

What I'd like to do in the next 45 minutes or so is to tell you a bit about my research project on Carolingian baptismal expositions, and especially how, to my own surprise, ^{and ~~they~~ are valuable for} they are ~~shedding more and more~~ shedding light on problematic areas in Carolingian studies, far beyond strictly liturgical questions.

I'll try to answer three queries that I imagine you must have, namely: what are Carolingian baptismal expositions? Why did they proliferate in the early ninth century? And what is their value for us?

Carolingian baptismal expositions (and since we're very fond of acronyms these days let's call them CBEs) vary in length from ten lines to over 20 pages, but typically run the equivalent of about two printed pages. There are essentially three types. First, the vast majority (Estimating from a sample of some 60 I have collected) are brief explanations of the series of individual ceremonies constituting baptism, from the initial making of the catechumen ^{with the} ~~and~~ giving of salt to the final post-baptismal anointing with chrism and reception of the Eucharist. (What we know as the separate sacraments of penance, baptism, confirmation, and First Holy Communion were done all together in a single rite called baptism^a.) These explanations

are usually divided into chapters with titles for each successive ceremony, ~~according to the liturgical order in which they would be celebrated.~~ Second,

some CBEs do not describe the entire rite, but are limited to a few ^{topics} ~~titles~~,

such as ^{the catechumen or baptism proper,} ~~"De catechumeno"~~ and ~~"De baptismo."~~ Usually the explanations

^{consist of} ~~given include:~~ the meaning of the word in question, ^{for example,} such as ~~"catechumenus"~~

~~"Quid est catechumenus?"~~ ^{cat. est auditor, a cat. is a hearer, or quid est scrutinium? S. est} ~~"competens," "exorcismus" or "scrutinium;"~~

exploratio
sive
investigatio,
a scrutiny
is an
exploration
or
investigation.

^{Also,} a statement about the purpose or effect of the ceremony; and, sometimes,

a scriptural basis for it, such as Christ's healing the deaf-mute with

spittle for the ceremony of the touching of the nose and ears with ^{the priest's saliva,} ~~spit.~~

Third, a small percentage of the CBEs are glosses of the words of the prayers spoken by the priest during the ceremonies. The glosses are simply rephrasings of lines in the prayers or synonyms of selected prayer words.

To judge from the number of extant CBEs whose manuscripts have survived through almost 1200 years of European history, including two world wars,

CBEs proliferated in the early ninth century. The number ~~that are~~ extant

^{is certifies} ~~are certain evidence~~ that many, many more once existed. For one reason,

the CBEs we have (I have found them in approximately 150 manuscripts so far) are probably all copies, not in the original composer's own hand.

3.

Why, then, were CBEs so popular? What gave rise to a demand for baptismal expositions, and for whom did their authors intend them? To answer these questions we need to understand, first, the ^{role}~~importance~~ of baptism in the Carolingian world.

In the year 812 Leidrad, Bishop of Lyon, ~~one of the oldest Christian communities of Gaul, situated~~ in southeastern France, composed an explanation of the ceremonies of baptism. He began it, ^{significantly,}~~tellingly,~~ by recalling the Creation Story. "And so," wrote Leidrad, "the unformed cosmos, not yet with glowing sun or paling moon, or twinkling stars, overwhelmed uncomposed, invisible matter by the magnitude of its abysses and odious darkness.

The Spirit of God, alone, was born over the waters in the form of a charioteer, and, in a type of baptism, brought forth the nascent world." Leidrad saw a parallel between primordial chaos, from whose black watery abysses life was brought forth, and holy baptism. His world of the early ninth century was a fragile world constantly threatened by the ubiquitously encircling ignorance of paganism, superstition, and error. From their murky hold, the saving waters of baptism brought forth new Christian life and hope.

