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Martel: The Transitional Frank

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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Abstract

The subject of this thesis is Charles Martel. This thesis attempts to show him for what he was in his context: as bridge between the Merovingian and Carolingian periods in Frankish history. Its main focus will be Martel as he fits into the schema of Merovingian kingship and his rise to power and its importance to the later Carolingian period of history. It will also touch upon the Battle of Poitiers/Tours in 732 and his role in the missionary activity of Boniface and Pirmin and their impact on his realm.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Charles Martel was both a Frank and a bridge between times. His life, from his imprisonment after the death of his father Pippin of Herstal, to his death in 741, was a time of transition. Before his life, the Franks had a concept of kingship which was based on the royal blood of the Merovingian line. Throughout Martel's life, he worked to change this concept through force of arms and gaining legitimacy for his family through the Church. Martel was also able to fundamentally change the relationship that the Franks had with regard to church and state. His rise to power during the Frankish civil war, followed by his actions leading up to and during the Battle of Poitiers, helped in a transition from Merovingian to Carolingian. Martel's time in power also changed the shape of Frankish punishment and views of the feud. Martel was able to lay the groundwork for the rise to power of his son, Pippin the Short.

This thesis includes eight main chapters. The first chapter is an examination of the historiography of the period and the sources used throughout the thesis. The second chapter assesses the Merovingian concept of kingship. The third chapter investigates the relationship between church and state in the Merovingian world. The fourth chapter follows Martel's rise to power. The fifth chapter examines the Battle of Poitiers and its impact on Martel and the Carolingian line. The sixth chapter investigates the changes in punishment and the feud from the Merovingian period through Martel's life. The seventh chapter examines Martel's interaction with the Christian Church, especially his role in the life of Boniface. The final chapter is an overview of the period after Martel's death. Martel is shown to be the transitional Frank between the Merovingian and Carolingian periods.

Before entering the world in which Charles Martel lived, it is first necessary to understand the current scholarship going into this period. In this chapter, the three major historiographic traditions surrounding Martel are examined. These three traditions are the study of the early Medieval period, specifically the time between 466 and 800, the study of the Merovingian line, and the study of Martel himself. After the historiography is investigated, the sources used in this thesis are explained.

In order to understand Martel, one first has to understand how the period he lived in has been traditionally studied and how it will be studied in this thesis. This thesis covers the early Medieval period from the birth of Clovis in 466 to the crowning of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor in 800. Traditionally, this period has been termed part of the *medius aevum*, and, until quite recently, has been popularly thought of as the "Dark Ages." The term "Dark Ages," an unfortunate term, was coined by Petrarch (d. 1374), who felt that, compared to what had come before, Petrarch's Fourteenth Century was a time of decay and used the term "dark ages" to describe his own time. The term "Middle Ages" did not come about until the Enlightenment, when a German historian, Christoph Keller (d. 1707), wrote his *History of the Middle Age from the Times of Constantine the Great to the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks*. With this work, the period between the Fall of Rome and the Enlightenment began to be studied as a block. Shortly following Keller was the historian Edward Gibbon, whose work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) is partially responsible for the current popular interpretation of the time after the fall of Rome as a time of decay and darkness. In Gibbon's mind, the Roman Empire in the second century was the greatest period in

human history. The rise of Christianity, coupled with invasion and corruption, caused the fall of the Empire and brought about the "Dark Ages."

Counter to Gibbon and other Enlightenment writers such as Voltaire, there was a move on behalf of the "Dark Ages." Sir Walter Scott (d. 1832) romanticized the period, especially the thirteenth century, creating an image of an idyllic world of damsels, tournaments, and chivalry. His effort of romanticizing the era was bolstered by the work of William Morris (d. 1896), who created a movement pushing for a return to handcrafted work, using the period after the fall of Rome as the ideal.

This romanticized view was not the only one to exist in the nineteenth century. Jacob Burckhardt published *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1806) and this work revolutionized the study of the field of medieval history. Burckhardt attempted to cut the time between the fall of Rome and the Enlightenment into sections, particularly by joining the later periods as part of the Renaissance. Richard Southern continued Burckhardt's work, publishing *The Making of the Middle Ages* in 1931, which focused on a further periodization of the later eras. This way of thinking persisted until Peter Brown published "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity" in 1971. In this paper, Brown connected this period with the late Roman world, hence the name "late antiquity," and emphasized the importance of continuity and change to the time. This thesis holds Brown's view that the late antique period is a transitional one. The late antique period cannot be seen as a uniform time period, but it can be seen as a transitional period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance.

The second historiographic tradition is the scholarship into the kings through which Charles Martel arose from, the Merovingians. The history of modern scholarship

into the Merovingian dynasty closely reflects that of the study of late antiquity. Until fairly recently, the Merovingians were not looked upon fondly due to the campaign waged by the Carolingian historians, who, it must be said, wanted to disparage the Merovingians. This led to a historical misconception of the Merovingians as the "Do Nothing Kings."

Recently, scholars have begun to reevaluate their views on the Merovingians due to new research. One of the leading scholars of Frankish history, and one who has been able to seamlessly implement archaeological evidence into his work, is Edward James. James asserts that the Franks were engaged in colonization. Colonization would mean that the Franks had some ability to spread their civilization. The most intriguing of the attempted Frankish colonization efforts were the possible invasions of Britain. Objects inlaid with decorative wires, a technique used in Frankish Gaul, have been found in England. Coupled with Frankish claims of lordship over parts of southern Britain, it can be assumed that the Franks had contact, and possibly invaded, Britain sometime in the fifth century. However, this assertion is dampened by his admittance that most of the evidence for colonization are names and graves of which ethnicity is tough to determine. This is important because it shows that the Franks had contact with Britain. This meant that ideas from the British Isles, such as Celtic coronation rites, could influence the Franks.

James's examination of Frankish minting also serves to illuminate the period of the Merovingians. Like the Romans, the Franks minted their own coins, in bronze, silver, and gold varieties. The *triens*, or one-third of a gold piece, became so widespread under the Franks that it is called a *solidus*, or gold coin, in many texts. If *solidus* meant gold

coin, then is it possible that the Franks actually had a large number of them, or was *solidus* only used to describe *triens* in Frankish areas that had been under Roman influence the longest? The answer to this question, which, again, James never answers, would give insight into the spread of Merovingian influence and how far-reaching the Roman Empire actually was. Another thing the coins illuminate is the relationship between the Merovingians and the Byzantine Empire. King Theudebert I placed his head and name on his coinage, and this action led to shock in the Byzantine Empire as recorded by the historian Procopius. This incident brings to light three things. First, it shows that there was trade between the Franks and the Byzantines. Secondly, it shows that the Franks had the technology to not only mint their own currency, but the technology to mark it as their own. Finally, it shows that the Merovingians did not fear the Byzantines. It would have been known by Theudebert that the minting of his coins would annoy the Byzantines, but it does not seem that he cared. The Byzantines thought of themselves as the continuation of the Roman Empire. Minting coins was something associated with the Empire. Theudebert minting coins would have been perceived by the Byzantines as the Merovingians becoming too Roman. The resultant show of annoyance by the Byzantines, and nothing more than that, demonstrated to the Merovingians that they had nothing to fear from the Byzantines, leading subsequent kings to mint their own coins.

A further important historian of the Merovingian period is J. Wallace-Hadrill. One area in which his studies have proved enlightening is the relationship of the blood feud to the Franks. A feud, according to Wallace-Hadrill, is "the threat of hostility between kins; then, the state of hostility between them; and finally, the satisfaction of

their differences and a settlement on terms acceptable to both." It is his belief that feud died out among the Franks for a variety of reasons, one among them being the complexity of Gallo-Roman society. This thesis will examine whether the feud was still a part of Frankish relations during the period of Charles Martel.

The final historiographic tradition that must be examined in order to place Martel into his proper historical context is the study into Martel himself. When examining the Franks, the study of Charles Martel normally falls into one of three areas. The first claim is that the Battle of Poitiers was the sole important event of Charles Martel's life. Currently, this view of the battle has lately been brought to the forefront of nationalist organizations who are fighting for a racial and religious cleansing of contemporary France. This view of Martel as being solely important for his victory at Poitiers is also found in textbooks, where it is normally used as a space filler. This view persists due to scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Heinrich Brunner, who died in 1887, is one of the historians who has emphasized Martel's role at the Battle of Poitiers. It was his belief that Martel was victorious and "saved Christendom" at Poitiers because he secularized church holdings. Brunner's reasoning for this is that the church lands were given to Martel's warriors, who were thus able to develop into a cavalry force. These cavalry then won Martel the Battle of Poitiers. These cavalry then created the framework for the manorial system of later centuries. Brunner's arguments were held by many historians throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, though many of them added to his theories. One theory claimed that victory at Poitiers led to the complete end of the late antique period. Others changed the Brunner

theory by stating that it was the invention of the stirrup, and not the secularization of church lands, that led to the creation of Martel's cavalry force.

The emphasis placed on the Battle of Poitiers in scholarship on Martel has largely fallen away since the middle of the twentieth century. Modern historians have demonstrated that Brunner's theories could not be correct, as Martel did not secularize as many lands as Brunner claimed, that he was not the creator of a new form of warfare, and that later society was not shaped by the advent of heavy cavalry. This, combined with a new appreciation for the partisanship inherent in many of the sources on Martel's life, has led to a de-emphasis of Martel's historical significance.

Lately, historians of Martel have begun to look at his reign as a bridge between the Merovingian period and the Carolingian period. This approach is perfectly utilized by Pierre Riché. This is best seen in his examination of Martel's military rise and his examination of Martel's last four years of life. One of the most interesting episodes mentioned by Riché were the four years in which Martel was sole ruler of the Franks. In 737, the Merovingian king Theuderic IV died, leaving no heirs. Instead of appointing another Merovingian relative, as was Martel's right as mayor of the palace, or naming himself or one of his sons king, Martel left the position vacant. Riché believes that he did this because of the unfortunate case of Grimoald, whose attempted coup was strategically left out of the histories made by the Pippinid supporters. This, however, only explains why he did not appoint himself or one of his sons as king. It is possible Martel did not appoint another Merovingian as king because he felt that after a few years of sole Carolingian rule, the Frankish people would have no problems with a Carolingian as king after Martel's death, which proved to be the case. As sole ruler, though, Martel acted as a

king, except that he used the late king's name on official documents. Pope Gregory III referred to Martel as *vice-regulus*, or substitute king, and not as mayor of the palace. This appears to be Rome giving tacit approval to Martel's bloodless coup, thus legitimizing the Carolingians in the eyes of the Franks. This examination of Martel's role as *vice-regulus* is extremely important to understanding the transition between the Merovingian and Carolingian periods.

In every historical exercise, it is important to examine the sources one has to draw from for the period one is researching. For the study of Charles Martel, historians have very few documents and artifacts contemporary to his time. It is therefore necessary to look at sources from a broad expanse of time. Martel's life cannot be understood without an understanding of the time immediately preceding him. For this reason, many of the sources examined in this period are from the Merovingian period, and many of them will predate Charles Martel by many years. It is also important to look at sources following Martel's life, thus some of the sources are from the early Carolingian period. This thesis uses both primary and secondary sources.

Special mention must be made of the most important source on the Merovingian world, Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*. Gregory (539-594) was the Gallo-Roman bishop of Tours, one of the premier sees in Gaul due to its founding by Martin of Tours. Gregory served as bishop under three grandsons of Clovis and one great-grandson: Sigebert (d. 557), Chilperic (d. 584), Guntram (d.593), and Childebert II (d.594). Unlike many of his contemporaries, Gregory's *History* does not attempt to whitewash the Merovingians. He depicts them as they actually appeared to him.

