Essential Readings for the Study of History

Humanitas

Early Middle Ages

BOOK 2

Dawn of the Holy Roman Empire to Viking Age

Junius Johnson, PhD

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Humanitas: Early Middle Ages Book 2, Dawn of the Holy Roman Empire to Viking Age

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CONTENTS

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† Translated for *Humanitas* by Junius Johnson.

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The Middle Ages were not the Dark Ages but a time of multidimensional growth and development. These centuries were bright and bursting with invention, discovery, conflict, conquest, and various attempts at reconciliation and resolution. While the Middle Ages indeed were "in the middle," caught between antiquity and the modern age, this was no pass-through period. A recent book by two medieval historians captures this by calling the long medieval period the Bright Ages,[1] seeking to emphasize the vitality of these centuries.

For some dubious reason, high school students are rarely given the opportunity and delight of studying the Middle Ages in depth, even though this history is integral to understanding the story of who we were and who we now are. *Humanitas* addresses this lack. For the first time, high school students can now, over a year-long course, read and study over 100 curated and annotated primary source readings that guide them through the Middle Ages.

Like our *Humanitas* books on Greece and Rome, the readings from the Middle Ages will take students *ad fontes*—that is, to the fountains or sources of human wisdom and great ideas. Though secondary sources certainly have their place, we ought not make what is secondary primary.

Consider, for example, that as students are preparing to read one of the greatest orators of the past, they learn that John Chrysostom was called *Chrysostom*, "golden tongued" or "golden mouthed," because he was such a great orator that almost every time he spoke at his church in Constantinople he caused a sensation. The eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon describes Chrysostom this way:

> The monuments of that eloquence, which was admired near twenty years at Antioch and Constantinople, have been carefully preserved; and the possession of near one thousand sermons or homilies has authorised the critics of succeeding times to appreciate the genuine merit of Chrysostom. They unanimously attribute to the Christian orator the free command of an elegant and copious language; the judgment to conceal the advantages which he derived from the knowledge of rhetoric and philosophy; an inexhaustible fund of metaphors and similitudes, of ideas and images, to vary and illustrate the most familiar topics; the happy art of engaging the passions in the service of virtue, and of exposing the folly as well as the turpitude of vice almost with the truth and spirit of a dramatic representation.[2]

Having read this, who would not want to read an actual sermon or oration by Chrysostom? In *Humanitas*, one can. Direct contact with Chrysostom will impart a firsthand familiarity with the great orator that no other text—not even Gibbon's,

1. Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry, *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe* (New York: Harper, 2021).
2. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 3:347–48.

renowned as its eloquence is—can adequately describe. To know about him is important; to know him is altogether better.

Following the sequence of *Humanitas*, as students have read through the history of Greece and Rome, they can now fully witness and engage the long, great conversation that was begun in antiquity. They have been equipped so as to see how it extends and expands into a cultural discourse with many rich dimensions. This discourse has been called the Great Tradition, and in the Middle Ages it blossoms forth from the bud that was developing and swelling throughout the history of ancient Greece and Rome. Since this is so, the authors in the pages that follow will often refer to ideas and artifacts, persons, authors, and events from antiquity. It is here that students will perceive their ongoing interaction and development in the Middle Ages. For the great figures of the Middle Ages received and transformed the wisdom of the past, but the transformation didn't stop there: the medievals were themselves transformed by what they inherited. Our hope is that as students witness this commerce between antiquity and the Middle Ages, the way in which the authors of the past can transform and be made present in the future, they will likewise receive, transform, and be transformed themselves.

Students will also enjoy reading some seminal texts in the *Humanitas* books on the Middle Ages, and they will encounter fresh, newly commissioned translations as well as several texts that appear in English for the first time, having been translated by the lead author, Dr. Junius Johnson. These texts are noted both in the table of contents and in the chapter headings where they appear.

Like the rest of the *Humanitas* series, these books attempt to bring the wealth of primary sources to high school students so that they may hear from the great authors themselves, thus gaining an understanding and appreciation of history from those who lived it. Nonetheless, we have also provided the necessary orientation to these sources as well as some practical guidance throughout the readings. We have carefully arranged the sequence and included brief introductions to each reading along with many explanatory annotations to provide clarity and context for students. Our goal has been to find just the right balance of the primary (original source readings) and the secondary (introductions, annotations, time lines, questions). The Teacher Guides for each semester of *Humanitas* offers further insight not only to the texts and art that appears throughout these pages but also into pedagogy, suggesting how best to guide students to engage the texts and to enable them to learn how to encounter the medievals for themselves.

We believe that students who study the Middle Ages through an engaged and direct study of its great authors will find themselves growing wiser as they behold the Middles Ages grow brighter.

—Christopher J. Perrin
Publisher & CEO

NOTE FROM THE SERIES EDITOR

The need for a series like *Humanitas* first occurred to me in the summer of 2014 when, as the newly appointed Humanities Chair at a small classical school in San Diego, my dean requested that we transition our history classes from a lecture model to a Socratic or discussion-based format. To accomplish this, three changes needed to take place.