For Leidrad, baptism was prefigured in the very creation of the world

because from that time ^{forth would} God ~~continued~~ through water and his Spirit, ^{brought} ~~to bring~~

forth new life out of darkness and sin. Noah's flood, the passage of the

Israelites through the Red Sea, and so on down the centuries, to the death

and resurrection of Christ, when ^{through the water which ~~came~~ ^{flowed} forth from his wounded side,} Christian baptism received its meaning

^{dying + rising to new life} ~~of new life in Christ,~~ God never ceased to mark out his chosen people thru water. Leidrad's exaltation of baptism is understandable, they

~~if we consider its importance in his world.~~ Leidrad was composing this

baptismal treatise at the request of his lord, king of the Franks and emperor

of the Romans, Charles the Great. In 812 Charles had been on the throne

for 44 years. For every one of those years up to 804, almost without excep-

tion, Charles had been at war, expanding his empire into heathen territory

^{often force-baptizing pagan tribes.} or putting down revolts of submitted peoples. Charlemagne never had the

man-power or technology to maintain permanent garrisons along the limits

(if anyone knew them) of his vast empire. The march system repeatedly

failed. His policy, therefore, mentioned from 776 on in the Royal Frankish

Annals, was to demand an act of submission from the tribal chieftains,

order mass baptisms of the conquered peoples, and usually let them continue

^{live} ~~to lead their lives~~ under their own leaders, but who had to do homage and

recognize Frankish overlordship.

~~And thus the Franks thought had been designated as the baptism of the Franks ever since.~~
brought to baptism a crucial significance in Leidrad's world.
The Franks were God's chosen people, destined to preserve the true faith in the error all @ them just as the Israelites did.

The ceremony of submission was baptism. It set apart the realm of the Franks from the heathen tribes, ~~threatening its borders~~. In a real way, it also set apart the realm of Christ ~~from~~ the realm of Satan. The CBEs are explicit: all unbaptized pagans, and infants for that matter, ~~are in the grip of Satan~~. ^{belong to}

Of course, baptism in and of itself was no guarantee for Charlemagne that the conquered peoples would remain submissive. A ~~simple water immersion~~ ^{dunk in the river} with a few words they could not understand meant nothing to the pagans.

What Charlemagne expected, however, was that the catechetical instruction accompanying baptism would be delivered to the neophytes by missionaries

~~proceeding~~ ^{following} in his wake. In other words, the policy was: take hostages and oaths of allegiance from the leaders; baptize the general mass; leave

behind missionaries to instruct them in Christian ways and the Catholic

faith. ^{So close was the connection between military submission and baptism.} ~~(It is interesting that~~ the feudal term fidelis for one who has

performed homage to his lord is ~~also the term used to describe~~ ^{the same given to} the newly

baptised, ~~before he is confirmed~~). ^{The CBEs tell us he is a cat. before baptism, a fidelis after bap., and a Christianus after he is confirmed w/ Chrism. This last step was often delayed until a bishop could be present.} This policy ^{I outlined} was begun in the time of

Charlemagne's father, Pepin III. In fact, in 754, the year Charlemagne was born, St. Boniface, known as "the Apostle of Germany," was martyred

by Frisians-- not, as is often heard, while baptizing them, but while attempt-

ing to instruct and confirm these northern rebels who had before been

conquered and baptized. Thus Charlemagne, like Pepin, continued to use

~~baptism and the servants of the Church~~ ^{conversion} to build long-term stability for

his kingdom, ~~through voluntary conversion~~. Ultimately, the peace, unity,

and control of his kingdom was in the hands of the missionaries and priests

who instructed the conquered peoples and ^{slowly} won their hearts and minds by perseverance,

~~courage, example~~, patience and wit. From the time of Pepin a pattern emerges

in the annals recording contemporary events. Into each newly conquered

territory a mission, with royal support, arrives, sets up a center, and

begins to preach. ~~Soon parishes appear~~, Rippling out from ~~the~~ center *small churches*

begin to appear, and finally, parishes are established.
~~like the waves of a pebble shattering an unbroken mill-pond.~~

Charlemagne, however, did not have the patience of a monk and was often frustrated at the recidivism of the nominal Christians. On several occasions he actually uprooted whole tribes from their homelands, broke up families, and transported large numbers to other areas in the hope that without the support of their kinsmen they would be more submissive.

Funny that history seems to have brushed over such an outrageous vio-

lation of human rights. Charlemagne is almost enrolled among the saints.

But some moral voices ^{back then} ~~did~~ ~~in fact~~, protest. ~~The~~ ⁰ outrage came from Alcuin, famed scholar and Master of the Palace School, over Charlemagne's misuse of baptism. "You can't," he said in a letter to his lord, "baptise these people without any prior instruction in the faith." At least three weeks of catechetical instruction should precede the sacrament! // We are amused, perhaps, but Alcuin actually wrote out a 21-day program of instruction for missionaries.

