that they prescribed for the various categories of sin. Priestly ignorance and negligence when added to this lack of textual uniformity resulted in penitential chaos. Thus we find Theodulf desperately trying to regulate his clergy in their conduct of penance so that the brethren would be properly shrived. The priests of Orleans were admonished to learn how to receive confessions properly

⁸³See MGH, Conc., no. 35, cc. 12-13, 16, p. 255; no. 37, cc. 32-34, pp. 279-280; no. 38, c. 22, p. 289. Cf. McNeill and Gamer, Handbooks of Penance, pp. 26-27; Watkins, A History of Penance, II, 688-707.

⁸⁴MGH, Capit., no. 79, c. 1, p. 175; no. 177, cc. 19-20, p. 365. That these and similar practices involving the influence of personal considerations in the assignment of penance were fairly common is evidenced by their condemnation in the reform councils of 813. See MGH, Conc., no. 35, cc. 12-13, p. 255; no. 37, c. 34, p. 280; no. 38, c. 22, p. 289.

and to be prepared to give suitable penance. To insure full confessions, they were to instruct the penitents in how to discriminate among the various kinds of sin, using Cassian's list of the eight major vices as their guide. For their authority in assigning penances, the priests, according to Theodulf, were to consult the sacred canons and Holy Scripture. By implication, they were not to use the error-filled penitentials.⁸⁵ In the early years of the ninth century, imperial legislation reflects a rising concern with the same problems of penitential indiscipline confronted by Theodulf. Priests were admonished by royal decree to exercise vigilance in the confessional and give penances that were proportionate to the offences committed. Bishops were ordered to examine their clergy as to their conduct of confessions.⁸⁶

Compounding the problems of securing uniform penitential practice was the fact that under the influence of the Carolingian revival, with its emphasis on the restoration of earlier church discipline, Frankish bishops were now attempting to reimpose the public system of penance. For example, Theodulf in his capitularies, not only decreed that confessions

⁸⁵Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 31, Migne, PL, CV, 201; Theodulf, Capitulare ad eosdem, Migne, PL, CV, 211.

⁸⁶MGH, Capit., no. 36, c. 21, p. 107; no. 38, c. 4, p. 110; Watkins, A History of Penance, II, 693-707.

be made to God alone or to a priest, but also that it was within the discretion of the priest to assign public penance for capital and mortal offences.⁸⁷ And at Liège, we find Bishop Ghaerbald instructing his priests to extend the regime of public penance to those convicted of homicide. These were to be reconciled only by the bishop or by his order.⁸⁸ At the same time, he urged that his priests be in possession of a penitential.⁸⁹ It is clear from these enactments that some kind of forced accommodation was being made between the ancient and the new systems of penance.

The reform councils of 813 which sought to clarify matters relating to each system of penance so as to achieve a standard practice succeeded only in generating more confusion. Reflecting regional differences and experience, they issued contradictory advice on the practice of private penance and the use of penitentials. The Council of Chalon, for example, closely following the penitential practice advocated by Theodulf, took the position that confession could be made either to God alone or to a priest, provided it was done fully. On the subject of penitentials, the Council was more explicit

⁸⁷Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c.30, Migne, PL, CV, 200; Theodulf, Capitulare ad eosdem, Migne, PL, CV, 211.

⁸⁸MGH, Capit., no. 123, c. 10, p. 243.

⁸⁹Ibid., no. 123, c. 9, p. 243.

and urged that they be "repudiated and abolished altogether." The Council of Arles, representing the church of southern Gaul, appears only to have sanctioned the use of public penance. In contrast, the Council of Tours gave full sanction to the system of private penance and to the use of penitentials, urging only that all agree on the penance book that should be used so as to insure uniformity.⁹⁰ As a result of these conflicting pronouncements, the imperial assembly that met at Aachen in 813 put the problem of the penitentials and how penitents should be judged aside for future inquiry.⁹¹ More general agreement was reached on the special application of public penance to criminals convicted of notorious crimes, such as homicidal violence, adultery, and unnatural sin.⁹² But as the succeeding age was to demonstrate, the unrealistic episcopal attempt to reinstitute public penance was doomed to failure. And as reflected in the teaching of Rabanus Maurus,⁹³ a compromise was reached by which public penance was to be applied to public offences and private penance was to be done

⁹⁰See MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 26, p. 253; no. 37, cc. 34, 38, pp. 280-281; no. 38, c. 22, p. 289. Cf. Watkins, A History of Penance, II, 700-706.

⁹¹MGH, Capit., no. 81, c. 20, p. 179. Cf. Watkins, A History of Penance, II, 706-707.

⁹²MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 26, p. 253; no. 35, c. 31, p. 256; no. 37, c. 25, p. 278; no. 38, c. 41, p. 292.

⁹³De cl. inst., II, 30, Migne, PL, CVII, 342-343.

for private sins.⁹⁴

Closely associated with the evolution of penitential discipline in the Carolingian period was the sacramental development of extreme unction. The use on the Continent of consecrated oil to cure the sick had long been practiced by both the clergy and the laity. As with the introduction of private penance, the custom of reserving to the priest the sole right of anointing the sick was introduced by Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionaries. This priestly monopoly of extreme unction is implicit in Carolingian ecclesiastical legislation. At the same time extreme unction was being integrated with the administration of penance and the viaticum to form the last rites of the Church. As this development occurred, the primary significance of extreme unction as a remedy for the sick gave place to a conception of the rite as an integral act in the remission of sins.⁹⁵

Under the Carolingians, the administration of the last rites of the Church was given clearer definition. The priests

⁹⁴Watkins, A History of Penance, II, 701-707; McNeill and Gamer, Handbooks of Penance, p. 27; Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 60-61. Cf. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, II, 152; Poschmann, Penance and Anointing, p. 134ff.; Paul Anciaux, The Sacrament of Penance (New York, 1962), p. 63.

⁹⁵Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 66-68; Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, II, 289. Cf. Poschmann, Penance and Anointing, p. 242ff.; C. Ruch, "Extreme onction du Ier au IX^e siècle," in DTC, V, 2 (1913), 1927-1985.

were charged with the responsibility of securing from the bishops on Holy Thursday supplies of consecrated oil for anointing the catechumens and the sick, as well as chrism for baptism.⁹⁶ Supplied with holy oil and the Eucharist, which they were always to have ready for immediate use, the priests were to insure that no Christian died without proper anointing and without reconciliation and viaticum.⁹⁷ The procedure for administering the last rites ideally entailed the services of several priests who would participate together in anointing the sick or dying individual to the accompaniment of prayers, in a church if possible, but elsewhere if necessary.⁹⁸ Both Ghaerbald and Theodulf instructed their priests to give the last rites to the sick who were incapable of speech, providing witnesses were present to attest to their contrition and to their desire to have received penance.⁹⁹

The legislative evidence of Charlemagne, Ghaerbald, and Theodulf cited above indicates by its repetitive nature

⁹⁶MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 3, p. 25; no. 12, c. 4, p. 29; no. 81, c. 17, p. 179.

⁹⁷Ibid., no. 19, c. 10, p. 45; no. 81, c. 16, p. 179.

⁹⁸Ibid., no. 36, c. 22, p. 107; no. 81, c. 17, p. 179; no. 123, c. 19, p. 244; MGH, Conc., no. 37, c. 48, p. 283; Theodulf, Capitulare ad eosdem, Migne, PL, CV, 220-221.

⁹⁹MGH, Capit., no. 123, c. 15, p. 244; Theodulf, Capitulare ad eosdem, Migne, PL, CV, 220. Cf. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, II, 289-291.

that many priests were negligent in administering the last rites of the Church.¹⁰⁰ In the face of this negligence and in view of the dire consequences awaiting those who died in sin, Ghaerbald was moved to threaten delinquent priests with loss of office.¹⁰¹ With respect to extreme unction, however, priestly negligence reflected deeper problems involving clerical and lay ignorance and superstition. For despite the monopoly given to priests of anointing the sick, the practice of extreme unction was vitiated by the widespread misuse of consecrated oil, especially chrism, as medicine to cure the sick or as a magic potion to exorcise evil spirits. These profane abuses, committed by both clerics and laymen, were a legacy from the earlier practice of allowing the sick to anoint themselves with chrism or other oil consecrated by a bishop. The severity of the penalties enacted against these abuses reveals the ineffectiveness of Carolingian attempts to achieve their suppression. Thus in a capitulary of the early ninth century, Charlemagne decreed:

Concerning clerics and laity who give or receive chrism under the pretext of medicine or witchcraft; if any priest or deacon shall have presumed to do so, let him lose his office, the rest of the clergy and nuns shall sustain corporal punishment and imprisonment; the laity who shall have received or given it

¹⁰⁰Cf. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, II, 289.

