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Abstract: "Pagani and Infantes in the Carolingian World"

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In one respect the adult pagan and the infant happily delivered from the knees of his Christian mother to be placed soon upon the breasts of Holy Mother Church were regarded identically in the Carolingian world. Both were in need of the saving waters of baptism. For both there were contrary forces in Frankish society urging their immediate baptism and arguing for some delay before their Christian initiation. In this paper I would like to examine some of these contrary forces of a political, sociological, psychological, and educational nature. My aim is to show the importance of the rite of baptism in the eyes of the Carolingians in the ramifications of its ceremonial, sponsorship, and catechesis on society at this period, and that scholars will consider this, who are attempting to unravel the enigmas surrounding, for example, the parochial system, village organization, family structure and kinship, women's roles, or popular religious mentality and piety, among the many intriguing Carolingian studies currently being undertaken.

Given the time stricture, I will focus on three different situations in which Charlemagne furthered his interests as ruler and reformer through the rite of baptism. First, I will examine Charlemagne's military strategy for cementing his conquests and the

forced mass baptisms of adult pagans, the strong objection to this policy by Alcuin, and the compromise worked out in the frontier diocese of the patriarch of Aquileia. Second, the baptisms of two of Charlemagne's children show the important political role of baptismal sponsorship and lead to the question of whether there was a "quam primum" popular attitude toward infant baptism. The advantages of sponsorship in preserving the extended family at a time when it was being checked by ecclesiastical reform legislation against incestuous marriages, divorce, polygamy, concubinage, and non-celestial clergy will also be considered. Third, Charlemagne's baptismal reform decrees, including his circulatory questionnaire to the archbishops of his realm on baptism, show that he saw baptism as an important occasion, (perhaps the only), of education for the grass roots level of society. This is why his baptismal reforms focus on the instruction of the often near-illiterate parish clergy, in whose hands lay the ultimate responsibility of the religious education of the common people.