Charlemagne must have been impressed with Alcuin's objections. At least, in 812, 8 years after the famous monk had died and when Charlemagne felt his own years weighing heavily upon him, he took out the correspondence of Alcuin and composed a letter for all the archbishops of his realm, based on a baptismal exposition Alcuin had written to a group of monks in Septimania, near the Spanish March. Charlemagne now had finally put away his buckler and was turning his thoughts to the survival of his vast empire after his death.

By the year 812 he ruled an area that stretched from the Spanish March with its capital at Barcelona, north to Frisia, the border of present-day

Denmark, northeast to the Elbe, which flows through the center of East Germany, southeast to the section of the Danube on which lies Budapest, and south down the Italian peninsula almost to Naples. The administration of such a far-flung realm was an extraordinary feat. Historians have studied and re-studied the huge bulk of reform legislation, ~~from that era,~~ which sought to bring political organization and cultural unity to the empire. Within its boundaries existed a formidable diversity of peoples, languages, codes of law, and age-old customs and beliefs. The only common bond extending over all the members of Carolingian society was their baptism into the Christian faith. The educational opportunity baptism presented would be a means to unify the empire at the grass-roots level. Because baptism touched every individual, here was a chance to create a broad-based conformity in understanding, belief, and worship.

Of course, it all depended on the parish priest who, ^{must} ~~one hoped,~~ would be competent to deliver ~~instruction at the time of baptism and guide catechu-~~ ~~mens and sponsors in~~ the orthodox teachings of the Christian faith. ~~Thus,~~ ^{It meant that} grass-roots conformity in the celebration and understanding of Christian Initiation was inseparable from clerical educational reform. Charlemagne's

legislation shows clearly that he regarded the clergy as pivotal to the success or failure of his efforts to unify his empire.

The Carolingian period is a famous ecclesiastical reform era. Charlemagne together with his bishops issued an amazing number of reform decrees on every aspect of ecclesiastical life. Although there was a lot of legislation on baptism dealing with where, when, and by whom it should be celebrated, who could be sponsors, the rights of baptismal churches, and so forth, the baptismal legislation issued between 789 and 813 is overwhelmingly related to clerical reform. One concern predominates: this is that bishops see to it that their priests know, understand, and can explain the rite of baptism.

What gave rise to ^{the interest in baptism} CBEs was no theological dispute over infant ^{vs.} or adult baptism; no verbal war against the Spanish Adoptionists who were practising single, not triple, immersion; no introduction of the Roman rite in Gallican territory where baptism was done slightly differently. Rather, the CBEs were drafted in response to clerical reform decrees demanding that priests know and be able to instruct and properly celebrate baptism. A ^{careful examination of} look at ^{confirms this.} the manuscripts containing the CBEs ~~makes this fully apparent.~~

The manuscript, it must be remembered, is the work of some individual or scriptorium with a specific purpose, probably a specific recipient, in mind. Manuscript after manuscript containing the baptismal tracts are, I found, clerical handbooks-- that is, manuals designed for priests bringing together in a single handy volume essential information they needed to fulfill the duties of their office. For example, besides baptism, one may find expositions on the mass; explanations of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, selected homilies from the Fathers, canonical collections, and a penitential for the rite of confession. All these items found in the manuals are ~~almost~~ a blueprint of the items spelled out in reform councils stating what a priest must know and be examined on. Very frequently the capitularies, that is, the decisions of the councils, themselves are included in these manuals, presumably as reminders, admonitions, or exhortations to the priest to learn well the contents of the manuals.

In sum, it appears that CBEs were composed and duplicated to provide instructions to clerics threatened with an examination of their knowledge. They were intended as didactic texts for priests and must be placed in the context of the Carolingian reform program. What, we may now ask, is

their value for us in problematic areas ⁱⁿ of Carolingian studies?

~~Charlemagne grew old. Increasingly, as he looked~~ ^{Charlemagne, looking} to the stability and strength of his empire, ~~after his death, he~~ ^{convoked councils and} pushed reforms in every area ^{from the} of administrative, ^{of his realm,} social, cultural, and religious life. ~~It is not~~ necessary, for the ninth century, to distinguish these concerns. The

clergy, ~~more than laymen,~~ were essential to carrying out ^{the} reforms ^{of} in all lay society in ~~the~~ ^{the direction of their common} understanding + celebration of the sacraments. ~~these areas; first, because the Church hierarchy system put clergy in contact~~

~~with the people at all levels of society, and second, because the clergy~~

~~monopolized knowledge and learning. Charlemagne understood the vital link~~ ^{at the grass roots level of society} ~~that the clergy were with the people.~~ ^{played between the people and the world of learning.} The value of the CBEs for historians

as well as liturgists is ~~in~~ their connection with the whole Carolingian reform program. They are able to tell us ^{from the day} how Charlemagne actually put into effect all the wonderful-sounding reforms he decreed.