¹⁰¹MGH, Capit., no. 123, c. 11, p. 243.

to others shall lose a hand.¹⁰²

In a similar vein, the priests and other clergy were repeatedly threatened with degradation and the obdurate among them even with the same mutilation if they gave or used chrism as medicine or as a magic remedy.¹⁰³ Given the persistence of these abuses, then, we may conclude that the practice of anointing the sick in the period under discussion very often did not conform to the injunctions laid down by the church reformers.¹⁰⁴

In an edict of 769, Charlemagne singled out the incestuous to be included among those that the priest was to be especially concerned about in administering the last rites, lest they perish in mortal sin.¹⁰⁵ This particular concern for those who committed incest derived in large part from the fact that there was widespread nuptial practice by the laity in violation of marriage impediments enunciated by both church

¹⁰²Ibid., no. 55, c. 1, p. 142: "De clericis et laicis qui chrisma ad aliquam nimietatem dant et accipiunt: si quis presbyter aut diaconus dare aut accipere praesumpserit, gradum amittat; ceteri clerici et nonnanes disciplinam corporalem et carceris custodiam sustineant; laici qui acceperint aut alicui dederint manum perdant."

¹⁰³Ibid., no. 61, c. 10, p. 149; no. 62, c. 21, p. 150; no. 78, c. 17, p. 174; no. 119, c. 11, p. 237; MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 18, p. 252; no. 36, c. 27, p. 268; Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 66-67.

¹⁰⁴Cf. Poschmann, Penance and Anointing, p. 243.

¹⁰⁵MGH, Capit., no. 19, c. 10, p. 45.

and state. And in stating this, we are brought to the larger consideration of pastoral care with respect to matrimony. From the earliest years of the Church, the regulation of marriage had been seen as a special responsibility of the clergy. In the Carolingian period, priests were expected to join with the elders of the community to investigate those who wished to marry to see that they did not violate the prohibited degrees of kinship whether physical, legal, or spiritual. Marriage ceremonies were to take place in church with priestly prayer and benediction. Thereafter, the priests were to insure, by their constant vigilance, that the sanctity of the marriage contracts entered into by the laity remained inviolate.¹⁰⁶

The priests, then, were charged with the major responsibility of insuring that those who married were not related by close blood ties. Their task was complicated by the fact that there was confusion in church doctrine as to the prohibited degrees of relationship. Thus at different times popes and Frankish councils decreed the prohibition of marriage of those related to the fourth,¹⁰⁷ fifth,¹⁰⁸ and

¹⁰⁶Ibid., no. 33, c. 35, p. 98; MGH, Conc., no. 71, c. 12, p. 53; Lagarde, The Latin Church, p. 76; Henry C. Lea, Studies in Church History: The Rise of the Temporal Power, Benefit of Clergy, Excommunication (Philadelphia, 1869), pp. 308-311 (hereafter cited as Lea, Studies in Church History).

¹⁰⁷Boniface, Ep., no. 26, p. 45; MGH, Capit., no. 15, cc. 1-3, pp. 37-38; no. 16, c. 1, p. 40; no. 177, c. 21, p. 365.

¹⁰⁸MGH, Conc., no. 36, c. 54, p. 273.

and seventh canonical degree.¹⁰⁹ Doctrinal confusion, however, was not the most serious problem complicating the priestly determination of blood ties in marriage. Much more important was the fact that Germanic society, with its basic clan structure, made it difficult for prospective married couples to be free from all consanguineous relationship. In such circumstances, to avert social chaos, especially in such important areas as legitimacy and inheritance, the Carolingians sought to coerce the incestuous not only with the ecclesiastical penalties of excommunication and public penance, but also by threatening them with monetary fines, imprisonments, and the loss of patrimony.¹¹⁰

In addition to concerning themselves with the niceties of genealogy, the priests were expected to investigate the legal and spiritual affinity of those wishing to be married. The union of two persons related by marriage was to be prohibited in the same degrees as marriage involving a blood relation. Both baptism and confirmation created a spiritual relationship or affinity, the violation of which, as in the case of an individual marrying the parent of his godchild, was

¹⁰⁹Boniface, Ep., no. 28, p. 51; MGH, Ep., III, no. 3, p. 485.

¹¹⁰MGH, Capit., no. 13, cc. 1-3, pp. 31-32; no. 14, c. 9, p. 35; no. 20, c. 5, p. 48; no. 33, cc. 33, 38, pp. 97-98; no. 56, c. 3, p. 143; Schnürer, Church and Culture, I, 517-518; Lea, Studies in Church History, pp. 310-312.

particularly to be regarded by the priests as a heinous offence.¹¹¹

Unfortunately, the nature of our evidence does not permit any precise evaluation of actual practice in the regulation of marriage by the priests. It appears, however, that they experienced considerable difficulty both in comprehending and in discharging their responsibilities in this area. This judgment is reinforced when we consider the fact that even St. Boniface himself did not understand the logic and necessity of marriage impediments induced by spiritual affinity. In a letter to Archbishop Nothelm of Canterbury, the perplexed Boniface states:

I desire your counsel in regard to a sin which I have unwittingly committed by granting to a certain man the right to marry. It happened in this way: the man, like many others, had stood as godfather to the child of another and then after the death of the father had married the mother. The Romans declare that this is a sin, even a capital sin, and say that in such cases a divorce should take place. They say that under Christian emperors, such a marriage was punishable by death or by perpetual exile. If you find that this is accounted so great a sin in the decrees of catholic fathers or in the canons or even in Holy Writ, pray let me know it, so that I may understand and know what is the authority for such an opinion. I cannot possibly understand how, on the one hand, spiritual relationship in the case of matrimonial intercourse can be so

¹¹¹MGH, Capit., no. 13, c. 1, p. 31; no. 15, c. 4, p. 38; no. 177, c. 21, p. 365; MGH, Conc., no. 36, cc. 55-56, p. 273; Schnürer, Church and Culture, I, 519.

great a sin, while, on the other hand, it is well established that by holy baptism we all become sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of Christ and the Church.¹¹²

In any event, the stream of legislation directed against incest indicates that it was impossible to enforce the observance of the prohibited degrees of relationship in marriage whether spiritual or physical. And thus we find the Council of Tours in 813 bitterly deploring the multiplication of incestuous marriages which even the threat of excommunication did not stop and exhorting the Emperor to exert secular power in the cause of reform.¹¹³ As if in recognition of the impossibility of eradicating the evil, Charlemagne subsequently ordered only that increased vigilance be taken to see that

¹¹²Boniface, Ep., no. 33, pp. 57-58: "Praeterea de uno peccato commisso vestrum consilium audire desidero, quod cuidam homini in matrimonio concedendo nesciens commisi. Quod hoc modo contigit. Homo quidam, sicut multi solent, alterius filium de sacri baptismatis fonte elevans adoptavit sibi in filium, cuius matrem postea viduatam marito duxit uxorem. Quod Romani peccatum esse adserunt et capitale peccatum, ita ut in talibus divortia facere precipiant; et adfirmant regnantibus christianis imperatoribus illius matrimonii scelus capitali sententia multandum vel peregrinatione perpetua delendum. Ut si hoc in catholicorum patrum decretis vel canonibus vel etiam in sacro eloquio pro tam magno peccato computatum esse inveniretis, indicare mihi curetis, ut et ego intellegendo cognoscam, cuius auctoritas sit in illo iudicio, quia nullatenus intellegere possum, quare in uno loco spiritalis propinquitas in coniunctione carnalis copulae tam grande peccatum sit, quando omnes in sacro baptismo Christi et ecclesiae filii et filiae fratres et sorores esse comprobemur." Text: Emerton, The Letters of Saint Boniface, p. 63.

