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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

BAPTISMAL INSTRUCTION IN THE CAROLINGIAN PERIOD:

THE MS. EVIDENCE

This thesis is a study of Carolingian baptismal literature. Its aims are, first, to offer an inventory of the numerous tracts or brief treatises on the rite of Christian initiation that were composed in the eighth and ninth centuries. The inventory identifies fifty-seven texts according to the MSS. in which they are found. The texts include: 1) the known baptismal treatises; 2) other tracts that are not published but are identified in MS. catalogues; and 3) hitherto unidentified texts that the author's MS. research has uncovered. (The inventory makes no pretence to be exhaustive.)

Second, in the thesis a comprehensive analysis of the baptismal literature is made in order to ascertain its nature and its value as an historical source of information.

The texts assembled in the inventory are analyzed in two ways, corresponding to two parts of the thesis. In Part I the texts are studied in light of their MS. context. The contents of all the s. VIII-X MSS. cited in the inventory are described in summary fashion. They are arranged according to a schema of the material found most frequently to least frequently adjacent to the baptismal tracts. It is possible to show the extraordinary extent to which the baptismal literature in its

earliest MSS. was associated with clerical reform legislation and literature directly resulting from that legislation.

In Part II the contents of the baptismal tracts themselves are studied comparatively in terms of their topical structure and their textual content. The originality of the tracts is found in the manner in which their composers pieced them together, selecting, modifying and supplementing pre-Carolingian sources and borrowing from their contemporaries to express their own ideas. To show the extent to which the tracts offer reinterpretations of their sources and new information, a major section of Part II is a summary of the explanations of the ceremonies of baptism contained in all of the texts.

Key issues in the Carolingian period, such as the effect and implementation of reform legislation, clerical education, the unity of the realm, and the Romanization of the liturgy were all related to the rite of Christian initiation. The baptismal literature gives us, then, a new perspective from which to view one of the critical eras in western civilization.

BAPTISMAL INSTRUCTION IN THE CAROLINGIAN
PERIOD: THE MS. EVIDENCE

by

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
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PREFACE

A dozen centuries ago the Carolingians faced many of the same problems that the Churches of western Christendom are currently confronting in the revision of their Christian initiation rites. They were concerned, as are local parishes today, to bring back the celebration of baptism to the Easter Vigil. They wrestled with the problem of insufficiently prepared godparents, just as today godparents are being instructed as to their responsibilities regarding the spiritual growth of their godchildren and the role of sponsor is undergoing reinterpretation. The Carolingians raised strong objection to the widespread custom of private initiation rather than the celebration of baptism of new members in the presence of the whole congregation. They, too, were concerned that people were seeking baptism with the wrong motivations. Perhaps most strikingly, they were confronted with the problem of differing views about the proper time and order in which Christian initiation should be completed, just as theologians, ecumenists, religious instructors and laymen are currently struggling with the question of the relationship between the initiatory sacraments, the justification of baptizing at birth or of delaying the rite, of combining it with confirmation and Holy Communion, or separating these sacraments.

My interest in the rite of Christian initiation in the early Middle Ages grew out of my interest in the liturgical

changes taking place today. Some of these changes have seemed quite radical and have led, unfortunately, to some confusion and alienation. Twelve hundred years ago large parts of the Latin West were also involved in rapid liturgical change, and the emotional reactions and sensitivities of those whose traditional rituals were being uprooted can be traced in the literature left us from that crucial period in western civilization.

It is a part of that literature which has been my specific concern over the past five years. I wanted to know more about the Carolingian interest in Christian initiation. After taking a seminar on baptism and sponsorship in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages with Professor Arnold Angenendt, now returned to Germany, two things became very apparent to me. The first was that the rite of baptism has enormous importance for the study of the early Middle Ages and entails investigation into almost every conceivable aspect of early medieval Christian society. The second was that, despite its importance, we know very little about the attitude toward Christian initiation in that period.

Before my curiosity could be satisfied as to how baptism was celebrated and interpreted in the early medieval period, the possible sources of information had to be established and collected. One of the most interesting aspects of my subsequent investigations has been the search in medieval manuscripts for evidence of baptismal literature. The wealth of material that was found from the Carolingian period is presented in this thesis.

For the grants and scholarships that permitted me to undertake the MS. research I wish to thank the Deutsche akademische Austausch Dienst, the University of Toronto, and the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library. Also, I am very grateful to the librarians at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica and Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich and at the other European archives I visited. I am indebted as well to the librarians on this continent at the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, at Yale University, and at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Library in Toronto. Finally, I wish to express special thanks to Professor John Contreni at Purdue University and Dr. Peter Jeffrey at St. John's University for their help in supplying information regarding several MSS..