Up until the CBEs were systematically analyzed, we did not know whether his baptismal legislation ever had a real impact. We did not know what process he intended for ~~getting from~~ a declaration at the royal palace

of Aachen that all priests must know and be able to explain the rite of baptism, ^{getting down} to a ~~reformed~~ parish priest of the countryside, who could instruct

12,
his parishioners knowledgeably in the sacrament.

Let's return to Leidrad, responding to a circulatory letter of Charlemagne on baptism. *With the help of the* ~~Using a related group of~~ CBEs it is possible to piece together

what Charlemagne was doing in issuing that letter-- nothing less than initiating the process by which his reform legislation would get carried out.

Charlemagne's first step, we discover, in looking back over his activities prior to 813, was to impress the leading bishops of his realm with his ~~acute~~

interest in clerical reform regarding baptism. Shortly before the prelates

were to meet in five regional reform councils planned for the Spring of

813, Charlemagne sent a questionnaire on baptism to his metropolitans.

He asked them to report to him in writing, "how you and your suffragan

[bishops] teach and instruct the priests of God and the people commissioned

to you on the sacrament of baptism," and then posed a series of specific

questions pertaining to the individual ceremonies of the rite: "Why is

an infant made a catechumen; what is the scrutiny; what is the Latin inter-

pretation of the creed;...what is the renunciation of Satan; what are the

devil's works and pomp; why is one exsufflated; why exorcized; why does

the catechumen receive salt, and so forth. After one bishop saw the question-

naire, he ~~stated~~ ^{said} that his majesty very clearly was not asking these questions to learn, but to instruct. The emperor's goal was to stir his bishops to see that their priests were able to teach baptism, and ~~not superficially~~, ~~but in a comprehensive manner with a knowledge of all its ceremonies~~, ^{he proposed a format for writing baptismal instructions}, as his series of questions suggests.

Next, Charlemagne set the agenda of topics that he wished the bishops to act upon at ~~the~~ ^{he convoked for the Spring of 813.} five regional councils ~~of 813~~. We know this from the Acts of ~~these~~ ^{the} five councils written up and sent to Charlemagne after the bishops met, and also from Charlemagne's own capitulary of 813 composed of excerpts from ~~these~~ acts. His very first capitula states: "Concerning baptism, that each archbishop diligently and zealously admonishes his suffragans, that each one does not neglect to carefully examine his priests as to how they celebrate the sacrament of baptism, and that each studiously teaches them how to do it in order."

Thus Charlemagne, in an issue of vital concern to himself, saw to it that interest was stirred in the reform of baptism even before ^{he demanded} ~~the~~ discussion of this topic in ecclesiastical councils. He sought to insure that the prelates would be aware of the importance to him of the proper instruction

and celebration of baptism in every archdiocese. By sending out a circulatory letter ahead of time and requesting a detailed written report on how baptism was celebrated in each archdiocese, Charlemagne prompted much thought and literature on baptism at the ideal moment. He wisely took advantage of the organization of the Church in this matter. He depended upon a system of regional Church councils, ^{By this system,} whereby archdiocesan representatives met in five different geographic areas, issued reform decisions, then returned to their individual archdioceses and handed over the decisions to their suffragan bishops. These, in turn, called local diocesan synods and issued the decisions to all the priests of their dioceses. Thus, from Charlemagne to the grass-roots level parish priest, Church organization provided the effective means to carry out his baptismal legislation.

It has been possible to document this whole procedure in the archdiocese of Sens. Magnus, Archbishop of Sens (an ecclesiastical province lying to the south and east of Paris), took ^{literally} Charlemagne's instructions, "how you and your suffragans teach and instruct the priests of God..." ~~literally~~.

The reply he sent to Charlemagne describing how baptism was taught and celebrated in his archdiocese is, ^{preserved. It is, I have been able to establish,} ~~in fact,~~ little more than a collection

of excerpts taken from the reports of his suffragans. We can reconstruct what Magnus did by the lucky survival of ~~a related group of~~ ^{several other} CBEs.