¹¹³MGH, Conc., no. 38, c. 41, p. 292.

those who refused to do penance be excommunicated.¹¹⁴

Finally, preserving the integrity of the marriage contract was an important responsibility of the priest in his role as moral supervisor of the parish community. But as the many strictures placed against fornication and adultery committed by both the laity and the clergy attest, the sanctity of the marriage bond was often violated in the Carolingian period. And though with papal blessing an attempt was made under Pippin to apply the ancient canonical prohibitions against divorce and remarriage, it met with failure.¹¹⁵ The tradition of Germanic law in which the matrimonial relationship was effected by a contract involving a monetary compensation, which could be broken arbitrarily by the husband, favored the easy dissolution of marriage. So did the unregulated use of the penitentials which ensured a lax enforcement of the marriage bond by the priest at the local level. In 756 and 757, legislation had to be passed which again gave official sanction to divorce and remarriage in a variety of circumstances.¹¹⁶ And though Charlemagne in 789 legislated

¹¹⁴MGH, Capit., no. 78, c. 8, p. 174; Lea, Studies in Church History, pp. 311-313; Amann, L'époque carolingienne, p. 88.

¹¹⁵MGH, Capit., no. 12, c. 9, p. 30; MGH, Ep., III, cc. 7, 12, pp. 482-483.

¹¹⁶MGH, Capit., no. 15, cc. 7-8, 11, 13, 16-17, 19, pp. 38-39; no. 16, cc. 5, 9, 17, pp. 40-41.

that the ancient canons prohibiting divorce again be applied,¹¹⁷ as his own actions in putting away unwanted wives demonstrate, the laxer conceptions of the marriage bond continued to prevail.¹¹⁸

Besides channeling the sacred benefits of divine worship and the sacraments to his parishioners, the priest was to give them constant inspirational guidance. The office of preaching was, in the eyes of Charlemagne, pre-eminently what pastoral care was all about. Reflecting the needs of Frankish society with its low level of culture, Charlemagne believed that good preaching should lay stress on the teaching and exposition of Christian theology as well as on religious and moral exhortation to live a good life. The theology that the priest was to teach and expound upon, in sermons on every Sunday and feastday, was the most basic and found its central matter in the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Thus the priest, using language that his flock could understand, was commanded to teach most assiduously belief in the Holy Trinity and Christ's incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven where He sits in judgment on all mankind. The priest was also to preach in great detail on the sins that

¹¹⁷Ibid., no. 22, c. 43, p. 56.

¹¹⁸Schnürer, Church and Culture, I, 519-523; Amann, L'époque carolingienne, pp. 88-89. Cf. Hauck, Kirchengeschichte, II, 238.

would bring eternal punishment and stress the virtues that would win heavenly reward.¹¹⁹ In addition to preaching the major tenets of the faith, the priest was to impart to the laity the wisdom of Scripture and the writings of the church fathers. And to accomplish this, he was ordered to have in his possession a homiliary containing Latin homilies translated into the vernacular for the benefit of the laity.¹²⁰ Finally, to have a just appreciation of the techniques of preaching, the priest was to be familiar with the Liber regulae pastoralis of Gregory.¹²¹

As Charlemagne himself found on his visit to Liège where he questioned prospective godparents who could not recite the Creed or the Lord's Prayer, the office of preaching was often neglected by the priests.¹²² This was especially true of the rural clergy. The Council of Arles in 813 found

¹¹⁹MGH, Capit., no. 22, cc. 32, 61, 82, pp. 56, 58, 61-62; no. 28, c. 33, p. 77; no. 36, cc. 4-5, p. 106; no. 38, c. 10, p. 110; no. 64, c. 6, p. 153; no. 78, c. 14, p. 174; MGH, Conc., no. 36, c. 25, p. 268.

¹²⁰MGH, Capit., no. 38, c. 10, p. 110; no. 116, cc. 5-6, p. 234; no. 117, cc. 11-12, p. 235; MGH, Conc., no. 35, c. 15, p. 255; no. 38, c. 17, p. 288.

¹²¹MGH, Capit., no. 38, c. 10, p. 110; no. 117, c. 13, p. 235; MGH, Conc., no. 35, c. 10, p. 255; Schnürer, Church and Culture, I, 510-511; Laistner, Thought and Letters, pp. 194-195; Gaskoin, Alcuin, pp. 221-222. Cf. Hauck, Kirchengeschichte, II, 252ff.

¹²²MGH, Capit., no. 122, pp. 241-242.

it necessary to urge all priests, including those located outside the cities, to preach to the people.¹²³ At Tours, it was reported to Alcuin that certain bishops were continuing the older episcopal practice of monopolizing the office of preaching and were forbidding its performance by the priests in their dioceses. Probably, as Alcuin suspected, the report was merely a mendacious rumor spread by priests who were too indolent or ignorant to perform the task themselves.¹²⁴

A reading of the evidence makes it impossible to avoid the conclusion that in the office of preaching, as in the other areas of pastoral care, priestly ignorance or lack of education was the decisive factor influencing practice. In his first capitulary of 769, an exasperated Charlemagne sought to lift the veil of priestly ignorance affecting preaching by decreeing that:

Whoever, after frequent admonishments from his bishop concerning the state of his knowledge, shall have neglected his learning shall be removed from office and lose the church which he held; for those who are ignorant of the law of God cannot proclaim or preach it to others.¹²⁵

¹²³MGH, Conc., no. 34, c. 10, p. 251.

¹²⁴MGH, Ep., IV, no. 136, pp. 209-210; Gaskoin, Alcuin, p. 221.

¹²⁵MGH, Capit., no. 19, c. 16, p. 46: "Quicumque autem a suo episcopo frequenter admonitus de sua scientia, ut discere curet, facere neglexerit, procul dubio et ab officio removeatur et ecclesiam quam tenet amittat, quia ignorantes legem Dei eam aliis annuntiare et praedicare non possunt."

But as the tenor of the decrees embodied in the Admonitio generalis of 789 indicates, the proclamation of 769, in too many instances, fell on deaf ears. For we find Charlemagne ordering his bishops to examine their priests, not for their acquaintance with a homiliary or with the pastoral rule of Gregory, but simply to discover if they understood and could teach the Lord's Prayer and the Creed to others without inserting uncanonical doctrine!¹²⁶ The later capitularies and canons admonishing the clergy and the laity to master these most basic precepts of the Church bear witness to the fact that the priests were not vigorously performing the office of preaching.¹²⁷ The evidence of the Epistola generalis revealing the shortage of homiletic texts and the corrupt state of those in existence only confirms this conclusion.¹²⁸

We may end our discussion of pastoral care with respect to the office of preaching by citing the wise course of action

¹²⁶Ibid., no. 22, cc. 70, 82, pp. 59, 61.

¹²⁷MGH, Capit., no. 28, c. 33, p. 77; no. 35, cc. 29-30, p. 103; no. 36, c. 5, p. 106; no. 38, c. 9, p. 110; no. 60, c. 2, p. 147; no. 120, c. 3, p. 238; no. 121, p. 239; no. 177, c. 2, p. 363; MGH, Conc., no. 35, cc. 1-2, p. 254. The Council of Mainz in 813 urged that those who failed to learn the Creed and the Lord's Prayer were to be castigated with fasting or some other penance. Children were to be taught by the monks and priests to recite these prayers in Latin if possible, but in their native tongue if necessary, so that they in turn could teach those at home (MGH, Conc., no. 36, c. 45, pp. 271-272).