The second key source with respect to Charles Martel and the Merovingian world is the *Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, written by a man historians have termed Pseudo-Fredegar. This *Chronicle* is important because it is the only source historians have for many of the events of the Merovingian period. The work is different from that of Gregory and other sources such as Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* in that it does not contain much of the author's commentary. It is a chronicle, not a biography or work of history. The author of the chronicle was not meant to be known by his audience. He was an anonymous observer. All that can be gathered about the author is that he was a supporter of the Carolingians. The *Chronicle* can best be viewed as a compilation of a number of sources attempting to explain what events happened and when these events were.

The third key source on the life of Charles Martel is Willibald's *Life of Saint Boniface*, written around 765. Unlike Gregory of Tours' *History* or Pseudo-Fredegar's *Chronicle*, the *Life* is a hagiographical work designed for religious purposes. This means that some aspects of it may not be entirely accurate. The *Life* is, however, very important in understanding Martel's relationship with the Christian Church.

According to Richard Marius, "the current mood in historical studies is to be skeptical about how much individual leaders may accomplish on their own." The aim of this thesis is to turn this on its head. True, Martel could not have accomplished everything he did without a number of factors helping him. These factors include the men in his armies, the men who helped him run the country, the weather, the actions of foreign powers, and the power of fortune. Charles Martel is different from other leaders. He was an illegitimate child. He was not expected to become the leader of the Franks.

This thesis answers how Martel was able to do this. The purpose of this thesis is to place Martel into his proper historical context. He is to be seen as a bridge between the Merovingian world and the Carolingian world.

Chapter 2: Kingship in the Merovingian Period

A key to understanding the world of Charles Martel is the Merovingian concept of kingship. The system of inheritance utilized by the Merovingians is extremely important for understanding Merovingian kingship. Throughout this chapter, Clovis is used as the model of a Merovingian king. Connected with Clovis, the role of gift-giver is shown as the most important action fulfilled by the king. Finally, the importance of signs and portents in the perception of a king's reign will be investigated.

The inheritance rights for the leadership of the Merovingians are quite enlightening about Merovingian kingship. The inheritance was not *primogeniture*, where the eldest son would be given the kingdom. Instead, the kingdom would be split between the sons, a system known as partible inheritance. For example, when King Childebert died in 596, the kingdom was split between his sons, Theudebert and Theuderic, "of whom Theudebert obtained Austrasia" and "Theuderic succeeded Guntramn in Burgundy." This inheritance system gave certain advantages to the Franks. One of the advantages is that it gave kingdoms natural allies. This can be seen in *The Agreement of Childebert I and Chlothar I For Keeping the Peace*, made sometime between 511 and 558. At the end of this agreement, the two kings jointly state that "since, by God's grace, brotherly love maintains an unbroken bond between us, *centenarii* are to have the right to pursue thieves and follow the tracks they leave within our adjoining provinces." This meant that one king's men could enter into the other nation's borders in order to pursue a criminal. This would have been very helpful in keeping each kingdom stable and the residents of each kingdom happy with the other.

Most kings had more than one son, and this led to problems. When this happened, a person's natural greed and impatience could be used by other Frankish leaders. One of the more interesting episodes occurred during the reign of Clovis. Clovis sent a message to Chloderic, son of Sigibert, that he would ally with Chloderic if Chloderic could kill Sigibert. Chloderic promptly assassinated his own father. This shows two things about familial relations under the Merovingians. First, it shows that sons were willing to kill their fathers for the chance to gain power earlier than they would have normally. The second thing that this shows is that the Merovingians were not above bribery to remove a rival. In this instance, Clovis used the promise of an early succession and the promise of an alliance to get rid of a potentially troublesome king.

The case of King Guntram (c. 584) proves enlightening with regard to Frankish inheritance. Guntram's brother Charibert, ruler of Paris and its surrounding regions, died leaving his wife Fredegund and an infant son. Fredegund offered Guntram control of Paris if he would raise Charibert's son. He accepted, gathered his army, and marched on to Paris where he was then welcomed into the city. In this instance, it appears that inheritance could be passed down through adoption. Guntram's adoption of Charibert's son made him into Charibert. He was thus entitled to take the city. It is interesting that Fredegund asked Guntram to come. She does not offer marriage, but says that she will be "his humble servant." There was another claimant to Paris, though. Guntram's nephew, Childebert, wished to have part of Charibert's lands. Childebert claimed that Guntram had made a treaty with him, and that if Guntram would not give him what they had agreed upon previously, he should "at least do not withhold from him [Childebert] that part of Childebert's kingdom which is his by right." Guntram read the treaty differently.

According to Guntram, the treaty "stipulates that, if one of us should enter the city of Paris without the prior agreement of his brother, he should thereupon forfeit his share." Obviously, both Guntram and Childebert understood Childebert to have taken the place of his father in this agreement as the "brother." Childebert thought that because Guntram was now in Paris, that Childebert would receive the city. Guntram, however, saw that two of his brothers, Sigibert and Chilperic had entered Paris beforehand. Both men "incurred the vengeance of God and the malediction promised in the pact." Unlike his brothers, Guntram had not died upon entering the city. He believed that this meant that he had not broken the treaty. In Guntram's mind, he would have died if he had broken the treaty, but because he did not, he must be the rightful ruler of Paris.

It is also important to examine the *Lex Salica*, or Salic Law of Merovingian Gaul. The Salic Law is a law code, but its first issuer is unknown. Most scholarship suggests that it was promulgated under Clovis, but this scholarship is, at best, an educated guess. All that is known is that it was more than likely written in the early sixth century and that it was written in Latin, though it does contain some words in Frankish. The *Lex Salica* contains laws regulating a number of things, but for this study, it is most important that its regulations regarding inheritance be analyzed.

Title 59 of *Lex Salica* concerns inheritance. Its first rule is that "if someone dies leaving no children, should his mother survive, let her succeed to the inheritance." This law allowed property to stay in one family. A man without children, if he died with a living relative, could die knowing that his land would stay within his family. This line of reasoning continues in the second guideline, proscribing that "should there be no mother, but the deceased leaves a brother or sister, let them succeed to the inheritance." This line

sheds light on the earlier case of Guntram. In this law, one sees the correctness of Guntram's earlier actions with regard to his taking of Paris. Charibert was Guntram's brother, meaning that by this law, Guntram and his brothers would receive the land of Charibert if he had no son. Charibert had a son, but his son was too young to succeed to the throne. Guntram's adoption of the son, through the insistence of Fredegund, made the succession law void by, in effect, removing Charibert's son. The land would then be given to the brothers of Charibert. Guntram's brothers were now dead. According to this law, Guntram rightfully gained control of Paris.

There is an odd line in Title 59 of *Lex Salica* that does not seem to fit with the rest of the title, but it is important to note it for its later importance. The final line states that "with regard to the land, no inheritance shall pertain to the woman, but the land in its entirety shall pertain to the male sex who are brothers [of the sister and mother's sister.]" Throughout Title 59, a sister or mother is allowed to get the inheritance. This line appears to repudiate that. It is quite possible that the inheritance mentioned in the beginning of Title 59 only applies to material possessions, whereas land would only go to the male. This would mean that only a man could rule an area, as the area ruled would be by inheritance of land. Once again using Guntram and his taking of Paris as an example, Fredegund, by this law, needed to have a male to rule the land. If this male did not appear, the land would fall out of her family. Guntram was the man she decided to rule the land, probably due to his blood relation to Charibert. This line would play an important role in Charles Martel's rise to power.

One of the more important aspects of a king's rule was understanding the complex system of gift-giving in the Frankish world. A Frankish king needed to command

absolute loyalty from his men. Gift-giving proved vitally important to gaining this loyalty. The rule of Clovis (482-511) proves enlightening on this topic. During Clovis's war with Syagrius, Clovis's men, who, along with Clovis, were not Christians at the time, looted many churches. One of the items looted was a chalice "of great size and wondrous workmanship." The bishop of the church pleaded with Clovis to return this chalice and Clovis agreed. However, when Clovis asked his men to not take the chalice as theirs, one of his soldiers broke the chalice with his battleaxe. Clovis returned the broken chalice to the bishop and waited until the end of the year, when, during a routine inspection of his men, came upon the same man who had smashed the chalice and "split his skull" as punishment for his earlier transgression. Why did Clovis not kill the man immediately for challenging his rule? The man who destroyed the chalice was not rebelling against Clovis, but was instead rebuking him. The Merovingians had a complex system of gift-giving. In claiming the chalice for himself, Clovis had, in the minds of his men, overstepped his bounds as king. At the time of this incident, Clovis did not have enough power over his men to successfully claim this chalice. By the end of the year, however, Clovis had consolidated enough power to exact his revenge.

Another episode in which Clovis showed his power was in the conversion of his army to Catholic Christianity. According to Gregory of Tours, Clovis called a meeting with his men to discuss conversion, and all of the men present voted to convert to Catholic Christianity. As previously seen, Clovis was a man who did not like his power to be questioned. It would be assumed then, that when he decided to convert, that he would force his men to convert. However, if Gregory is to be believed, this was not the case. Why would Clovis have suddenly become an egalitarian ruler? In truth, he did not.

However, there were some very good reasons for claiming that it was the decision of Clovis's men rather than the decision of the king. The first reason is that the other Germanic tribes of the region were adherents of Arian Christianity. Gregory wanted to show that Clovis's entire tribe wanted to convert to the Roman, and in Gregory's eyes correct, version of Christianity. This gave, in Gregory's mind, a superiority to the Franks over the other Germanic tribes. The actions of the Franks would be supported because they had all, by choice, decided to follow Catholic Christianity.

It is of little importance whether Clovis' decision was truly egalitarian. When Clovis and his men gathered to be baptized, Clovis "asked that he might be baptized first." Clovis then went to Remigius, bishop of Rheims, and was baptized. He was the ruler of the Franks. Even if the men had all voted, Clovis was not going to have his authority questioned. He was the leader, and he was going to be baptized first.

Using the reign of Clovis as a model for Merovingian kingship, however, is problematic. Clovis was entirely unique. He was the man who first unified the Franks. He was the man who tied them to Catholic Christianity. He had power over his men and lands that later kings did not have. So, Clovis can be used as a model, but it must be remembered that he is unique.

Frankish kings needed to show that they were the legitimate rulers. Sometimes, proving this legitimacy became quite creative. As previously mentioned, Clovis had tricked the son of a neighboring king to kill the king. After killing Sigibert, the king, Chloderic, the son, then sent for Clovis to come and give him his alliance. Clovis sent a message back that he would send soldiers to inspect the treasury left over from Sigibert. Chloderic did as he was asked and Clovis sent his army to inspect the treasury. The

soldiers asked Chloderic to place his hand on the treasure and, acting on Clovis' orders, the soldiers then killed him. After his death, Clovis came to Sigibert's domain and assured the people that he had played no role in the deaths of Sigibert and Chloderic. After this the men of the area made Clovis their ruler. Clovis had tricked Chloderic into killing his father and then tricked Chloderic into his own death in order to gain control of land without the use of military force.

Clovis was chosen to be the leader of the Franks for a reason. He had proven to be the best person at giving them gifts. Clovis was able to send treasure, even if this treasure led to the deaths of others. Clovis's armies could also offer the region protection, another form of a gift. He had gained legitimacy by giving the people what they wanted, and by doing it in a better way than the other rulers.

In a similar vein, and a topic which will be examined more thoroughly, Christianity could also be used to prove legitimacy. An example is the reign of Guntramn, a Frankish king whose territories centered on Burgundy. According to Pseudo-Fredegar, "all the neighboring peoples sang his praises in full." Guntramn "when with his bishops... conducted himself like one of them; contributed generously to the relief of the poor... founded a monastery..." and "he ordered the convening of a synod of forty bishops." Guntramn, it appears, was engaged in gift-giving to the Church. The Church was a powerful force in the region, and they probably felt that they deserved the same treatment as other tribes. If they were going to support the Merovingians, they wanted to be paid. Guntramn, by giving them land and buildings, paid them. The Church then supported Guntramn's actions. It would have seemed as though Guntramn had been chosen by God to be the King of the Franks.