It ~~has~~ ^{was} long ~~been~~ known that Magnus sent one of his suffragans, Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans, a copy of the questionnaire and asked him to compose a response for him, and that Magnus used parts of Theodulf's long baptismal exposition when he composed his own much briefer treatise for Charlemagne. What has not been noticed before is the similarity of various other sections of Magnus' treatise to three other ^{extant} baptismal tracts besides Theodulf's.

They are anonymous, but two are unquestionably by bishops. ~~It may be added~~ ^{We can't swear where they}

^{were written, but} ~~that~~ the ninth century manuscripts of two of the three, according to the distinguished paleographer Bernard Bischoff in Munich, probably were written in the province of Sens area. ^{I believe that these anonymous tracts are}

^{I believe} ~~It~~ appears that Magnus composed his response after taking a poll of his ~~suffragan~~ bishops throughout the archdiocese. He sent them copies

of Charlemagne's letter and urged them to respond to the questions. ~~After~~ ^{Then}

he ^{ed} fashioning a composite report using excerpts from his suffragans' reports, and sent it to Charlemagne. We can take Magnus literally when he tells Chlg at the beginning of ~~Magnus addressed it to Charlemagne thus:~~ ^{the letter:} "Most glorious emperor, we your servants, that is Magnus and my colleagues, the rest of the bishops, though

unworthy, in the diocese of Sens, have presumed to make known to your high-ness..."

One of the anonymous tracts that contains a number of phrases identical to ones found in Magnus' letter was published without identification of its manuscript in the seventeenth century. It has ^{never} not been appreciated what this baptismal tract is. A brief remark in the text, however, reveals that it is a synodal address of some bishop. The remark states: "We will speak no further here on this matter, lest a long speech offend this holy synod." The bishop who convened this diocesan synod was concerned with baptism. He begins: "These are the causes which the august lord emperor ordered us [to act upon], always for the utility of the holy church, through

his letter. ^{Then he breaks down his address into capitula. The first capital!} ~~Capitula 1~~, How each priest of God teaches, preaches, and guides the people commissioned to him by God... ^{The second} ~~Capitula 2~~, Concerning the whole mystery of sacred baptism, how we ought to celebrate it... ^{The 3rd} ~~Capitula 3~~;

~~3~~ Why one is made a catechumen..." and so forth, according to Charlemagne's questionnaire. This capitulary format shows that the questionnaire had become a model for diocesan clerical reform legislation on baptism. Why are parts of it identical with the wording of Magnus' letter? Most probably,

this diocesan synod took place in the archiepiscopal province of Sens, ~~following~~

After the five regional reform councils of 813, Magnus would have transmitted

the decisions of those councils to his suffragans to be repeated at their

own diocesan synods with their priests. The bishop of this one synod perhaps

used his report on Charlemagne's questions, which he had previously sent

to Magnus when the archbishop had polled his suffragans. (This is not

a far-fetched hypothesis; we have the synodal address of ^{Bishop} Jesse of Amiens,

who, just like this anonymous bishop, ^{instructed} ~~addressed~~ his priests ^{at a diocesan council} on the ceremonies

of baptism exactly following Charlemagne's order of questions).

Did others of the metropolitans besides Magnus take a poll of their bishops before responding to Charlemagne? Might we really have before us in the CBE corpus the literary activity of a suffragan network showing how reforms were effectively implemented? We also possess the replies to the questionnaire of Archbishops Odilbert of Milan, Amalarius of Trier, Maxentius of Aquileia, and Leidrad of Lyon. By comparing anonymous baptismal tracts and the place of origin of their manuscripts with tracts written by bishops whose names and localities we know, I have been able to link a number of the anonymous tracts to the identified tracts in other areas

besides Sens. The possibility of classifying the tracts according to geographical areas of origin is very exciting. For one, it reveals how well church organization-- the link between metropolitan, diocesan bishop, and parish priest, had developed in different areas of Charlemagne's empire.

For another, it permits us to date and locate anonymous compositions (this

^{can be very}
~~is~~ helpful to scholars working with other unidentified material in the

same manuscripts). For a third, it explains oddities in the baptismal

expositions. For example, one anonymous instruction contains a description

of the pedilavium, the foot-washing ceremony not in the Roman rite of baptism.