¹²⁸MGH, Capit., no. 30, pp. 80-81; Laistner, Thought and Letters, p. 195.

pursued by Bishop Theodulf of Orleans. Confronted by the very real problem of priestly ignorance, he exhorted his priests, each according to his own abilities, to preach to the people. Thus he stated:

He who knows the Scriptures, let him preach the Scriptures, but he who does not know them, let him at least say to the people what is very familiar, that they "turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it, because the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are turned to their prayers," etc. No one can therefore excuse himself because he does not have a tongue which he can use to edify someone. For when he shall see anyone in error, he can at once, to the best of his ability and powers, by arguing, pleading, reproving, withdraw him from his error and exhort him to do good works. But when, with the Lord's help, we assemble together for a synod, let each man know how to tell us how much he has accomplished with help from the Lord, or what fruit he has accomplished. And if any man perhaps needs our aid, let him tell us this in love, and we with no less love will not postpone bringing aid to him as we are able.¹²⁹

¹²⁹Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 28, Migne, PL, CV, 200: "Qui Scripturas scit, praedicet Scripturas: qui vero nescit, saltem hoc, quod notissimum est, plebibus dicat: Ut declinent a malo, et faciant bonum; inquirent pacem, et sequantur eam, quia oculi Domini super justos, et aures ejus ad preces eorum, etc. Nullus ergo se excusare poterit, quod non habeat linguam, unde possit aliquem aedificare. Mox enim, ut quemlibet errantem viderit, prout potest et valet, aut arguendo, aut obsecrando, aut increpando, ab errore retrahat, et ad peragendum bonum opus hortetur. Cum vero, Domino opitulante, ad synodum in unum convenerimus, sciatis nobis unusquisque dicere, quantum Domino adjuvante laboraverit, aut quem fructum acquisierit. Et si quis forte nostro indiget adjutorio, nos cum charitate admoneat, et nos cum charitate nihilominus ei pro viribus adjutorium ferre non differemus." Text: Theodulph of Orleans, "Precepts to the Priests of His Diocese" in George E. McCracken and Allen Cabaniss (eds.), Early Medieval Theology, Vol. IX of The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 379-399 (hereafter cited as

In the Carolingian era, pastoral solicitude encompassed not only the minds and souls of Christians, but their bodies as well. The priest was expected to succor the poor and the sick, the widow and the orphan, the pilgrim and the traveler with works of charity. Affording charity to the needy had in earlier times been solely an episcopal and monastic responsibility. With the development of the parochial system, however, this charge devolved also upon the parish priest. Under Charlemagne, responsibility for the weak and needy did not end with the clergy. He saw it as incumbent upon all of his subjects as part of their oath of fidelity. And finally, in his person, he made the state the ultimate refuge of the destitute. As he so forcefully expressed it: "No one shall presume to rob or do any injury fraudulently to the churches of God or widows or orphans or pilgrims; for the lord emperor himself, after God and His saints, has constituted himself their protector and defender."¹³⁰

McCracken and Cabaniss (eds.), Early Medieval Theology). Cf. H. Dressler, "Preaching," in New Catholic Encyclopedia, XI (1967), 686-687; Hauck, Kirchengeschichte, II, 254-255.

¹³⁰MGH, Capit., no. 33, c. 5, p. 93: "Ut sanctis ecclesiis Dei neque viduis neque orphanis neque peregrinis fraude vel rapinam vel aliquit iniuriae quis facere presumat; quia ipse domnus imperator, post Domini et sanctis eius, eorum et protector et defensor esse constitutus est." Text: Translations and Reprints, Vol. VI, no. 5, p. 17; Schnürer, Church and Culture, I, 488-489.

At the parish level, the work of charity was largely centered in the matricula pauperum or register of the poor. Only members of the parish who were unable to support themselves were inscribed on the register and thereby entitled to sustenance from church revenues.¹³¹ The paucity of our sources, however, does not permit an appraisal of this institution¹³² nor can we assess the priestly operation of the hospices that Charlemagne ordered to be maintained for the transient poor and the wayfarer.¹³³ Support for these charitable enterprises came from the ecclesiastical tithes and other offerings of the faithful. Depending on the locality, one third or one fourth of these revenues was set aside for charity.¹³⁴ However, as has been indicated, the poor physical state of Carolingian churches reflected the fact that these revenues were often not received or were put to other uses.

¹³¹H. Leclercq, "Paroisses rurales," in DACL, XIII, 2 (1938), 2233.

¹³²See Émile Lesne, "La matricule des pauvres à l'époque Carolingienne," Revue Mabillon, XXIV (1934), 105-123.

¹³³MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 75, p. 60; no. 28, c. 35, p. 77; no. 120, c. 8, p. 238.

¹³⁴Theodulf instructed his priests to use all of the tithes and oblations that they received for the support of the poor, pilgrims, and travelers (Capitulare ad eosdem, Migne, PL, CV, 209). For an excellent discussion of the confusion that existed throughout the Carolingian period over the proper distribution of tithes, see Constable, Monastic Tithes, pp. 47-56.

In fact, the legislation of Charlemagne's later years suggests that the poor and the defenseless were growing in number and that they suffered greatly from the oppression of the rich and powerful.¹³⁵ And apparently the suffering of the poor was not ameliorated by the activities of the priests in many instances. For as the Emperor lamented in a capitulary of 811, not only laymen, but even churchmen, far from performing the office of charity, were actively despoiling the poor of their property.¹³⁶

With these brief comments on the subject of charity, our discussion of pastoral care comes to a close. In our examination of divine worship, the sacraments, preaching, and charity, we have found that the actual practice of pastoral care in the Carolingian era was seriously deficient. The mutilation by priests of the rite of the Mass and their negligence in communicating the sacraments reflect the inability of the Carolingians to affect needed reforms in the face of the centrifugal tendencies of the proprietary church system. The majority of priests, as has been stated, were included in the proprietary regime. It appears that very often, because of ignorance or negligence, they failed to respond to the

¹³⁵See MGH, Capit., no. 33, cc. 1, 5, 15, pp. 92-94; no. 34, c. 19, p. 101; no. 35, c. 59, p. 104; no. 64, c. 20, p. 154; no. 68, c. 1, p. 157; no. 69, c. 3, p. 158.

¹³⁶Ibid., no. 73, cc. 1-3, pp. 164-165.

repeated instructions and admonitions to better the conduct of their ministry.

The picture, however, is not entirely negative. As we have seen, many of the elements that comprised pastoral care were in a state of flux. Sacraments such as penance and extreme unction were in the process of attaining final formulation through the collective experiences of numerous priests. And perhaps this is the real significance that emerges from the developments of the period under discussion. Though his level of life and culture too often differed but little from that of his untutored flock, nevertheless, the Carolingian priest played a creative role in the cause of religion.

CHAPTER V

THE PRIEST IN SOCIETY

For the priest, the care of souls does not end when he has discharged the pastoral responsibilities of his office. The very nature of his vocation demands that he conduct all of his life activities so as to give a good example to his flock. Given the superstitious, semi-barbaric character of Carolingian society in which the ideals of manhood were best expressed in hunting, carousing, and fighting, men of good character who would encourage more civilized behavior were especially needed in the priesthood. The endeavor of the Carolingian church reformers, therefore, was to stress the unique position of the priest in society and to discourage him from all secular involvement that would detract from his role as a moral leader. The priest was continually enjoined to lead a good life and to provide the highest model of Christian conduct for the emulation of his followers. In what follows, we shall focus our attention on selected aspects of sacerdotal life in Carolingian society so as to make some assessment of the priest's ability to give moral leadership.

We may begin our survey of priestly life in Carolingian society by recalling (see Chapter Three) that St. Boniface in the early years of the eighth century found an almost total absence of canonical discipline in the Frankish Church. The ranks of the clergy, as he discovered, were filled with men whose lives were given over to every imaginable debauchery. As was indicated, the great reforming councils inspired by St. Boniface sought to achieve a moral regeneration of the Frankish Church by restoring canonical discipline. A major problem confronting the reformers was the sexual immorality of the clergy. The incontinence of the latter extended far beyond the mere violation of the code of celibacy promulgated by earlier church legislation to include every kind of sexual vice.¹

Regarding ecclesiastical celibacy, the discipline that had obtained into the seventh century and that had been asserted by numerous church councils had forbidden the marriage of those in holy orders. Those who had married before taking orders had been permitted to cohabit with their wives provided they treated them as sisters. Needless to say, this discipline had been difficult to enforce, and in the early eighth century it had all but disappeared. St. Boniface found

¹Henry C. Lea, History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church (London, 1907), I, 144-145 (hereafter cited as Lea, Sacerdotal Celibacy).

that concubinage and sacrilegious marriages, including polygamous unions, were common features of clerical life.²

The first Bonifacian reform council held under Carlomann in 742 took vigorous action against clerical promiscuity. Unchaste priests and other clergy were to be stripped of their benefices, degraded, and put to penance.³ Bishops were charged with close surveillance of their priests to ensure their chastity.⁴ Harsh penalties were to be applied to all the clergy who henceforth fell into carnal sin. At a minimum, errant priests were to be whipped until they bled and placed in prison for two years on bread and water.⁵ Carlomann reasserted this discipline in 743,⁶ while Pippin in the following year passed less stringent legislation forbidding unchastity among the clergy.⁷ The reinvigoration of canonical life for the secular clergy was also important in regulating priestly morality. The rule of St. Chrodegang discouraged all intercourse by

²Boniface, Ep., no. 50, pp. 82-83; no. 51, pp. 87-88; Willibald, "Life of St. Boniface" in Talbot, The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany, pp. 50-51; Lagarde, The Latin Church, pp. 383-385. Cf. H. Leclercq, "Célibat," in DACL, II, 2 (1925), 2820-2821.

³MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 1, p. 25.

⁴Ibid., no. 10, c. 3, p. 25.

⁵Ibid., no. 10, c. 6, pp. 25-26.

⁶Ibid., no. 11, c. 1, pp. 27-28.

⁷Ibid., no. 12, c. 3, p. 29.

priests with women and punished transgressors with floggings, imprisonment, and deposition.⁸ Finally, legislation was enacted prohibiting cohabitation by the priest with any woman unless she was above suspicion, such as a mother, a sister, or a niece.⁹ Though our sources are silent on the matter,¹⁰ it may be surmised that under this dispensation, married men who entered the priesthood could no longer live with their wives.¹¹

It appears, however, that priestly indulgence in carnal pleasures, though perhaps less blatantly practiced as a result of the efforts at reform, continued to be a very serious problem throughout the Carolingian period. The repeated enactments against priestly cohabitation with women who were not above suspicion,¹² as well as the many canons and capitularies

⁸S. Chrodegang, Regula Canonicorum, cc. 13, 29, 56, 66, 68, 70, Migne, PL, LXXXIX, 1065, 1070-1071, 1083-1084, 1088.

⁹MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 7, p. 26; no. 12, c. 8, p. 30; MGH, Conc., no. 1, c. 7, p. 4; no. 4, c. 8, p. 35; Lea, Sacerdotal Celibacy, I, 147-152; Lagarde, The Latin Church, 385-386.

¹⁰Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque, pp. 300-301.

¹¹A capitulary (MGH, Capit., no. 120, c. 2, p. 237), issued perhaps in 809, orders priests to avoid consorting with women altogether and forbids cohabitation.

¹²See MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 4, p. 54; no. 33, c. 24, p. 96; no. 35, c. 3, p. 102; no. 36, c. 15, p. 107; no. 37, c. 9, p. 108; no. 119, c. 6, p. 237; no. 123, cc. 1-2, p. 243; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 17, p. 210; no. 35, c. 22, p. 256; no. 36, c. 49, p. 272.

directed toward regulating priestly admission into nunneries,¹³ are examples of the ineffectual attempts made to eradicate the evil. The details of this legislation make it appear that the priests had to be physically kept out of temptation's way at all costs or they would easily succumb. To take an example from a capitulary issued by Bishop Ghaerbald to his diocesan priests:

As the holy council of Nice interdicts, no priest may be permitted to have extraneous women in his house, with the exception of a mother, a sister, or an aunt. In addition, no priest may approach any woman secretly in a bedroom or a storeroom. Should he do so after this warning, he is to be removed from office; for although we have frequently prohibited this, these prohibitions have not been fully observed by the priests. We therefore order that those who wish to retain their offices abstain in all ways from familiarity with extraneous women, so that no evil occasion arises to suggest sin, and so that no priest may incur an evil reputation among the people.¹⁴

¹³See MGH, Capit., no. 33, c. 18, p. 95; no. 42, c. 5, p. 119; no. 78, c. 5, p. 173; no. 79, c. 4, p. 175; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 21, p. 210; no. 34, c. 7, p. 251; no. 36, c. 26, p. 268; no. 38, c. 29, p. 290.

¹⁴MGH, Capit., no. 123, c. 1, p. 243: "Sicut sancta synodus Nicena interdicat, nullus umquam presbyter in domo sua habitare secum permittat mulierem extraneam, preter matrem et sororem atque amitam vel materteram, vel etiam ad secretum cubiculi vel cellarium nullus presbyter feminam aliquam adire permittat; quod si fecerit post hec, sciat se ab honore presbyteratus deponi. Quia hoc frequenter secundum canonicam institutionem prohibuimus, et pleniter a presbyteris observatum non fuit; ideoque praecipimus ut qui gradus honoris sui retinere vult omnibus modis a familiaritate extraneorum mulierum se abstinere faciat, ut nulla occasio inimico pateat suggerendi peccatum, et famam malam a populo nullus eorum incurrat." How far this distrust of the flesh extended is further evidenced by Bishop Theodulf of Orleans who forbade

Under these circumstances, then, it is not surprising that clerical licentiousness was common--so much so that we find Charlemagne in a capitulary of 811 posing the question as to whether the clergy differed from the laity only in the fact that they did not bear arms and were not married in public.¹⁵

But in fact, secular priests often did bear arms in combat or for protection. They also frequently indulged in the other manly pursuits of hunting and carousing. The distinction made by Charlemagne that the clergy did not bear arms is open to serious question in view of the need for protection in a violent age,¹⁶ but more particularly because of the military dependence of the monarchy on the support of churchmen. As the evidence of St. Boniface tells us, the Franks in the first decades of the eighth century made no distinction between laymen and priests when it came to

the sharing of residence by priests with even their mothers or sisters lest the latter's presence lead to incestuous crime or attract other women who might offer enticement. See Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 12, Migne, PL, CV, 195; Theodulf, Capitulare ad eosdem, Migne, PL, CV, 209.

¹⁵MGH, Capit., no. 72, c. 4, p. 163; Lea, Sacerdotal Celibacy, I, 153.

¹⁶The priests and other clergymen, however, were advised to put greater confidence in God's protection than in arms. See MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 70, p. 59; no. 35, c. 37, p. 103. Cf. H. Leclercq, "Paroisses Rurales," in DACL, XIII, 2 (1938), 2214-2215.

military service.¹⁷ One of the first important measures taken by the Bonifacian reform council of 742, held under Carlomann, was to prohibit without exception all clerical participation in warfare. Bishops, priests, and other clergy who accompanied the armies were to perform strictly religious duties.¹⁸ This edict, however, was stillborn. For both Pippin and Charlemagne regularly called upon their church prelates to muster themselves and their men for service in the army.¹⁹ And given the fact that Frankish bishops had martial responsibilities, it is not surprising to find that they failed to give vigorous enforcement to the royal and conciliar decrees prohibiting the bearing of arms and the shedding of blood by the lesser clergy.²⁰

More often, priests bore arms because of the attractions of hunting. In general, the clergy ignored the decrees seeking to keep them out of the fields and forests and

¹⁷Boniface, Ep., no. 50, p. 83; no. 51, pp. 87-88; no. 61, p. 126.

¹⁸MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 2, p. 25.

¹⁹Lesne, La propriété ecclésiastique, II, 131-132.

²⁰For examples of this prohibitory legislation, see: MGH, Capit., no. 12, c. 3, p. 29; no. 16, c. 16, p. 41; no. 19, cc. 1-2, 5, pp. 44-45; no. 22, c. 70, p. 59; no. 35, c. 37, p. 103; no. 36, c. 18, p. 107; no. 123, c. 3, p. 243; MGH, Conc., no. 6, p. 47; no. 22, cc. 1, 7, pp. 197, 199; no. 36, c. 17, p. 266.

prohibiting to them the possession of hunting dogs and birds.²¹ So serious did the problem become that we find Charlemagne in 802 ordering:

That no bishops, abbots, priests, deacons, or other members of the clergy shall presume to have dogs for hunting, or hawks, falcons and sparrow-hawks, but each shall observe fully the canons or rule of his order. If any one shall presume to do so, let him know that he shall lose his office. And in addition he shall suffer such punishment for it that the others will be afraid to usurp such things for themselves.²²

For many priests, carousing at a banquet or in a tavern was an even more attractive pastime than the hunt. The admonitions of Bishop Ghaerbald of Liège to his priests may be taken as typical of the concerns expressed by the reformers regarding clerical dissipation. Ghaerbald admonished his priests that they must not dare to enter taverns where they might mingle with worldly men, hear or speak evil words, or get into argument or altercation.²³ When the priests were invited

²¹See MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 2, p. 25; no. 12, c. 3, p. 29; no. 19, c. 3, p. 45; no. 23, c. 31, p. 64; MGH, Conc., no. 6, p. 47; no. 38, c. 8, p. 287.