List of Abbreviations

CCM	Corpus christianorum continuatio mediaevalis
CLLA	Gamber, Codices liturgici latini antiquiores
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
DACL	Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie
EL	Ephemerides Liturgicae
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
KR	Mordek, Kirchenrecht und Reform im Frankenreich
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Capit.	Capitularia
Conc.	Concilia
Epp.	Epistolae
LL.	Leges
MS	Medieval Studies
NA	Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde
OR	Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age
PL	Patrologia Latina
RB	Revue Benedictine
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique
RQ	Römische Quartalschrift für Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte
RSR	Revue des sciences religieuses
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte

INTRODUCTION

Among the myriad works still extant in MSS. from the late eighth and ninth centuries is an astonishingly large number of tracts or brief treatises concerned exclusively with the subject of baptism. Some of the tracts have been edited in scattered publications reaching back to the eighteenth century. Most of these have received no critical commentary, nor have the tracts been the object of a comprehensive study.¹ There are numerous baptismal treatises that have not been published, and now many more MSS. of the edited texts have been identified.

One reason the baptismal literature has been neglected is because it consists largely of anonymous works that did not capture the attention of MS. editors who in the past were too interested in the works of celebrated authors. Because so many of the MSS. before the era of Bernard Bischoff could not be pinpointed to the Carolingian period or to a place of origin, anonymous works had little value. Another reason why the baptismal tracts have not been studied is because, by their nature, they are not an obvious source of information for historians or even for liturgists or theologians. The tracts are not liturgical texts per se, but are commentaries on the rite. Nor do the texts deal primarily with the theology of the sacrament. Rather, they are explanations of the ceremonies of baptism on a very

simple level. A final factor as to why the Carolingian baptismal literature has been largely ignored has been the opinion that the tracts, along with many other liturgical commentaries, were unoriginal and repetitive.

Even granting the legitimacy of these reasons, it is nevertheless very surprising that the baptismal literature has not received more attention. The importance of baptism in the Carolingian world has been acknowledged in the great architectural, political, legislative, and educational programs of that period. When Leidrad of Lyons began his explanation of baptism with the story of the creation of the world, in whose birth out of the watery abyss he saw the first prefiguration of the Christian sacrament, he captured the importance that the sacrament of baptism played in the Carolingian era in bringing harmony out of chaos.

Let us imagine for a moment the Latin West in the year 800, a few years before Leidrad's baptismal treatise. By that date Charlemagne ruled a vast empire, but large parts had submitted to Frankish domination and Christianity in little more than name. Christianity for a great number of recently conquered peoples was a new phenomenon. St. Boniface, it must be remembered, had suffered martyrdom while baptizing pagans within the lifetime of Charlemagne. The rite of baptism, comprising the entire initiation process for a Christian from catechetical preparation to reception of the Eucharist as a full member of the Church, identified every individual not only as a part of the Church, but as a member of society. It was often the only

thing that distinguished the peoples on the newly conquered borders of the Carolingian empire from the pagan tribes. The story has more truth than fiction that Charlemagne gave the defeated Saxons an alternative: baptism or death.²

There is another way that baptism, as a rite, was the cornerstone of Carolingian society. In its preparatory stages, whether for adult catechumens or sponsors of infant candidates for baptism, baptism was an opportunity for education. Charlemagne at the very end of his reign composed an extraordinary letter for his archbishops demanding that each report to him exactly how they and their suffragan bishops taught the rite of baptism to the priests and the people. What had stirred the Emperor to concern himself in the minutia of baptismal instruction in his realm? If we can judge by Charlemagne's own literary compositions, it was no shallow interest. After receiving the replies of his archbishops, he read them carefully and sent praises to one, and criticism to another with a request for a fuller explanation of one ceremony of the rite. Charlemagne's baptismal questionnaire is cited wherever one turns in studies on the Carolingian period, usually to show the Emperor's personal interest and involvement in liturgical reform. This makes it even more astonishing that the baptismal literature has not been studied.

Baptism was inseparable from the chief preoccupations of the Carolingian world. It is in this context that the present study is undertaken. This thesis is a study of the Carolingian renaissance from the perspective of a hitherto neglected source

of information. Its purpose is two-fold. The first is to assemble the Carolingian baptismal literature and identify the texts in their MSS. as far as this is possible. The second is to study the baptismal tracts collectively in order to ascertain their value as historical sources of information.

Correspondingly, the plan of the thesis is, first, to present an inventory of the baptismal literature. Other than a brief listing of only published commentaries on baptism by J.-P. Bouhot in an article in 1978,³ this has never been done. The Carolingian baptismal literature, it has been noted, extends far beyond the edited texts. With the ever-increasing work of paleographers, historians, liturgists, and canonists in early medieval MSS., many previously unknown treatises on baptism are being brought to light, as well as new MS. witnesses of published texts. Thus, an attempt to present as complete a listing as possible of the Carolingian baptismal literature demands the identification of the texts by their MSS..