^{The washing of the cat's feet, however, was an important part of,} It would be interesting ^{but in the ancient Ambrosian or Milanese rite.} ~~We can explain this by~~ to have evidence that this non-Roman rite persisted in the area of Milan. Odilbert ~~saying it came from Odilbert of Milan's province; and indeed, in this case,~~ of Milan's treatise does mention the pedilavium. The anonymous tract's ~~we have confirmation: its manuscript was written in a north Italian scriptor-~~

^{We are seeing that the variety among the CBEs}
ium. [^] ~~In fact, the variety in the explanations from all the anonymous CBEs~~

~~becomes~~ meaningful. It reflects local differences in the teaching and

celebration of baptism, *despite the desire for conformity.*

We have said that

~~Furthermore,~~ Charlemagne's questionnaire, by its detailed series of

questions, suggested to the metropolitans that he wanted a full exposition

of the rite. These they gave him and, in the process, provided models

for their bishops who of course had to see to it that their priests had
baptismal instructions, so that they indeed could reform themselves.

~~This~~, Many of the anonymous CBEs we have today are adapted forms of the
expositions of well-known prelates ^{like Leidrad.} ~~responding to Charlemagne's questionnaire.~~

Others are modeled straight on the questionnaire, which presumably the
local bishops got copies of and gave to composers of clerical instructions.

This permits us to go down one level further than the diocesan synod
in observing the implementation process of Charlemagne's legislation.

There are extant at least nine anonymous baptismal instructions whose composers
used the imperial questionnaire as their model. ^{These tracts are extremely simple in their wording + content.} Most of ~~these tracts~~ are

~~cast~~ in question-response form and ~~are found~~ in clerical handbooks. ~~These~~

^{prove} ~~anonymous tracts~~ confirm that instructions on baptism for clerics have

actually been composed and disseminated in clerical manuals as a direct
result of Charlemagne's reforms. Furthermore, these handbooks come from
wide-ranging areas of his empire.

~~Charlemagne's baptismal questionnaire was the greatest impetus for~~
~~the multiplication of baptismal expositions in the early ninth century.~~

The ~~numerous~~ ^{did, then,} anonymous baptismal instructions that we are finding in clerical handbooks reached the hands of parish priests. ^{Be/ of this fact, we can} ~~Using the CBEs,~~ let us

turn to another problematic area in Carolingian studies where ^{the CBEs} ~~they~~ shed some

light. ¶ During the Carolingian era one of the most significant events of European history was taking place-- namely, the conversion of early medieval Germanic society to Christianity. We would like to know much more about how the common people of village and countryside received the Christian teachings and way of life in the face of their pagan ethics, beliefs, fears and superstitions. Perhaps the closest we may ever come to knowing what people were taught and thought in thousands of rural parishes across Carolingian Europe is contained in the literature written for the parish priest.

His homilies and catechesis were delivered orally. These we will not recover. But ^{whatever} ~~the~~ ^{he conveyed was presumably gained through the} knowledge of the priest who delivered that homily or in-

^{clerical handbooks} ~~struction was based on texts.~~ What do we know about the parish priest

responsible for the education of the masses? From the reform capitularies, one picture can be fashioned: he is illiterate, unequipped with the vessels of his office, living with a woman, wearing filthy vestments, renting out his church as a hayloft or a market place, off hunting, visiting taverns,

carousing at banquets and showing raucous behavior in public, absent from his parish, failing to preach on Sundays, and charging a fee for the sacraments! Was the situation really this bad at the parochial level? The CBEs can speak to the most important of these accusations: clerical illiteracy. What were the priests told in these baptismal instructions? How sophisticated or simple are they? How much formal theology, how much Scripture, do we find in them?

Reform legislation, by its nature, is not a very reliable source of information for a true picture of the daily life situation. But the baptismal tracts offer us a means to get behind the legislative sources. The instructions provide concrete evidence of the real state of affairs. The general impression one gains from the anonymous CBEs is the shockingly low level of expectation their composers had for the parish priest. Many of the tracts are brief to the point of being useless as practical liturgical guides. Most of

the anonymous ones contain little more than textbook, that is Isidorian, definitions of terms. ^{I found} ~~One finds~~ almost no effort to provide any theology of baptism. For example, Christ's words, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God" ^{are} ~~is~~ never found.

If only baptismal tracts

*are X
TEXT 2*

All consist, in a great part, of sprung phrases from the Fathers. We do well to ask, did these tracts really improve the priests' understanding, instruction, and celebration of baptism?