²²MGH, Capit., no. 33, c. 19, p. 95: "Ut episcopi, abbates, presbiteri, diaconus nullusque ex omni clero canes ad venandum aut acceptores, falcones seu sparvarios habere presumant, sed pleniter se unusquisque in ordine suo canonice vel regulariter custodiant. Qui autem presumserit, sciat unusquisque honorem suum perdere. Caeteri vero tale exinde damnum patiat, ut reliqui metum habeant talia sibi usurpare." Text: Translations and Reprints, Vol. VI, no. 5, p. 22.

²³MGH, Capit., no. 123, c. 4, p. 243.

to feasts by any of the faithful, they were to deport themselves as men of God and practice moderation, temperance, and self-control.²⁴ Above all, the priests were to avoid the evil of drunkenness so as to be able to administer the sacraments in cases of emergency and perform the normal tasks of their office without faltering.²⁵ Theodulf of Orleans went over much the same detail in his orders to his priests to lead abstemious lives and teach their parishioners by good example as well as by preaching on the subject. When asked by the brethren to partake of food and drink, the priests were to give them spiritual refreshment in return.²⁶

As the many edicts on the subject indicate, the prohibition of drunkenness and other forms of dissolute behavior on the part of the clergy was no idle concern.²⁷ One of the more graphic of these states:

Let the priests, according to the Apostle's advice, withdraw themselves from revellings and drunkenness: for some of them are accustomed to sit up till midnight or later, boozing with their neighbours:

²⁴Ibid., no. 123, c. 6, p. 243.

²⁵Ibid., no. 123, c. 8, p. 243.

²⁶Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 13, Migne, PL, CV, 195.

²⁷See MGH, Capit., no. 22, c. 14, p. 55; no. 28, c. 19, p. 76; no. 33, c. 22, pp. 95-96; no. 35, c. 4, p. 102; no. 36, cc. 14, 19, p. 107; no. 119, cc. 7-8, p. 237; no. 120, cc. 4, 7, p. 238; no. 177, c. 10, p. 364.

and then these men, who ought to be of a religious and holy deportment, return to their churches drunken and gorged with food, and unable to perform the daily and nightly office of praise to God, while others sink down in a drunken sleep in the place of their revels.²⁸

The reforming councils of 813 took especial note of the widespread evil of drunkenness among both the clergy and the laity and ordered that excommunication be applied to the guilty.²⁹

Along with the interdictions placed against unchastity, the bearing of arms, hunting, and carousing, the priests were warned against cursing, joining in worldly games and song, and attendance at plays or other immodest exhibitions.³⁰ Participation in some or in all of these secular activities meant in too many instances that Carolingian priests were little distinguishable in their behavior from the laity. So

²⁸Ibid., no. 120, c. 4, p. 238: ". . . ut ipsi presbyteri a comessationibus, potationibus, ut apostolus monet, se subtrahant; nam quidam illorum cum quibusdam vicinis suis utuntur usque ad mediam noctem et eo amplius cum ipsis bibendo morantur; et qui religiosi et sancti esse videntur non quidem tunc ibi manent, sed tamen saturati vel ebrii revertuntur ad ecclesias suas et neque in die neque in nocte officium Deo in ecclesia sibi credita persolvunt; nonnulli vero in eodem loco, ubi ad convivium pergunt, dormiunt." Text: Thomas Hodgkin, Italy and Her Invaders 774-814, Vol. VIII: The Frankish Empire (Oxford, 1899), p. 289.

²⁹MGH, Conc., no. 35, cc. 18, 26, pp. 255-256; no. 36, c. 46, p. 272; no. 37, cc. 10, 44, pp. 276, 282; no. 38, c. 21, p. 289.

³⁰MGH, Capit., no. 33, c. 23, p. 96; no. 36, c. 20, p. 107; no. 120, c. 7, p. 238; MGH, Conc., no. 36, cc. 10, 14, pp. 263-265; no. 38, cc. 7, 8, 43, pp. 287, 292.

much was this the case that often priests wore the same clothing as laymen. They put aside (if they owned them at all) the cassock and stole, which they were ordered to wear in public so that they would be easily recognizable, and donned the shorter cloaks worn by laymen.³¹ As a result, priests had to be cautioned against wearing showy or martial dress.³² And we can well believe that an undated address by an unknown bishop to his diocesan clergy in which priests are instructed not to wear riding spurs or knives strapped to their sides when officiating at Mass captures an important part of the flavor of sacerdotal life among the rural parishes in our period.³³

Obviously, promiscuity, combativeness, and dissipation on the part of priests did not conduce to a role of moral leadership. However, these were not the only worldly paths taken by priests which detracted from their pastoral image. Their involvement in secular affairs was perhaps nowhere more evident than in their avid participation in the activities of the

³¹MGH, Capit., no. 10, c. 7, p. 26; no. 12, c. 3, p. 29; MGH, Conc., no. 6, p. 47; no. 22, cc. 1, 7, pp. 197, 199; no. 36, c. 28, p. 268.

³²MGH, Conc., no. 6, p. 47.

³³Anonymous, "Address to the Clergy" in McCracken and Cabaniss (eds.), Early Medieval Theology, p. 375. The editors (pp. 371-373) state that no critical text of this address has yet been published and speculate that it was composed before 855, probably in Gaul.

marketplace and in their pursuit of material betterment. As has been stated, men who sprang from the lowest classes of society often found that entrance into the priesthood opened up avenues for personal advancement in social and economic power. In the history of civilizations, the scribe, no matter how minimal his education, has been at an advantage over his ignorant fellows. In the Carolingian period, this truth is vital to an understanding of the role that the priest played in society. Very often his scribal talents were called upon for the drafting of a charter or the preparation of other legal and economic documents. Lay and ecclesiastical lords utilized priests as bailiffs or as business agents for the management of their property and the regulation of their estates. And the priests were not slow in taking advantage of this need for their services to better their own condition.³⁴

But there were other factors that induced priests to become "slaves to the gluttony and cupidity of this world." The most important of these was the fact that, as indicated earlier, Carolingian churches, especially those in the rural areas, often failed to receive their legitimate income from benefice holders. Nor did they in many instances receive the ecclesiastical tithe, one fourth of which was generally

³⁴MGH, Capit., no. 14, c. 16, p. 36; no. 81, c. 13, p. 179; MGH, Conc., no. 37, cc. 12, 44, pp. 276, 282.

designated for the support of the priest and their clergy. Not only did priests suffer financial abuse from lay proprietors who diverted the revenues of their churches for their own purposes, but they were also exposed on many occasions to the venality and rapacity of their ecclesiastical superiors. As the canons issued in 813 at the Council of Chalon inform us, there were bishops who acted more like temporal lords and tyrannized over their parochial clergy by exacting unjust taxes,³⁵ extorting exorbitant visitation fees, and placing a charge not only on ordinations, but also on church dedications, and on holy oil. Some bishops even conspired with the counts to defraud their priests of the ecclesiastical tithe by accepting bribes for its nonenforcement.³⁶

Schooled by the evil practices of their superiors, then, it is no surprise to find that many priests, often out

³⁵Alcuin while at Tours became especially indignant with Bishop Raganbert of Limoges who sought to enforce a novel tax on the property and priests of St. Martin's. The penalty imposed by the bishop if the tax (consisting of stipulated measures of such items as wine, bread, feed, eggs, and fish) was not paid was the interdiction of the singing of Mass in the defaulting priest's church. See MGH, Ep., IV, no. 298, p. 457. In the diocese of Worms, Bishop Bernarius, a contemporary of Alcuin, refused to appoint a priest to celebrate the Mass in the churches of the monastery of Hornbach because (it was believed) the monks there had refused to care for his horse at their expense. See ibid., IV, no. 34, p. 551.