Being a king during the Merovingian period brought with it a number of challenges, one of them being the importance of signs and portents in the perception of the actions and remembrance of a king. Throughout his *Chronicle*, Pseudo-Fredegair references signs before nearly every major event. For example, in Childebert's third year as king, "many signs were seen in the sky. A comet was seen." Later during this year, Childebert's forces defeated the Warni in such a fashion that "few indeed of that people survived." The signs would have been interpreted as God placing his favor on Childebert. However, many of the signs are not given explanations. Pseudo-Fredegair assumes that his readers already understand the meaning of most of the signs he references. This means that belief in the importance of these signs was widespread during the time of the Franks. Any sign in the sky would have been interpreted by the people as either God's favor or disfavor with an action of a king.

Kingship was important to the Merovingians. The inheritance rights of Merovingian leadership gave some advantages to the Franks. This can be seen in the case of Guntram and his taking of Paris, as well as the *Lex Salica*. Kings during this period needed to command absolute loyalty from their men in order to lead successfully. These kings also had to prove that they were the legitimate rulers. Finally, each king needed to know the importance of signs in the perception of their actions.

Chapter 3: Church and State Relations in the Merovingian World

The complicated relationship between the Merovingians and the Catholic Christian church in Gaul played a major role in Charles Martel's rise to power and this chapter details explains the relationship between church and state. Following Clovis' conversion to Catholic Christianity in 496, and even before his conversion during his interaction with the Arian tribes surrounding him, the church and state of Merovingian Gaul were linked. The interaction between kings and bishops led to policy changes and shows the power of the episcopacy during the period. Bishops in Gaul supported certain factions, and, it can be assumed, led to the conquests of a number of lands. Merovingian kings and queens had the power to select, remove, and support bishops. Finally, the implementation of a monastic immunity policy led to a change in the Merovingian policy regarding the Church.

The most important source for the study of the relationship of the church and state in the Merovingian World is Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*. Gregory wrote his *History* while he was presiding over one of the principal bishoprics in Gaul, the See of Martin of Tours. This position gave Gregory a special look into the workings of both the church in Gaul and the workings of the Merovingian state. It is impossible to ignore his importance to the study of this period and topic. There are, however, problems which can arise when studying Gregory. He was a biased individual. He wrote people a certain way in his *History* because he knew those people would be remembered in that way. He was also a product of his time. Gregory was also not a Frank, but a Gallo-Roman. Thus, not every word of Gregory can be taken as completely valid.

It is also fundamental that one understands the role of Arian Christianity during the settling of Gaul by the Germanic tribes. This form of Christianity, formed by Arius in Alexandria, Egypt, in the early fourth century, denied the principles of orthodox Christianity that stated that Jesus was God and that Jesus was co-eternal with the Father. At the time of Clovis, every Germanic tribe, including most of the Burgundians, which had converted to Christianity had converted to a form of Arianism.

It is impossible to discuss the church in Merovingian Gaul without discussing the conversion of Clovis to Catholic Christianity. Clovis was born a non-Christian Frank but married a Catholic, Clotild, who was a Burgundian. Clotild bore a son and wanted to have the child baptized. According to Gregory of Tours, her arguments proved persuasive and Clovis agreed to have his son baptized. The son, however, died shortly after the baptism. Clovis, understandably, blamed Clotild's god. This did not stop her from having their second son and having him baptized. This second son became sick shortly after his baptism, causing Clovis to comment that "no sooner is he baptized in the name of your Christ than he will die." This child recovered, according to Gregory, after Clotild prayed to God. After losing one son and nearly losing another, Clovis was not receptive to his wife's pleas that he be baptized into Christianity. It is understandable that Clovis blamed his wife's god for the problems in his sons' health. This changed, however, when he went to war with the Alamanni, another tribe in Clovis' region. According to Gregory, Clovis was in the process of losing a battle when he decided to call upon the god of Clotild to come to his aid. It is unclear why Clovis decided to change his mind about Clotild's god, but perhaps he had decided he had run out of

options. Amazingly, the tide of battle immediately turned and Clovis' army won. Clovis credited Christ with the victory and went to Remigius, bishop of Rheims, to be baptized.

Clovis' conversion is important in a number of ways. First, Clovis converted to Catholic Christianity along with his men. The Franks were the first Germanic tribe to do this. If they had converted to Arianism, it is quite likely that Catholic Christianity would have been overwhelmed by the Germans at its doorstep. The main rivals of the Franks, the Visigoths and Vandals, were both Arians. Even the Burgundians, of whom Clotild was a member, were predominantly Arian. Clovis' conversion, and the tribes' mass conversion, set the tribe apart from the rest of the tribes in western Europe. Second, Gregory's depiction of Clovis' conversion is intriguing. Gregory sets Clovis up as a new Constantine. Gregory wanted Clovis to be seen this way to cause the Franks to protect and follow the church. Unlike Constantine, Clovis was baptized almost immediately and was baptized with his men. Gregory went to such great lengths to tie Clovis to Constantine for another reason other than protection. Gregory wanted Clovis to be Roman and to have ties with Rome. This would give Gregory power in both the Church and in the state in Gaul. There was a political reason for Clovis' conversion, as well. Gaul was mainly inhabited by Gallo-Romans who adhered to Catholic Christianity. Gregory of Tours was a member of this group. Converting to Catholic Christianity allowed Clovis and his tribe to more easily assimilate the Gallo-Romans.

An area in which the relationship between church and state is especially apparent is the conversation between Gundobad and Bishop Avitus during the reign of Clovis recorded by Gregory of Tours. Gundobad, who ruled the province of Marseille, wished to be baptized into Catholic Christianity. He travelled to Vienne, where he asked the

bishop of the city, Avitus, who was considered a holy man due to his actions during an earthquake, to "anoint him with chrism in secret." Avitus refused to anoint him and told him that it would appear that Gundobad was "pandering" to the people if he was baptized in secret. God would know that Gundobad was scared of witnessing the faith, and this made Gundobad a coward in the eyes of God. Avitus told him that "it is therefore preferable that they should learn the truth under your direction, rather than that at your death they should continue in their errors." In this episode, a bishop is rebuking the leader of a tribe. There are two things that Gregory wanted to show in this rebuke about the Merovingian world. First, he wanted to use Avitus as a model so that other bishops would not be scared of kings. At this point in time, Gundobad was not a Catholic Christian. Although it is unclear what Gundobad's faith officially was, it is quite possible that he was an Arian. This can be implied from Gundobad asking Avitus to "anoint" him. Liturgical anointing was used to switch from Arianism to Catholicism, as seen in the conversion of Lantechild, a sister of Clovis. Avitus' rebuke of Gundobad could have resulted in Avitus' death. It would have been understandable if Avitus had kept his silence and anointed Gundobad. In this instance, though, Avitus declined and, amazingly, scolded Gundobad and told him how he should be ruling his people. This implies that Avitus did not fear Gundobad's men. Second, this incident shows that non-Catholic Christians respected the power of bishops. As previously mentioned, Avitus was famous for his actions during an earthquake in the region. Gundobad came to him to be anointed because he was perceived to be important. After experiencing this rebuke, Gundobad could have gone to another bishop in the region and been anointed, but he did

not. Avitus' word was law. Gundobad was not going to go against what the bishop of his region had said, especially due to Avitus' perceived connection with God.

What can also be seen in an examination of the Merovingian Church is a history of bishops supporting certain Germanic factions. An example is the case of Quintianus, Bishop of Rodez, a city in southwestern Gaul near the Pyrenees, who served during Clovis' efforts to unite the tribes. Earlier in Quintianus' time as bishop, Clovis had met with King Alaric II of the Visigoths to discuss an alliance. Quintianus openly supported this alliance, but, it appears, he was too enthusiastic about it. The various tribes in his bishopric revolted and forced him to flee Rodez, ostensibly as an act to show their displeasure with a possible Frankish takeover of the Rodez region of Gaul. This episode shows that the bishops in Gaul were willing to speak on political matters. There is, however, another possible motive that the citizens may have had in ousting the bishop. After hearing of Quintianus' ouster, Clovis told his ministers that "Arians occupy a part of Gaul" and that, "with God's help," he would remove and convert them. Gregory wants us to believe that Clovis invaded the territory at the request of Quintianus. It is possible that Quintianus was removed from his post because the Visigoths thought that he would invite Clovis into the territory to convert them. Gregory does state that "the Ruthénois [one of the tribes in Rodez] went so far as to accuse him of wishing to accept the rule of the Franks." This "rule of the Franks" could have meant, for the barbarian tribes, Catholic Christianity. Clovis' subsequent invasion and conversion of the territory to Catholic Christianity does lend credence to their fears. If this is true, this incident shows that bishops had the power to call upon the Merovingian kings in order to convert an area.

Merovingian leaders also had the power to choose bishops. Under the reign of Chilperic of Neustria (d. 584), a number of men tried to remove Aetherius from his bishopric. Gregory of Tours relates that the men "rushed off to King Chilperic to ask for the bishopric." This action implies that the King had the ability to choose and remove the bishops in his lands. This power would have given the King considerable influence in the Church's affairs. If the King could remove a bishop at any time, then the bishops of his land would want to support him. This, however, does not fit into the previously told story of Avitus. Being that Avitus was bishop during the reign of Clovis, it is conceivable that the bishops had lost some of their power in the intervening years. In this way, Aetherius' story does not call into question Avitus' story. There is another possible reason for the inconsistencies in the story. First, Avitus was a miracle-performing bishop. Gregory does not relate whether or not Aetherius was able to perform miracles. It is probable that the Franks would not want to anger a bishop who they believed had powers from God. Not having these powers, Aetherius would have been seen as just another, albeit important, person in Chilperic's domain. Second, Aetherius does not seem to have had a devoted group of followers. Men in Aetherius' province wanted to remove him from power. This did not happen to Avitus. This means that removing Aetherius presented less risk of revolt to Chilperic.

It must be noted, however, that Chilperic did not remove Aetherius. In fact, he sent for Guntram, Chilperic's brother and king of a neighboring province, to restore Aetherius to his See and proceeded to give Aetherius gifts. This meant, in no uncertain terms, that Chilperic supported Aetherius. While returning to his See, Aetherius stopped in every city between him and his city. While at these cities, he received, according to

Gregory, "so much wealth" that "he had difficulty in carrying home all that he had received." On their own, these gifts appear to be merely attempts by the heads of these cities trying to gain favor with Aetherius. In truth, it is much more probable that these men were giving Aetherius gifts not to gain his favor, but to gain favor from Chilperic. Aetherius now had Chilperic's endorsement, so supporting Aetherius would be seen as supporting Chilperic. In this way, Chilperic's power to name, replace, and support bishops gave him an advantage over his rivals and power over his lands.

In other cases, bishops owed their appointments to the king. This can be assumed due to the numerous appointments of bishops to dioceses where they had no or few local ties. Some examples include Baudinus at Tours, Flavius at Chalons, Licerius at Arles, and Charimer at Verdun. Being placed in an area where he was not from could cause problems for a bishop, even for an established bishop such as Gregory, who claimed to be related to thirteen of his predecessors. In Gregory's case, Riculf, a fellow priest, felt that Gregory was an outsider, and this proved unhelpful in Gregory's dealings with Leudast, one of Gregory's greatest enemies upon his ascent to the episcopacy. Fear of similar problems led Bishop Dalmatius of Rodez to request that his successor be a local man. There is evidence that kings made numerous other appointments to the episcopacy. Some of these men include Chlothar II's (d. 629) appointment of Amandus, Balthild's appointment of Leodegar to Autun, and Pippin II's appointment of Lantbert to Lyon. A prime example of a royal appointment to a bishopric is Desiderius of Cahors in the seventh century. Before his appointment, Desiderius had served Chlothar II as treasurer and had functioned as governor of Marseille for a number of years. Chlothar, apparently pleased with Desiderius' success, gave him the position of bishop of Cahors, a

city directly west of Rodez in southwestern Gaul. After his appointment to the episcopacy, Desiderius concerned himself mainly with the administration of his city. According to Ian Wood, it is probable that Desiderius' city planning was done at the behest of the royal court. In these ways, it is seen that kings were very involved with the selection of bishops in their regions.