What appears, in fact, to be the case, is that the chief utility of these tracts was as reading primers. Let me share one example: there are four CBEs which gloss the words of the ordo of baptism, that is, they interpret words taken from the prayers and rubrics a priest would recite or read while celebrating baptism. I will describe them as A, B, C, and D, from lengthiest to briefest. The composer of A glossed a series of fifteen prayers from the ordo, providing the entire text of each prayer and inserting after every sentence or phrase and explanation of its sense or a synonymous phrase. The earliest manuscript of A known to me is dated first third of the ninth century. The composer of B did not explain the full text of any prayer. Rather, he selected a large number of words that come from ten different prayers in the ordo. The words, each followed by a synonymous word or phrase, are listed out of their prayer context, but in the same order, word for word and prayer for prayer, that they are found in the ordo. The earliest manuscript of B known to me is dated between 820-840.

In the same manner as in B, the composer of C listed a series of words that can be found in fourteen different prayers. This tract has a far smaller selection of words from each prayer, however. The earliest manuscript of C known to me is dated second-third of the ninth century. D is the briefest of all the glosses. Although its composer gives a list of words that come from 16 different prayers, sometimes there are only one or two words from any one prayer. The three earliest manuscripts of D are middle, second-third, and second half of the ninth century. A close comparison of the four glosses shows that they are independent derivations from a common archtype. ^eThis archtype consisted of a full exposition of the entire text of each prayer, most similar to A. In B, C, and D there is no way of telling that the lists of words come from certain baptismal prayers. What, then is the purpose of these brief glossary lists? They have lost their context. The manuscripts of C and D contain no ordo of baptism to accompany the glossaries. An ordo is found in ^{one}the manuscript of B, but only four of the ten prayers glossed in B are in it. The evidence of these manuscripts suggests that the glosses had a function other than liturgical interpretation. The aim of the composers of the brief glossary

lists disassociated from the ^{prayer} texts was not instruction on an ordo of baptism. The brief glossary lists were an end in themselves. ^{In sum,} ~~Early~~

baptismal expositions glossing the entire prayers of the rite of baptism were ^{soon} ~~quickly~~ abbreviated to serve another purpose. They became little

more than glossary lists, useful as primers for illiterate clerics who needed to learn to read Latin. To show this let's take one example from

A, B, C, and D. The word in question is "arce." It comes from a prayer in which it states that "God descended from the arce of heaven." A gives

the prayer and following the words "arch of heaven" adds: id est, seniore loco celi [that is, the senior or highest place of heaven]." A accurately

interpretes the meaning of "arce" as "highest place" in this context.

The composer of B lists the word arce, followed by: "hoc est, principatus et senior," ^{meaning "first place and highest."} ~~SA~~ But, apparently unfamiliar with this word by itself, a copyist

of B saw "principatus et senior" and thought arce must be an error for

"patriarche," which would beautifully fit the gloss "principatus et senior," ^{because} "principatus et senior" can also refer to a person who holds the 1st or highest place. In a final manuscript we find, "patriarche, hoc est princeps et senior."

There is nothing wrong with the gloss in itself, but "patriarche" is in no prayer in the ordo of baptism, and the gloss has of course lost all

association with the original word arce.

The educational reform program of the clerics was underway. It was hardly a theology course on baptism, however. Its aim was no loftier than to make clerics literate enough to function in the minimal duties of their priestly office. The functional quality of the tracts is supported by their brevity, question-response form, simple phraseology, repetition, and lack of formal theology, to repeat just a few characteristics of the CBEs. Overall, the evidence of the baptismal tracts is that clerical illiteracy was a tremendous problem for Carolingian reformers. This conclusion is important for our understanding of what the common people may have received in homilies or catechesis from their parish priests. Much greater acknowledgment can probably now be given to the persistence of a hybrid oral Christian culture tainted with long-held indigenous folklore, in the absence of instructors well versed in Scripture and orthodox teachings.

In conclusion, the retrievable Carolingian baptismal tracts are only the tip of an iceberg, when we consider how many manuscripts must have perished. But these tracts should make modern scholars thoughtful about the potential information to be drawn from these and other so-thought obscure

kinds of texts that have been previously ignored. SDI and LBOs are not the only frontiers left to challenge our initiative. With the manuscripts that have yet to be fully explored, much work remains for scholars and students in Carolingian studies. Unlikely sounding historical sources as the CBEs may appear, a sampling have already enriched our understanding of the complexities of Carolingian life.

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