³⁶MGH, Conc., no. 37, cc. 14-19, pp. 276-277; Boyd, Tithes and Parishes, pp. 43-45.

of necessity, "labored day and night" for their own personal aggrandizement. Thus, despite the civil and ecclesiastical prohibitions placed against usury, priests in many instances used the revenues of their churches as capital to become moneylenders turning their churches into countinghouses.³⁷

Some of these became, in effect, bankers who not only put out loans at interest but also provided fiduciary services to those in need.³⁸ Inevitably, these interests drew them into all the activities of the marketplace. And, as a good deal of legislation prohibiting their participation in secular business indicates, the material advantages to be derived from commerce were attractions not easily to be ignored.³⁹

So overtaken were some priests by their desire for earthly gain and advancement that they did not scruple to violate the sacred injunction against selling the spiritual gifts

³⁷MGH, Capit., no. 22, cc. 5, 33, pp. 54, 56; no. 28, c. 34, p. 77; no. 37, c. 11, p. 108; no. 120, cc. 2, 6, pp. 237-238; no. 123, c. 14, p. 244; no. 177, c. 17, p. 364; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 10, p. 209; no. 35, cc. 28, 30, 32, p. 256.

³⁸MGH, Capit., no. 36, c. 16, p. 107; no. 37, c. 4, p. 108; no. 123, cc. 16-17, p. 244.

³⁹Ibid., no. 14, c. 16, p. 36; no. 22, c. 23, p. 55; no. 23, c. 30, p. 64; no. 35, c. 9, p. 102; no. 37, c. 1, p. 108; no. 113, c. 1, p. 231. The reforming councils of 813 were especially concerned with clerical involvement in secular affairs. See MGH, Conc., no. 35, c. 30, p. 256; no. 36, c. 14, pp. 264-265; no. 37, c. 12, p. 276; no. 38, c. 8, p. 287.

which God freely gave to man. This abuse of the donum Dei extended even to the selling of the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Eucharist.⁴⁰ Finally, the urge to better their worldly condition led many priests to abuse the rights of their fellow pastors by pursuing the sharpest of practices. Thus we find Bishop Theodulf legislating:

Let no presbyter persuade the faithful of the holy church of God belonging to the parish of another presbyter to leave their own church and come to his church and give their tithes to him.⁴¹

The most ambitious priests, however, not satisfied with merely raiding the flock of another parish, strove to acquire the church also. And again Theodulf throws light on an important problem when we find him ordering:

If any presbyter shall be found to be giving a bribe or to have given one to any man, cleric or lay, so that he may steal away the church of another presbyter, let him know that for this theft and keen covetousness, either he will lose his rank or he ought to be kept in the toils of prison a long time doing penance.⁴²

⁴⁰MGH, Capit., no. 36, c. 12, pp. 106-107; no. 79, c. 1, p. 175; no. 123, c. 5, p. 243.

⁴¹Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 14, Migne, PL, CV, 195: "Nullus presbyter fidelibus sanctae Dei Ecclesiae de alterius presbyteri parochia persuadeat, ut ad suam ecclesiam concurrant relicta propria ecclesia, et suas decimas sibi dent . . ." Text: McCracken and Cabaniss (eds.), Early Medieval Theology, p. 386.

⁴²Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, c. 16, Migne, PL, CV, 196: "Si quis presbyter inventus fuerit alicui clerico aut laico munera dare, aut dedisse, ut ecclesiam alterius presbyteri subripiat, sciat se pro hac rapina et saeva

These priests were often driven to such simoniacal practices by the attractions of acquiring a more lucrative living.⁴³ Unfortunately, their success in achieving this goal usually came at the expense of their original churches which were seriously diminished by their self-serving administration.⁴⁴

Such heavy involvement by priests in the social and economic activities of Carolingian society often led to serious contentions that needed to be settled by judicial action. In Merovingian times, civil and ecclesiastical courts had variously assumed jurisdiction over the clergy. Efforts to secure clerical immunity from secular justice had met with small success. The impetus of ecclesiastical reform, however, led the Carolingians to make a serious attempt to set the clergy apart from the rest of society in matters pertaining to justice. Under Pippin, and especially under Charlemagne, legislation was passed seeking to establish sacerdotal immunity from secular tribunals. Thus, priests were not only to be submissive to their bishops, they were to be judged by them

cupiditate, aut gradum ammissurum, aut in carceris aerumna longo tempore poenitentiam agendo detinendum." Text: McCracken and Cabaniss (eds.), Early Medieval Theology, p. 386.

⁴³MGH, Capit., no. 36, c. 13, p. 107; no. 123, c. 7, p. 243; MGH, Conc., no. 35, c. 20, p. 255; no. 38, c. 14, p. 288.

⁴⁴MGH, Capit., no. 18, c. 3, p. 43; no. 24, c. 3, p. 65; no. 81, c. 11, p. 178.

also. And episcopal permission was necessary before cases involving priests could be adjudicated in secular courts. A judgment taken in an episcopal court could only be appealed to the archbishop and finally to the king himself.⁴⁵

The fact that the ultimate appeal could be made to the secular power in itself introduced ambiguity into the judicial system as far as ecclesiastical exclusiveness was concerned. As the repeated injunctions against the use of secular courts by the clergy attest, practical enforcement of the principle of sacerdotal immunity was impossible.⁴⁶ Priests, especially those in the rural areas who led lives given over largely to secular concerns and whose churches were used as public court-houses, did not hesitate to seek the convenience of secular justice. An enactment of 794 attempted a compromise by ordering that a mixed lay and ecclesiastical tribunal be used to adjudicate cases involving laymen and clergy.⁴⁷ And, as a capitulary of 805 ordering public judges to expedite suits involving churches, widows, and orphans indicates, secular

⁴⁵Ibid., no. 13, c. 7, p. 32; no. 14, cc. 9, 18, pp. 35-36; no. 19, c. 17, p. 46; Lea, Studies in Church History, pp. 176-178. Cf. H. Leclercq, "Jurisdiction," in DACL, VIII, I (1928), 485-498; H. Leclercq, "Tribunal du clerc," in DACL, XV, 2 (1953), 2761-2781.

⁴⁶MGH, Capit., no. 22, cc. 28, 38, p. 56; no. 35, c. 17, p. 103; no. 36, c. 16, p. 107; no. 84, c. 9, p. 183; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 3, p. 207; no. 37, c. 11, p. 276.

⁴⁷MGH, Capit., no. 28, c. 30, p. 77.

courts regularly handled ecclesiastical cases.⁴⁸ Finally, that priests often ignored the episcopal courts even at the risk of excommunication and deposition is indicated by their persistent attempts to secure royal justice without first obtaining permission of their bishops.⁴⁹

Thus, even where benefit of clergy was concerned, the efforts by the Carolingians to stress the unique character of the priest in society and to discourage him from all secular involvement met with poor success. As our review of selected aspects of sacerdotal life in Carolingian society reveals, a large segment of the priestly population indiscriminately participated in worldly affairs. They not only kept concubines, bore arms, and took part in the hunt; they also caroused in taverns, were convivial table companions, and involved themselves in a variety of economic pursuits. Such clerics, who in effect differed little from the laity in the conduct of their lives, we may conclude, were hardly in a position to give moral leadership. Despite the best intentions of Charlemagne and his ecclesiastical reformers expressed in many a canon and capitulary, the necessary canonical discipline that would have

⁴⁸Ibid., no. 44, c. 2, p. 122.

⁴⁹Ibid., no. 22, c. 10, p. 55; no. 28, cc. 6, 39, pp. 74-75, 77; MGH, Conc., no. 24, c. 26, p. 210; no. 36, c. 24, p. 267; Lea, Studies in Church History, pp. 178-180.

insured exemplary conduct on the part of priest did not obtain. For the period under discussion, then, this reform legislation remained largely an oft-stated ideal and the goal of achieving a morally pre-eminent priesthood remained unrealized.

CONCLUSION

With our examination of the priest as he is revealed in the sources completed we may now make some estimation as to how he measured up to the Carolingian ideal set forth in the De clericorum institutione of Rabanus Maurus. According to Rabanus, Frankish priests attained to their office because they were the chosen of God set apart from the commonality by their possession of honor and merit and wisdom.¹ That he was speaking in this instance of the "present Church," that is, of men in the real world of his age is an indication of the lofty idealism that characterized the thinking of Carolingian reformers. This propensity to idealism often came, as was stated at the outset of this paper, at the expense of neglecting the practical application of energy to achieve necessary reforms. Thus we would look in vain in the pages of Rabanus' treatise to find any reference to patronage and the proprietary church regime as it affected the Frankish clergy. Instead of speaking to the actual needs of priests in a Carolingian society in which the proprietary church was a dominant

¹De. cl. inst., I, 2, 6, Migne, PL, CVII, 287-298, 301-302.

reality, Rabanus, in the tradition of Alcuinian scholarship, culls the books of earlier writers and holds up a model of the priest that under the circumstances was impossible of fulfillment.