The practice of kings having a say in who was dedicated to the service of God had roots dating back to the first Christian Merovingian king. Clovis persuaded a number of his relatives to join convents, including his sister Albofled. Clovis recommended a number of people for the priesthood. One of these men, and the one who best serves as an example of Clovis' power in ministerial appointments, was Claudius. Remigius, bishop of Rheims, ordained Claudius to the priesthood following Clovis' recommendation. Remigius then learned from three other bishops that Claudius had abducted a man shortly before his ordination. All three bishops recommended that Claudius be removed. Remigius refused, stating that he acted on "the word of the most excellent king, who was not only a preacher but a defender of the Catholic faith." The king wanted Claudius to be a priest, so Remigius was going to allow Claudius to remain a priest. This was not to be questioned. From this, one can see the power of the king in the realm of clerical appointments.

The practice of monastic exemption is important to understanding Merovingian policy as it regards the Church. Monastic exemption, given by royal charter, freed certain monasteries from civil and episcopal intervention. For example, Clovis II granted immunities to the monastery of St. Denis and his queen, Balthild, gave exemptions to the monasteries of St. Denis, St. Germain, St. Medard, St. Aignan, and St. Martin once they

adopted monastic *Rules* in the late seventh century. There were many reasons for the court to grant these privileges to monasteries. First, it was expected that the royal family would be remembered in the monastery's prayers, thus ensuring them of a good rule and the promise of salvation after death. Second, support of a monastery could lead to the monarch's reign being remembered fondly in the *Histories* being produced at the monasteries. There were problems encountered when immunities were given. Sometimes, a monarch would revoke an immunity if he disliked the previous ruler. For this reason, monasteries like Nivelles, Faremoutiers, and Sadalberga went through phases where they were nearly disbanded. Immunities being given to a monastery led to clashes with the local bishops. From the standpoint of a bishop, monastic immunities stopped a major source of revenue, control, and supply. Many bishops did not remain quiet during these perceived injustices. Their actions, however, sometimes led to deleterious effects. During the reign of Balthild, nine bishops died under mysterious circumstances after publicly rebuking the queen for granting immunities to certain monasteries. Her later removal from power and sequestration at a nunnery in 664 could be seen as a victory for a number of bishops. Her ouster, though, did not lead to the end of the Merovingian practice of granting monastic immunities. By the end of Chlothar III's (d. 673) reign, monastic immunity had become the key element of Merovingian policy as regards the Church. This policy would play a large role in Charles Martel's later reign.

The role of the Church during the Merovingian period is a key to understanding the time. In some cases, bishops, such as Avitus, rebuked the kings in the area where they were stationed. At other times, Merovingian bishops supported certain factions, and this support led to later invasions. Merovingian kings gave themselves the power to

appoint and depose bishops, and this power led to an remarkable association between the episcopacy and the monarchy. The support given by a king to a bishop also proved important. Finally, near the end of the Merovingian dynasty, the royal court implemented a policy of monastic immunity. This policy, while it gave certain advantages to the monarch, led to clashes with the local bishops. This policy later played a role in Charles Martel's reign.

Chapter 4: Martel's Rise to Power

Charles Martel's rise to power was a time of great change and violence. The stage was set by the rule of Pippin of Herstal, Martel's father, as mayor of the palace. The time shortly after Pippin's death resulted in what amounted to a seismic shift in Gaul. Charles Martel was the new man in charge. Patronage would be used to gain allies to strengthen the new Carolingian dynasty at the expense of the Merovingians. The regions of Neustria and Austrasia would once again be united. The Church would be packed with pro-Martel bishops. This chapter follows three key points: the rule of Pippin of Herstal, the Frankish civil war won by Martel, and Martel's interaction with the church during and immediately after the war. This was a time of great change.

The rule of Pippin of Herstal, also called Pippin II, was exceedingly important to the rise of Charles Martel. Pippin's domains were extremely important to the rise of the Carolingians. One of these Austrasian domains was Namur, an area containing the lower Meuse basin, which would later become the economic base of the Carolingians. Pippin was on good terms with two bishops, as well, and these gave the soon to be Carolingians, now Pippinids, new authority and legitimacy. Pippin was married to Itta, the sister of the Bishop of Trier, and was a good friend of Arnulf, later Bishop of Metz. This relationship with Arnulf was the most important. Metz was the capital of Austrasia, and as bishop, Arnulf was given control over administration of the city and the education of the Austrasian prince. As a favor to Arnulf, King Clothar II had placed Pippin I of Landen, friend of Arnulf and the father of Pippin of Herstal, in the position of mayor of the palace of Austrasia around 614. As mayor of the palace, Pippin of Landen governed Austrasia with Arnulf, who, after Clothar II's death, left to become a monastic, leaving Pippin of

Landen sole administrator of Austrasia. After Pippin of Landen's death in 687, Pippin of Herstal took over as mayor of the palace and cemented Carolingian control over Austrasia. He first ruled in the name of Theuderic III, who died in 691. After this, Pippin of Herstal installed three more kings before his death in 714: Clovis IV in 691, Childebert III in 695, and Dagobert III in 711. This power of installing kings illustrates that even at this point in time the mayor of the palace had a great deal of power. He was able to appoint kings. It was true that the king had to be Merovingian, a descendant of Clovis, but the mayor of the palace was still the officer doing the appointing. From this position as mayor of the palace, the Carolingians would gain the legitimacy they would later use to rule the Franks.

One thing one must notice when studying Charles Martel's rise to power is that it was, in large part, a rupture with the past. Martel was the illegitimate son of Pippin of Herstal. He also never became king. He was not a Merovingian, but he was a Frank.

Upon his father's death in 714 Martel was imprisoned by one of the families of the region. While Martel was imprisoned, the wife of Pippin of Herstal, Plectrudis, attempted to take control of all of Pippin's lands. Under the previously mentioned Salic law, she was not supposed to do this. A number of the men in Pippin's lands rose up and decided to rule themselves. Their first objective was to go to war with Theudoald, the Austrasian king Pippin had served under. This began something akin to a Frankish civil war. The forces met in battle and the rebellious Franks forced King Theudoald to flee from the field. These men did not finish their coup by pursuing and killing Theudoald. Instead, they named one of their company, Ragamfred, mayor of the palace and placed him under Theudoald. Like Pippin before him, Ragamfred did have a large amount of

autonomy. His first action was to march to the Meuse and intimidate Radbod, the leader of the Frisians, into making a treaty with them. There is no reason to believe that this action was supported or recommended by Theudoald. Martel would later use this incident as a model in his own rule.

Martel managed to escape, according to Pseudo-Fredegar, "by God's help." Shortly after his escape, the Merovingian high king Dagobert died and Chilperic II was named king by Ragamfred in 715. Sensing that this was his time to strike, Martel decided to raise an army to confront the Frisians, who had invaded the area believing that Pippin's death would cripple the Austrasians, seemingly breaking their treaty with Ragamfred. However, Martel's army was defeated and he was forced to retreat to the Ardennes for the next year. For Martel, victory over Radbod and the Frisians would have meant instant credibility with the Austrasians. He would have been seen, despite his birth, as the legitimate successor of Pippin of Herstal.

In 716, Martel once again ventured out. He defeated a combined Neustrian and Austrasian army under Chilperic and Ragamfred at Amblève, which allowed Martel to recapture Verdun. Verdun was important as it was ruled by Wulfoald, an ally of the Merovingians and a man who would later support Martel. This capture of Verdun also allowed Martel to gain an alliance with Verdun's bishop, Peppo, who was given a number of former Neustrian lands by Martel. Martel knew that an alliance with the established Church in Gaul would be helpful when he was finally victorious. It is very likely that Peppo persuaded Wulfoald to support Martel, and this alliance would become one of the most important for Martel throughout his life. Befriending Peppo allowed Martel to have influence in cities far from his own base of operations. It also allowed him to get

alliances in Peppo's region through his support. Finally, it gave him legitimacy through God. Peppo, as bishop of Verdun, would have had masses said for Martel, and Martel's victories following these masses would be seen as God granting favor to Martel. This view can be seen in Fredegar's reference to "God's help" in the escape of Martel from imprisonment. The favor of God was important to the Franks. Bishop Peppo gave Martel this favor.

Martel continued on from Verdun and defeated the Neustrians at Vinchy in 717, driving them back to Paris, where the Neustrians would be unable to interfere with Martel. He then besieged Paris and took Cologne. Chilperic II fled to Aquitaine and took refuge with Duke Odo. Martel then returned to Austrasia where he regained Pippin's lost fortune, placed himself in the position of mayor of the palace, and placed a Merovingian on the throne as Chlothar IV. Martel's appointment of Chlothar IV as king shows that he realized two things about the Franks. First, it shows that Martel did not believe he had enough power and support to name himself king. Martel remembered the problems encountered by his great-uncle Grimoald. Grimoald, after the king he was serving under died, decided to place his own son as king. Grimoald had the king's son, Dagobert II, tonsured and sent to Ireland to become a monk. He then placed his own son, Childebert the Adopted, upon the throne of Austrasia. The Neustrians, however, were unhappy with their family being removed from an area so close to their lands. They lured Grimoald and Childebert into Neustria, probably by offering an alliance, and had both men killed. This episode shamed the Carolingians. It appeared, from a context of legitimacy, to be a grab for power that the Carolingians had no right to gain. Pseudo-Fredegar, a supporter of the Carolingian dynasty, leaves this entire episode out of his

history. It only survives in Merovingian and church sources. Martel remembered this incident, and he probably thought that if he had done something similar he and his family would have met the same fate as Grimoald. Second, Martel wanted to be seen as a king-maker. By placing Chlothar IV on the throne, Martel was making the statement that he was the most powerful man in Austrasia. He could make kings and, presumably, remove them. He was not to be questioned. Although he was not king, he was going to act as king, just as Ragamfred had done during Martel's captivity.

This incident shows three things about Charles Martel. The first is that he was a persistent and able military leader. Although he failed in his first assault, he retreated, regrouped, and took the fight back to his enemies. The second is that he understood that he needed legitimacy to rule, and that that legitimacy could only be gained through alliances with the Church and the Merovingian dynasty. Finally, Martel knew that he could use force to give himself some legitimacy, as seen in his restoration of Pippin's treasury and his subsequent appointment of himself as mayor of the palace.

Placing Chlothar IV on the throne did not end the Frankish civil war, though it did begin its conclusion. Throughout the civil war, from 715-24, Martel fought in at least eight major military engagements. Of these, he only lost the first. With this string of military victories, Martel appeared to the inhabitants of Gaul to be the man on the ascendency. As the years passed, fewer and fewer people wanted to fight him, and more and more people wanted to join him. This cause was helped by the treasury he now controlled through his puppet king in Chlothar IV. With this treasury, Martel began to drive his enemies out of their own area of Neustria. In gaining this new territory, men who had followed Pippin began to come out of the shadows from which they were hiding

from Ragamfred and Chilperic, such as Hugo, Benignus, and Rotgarius, all important Franks in the areas which had rebelled. The addition of their support lent to Martel the men and supplies to push through Neustria and take it in the name of Chlothar. Of these men, the most interesting was Rotgarius. Rotgarius, who lived in Le Mans, had previously been a supporter of Ragamfred. He saw that Martel appeared to be winning and switched sides. Rotgarius' defection signaled the end of any true hope of victory for the Neustrians. In this way, it can be seen that victory and treasure was used to sway a campaign in Martel's favor.