The need for bringing the literature together has been recognized. E. Dahlhaus-Berg stated in 1975 that

With J.M. Hanssens and A. Wilmart it is to be regretted that the extant responses (to Charlemagne's baptismal questionnaire) are strewn over different edited works and periodicals, often in very remote places. Their assembly in a corpus would afford an overview and a comparison and above all allow a statement about the level of education reached at the end of Charlemagne's reign regarding instruction on the central themes of the Creed and the rite of baptism.⁴

Dahlhaus-Berg and her predecessors spoke only in reference to a fraction of the Carolingian baptismal literature and even then in reference to texts that have been published. The

identification of the baptismal tracts by their MSS. is needed because it shows the extent of the literature. Its potential as a source of information for the Carolingian period is far greater than Dahlhaus-Berg imagined.

The list of Carolingian baptismal tracts in this thesis includes: the known published baptismal treatises of the Carolingian era; unedited tracts that have been identified in MS. catalogues; and, finally, hitherto unidentified tracts that were found through the author's MS. research.⁵ There are limitations to this study, especially concerning the inventory. First, the listing makes no pretence to be exhaustive. There are many more MSS. whose catalogue descriptions are incomplete and that still await investigation. Undoubtedly more tracts will be found.⁶ Second, regarding the selectivity of the inventory, the texts included comprise works whose composers' sole purpose was to explain baptism. The inventory, therefore, does not include the chapters on baptism in the much larger works of, for example, Rabanus Maurus, Walafrid Strabo, or Jonas of Orleans. On the other hand, if an anonymous composer deliberately extracted the chapters on baptism from a larger work to use independently in another context as a baptismal commentary, these extracts are included in the inventory. Third, the unpublished tracts have not been edited in this thesis. An important question remains as to whether full editions of all the tracts are necessary, or if a more valuable project would be to offer a critical analysis of their contents and MS. context in comparison with other tracts. For some of the texts editions

will have great interest and are planned. For these, it is hoped that the reader will understand the impossibility of offering new critical editions of individual texts as well as undertaking the contextual and comparative study of the literature.

Together with presenting the inventory of texts, the second purpose of this thesis is to analyze them. In order to evaluate them as historical sources of information, three aspects of the literature will be examined. The first is the reason for the literature. This concerns answering the questions as to what gave rise to the tracts, why there were so many, and what function they fulfilled.

To an extent that has not been shown before, the answers to these questions can be found by examining the MS. context of the tracts, or with what kind of material they were associated in their earliest MSS.. One of the most serious lacunae in critical analyses of the texts in the past has been the total disregard of the contents of their MSS.. Thus, in Part I of the thesis, the texts will be evaluated in terms of their MS. context.

A second aspect of the tracts that touches on their value as historical sources of information is the nature of their composition and the extent of their originality. One reason, it was explained, that the baptismal literature has been ignored in the past is that it was thought to be repetitive and unoriginal. It is true that Carolingian literature is overwhelmingly based on pre-Carolingian authors. Without the energetic copying

of myriad classical and patristic works as part of the program of intellectual revival, many of those texts undoubtedly would have been lost. It is hardly an over-statement that in a large measure we owe the preservation of classical literature to the Carolingians. They were not only copyists, however. They composed their own works, often drawing, to be sure, on much older sources, but modifying and supplementing them in a way that reflected their own ideas. With the baptismal tracts, past studies of isolated texts have not permitted us to appreciate the subtle variations among the tracts collectively that reflect Carolingian notions different from their pre-Carolingian sources. Thus, in Part II of the thesis a comparative analysis of the contents of all of the texts will be made. By studying the nature of their compositions in terms of the variety in their structures or textual content, the extent to which the tracts are expressions of Carolingian ideas will be shown.

A third aspect of the literature to be examined in Part II is what the tracts tell us about the chief preoccupations and concerns in the rite of Christian initiation in the Carolingian period. In a major section of Part II the explanations of the ceremonies of baptism found in all of the texts will be summarized. The summaries are enormously interesting. A problem remains, however, as to whether the explanations of the rite found in our texts reflect Carolingian ideas or simply the ideas of their sources. Sometimes the author and place of origin of a text is known and his explanations of baptism strikingly correspond to his local situation. It is from these occurrences that

the significance of the entire baptismal literature as a source of information for the Carolingian period is indicated.

Throughout the thesis it will be necessary at times to descend from the broader considerations of the part the baptismal literature played in the Carolingian renaissance to detailed comparisons of single words or phrases in individual tracts. A number of charts and tables will be used to show the material by which the results of the analyses were attained. It is hoped that the reader will bear patiently with these minutiae because it is in the close comparison of the texts with one another and with their MS. contexts that their fascination as historical sources is found.