As has been noted, the majority of Frankish churches in the eighth and ninth centuries fell under proprietary control and the bulk of the priesthood was recruited from the class of minor freemen and from the serf population. Under this dispensation, priests were rarely selected on the idealistic basis suggested by Rabanus. Rather, they were chosen because of more mundane considerations. The motives for choosing candidates for holy orders ranged from the selection of a minor freeman for reasons of simony or property considerations to the choice of a serf for reasons of mere seigniorial convenience. This meant that ordinations were often irregular and that men who were morally unfit entered the priesthood in great numbers. As we have seen in our study of the priest in society, Carolingian legislation from the time of St. Boniface is filled with repeated injunctions to the clergy to abstain from dissolute behavior that included every kind of vice. The indications, then, are that moral insufficiency was widespread in the ranks of the clergy.

Rabanus focused his greatest attention on the educational preparation of the candidate for priesthood while the

latter was serving in the various degrees of holy orders. The ordained priest was seen ideally as a classical scholar and a theologian whose training enabled him to understand the Scriptures and the prayer of the Church and to perform the pastoral duties of maintaining divine worship, administering the sacraments, and preaching. The fact of priestly recruitment from the lowest echelons of a semi-barbaric society did make formal education for the priesthood a primary need. At the same time, working with such culturally impoverished men meant that a sophisticated educational program of the kind prescribed by Rabanus was wholly unrealistic. In actuality, our sources reveal that Carolingian education affecting the priest remained, of necessity, very rudimentary; and frequently priestly knowledge of even the Creed and the Lord's Prayer was brought into question.

For Rabanus it followed logically that if men of the best character were chosen for the priesthood and were properly indoctrinated, then they would be fully prepared for their pastoral duties. But we have found that in the real world of Carolingian society neither of his premises generally obtained. Consequently, there did not exist in fact a priesthood with the necessary competence to carry on an adequate program of pastoral care at the parish level despite all reform efforts to legislate to the contrary.

Thus it must be concluded that the reformation of ecclesiastical life envisioned by St. Boniface in which canonical discipline would obtain throughout the Frankish Church was far from realized at the time of Charlemagne's passing. For in fact, the compromise made by the Carolingian monarchy with the proprietary church system did not work. The principle of private church ownership was fundamentally incompatible with ecclesiastical reform and its divisive effects could not be compensated for merely by legislation. But in explaining the failure on the part of the ruling elite to implement the reforms urged by St. Boniface, it is not enough to point to the paradox of their position--that by countenancing the evils of the proprietary church system the reformist goals that they pursued remained ideals impossible of attainment. In the final analysis, the political necessity which induced the Carolingian rulers to use ecclesiastical lands and prelates as a major prop of their military policy dictated that the compromise be made. Charlemagne, it must be said, sincerely tried to curtail the abuses of the proprietary church regime, but inevitably his political policies favored their evolution.

THE SOURCES

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

For convenience of reference, the edition of Rabanus Maurus' De clericorum institutione published in J. P. Migne's Patrologia Latina was used. The best edition of this work, A. Knoepfler's Rabani Mauri De institutione clericorum libri tres, includes an analysis of the sources used by Rabanus. The most pertinent and detailed evidence for the life of the Carolingian priest is to be found in the legislative and administrative decrees contained in the royal capitularies and in the canons of church councils. The standard recensions of these primary sources remain A. Boretius' Capitularia regum francorum and the Concilia aevi Karolini edited by A. Werminghoff in the Monumenta Germaniae historica. For the very important diocesan capitulary of Theodulf, Capitula ad presbyteros parochiae suae, recourse must still be made to the early edition published in the Patrologia Latina; a recent recension of his Capitulare ad eosdem may be found in Carlo de Clercq, La législation religieuse franque de Clovis à Charlemagne.

Next in importance in terms of its illumination of the actual life of the priest in Carolingian society is the correspondence. Here the letters of St. Boniface, Alcuin, and

Charlemagne are the most abundant and useful. The best edition of St. Boniface's letters is that of M. Tangl's Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius. For the letters of Alcuin and Charlemagne, reliance must still be placed upon the recensions by E. Dümmler, W. Gundlach, et al. of the Epistolae Karolini aevi. Important correspondence reflecting on the life of the Frankish priest is also found in the papal letters contained in the Codex Carolinus. Finally, with respect to pastoral activities, enlightenment was gained from a reading of the penitentials of which the principal works may be found translated by J. T. McNeil and H. M. Gamer in Medieval Handbooks of Penance.

The limitations placed on the scope of this paper dictated that no use be made of charters most of which deal essentially with the granting or confirmation of donations and immunities for the benefit of churches. An in-depth study of the economic life of the priest, however, would necessitate the use of the Diplomata Karolinorum edited by E. Mühlbacher. It should also be noted that little use was made of the annals, vitae, and gesta of the period because, as a reading of them reveals, they are generally lacking in specific detail concerning the priest. Regarding the lives of saints, many of which may be found critically edited in the Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptores, the most important are those of

Anglo-Saxon missionaries. A convenient English translation of the lives of the principal Anglo-Saxon saints may be found in C. H. Talbot's The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany.

With respect to the secondary sources used in this paper, a few of the more important works should be noted. The general church histories such as Albert Hauck's Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands, André Lagarde's The Latin Church in the Middle Ages, the Histoire de l'Eglise depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours edited by Augustin Fliche and Victor Martin, and especially Gustav Schnürer's Church and Culture in the Middle Ages were valuable for understanding the historical context of the period. More topical works such as A. Kleinclausz's Charlemagne, E. S. Duckett's Alcuin, Friend of Charlemagne: His World and His Work, C. J. B. Gaskoin's Alcuin: His Life and His Work, David Knowles' The Monastic Order in England, and Wilhelm Levison's England and the Continent in the Eighth Century provided valuable commentary. The scholarly articles published in the Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie and in the Dictionnaire de théologie catholique were indispensable aids. Especially useful for the critical study of canonical legislation were Carlo de Clercq's La législation religieuse franque de Clovis à Charlemagne, P. Fournier and G. Le Bras' Histoire des collections canoniques en occident, and Hefele-Leclercq's Histoire des conciles

d'après les documents originaux.

Henry G. J. Beck's The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France During the Sixth Century is one of the very few secondary publications that deals specifically with the priest in Frankish society. To this work, this paper owes a great debt. Much use was made of it for suggestions as to organization as well as for early developments in pastoral care and in the proprietary church. With respect to the proprietary church, an extensive bibliography has developed (see Chapter II, note 9). The standard works on the subject are those of Ulrich Stutz, Die Eigenkirche als Element des mittelalterlich-germanischen Kirchenrechtes and Geschichte des Kirchlichen Benefizialwesens von seinem Anfängen bis auf die Zeit des Alexanders III and Imbart de La Tour, "Les paroisses rurales dans l'ancienne France du IV^e au XI^e siècle." To these must be added the definitive volumes of Émile Lesne's Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France.

For a comprehensive view of Carolingian education, recourse was made to J. Bass Mullinger's old standard on the subject, The Schools of Charles the Great and the Restoration of Education in the Ninth Century and to M. L. W. Laistner's incisively written Thought and Letters in Western Europe A.D. 500 to 900. Especially important were Pierre Riché's Éducation et culture dans l'occident barbare, VI^e-VIII^e siècles

and volumes four and five of Émile Lesne's magisterial Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France.

Most helpful for the study of pastoral care and liturgical developments were L. Duchesne's still valuable work, Christian Worship: Its Origins and Evolution, J. A. Jungmann's authoritative The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia), and Gerald Ellard's illuminating Master Alcuin: A Partner of Our Piety. To these must be added O. D. Watkin's A History of Penance along with the critical commentary of J. T. McNeill and H. M. Gamer found in the introduction to their work, Medieval Handbooks of Penance. Finally, despite his anti-Catholic bias, H. C. Lea's Studies in Church History, The Rise of the Temporal Power, Benefit of Clergy, Excommunication still proves of great value in any discussion of sacerdotal affairs.

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