The situation of the Catholic Church in Gaul during the civil war is important to note. Some clergy, notably Rigobert of Rheims and Celestinus of Ghent attempted to remain neutral. Rigobert, bishop of Rheims, enters Martel's life in 717 as Martel was besieging Vinchy. Martel wanted to enter the cathedral at Rheims to pray for victory. Rigobert refused Martel's request, claiming that because God had not yet decided who would win between Martel and Ragamfred, Rigobert would not show any special favor to any of the combatants. The story of Rigobert did not end well, and it shall be related in the later section on punishment under Martel. Similarly, Celestinus of Ghent attempted to remain neutral. Celestinus, who was the abbot of St. Peter's monastery in Ghent (now located in Belgium), should have had an easier time remaining neutral than Rigobert, as Celestinus was not the head of a city but rather a monastery in the countryside. Celestinus, however, had powerful enemies, and these enemies told Martel that Ragamfred had received letters of support from Celestinus and that he wished to sabotage Martel's plans in the region. In response, Martel marched on the monastery, drove Celestinus from it, and gave the monastery's lands to some of his followers. For Martel,

there was no neutrality with regard to the Church in Gaul. They could either support him or be punished.

Martel's enemies wished, like him, to have churches and monasteries as allies. From 716-18, Chilperic gave ten charters to monasteries and bishops. In contrast, Martel and his puppets only issued five charters throughout the period of the civil war. This implies one of two things. The first is that Martel was not in a stable enough position throughout much of the war to give charters. He was busy trying to consolidate power and to reform his army while Chilperic was able to use his position as king to issue as many charters as he pleased. The second is that Chilperic wanted, or had, to use a soft touch to get the churches on his side. Unlike Martel, Chilperic did not have the resources to go on a campaign to each monastery and cathedral to intimidate the abbot or bishop into supporting him. As the aggressor in the war, the monasteries and cathedrals would have been en route to Martel's objectives.

It is Martel's victory at Soissons in 718 that forces a change in his relationship with the Church during the civil war. Victory at Soissons gave Martel control of the region surrounding Paris, which included the monasteries of St. Denis and St. Wandrille. St. Denis was one of the most important Christian sites in Gaul and was an important site for the Merovingians, holding the tombs of their kings. Forming an alliance with it would give Martel immediate influence in the area. He thus became the monastery's protector, a relationship that existed throughout his life. St. Wandrille is much more intriguing. Benignus, one of the men who had gone into hiding during Ragamfred's rule, was restored to his previous position as abbot of the monastery in 719. Another of the once-hidden men, Hugo, became Martel's emissary to St. Wadrille. Hugo, who was the

son of the prominent man Drogo, gave a large number of gifts to St. Wadrille at the insistence of Martel. After Benignus' death, Charles then placed Hugo at St. Wadrille as abbot. Martel did not stop there, though. He also appointed Hugo abbot of Jumièges, bishop of Paris, bishop of Rouen, bishop of Bayeux, bishop of Lisieux, and bishop of Avranches. Martel did not want to deal with problems with the church, and placing Hugo as bishop of most of the areas around Paris served to consolidate power. He had the power to appoint bishops, so he decided to use it.

This practice by Martel of naming men bishops of more than one bishopric was used as a strategy by him to siphon power away from Ragamfred. After his defeat at Soissons, Ragamfred fled to Angers, where he stayed until the conclusion of the civil war. In order to keep Ragamfred out of supply, Martel decided to semi-secularize the bishoprics around Angers that he feared would support Ragamfred. During this time, Martel completely secularized four bishoprics and appointed his own men as bishops in a number of areas. His first act was to give control of the bishoprics of Nantes and Rennes to Count Agatheus. Much more interestingly were Martel's actions regarding the bishopric of Le Mans. As already seen, Rotgarius, a former supporter of Ragamfred who switched his allegiance to Martel, was in control of Le Mans. As a reward for defecting to his side, Martel gave Rotgarius complete control of the operations of the Le Mans bishopric. When Bishop Herlemund died in 721, Rotgarius proceeded to plunder the bishopric. Martel did not punish him, but instead put him in contact with Hugo, who, at this point, was acting as bishop of Rouen. Rotgarius decided to have his second son, Gauziolenus, named bishop of Le Mans. Hugo performed the consecration. This was a break with the traditions of the time. Normally, the bishop of Le Mans would be

consecrated by the bishop of Tours, but this bishop of Tours was not a supporter of Martel. Therefore, Martel had one of his greatest supporters, Hugo, consecrate the son of one of his most important supporters, Rotgarius, bishop of an area that was important to Martel's later plans. In this one can see Martel's strategy with regard to the Church in Gaul.

The time between 715 and 723 brought great change to Frankish Gaul. The balance of power was forever shifted in the direction of the Pippinid/Carolingian family at the expense of the Merovingians. This was done through war, patronage, and alliances with the church. The world would forever be change by the end of 723.

Chapter 5: The Battle of Poitiers

In 732, two forces met in battle south of Tours in Gaul. At stake, supposedly, was the fate of Europe. The Battle of Poitiers is, at least to the textbook writers, Charles Martel's claim to fame. There are four main aspects of the battle. The first is the Islamic leader Abd al-Rahman. The second aspect is the makeup of the forces arrayed in battle. The third is the battle itself. Finally, the importance of the battle to Martel's line is examined.

Although there were three main Islamic commanders at Poitiers, the most important was Abd al-Rahman Ibn Abd Allah al-Ghafiqi, also referred to as Abd al-Rahman al-Gahfiqi. As his name suggests, he was from the Ghafiq clan. The Ghafiq clan was an integral part of the Kalb tribe which formed one-third of the Islamic forces which conquered Egypt in the mid-seventh century. The Ghafiq clan was one of the first clans to settle al-Andalus (the Islamic term for Spain), as a number of the clan formed part of Musa Ibn Nusayr's army. Abd al-Rahman first appears in history in 721 following the failed siege of Toulouse. He is credited with leading the Islamic army back to Narbonne after the governor of al-Andalus was slain during the siege of Toulouse. At this time, Abd al-Rahman became *wali*, or client governor, of al-Andalus. He did not last for a long time in this status because the Umayyad governor of North Africa, who had superiority over al-Andalus, replaced him with Anbasa Ibn Suhaym al-Kalbi due to the governor thinking that Abd al-Rahman was too lenient to defeated enemies. Due to his religious standing, Abd al-Rahman was highly favored by the religious classes in al-Andalus, and twice before 732 these men conspired to have him placed as *wali*, both times being replaced by someone more favored by the Umayyads in North Africa.

The first area which must be addressed is the makeup of the forces arrayed at Poitiers. This is important due to the claim popularized by Heinrich Brunner that the Frankish force at Poitiers was made up of a large amount of heavy cavalry. The Frankish military was expected to equip themselves so that a force would vary in appearance due to the status of the specific soldiers involved. This also meant that food would be provided by via pillaging from the land. All free men were legally bound to join the military for three months of the year, however, there was a way to pay a fee to get out of this duty. This fee allowed Martel to equip those soldiers who were too poor to buy good military equipment. Martel's forces were bolstered by landholders, both secular and religious. While priests and monks were exempted from military services, major landholding clerics led their forces onto the field of battle. This was important in other areas as well. With the fall of Roman governance, bishops had taken command of towns and cities and placed themselves at the head of their defense. This meant that bishops had a vested interest in the victory of Martel at Poitiers. Horses were also used during battle, although this did not mean that cavalry was used. A wealthy landowner might have owned a horse, but he may not have been trained and placed into a formation of cavalry. Most of Martel's cavalry were not Franks at all, but rather Basque and Visigoth soldiers from areas conquered shortly before Martel's rise to power. These latter soldiers are a fascinating aspect of the battle. Throughout Martel's rise to power, he had been campaigning against these tribes, especially the Visigoths. Now, he was leading an army where the cavalry force was predominantly made up of his old enemies.

The Islamic forces at the Battle of Poitiers can be broken down into two groups: Arabs and Berbers. It is important to understand the composition of these forces because

of the numerous misconceptions about the battle. Arab soldiers were professional cavalry armed with spears and swords. The Arab tribes were divided into *qabilas*, of which smaller *ajnads* (singular *jund*), or regular regiments, were created. *Ajnads* were divided into even smaller sections called *irafas* for use on scouting campaigns, and many of these were used while crossing the Pyrenees. During Hisham's reign, each soldier was given arms, armor, funds, and a horse to ride on from a main supply garrison nearest the front. The Berbers were *mawalis*, or clients, of the Arabs. During earlier Umayyad conquests of al-Andalus, Berbers entered Islamic armies as *mawali* regiments headed by a *qa'id*, who was an Arab. These *mawali* troops helped the Umayyads so much that they began to add *mutatawwi'a*, or irregular troops. These troops consisted mainly of unarmored light cavalry. It was the Islamic forces at Poitiers, and not Martel's forces, that were composed mainly of cavalry. These two forces combined to create the army that would face Martel at Poitiers.

In 732, thirty thousand men under the command of Abd al-Rahman crossed the Pyrenees. The Anglo-Saxon chronicler Bede recounts this event by stating "two comets appeared around the sun, striking terror into all who saw them... a swarm of saracins [sic] ravaged Gaul with horrible slaughter." As previously mentioned, Bede's mention of the comets is unsurprising. The heavens were important to the people of the time. Two comets being seen in the sky coupled with the mass of men crossing the Pyrenees would have seemed like the end of the world to the men of the people witnessing these events. Memories of the earlier siege of Toulouse in 721 must have been in the air as well. Although the Islamic forces had lost, a larger force led by the same commander was back crossing the Pyrenees. Shortly after the crossing, Duke Odo of Aquitaine fought Abd al-

Rahman's forces on the banks of the Garonne near Bordeaux. Odo fled for his life and the scene was lamented by the *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754*: "only God knows how many died and vanished." Abd al-Rahman's forces approached the city of Poitiers where he slowed his forces. Just outside the city lay entombed in a very large and lavish church the body of Hilary of Poitiers, a holy man revered by the local community. Abd al-Rahman's men stormed the church, stripped it of all its gold and precious metals, and torched the interior.

Sixty miles to the north of Poitiers lay the city of Tours. This was the city of Martin and Gregory, and the city of Clovis. If this city fell, the spiritual heritage of the Franks would have been destroyed. The people of Tours sent for Martel at this time as he was away campaigning across the Danube. It is interesting that the people of the city sent for Martel and not the sitting Merovingian king. Martel was not the king, but only the mayor of the palace. This episode only makes sense if one believes that Martel had completely neutralized the power of the Merovingians by 732. During his rise to power, Martel needed a king so that the people would not rise up against him. Now, the people were asking for his help. With around ten thousand men, Martel marched to Tours. He met with Odo who reaffirmed his fealty to him, along with giving a number of well-born hostages. This action, too, is quite odd. Odo is swearing fealty to Martel and not to the king. Odo's forces bolstered Martel's numbers to somewhere around fifteen thousand, most of them light infantry. The battle itself lasted a number of days and a Catholic monk in al-Andalus, Isidore Pacensis, left an account of the turning point of battle in 754: "the men of the north stood as motionless as a wall. They were like a belt of ice frozen together, and not to be dissolved as they slew the Arabs with the sword. The

Austrasians, vast of limb and iron of hand, hewed on bravely in the thick of the fight." According to the chronicler Pseudo-Fredegar, "with Christ's help, he [Martel] overran their tents... and when 'Abd ar-Rahman [sic] perished in the battle he utterly destroyed their armies... and in the power of Christ he utterly destroyed them." In this way, the Battle of Poitiers ended in victory for Martel.

The aftermath of the Battle of Poitiers is debated to this day. In *The Fields of Gold*, an Islamic history written in the tenth century by al-Masudi, the Battle of Poitiers is not mentioned. Nineteenth century historian Heinrich Brunner claimed that the Battle of Poitiers led to the rapid deployment of stirrups throughout Europe and the subsequent evolution of European society through its use. Others claim that the Battle of Poitiers finalized Europe's descent into feudalism. Still others claim that the battle ended Islamic attempts at expansion into Europe. This final claim is laughable, as Hisham saw defeat at Poitiers as an assault on his own honor and thus tried to accelerate campaigns into Europe.

From a historical perspective, Paul Fouracre is more than likely correct in claiming that the Battle of Poitiers did not really do anything. In fact, it only merits a single dedicated page in Fouracre's work on Martel, and that page is focused on the speed with which Martel was able to move his men rather than with the impact of the battle. What this thesis contends is that the Battle of Poitiers was important psychologically. From the eyes of the everyday Christian on the ground in Gaul who had seen the comets in the sky earlier in 732, and had heard of the Islamic sacking of Poitiers and Odo's defeat outside Bordeaux, Martel's victory would have looked like a divine blessing. They had been saved from the end of the world. If Tours had fallen, it would have seemed to them

as if God hated them. It is for the opposite reason that al-Masudi did not record Poitiers' result in his history. His side lost. God had failed him. At a time when religion played a role in everything, winning a battle was essential in the survival of your faith. Poitiers was important for this very reason.

Poitiers is doubly important for Martel. It showed him that his family had the power in Gaul. The people of Tours looked to him, not the Merovingian king, as their protector. Duke Odo of Aquitaine pledged fealty to Martel, not to the king, when Martel came to his aid. He had also shown the people that he was a great military leader by defeating a force much larger than his own. He had also gone against fate by defying the comets seen in the sky as the Islamic forces crossed the sky. Martel's victory at Poitiers, though it did not end the Islamic threat, did give the Carolingians a needed boost in legitimacy. This would be used by later Carolingians to show that the Merovingians had lost their power and that they, the Carolingians, were the rightful rulers of Gaul.

Charles Martel won a great battle in 732 just south of Tours. At this battle, he fought Abd al-Rahman, a man who had invaded Europe previously. In the battle, Martel's forces were outnumbered thirty thousand to fifteen thousand. The battle lasted for days, but he won. In so doing, he changed the entire psychology of Christian Europe. He also realized that he and his family were the real power in Gaul. After the Battle of Poitiers, Martel would be comfortable enough in his position that he would not appoint a new king when the sitting king died. For these reasons, the Battle of Poitiers is important.

Chapter 6: Punishment and the Feud under Martel

When discussing the time of Charles Martel, it is necessary to examine two things in particular that shaped Merovingian rule. These things were punishment and the blood feud. With regard to punishment, the Carolingians were quite different from their Merovingian forbearers. The feud, however, lasted throughout the Carolingian period, despite the best efforts of the Christian Church in Gaul.

In the discussion of Frankish punishment, one sees the first major break between the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties. According to Matthew Innes, while the Merovingian kings would kill rivals with "glee," the Carolingians were much more humanitarian in their approach. The Carolingians would send their rival into something approaching exile, by shaving the man's head and riding him off to a monastery to "do penance" for the offense they had committed against the Carolingians. This gives two pieces of insight into the worldview of the Carolingians: First, they did not see brute force as a good way to keep their power; Second, they saw the Church as a way to both keep power and remove of obstacles. They did, of course, still use a great deal of force in dealing with their enemies. They just did not use violence as the first resort.

Families who did not support Carolingian power had their wealth taken from them. This wealth, normally consisting of land or episcopal sees, was then given to Carolingian allies. For example, Hugo, son of Drogo, a relative of Martel, was given around five sees and their corresponding monasteries in Neustria as a reward for his service. Families were not the only enemies attacked by Martel. Bishop Savaric of Auxerre, who had turned his see into something resembling an independent state, had parts of his land removed and a state official, in this case a count, was placed to check the

Bishop's powers. In this way, Martel used patronage to protect his power and to reward those who had aided his rise.

There were, however, exceptions to this general leniency. During the discussion of Martel's rise to power, the character of Bishop Rigobert of Rheims made an appearance. In 717, before besieging Vinchy, Martel wanted to enter the cathedral at Rheims to pray for victory. Rigobert refused Martel's request, claiming that because God had not yet decided who would win between Martel and Ragamfred, Rigobert would not show any special favor to any of the combatants. Martel replied that if he won at Vinchy that he would return and exact vengeance upon Rigobert. Martel, of course, won at Vinchy. He returned, sent Rigobert into exile, appointed Martel's friend Milo bishop, and destroyed all of Rigobert's lands. It is important to note that Martel did not kill Rigobert. He only exiled him. Although Martel did surpass many of the punishments given out by later Carolingians, he was merciful to Rigobert. He did not kill him, though many of the people of Rheims probably would have preferred that outcome rather than being starved through destruction of their crops. The Carolingians were much more lenient than the Merovingians with regard to punishment.

The concept of the blood feud is important to understanding the changes, or lack thereof, of the Carolingian dynasty ushered in by Charles Martel. According to Wallace-Hadrill, a feud consists of "first, the threat of hostility between kins; then, the state of hostility between them; and finally, the satisfaction of their differences and a settlement on terms acceptable to both." It is important to note that blood does not need to be spilled for a feud to take place, only that it needs to happen for a feud to end. There only has to be a perceived moral slight. It is also important to note that the feud was not illegal in

Merovingian law. Historians know of feuds because they were recorded in hagiographies, histories, and chronicles, not because there were criminal records left.

The church in Gaul was opposed to feuds, though it was used as an arbitrator in a number of instances. An example of both a complicated feud and church meddling in a feud is the case of a feud in Tours which broke out in 585. During the celebration of Christmas, a servant of the priest of the village of Manthelan was killed by a man in the company of Austregesil, an important man in the town. Sichar, an important man in Tours and a friend of the priest, heard of this offense and went to the church where the priest was stationed. Austregesil heard of this and went to the church fully armed. Both men and their attached men fought each other, and "a pitched battle ensued." Sichar's men lost, and he was forced to leave the village and hide in the countryside, though he left four of his men wounded for Austregesil to capture. Austregesil killed the men, took the treasure Sichar left behind, and went back home. The people of Tours, obviously fearing that this feud would erupt and end in the death of at least one of their most prominent men, called both men before a tribunal for arbitration. The tribunal of townspeople found Austregesil at fault for killing the four men and taking Sichar's treasure.

It appears, however, that Sichar did not care about the decision of the tribunal. He heard that his treasure was now in the hands of three men, Auno, Auno's son, and Eberulf. Sichar gathered his men and his friend Audinus and attacked and killed Auno and his companions and took Auno's property and livestock. At this point, the feud had grown so large that the Church had to step in to mediate. Gregory of Tours, the bishop of Tours, met with the tribunal and sent for Sichar and Austregesil to meet with them to

settle the dispute. Gregory pleaded with the men, now joined by Chramnesind, another son of Auno, and offered to pay the price that each demanded through his own treasury. All of the men but Chramnesind accepted Gregory's settlement. This was not the end of the matter. Sichar went home, but his slave decided to try to flee. The slave stole Sichar's sword and hit him with it. The slave was caught and "cruelly beaten" and Sichar went to a relative's house to heal. Chramnesind heard of this incident, but he falsely heard that Sichar was killed. Chramnesind went to Sichar's house, stole his possessions, killed some slaves, and burned all of his lands. The tribunal once again called all of the parties together. The tribunal decided that Chramnesind should forfeit half of the settlement given to him by the tribunal headed by Gregory. All of the men were then forced to swear an oath stating that they would never trouble the other people again. The feud was then ended.

This episode is enlightening with regard to the feud and the Church's role in them. One can see that the Church was only brought in as a last resort to stop the feud from growing larger. The matter of this feud was first brought to a city tribunal, not the Church. The matter was only transferred to Gregory when more than the original combatants were affected. It is seen in this episode that tribunals did not have a great effect at ending feuds. In this case, three tribunals, including one headed by the bishop of the city, were called before the feud was ended. This shows that tribunals were not effective. This view is given even more credibility when one learns that Gregory was wrong when he stated that "they would never make further trouble against each other."

After this feud ended, Sichar and Chramnesind became great friends. Gregory relates that "they became so devoted to each other that they often had meals together and

even slept in the same bed." Leaving aside the question of Frankish toleration of homosexual relations, this relationship seems odd. Sichar had killed Chramnesind's father, brother, and uncle a few years previous. It would be understandable if Chramnesind had never spoken to Sichar again. It appears, however, that these men took the decision of the third tribunal very seriously. This relationship was not to remain this way, though, as one can only suppress bad blood for so long before one side renews hostility. One night while the two were eating, Sichar said some of the most idiotic and fateful words ever uttered. He told Chramnesind that he should "be grateful to [Sichar] for killing off [Chramnesind's] relations" because the fine Sichar had paid as part of the settlement kept Chramnesind from being "poor and destitute." Understandably, Chramnesind "blew the lights out and hacked Sichar's skull in two." He then stripped Sichar and "hung [his corpse] from a post in his garden-fence." In this way the feud was finally ended.

Something quite interesting about this episode is the public display of the body. According to Wallace-Hadrill, this public display "fulfilled the requirements that the outcome of vengeance" not be "hidden." It is also interesting to note that Chramnesind was not punished. Chramnesind escaped with the Frankish equivalent of justifiable homicide. The Franks, it can be assumed, understood that Sichar was not fit to live. He had not only killed Chramnesind's relatives, but he had also claimed that his actions had saved Chramnesind. From this, it can be seen that the feud under the Merovingians not only engaged in the feud, but kept prolonged feuds.

The Church made its way into feuds in other ways. The episode of Ermenfred related by Pseudo-Fredegar is an example of one of these ways. In 642, Ermenfred, who

had married one of Clovis' relatives, killed Count Chainulf in the court of Augers. With the permission of the Queen of Augers, Nantechildis, Chainulf's family started to feud with Ermenfred by "savagely" attacking his possessions. Ermenfred, now fearing for his life, went to the church of St. Rémi in Austrasia. He declared asylum and was saved from "the royal wrath." In this episode one can see that churches were used to escape from feuds. Hiding in a church, unless the priest threw the person out, could save someone from pain. This would have given churches both prestige and problems. The church would be seen as fulfilling its duty to protect the weak, but it would probably be attacked by the people who were after the person being pursued. It is for this latter reason that Ermenfred fled to Austrasia. Nantechildis and Chainulf's family could not enter Austrasia and take vengeance upon the church without the permission of the Austrasian leadership. In other words, if someone committed some feud-worthy offense, the easiest way to escape punishment was to flee from the territory and hide in a church. From this, one can see that the Church performed two specific functions with regard to the feud. First, bishops and priests acted in tribunals determined to end feuds. Second, churches were used as asylum by those escaping the punishment of a feud. Thus, the Church played an important role in the feud.

The feud persisted into the reign of Charles Martel and his descendants. One example is the incident involving the death of Bishop Gerold of Mainz. While Martel was fighting the Saxons, Gerold was killed. His son, Gewilib, decided that, due to his father's office, the killing was a murder. He found who killed Gerold and, while on campaign with Martel, arranged a meeting with the men in order to discuss terms to end the feud. The men were Saxon soldiers, but the killing merited Gewilib starting a feud.

Gewilib killed the men immediately as he set his sight on them. Martel and his men did not see anything wrong with Gewilib's actions. From this, it can be seen that the feud did not end with the Merovingians. It continued, though in smaller numbers, throughout the Carolingian period.

This feud of Gewilib appears to be the only documented one during Martel's reign. No feuds are related by Pseudo-Fredegair in his *Chronicle*, and there are no others referenced in the *Life of Boniface* or his *Letters*. Fouracre does not mention the feud during Martel's life, nor does Riché. This is not to say, however, that the feud disappeared during the time of Martel, but it does say something important about the time. In the Merovingian world before Martel, the feud was a fundamental part of life. After Martel, it barely merits a mention in the most important chronicles of the time. This implies that something the Carolingians did stopped the feud.

One of the things the Carolingians did to stop the feud was to strengthen the Salic Law and the compensation offered for families of murder victims. In *Title 62*, the sons of the man killed are entitled to half of the penalty and the next of kin are given the rest of the bounty. This would have served two purposes. First, it would have helped to ease the pain of the loss by compensating the family. Secondly, it would give the family something to live off of in the short term. This would also have served as a deterrent for murder. Things like the Salic Law would have helped to stop the feud.

The concepts of punishment and the blood feud shaped Merovingian political life. It is understandable to wonder whether these things remained in the Carolingian period. Punishment, though it still existed, was much harsher in the Merovingian period than in the Carolingian period. In circumstances that would have meant certain death in the

Merovingian world, people could survive their punishments, although they would lose their positions and, normally, their possessions. The feud continued, though. It was severely curtailed by the end of the Carolingian period.

Chapter 7: Boniface and the Church

Church and state have always had a complicated relationship in the west, and this was no different during the time Charles Martel was in power. At the same time Martel was placing church lands into the hands of lay people, he was busy protecting and subsidizing missionary activities on the outskirts of his realm. In this chapter, secularization of church lands will be discussed. Missionary activity, especially that of Boniface and Pirmin, and its impact on Martel will also be discussed. Then the theory of secularization causing the creation of cavalry warfare will be discussed. Finally, the relationship between Martel and the papacy will be examined.

As was seen in chapter four, Martel placed some of his allies in positions of ecclesiastical importance. For example, he had appointed Hugo abbot of St. Wadrille, Jumièges, bishop of Paris, bishop of Rouen, bishop of Bayeux, bishop of Lisieux, and bishop of Avranches. He did this for a number of reasons, chief among them being that Martel did not want to deal with problems with the church, and placing men like Hugo as bishop of most of the areas around places like Paris served to consolidate power. This was a break with the past. Earlier Merovingian kings had appointed bishops, but only to one bishopric. Some examples include Chlothar II's appointment of Amandus, Balthild's appointment of Leodegar to Autun, and Pippin II's appointment of Lambert to Lyon. Martel was different. Although it was against canon law, it suited Martel's purposes to have friends in power in important areas. Martel also concluded, correctly if history can be believed, that canon law would not apply in this case. Appointments obviously would not remove themselves from power and Martel was safe as long as the Pope did not take issue with it and bring an army with him to remove an appointment.

As has been discussed, Martel placed men in positions of power in the episcopacy. Chief among these was Hugo. Hugo's situation is enlightening for another reason, though. The successors of Hugo at the monastery of St. Wadrille were examples of the problems inherent in patronage selections. One of these successors was Wido, a relative of Martel, who, before being named abbot, was an uneducated huntsman. He was later accused of treason and executed at Noyon. He was followed by Martel's appointment as Archbishop of Rouen, Ragamfred, who was also uneducated. After Martel's death, the monks appealed to Martel's successor, Pippin the Short, who reappointed Wido as abbot. Wido had earlier been ousted by Martel for supporting Chilperic II against him during his rise to power. This shows a couple of things about Martel's relationship with the Church. The first is that even if he did not appoint someone, a candidate to his liking would be chosen. This explains why someone like Wido, whose only qualification to be abbot seems to be that he was a relative of Martel, was chosen as abbot following Hugo's death. This also shows that not everyone was pleased with Martel's decisions. Wido's return could only happen with anti-Martel sentiment at an extremely high level among the monks.

Some secularization and consolidation of church lands by Martel came not through the Church's fault, but through the fault of the leaders of the land in which the church was located. An example is the situation of the churches in Provence in southern Gaul. This information is found in the will of Abbo, founder of the monastery of Novalesa in the Alps, composed in 739. Abbo was a supporter of Martel against Maurontus in Provence from 733-738. Martel defeated Maurontus and, according to Abbo's will, gave Abbo control of a number of monasteries in Embrun, Diem Gap, and

Grenoble. The churches in these areas did not necessarily oppose Martel. The area they were located in, however, had been held by one of his enemies, so they were removed.

With the secularization of church lands, there is a certain theory among some historians about Martel and the Franks that must be discussed. That theory is that this secularization, which was gained rapidly under Martel, led to the rise of cavalry in Western Europe. It is true that the Franks possessed large number of cavalry long before most of their main rivals. The advent of cavalry warfare was delayed during Martel's day. The first reason for this was the sheer expense of cavalry warfare. According to the Ripuarian law code, it cost more than 40 *solidi* to outfit a horse, which was the equivalent of 20 cattle. This does not include the cost of maintaining the horse or to pay the horse's attendants. This meant that it was too expensive, even with large amounts of new land, to risk a horse in battle. One must also take into account that one cannot immediately turn land into revenue. One would have to wait years before the newly secularized church land was able to be worth enough to give enough wealth for the owner to equip a cavalry force. This meant that if secularization did bring about cavalry, then it would not have been seen during the time of Martel.

Martel's enemies wished, like him, to have churches as allies. From 716-18, the peak years of the Frankish civil war, Chilperic II gave ten charters to monasteries and bishops. In contrast, Martel and his Merovingian puppets only issued five charters throughout the entirety of the Frankish civil war. These charters 'freed' monasteries and churches from civil or episcopal intervention. This implies one of two things. The first is that Martel was not in a stable enough position throughout much of the war to give charters. He was busy trying to consolidate power and to reform his army while

Chilperic was able to use his position as king to issue as many charters as he pleased. The second is that Chilperic wanted, or had, to use a soft touch to get the churches on his side. Unlike Martel, Chilperic did not have the resources to go on a campaign to each monastery and cathedral to intimidate the abbot or bishop into supporting him. As the aggressor in the war, the monasteries and cathedrals would have been en route to Martel's objectives. This does not, however, explain why Martel did not give charters after the war ended. It is possible that he wanted to keep this land as spoils of war to be divided between himself and his men after the end of the war. Instead, as has already been illustrated, he began a campaign of consolidation and secularization.

The most important person with respect to the Church and Martel was a missionary called Boniface. Boniface, whose original Anglo-Saxon name was Winfrith, was first influenced by Martel in 724. At this time, Duke Bubo led a revolt in Frisia, the region where Boniface was spreading Christianity at the behest of Pope Gregory II. Boniface and his men were tasked with converting the Frisians to Catholic Christianity. Martel moved into Frisia, this time attacking using the sea perhaps for the only time in his career, killed Bubo, and destroyed every shrine in the region. Martel proclaimed himself defender of the missionaries in the region, but this did not include Boniface, who had left for Rome by the time Martel had finished the campaign. The Pope sent Boniface back to Germany and asked Martel to offer him protection. Martel agreed to this arrangement. This relationship existed until 732 when Pope Gregory III sent Boniface the pallium, a garment which symbolized Boniface's authority over all the other bishops in the region. Boniface recognized the importance of Martel to his mission. In a letter to his mentor, Bishop Daniel of Winchester, "Without the patronage of of the prince of the

Franks, I could neither govern the faithful nor defend the priests, clerics, monks, and nuns. Without an order from him and the fear it inspires, I could scarcely hinder the pagan rites and the practice of idolatry." Boniface knew that he needed Martel to succeed in his goals. For his part, Martel knew that he needed Boniface to consolidate power on the fringes of his region. It was much easier for Martel to rule his domains, especially the regions of Hesse and Thuringia on the border with the Saxons, when everyone was the same religion.

Boniface, however, was not a blind supporter of Martel. Boniface took issue with Martel's habit of appointing bishops, and he wanted Martel to stop. This problem was exacerbated when he disliked the person appointed. Two people who he appeared to dislike particularly were Rigobert's successor at Rheims, Milo, and Gewilib of Mainz. Of these two, only Gewilib does something morally reprehensible, that being adultery. For Milo, it appears that Boniface just dislikes him, as he does nothing different than any of the other appointees of the period. In another letter of Boniface, this one to Aethelbald of Mercia, written shortly after Martel's death, Boniface lets his real feelings for Martel show through. For Boniface, Martel is "prince of the Franks, destroyer of many monasteries, and embezzler of Church revenues for his own use, was consumed in a long period of agony and a fearful death."

Another missionary who played a major role during Martel's period in power. Pirmin was a bishop whose last see was in Visigothic Spain. In 724, Martel gave him the ability to create a monastery on the island of Reichenau in Lake Constance. Three years later, in 727, Duke Lantfrid chased him from the island and accused him of being a spy for Martel. Pirmin was forced to Alsace until 740, when the territory fell into Martel's

control. At this time, Pirmin was sent by the bishop of Metz, a supporter of Martel to restore the monastery of Marmoutier. From there, he took control of all of the monasteries from Hornbach in Rheinland-Pfalz to Wissembourg. Thanks to Pirmin's influence, Martel gained complete control of the eastern half of the realm. The monasteries on the outskirts of Pirmin's influence, like those of the Widonid clan, would come under the control of the Carolingians shortly after Martel's death. Martel's patronage of men like Pirmin and Boniface led to Carolingian consolidation of their territories and made it possible to expand into Germany. It is important to note that both Boniface and Pirmin were not Franks. Boniface was Anglo-Saxon and Pirmin had spent time with the Visigoths. They did, however, adapt to Frankish customs very easily and had no trouble dealing with the ruling classes due to their differing tribal affiliations.

It is important to note that not all historians believe that Martel played a role in the secularization of Church lands. The thoughts of Paul Fouracre, for example, should be examined, as part of his theory does hold merit. The correct part is that Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, who served from 845 to 882, is probably the man most responsible for the blame for secularization resting solely with Martel and not with the Carolingians as a whole. Hincmar wrote a letter from the Synod of Quierzy to Kings Louis the German and Charles the Bald of East and West Francia in 858 appealing for the return of church lands which had fallen into the hands of laymen. In this letter, Hincmar claimed that Martel was "the first to take property away from the church and divide it up." He added an account of a vision he said that a holy man named Eucherius had told him. In this vision, Martel was in hell, having been dragged out of his tomb in St. Denis by a dragon. According to Hincmar, this empty tomb had been discovered by Boniface and

another missionary, Fulrad. According to Hincmar, this vision had occurred during the reign of Martel's son Pippin sometime between 751 and 768. According to Fouracre, Hincmar was a specialist in visions and he amassed a collection of them throughout his life. This leads one to believe that this vision was a hoax appended to the letter in order to try to gain the support of the two kings in Francia.

Hincmar is interesting for another reason. Like Boniface, he seems to have intensely disliked Milo, though Hincmar did have a reason. Milo had served as bishop of Rheims during the time of Martel. During Milo's forty year reign, Rheims lost a number of church lands. Hincmar blamed Milo for the present state of affairs that he was in. Boniface's dislike of Milo only gave Hincmar more reasons to dislike Milo. There is one thing to keep in mind when looking at Hincmar. That thing is to keep him in his proper context. He is attacking Martel and Milo from a position of strength for himself. From his point in time, it is completely forbidden for a king to appoint bishops. Milo was an appointed bishop. For this reason, and because Milo had been attacked by someone who was recognized as a Saint and martyr of the Church in Boniface, Hincmar could attack Milo with impunity. It is also important to note that Martel was not king. He was only mayor of the palace. Thus, Hincmar was not directly attacking the Carolingian dynasty by attacking Martel. If Hincmar had attacked someone like Charlemagne or a Carolingian king for secularization, he would have been replaced immediately or he would have lost even more lands. Attacking Martel was the safe option for Hincmar.

It is impossible to talk about the relationship between church and state without talking about the papacy. In 731, Pope Gregory III became bishop of Rome. In 738, he made a disastrous tactical mistake regarding the now Catholic, but still expansionist,

Lombards near Ravenna. The Lombards marched on Rome and seized four strongholds outside the city. The Pope's allies in Byzantium had left them due to Gregory's negative stance on iconoclasm leaving Rome with nowhere to turn but to Martel. In three letters, Gregory III addressed Martel as *vice-regulus*, or substitute king, and asked for his assistance. With these letters, Gregory sent gifts, including a reliquary in the shape of the keys and chain of St. Peter contain the flakes of St. Peter's bones. It is possible that this gift was meant to emphasize to Martel that Gregory held the keys to Paradise if he would help him, perhaps hoping to make his way into Frankish gift giving. The papal embassy was met with honor, a delegation was sent back with gifts, but nothing else was done. Martel's son, Pippin the Short, had been adopted by the Lombards in 734, and Martel felt that he needed their help against the Muslims. This does show a few things about Martel and the papacy, though. First, it shows, a general shift towards the Franks by the Papacy when it is in trouble. This will play a major role in Carolingian history, as popes will anoint Pippin the Short as king and will crown Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor. Secondly, it shows that the western world at large saw Martel as the ruler of the Franks. Gregory III called Martel *vice-regulus* and addressed him, not the king. Boniface addressed him as prince. This marks a shift in power to what will be the Carolingians from the Merovingians. The papacy was the most important Christian institution in the world. If it gave something legitimacy, it had legitimacy. Finally, it shows that non-Germanic peoples were beginning to at least act Germanic for the sake of gaining help. The papacy gave gifts to Martel as an act of gift giving. If the papacy had been fully Germanic, they would have understood that Martel would not have broken the contract of

adoption with the Lombards. They did not, however, but this situation shows that the non-Germanic world was attempting to adapt to a new Germanic world order.

The relationship between Martel and the Church was confusing. On the one hand, Martel had a habit of consolidating bishoprics into the hands of one man and secularizing other church lands. On the other, he was very active in protecting missionaries, particularly Boniface and Pirmin in Germany. It has also been seen that the great historical myth of secularization breeding cavalry is false. Finally, it seems that it is at this time period that the papacy first decides that it is with the Franks that the future of the Church rests and not with the Byzantines or the other Germanic peoples of Europe.

Chapter 8: *Vice-Regulus* and Setting the Stage

In October of 741, Charles Martel died. Martel's effect on the concept of kingship in the Frankish world must be examined as it played an extremely important role in the rise of Pippin the Short and Charlemagne. After this, the immediate aftermath of Martel's death can be seen in the power struggle which went on between his three sons. Pippin the Short's quest for legitimacy, and the role Martel played in it, is examined. Finally, one of the most important effects of Martel's death was Gregory III's plea to Charlemagne for help.

An area in which Martel's life can be seen as a bridge into the Carolingian period is the concept of kingship. Even before Martel, the Carolingians had begun to lay the groundwork to take power from the Merovingian dynasty. Martel was the man who made it a partial reality. In his dealings with the papacy, the Pope addressed him as *vice-regulus*. Martel spent four years, from 737 until his death in 741, as the sole ruler, but not king, of Gaul. Martel was not sure enough of his position to proclaim himself king or to place one of his sons on the throne. He did place the idea of a Carolingian ruler into the minds of the people of Gaul and of Western Europe. His life, and that of his son, also timed quite nicely with the writing of a number of different statements on kingship coming from various parts of Europe. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) explained kingship in his *Etymologies* that "the name of king comes from the act of ruling." In contemporary Britain, *On the Twelve Vices of the World* was written by an unknown author, and it also claimed that ruling effectively was the most important part of being a king. The *Law of the Alemans* contained a line stating that "the leader who is unable to go on campaign or to ride or to bear arms can be deposed." These works, combined with the Frankish

importance placed on legitimate rule, meant that Martel was to be used as a bridge for legitimacy.

Once Martel was dead, which happened in October of 741, the area he had ruled as *vice-regulus* needed to be divided between his sons. The most important thing for Martel, according to Pierre Riché, was to keep the position of Mayor of the Palace in his family. He had turned this position into the real power in Gaul. Martel had had three sons by his two wives, Carloman, Pippin the Short, and Grifo, and he gave all three of them Austrasian lands. Quickly, Carloman and Pippin the Short had the semi-illegitimate Grifo removed to Chèvremont and continued Martel's policy of having no king for two years. In 743, they decided to return a "Merovingian" to the throne. They went to the monastery of St. Brctins and took someone who looked Merovingian and placed him on the throne with the name of Childeric III. It is important to understand why they placed a king upon the throne after all that Martel had done to set the stage for them up until that point. One reason was that there were two heirs of Martel alive and vying for power. Each was scared that the other would try to seize power and tonsure the other brother. Another reason was a recent rebellion in Alemannia. The rebellion had to be put down through extreme force and many of the leaders were executed, including members of noble families. Placing a king on the throne would allow the brothers to rule the kingdom with relative security and have a cause for the people of the region to rally around. As soon as one of the brothers was out of the way, however, the other brother was ready to make good on what Martel had set in motion.

One of the brothers was out of the way in 747. Carloman gave a portion of his domains to the abbey of Malmédy on the Meuse and went to Rome where he requested

the tonsure from Pope Zacharias. Shortly thereafter, Pippin the Short asked Pope Zacharias a question. Drawing from the works discussed earlier on kingship, Pippin the Short, through his associates, wondered to Zacharias "concerning the kings in Francia, whether it was good or not that they then had no royal power." Zacharias replied that "it was better to call him king who had royal power rather him who did not." He then gave Pippin the Short's diplomats a letter containing a phrase stating that "he ordained by his apostolic authority that Pippin should be made king." Pippin the Short had just been given an order by the most important religious person in Christianity to remove a king. He now had the one thing that Martel lacked: legitimacy. He had just been given an order by who he and his people believed was God's representative on Earth to remove his ruler and place himself on the throne. He could not be stopped. He called together the leading men of the realm in 751. At this meeting, he showed them the letter written by the Pope and he was elected King of the Franks. Childeric III was immediately dealt with by being placed in the monastery at St. Bertin, and his newborn son, Theuderic, was placed at Fontanelle. Pippin the Short was now king of the Franks. All that was left to do was to shore up his claims of legitimacy. What he needed for that was the support of the Church in Gaul and, perhaps, an appearance by the successor of Peter himself.

Pippin the Short was aided in his search for legitimacy from an unlikely place, Visigothic Spain. The Visigoths anointed their kings, and the Franks had learned of this practice in a book of canon law called the *Hispana* smuggled out of Spain. The Visigoths in Spain had been anointing kings since at least the seventh century. In the *Historia Wambae*, Julian, Bishop of Toledo, gives an account of an anointing he participated in 672. The Irish Celts also anointed their kings, and this practice probably found its way

into Gaul through trade, though Celtic anointing had much less effect on the Franks than the Visigoths. All of these anointing had their initial roots in the Old Testament and its commentaries, particularly those by Pope Gregory the Great. In the *Book of Kings*, Samuel anoints both Saul and David with oil to signify their having been chosen by God for their role as leaders of God's people. In Gregory the Great's *Commentary on the Book of Kings*, he states that "he who is elevated to the summit of power receives the sacrament of unction... The head of the king should be anointed because the soul of the master must be filled with the spiritual grace." Pippin the Short wanted to be anointed. He felt that he could be brought to the level of the biblical kings like David and Solomon if he was anointed. The Merovingians had claimed that they were chosen by God through birth. Through anointing, Pippin the Short could show that the Carolingians, like the people of Israel, were chosen by God. He called together the bishops of Gaul and the bishops anointed him. Among those doing the anointing was Boniface, missionary to the Germanic peoples under Martel, who was acting as the Pope's special representative. Boniface is important to this episode for two reasons. First, he was there as the Pope's representative. Even though Pope Zacharias was not there himself, he was there in spirit. Pippin's rule continued to have the Papal blessing. Second, Boniface can be seen as the living embodiment of Martel's legacy. Martel had worked to make the Merovingians so weak that a Carolingian ruler was not a foreign concept to the people. Martel had worked with the Pope so that the Pope saw that the Carolingian family was the real power in Gaul. Martel had worked to protect Boniface so that Catholic Christianity could be spread throughout Germany. This missionary activity had led to further power for Martel and the Carolingians.

Pippin the Short, however, was not done shoring up his legitimacy. He wanted the entirety of Europe to know that God wanted him, and the entire Carolingian line, to be the rulers of Gaul. In 754, he called for the new pope, Stephen II, to come to Gaul. In a unique event, Pippin was re-anointed, but he was not the only one anointed. His two sons, Carloman II and the future Charlemagne were also anointed. Then Stephen II made a threat, probably at the behest of Pippin the Short. According to a contemporary monk of St. Denis in the *Clausula de unctione Pippini*, "Stephen forbade all, under the threat of interdict and excommunication, to dare ever to choose a king from a line other than that of these princes; these whom divine piety had deigned to exalt and confirm by... the hand of the blessed pontiff." Pippin the Short was king. His sons were going to be king after his death. The Carolingians were fully entrenched in power in Gaul thanks to the Pope. Of course, this meant that the Carolingians would help the Pope later on, but, as has already been discussed, this had been practically guaranteed since the life of Martel.

A major area where Martel can be seen as an immediate bridge is in the Carolingian relationship with the Papacy. In 800, a new Pope needed the help of a Carolingian ruler. This ruler was Charlemagne. The Byzantines, whom Charlemagne's biographer Einhard calls "the Romans", invaded Rome and captured Pope Leo. Leo escaped, but not before the Lombards were able to tear out his eyes and cut out his tongue, maiming him for life. Leo called upon Charlemagne for help and Charlemagne, unlike Martel, came to the aid of the Pope. According to Einhard, Charlemagne "accordingly went to Rome, to set in order the affairs of the Church, which were in great confusion... it was then that he received the titles of Emperor and Augustus." From this episode, it can be seen that Martel had linked the Carolingians to the Papacy. Without

the earlier negotiations between Pope Gregory III and Martel, Leo would not have gone to Charlemagne. The Carolingians and the Papacy were militarily linked, and Martel was the beginning of this link.

None of this could have happened without the life of Charles Martel. His life was a time of transition. Martel was a bridge between times. Before him, there was a specific Merovingian concept of kingship, the concept of royal blood. It involved being born as a king and it had specific inheritance rights one had to follow. Martel and his life changed that. Martel began life as an illegitimate child who through force of arms and carefully negotiating a complex relationship with the church was able to make himself into the most powerful man in Western Europe. Pippin the Short would not have been able to become King without the specific actions taken by Martel during his rise to power. Martel fundamentally changed the relationship between church and state. Before Martel, bishops in Gaul were mainly autonomous and many monasteries in Gaul and Germany had royal protection. A king would be extremely careful before breaking canon law. Martel secularized church lands and placed his supporters into positions of episcopal authority, normally more than one. Martel strengthened relations with the papacy and gave military protection to missionaries. Martel and the Carolingians also changed how the Franks thought about punishment and loyalty. Although still brutal, the Carolingians were much more likely to send someone they disliked to a monastery rather than being killed. Martel's victory at the Battle of Poitiers also served to give the Carolingian family legitimacy. Historians have, rightly, begun to move away from looking at just one man as causing history. In the case of Charles Martel, historians have erred if they do not

place him in his context. He was a bridge. He was the transitional Frank between the Merovingian dynasty to the Carolingians.

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