First, the architecture of the classroom had to transform. Instead of students lined up in rows before a lectern, they would be seated with their teacher around a long, oval table. Second, students and teachers would need to approach the classroom with a different mindset. The former would become active participants in their education, while the latter would lead conversations about texts that raised questions rather than offering lectures that simplified and categorized. Teachers, in other words, would become model students, participating in discussion and discovery even while demonstrating how to read and discuss and think alongside and with students. The endeavor was to be collaborative. Finally, we would have to find a curriculum capable of facilitating this type of learning, which meant replacing textbooks with something more substantial.

Traditional history texts were designed to distill large epochs of time into easily digestible paragraphs, helping students become familiar with the important people, events, and ideas of a particular era. They did so, however, by holding those people, events, and ideas at a distance. We were after something much different. Rather than reducing history to a series of facts that could be regurgitated and checked for accuracy, our mission was to help students approach and indeed experience these events through the people who lived them, to interact with the great ideas by directly engaging the geniuses who articulated them. Traditional textbooks reduced history for the sake of students' "mastery," most often demonstrated by way of multiple-choice tests favored by so-called Advanced Placement courses that only occasionally involve primary sources; but we wanted history to expand the minds and hearts and souls of our students for the sake of the student's humility. In short, our aim was to enable students to cultivate wisdom rather than simply memorize facts. The goal was not to allow students to test out of college classes but to prepare them for a life marked by the pursuit of *eudaimonia*, to give them a love and desire for the True, the Good, the Beautiful, and the Holy.

Though we all understood that this meant "going back to the sources," collecting and organizing primary texts into a three-ring binder proved much more difficult than we could have imagined. For starters, one had to be a scholar in each of the different epochs of history to know which documents should be read, but one also had to be a master pedagogue to know which sort of texts freshman could wrestle with and how seniors' readings could call on and incorporate ideas and authors encountered in our study of previous periods. And while it is true

that there are several online sourcebooks, we found that they were often disorganized messes of broken links, terrible or overly technical translations, and cumbersome redactions—and none were informed by classical pedagogy or compiled with a view for discussion in a high school classroom.

We saw too that there would be challenges unique to each period. If freshmen were to study Greece and Rome, that meant curating selections of Plato and Aristotle that would be accessible. Though the Middle Ages has many primary sources from which to choose, the period has long been the domain of specialists who work in Latin. As there are few and sometimes no English versions of texts available, we would have to commission translations of certain texts for the first time.

Furthermore, even when these sources and translations could be secured, we soon discovered there was a marked difference between teaching a good class and creating a comprehensive course. In other words, while it is true that we had many wonderful discussions, at the end of the year, I knew my students were not getting a sense of having been exposed to an unfolding, cohesive, and chronological narrative. In that sense, we were still falling short. These were, after all, courses in history.

Then came the great supposal: What if we could create a resource that had all the accoutrements of a traditional text—beautiful art, helpful annotations, clear prose, explanatory essays coupled with proper seminar questions, and an obvious, historical progression—yet that was completely built around the source documents? That is, what if we could get the sources to tell the story and send the pedagogue into the background where he belongs? Wouldn't it be best to let the Greeks teach the student what it meant to be Greek? If this could happen, then students will have received, in the truest sense of the word, an education.

In this vein, we humbly offer you the *Humanitas* series. We designed the books so students and teachers can experience unfettered delight in discussing the most profound specimens of firsthand knowledge in the Western historical cannon. This is the story of humanity, told in an unfolding narrative, through primary sources. This, in the simplest terms, is *Humanitas*.

—Christopher Maiocca
Series Editor

Christopher Maiocca received a Master of Arts from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Since graduating, he has taught at three classical schools and currently resides in Boise, Idaho. He is married to Robin, his wife of twenty years, with whom he has four children—Hannah, Christopher, Phoebe, and Jeremiah.

Welcome to *Humanitas*

The emphasis on the importance of firsthand knowledge has been traditionally communicated by the Latin phrase *ad fontes*, meaning "to the fountains." This phrase was used as a banner by both humanist scholars and reformers of the high medieval and the early modern periods to describe their renewed interest in studying the primary sources that contained the ideas most responsible for precipitating the civilizations and cultural milieus in which they found themselves. While this approach to education fell out of vogue in the twentieth century, the *Humanitas* series seeks to return *ad fontes*, to provide high school students and educators with a comprehensive course in the Western story, told through primary sources.

Why is "going back to the sources" so important? As Emerson observed, "We, as we read, must become Greeks, Romans, Turks, priest and king, martyr and executioner; must fasten these images to some reality in our secret experience, or we shall learn nothing rightly." The hope, then, is that our reading becomes our lives, that our own experience will be enriched because it contains something of the best of ancient Greece and Rome. At the very least, the old authors enable us to live our lives with remarkable freshness, to encounter our days of joy and tribulation in light of the wisdom of the past. Thoreau, Emerson's great student, likewise observes, "Men sometimes speak as if the study of the classics would at length make way for more modern and practical studies; but the adventurous student will always study classics, in whatever language they may be written and however ancient they may be. For what are the classics but the noblest recorded thoughts of man? They are the only oracles which are not decayed, and there are such answers to the most modern inquiry in them as Delphi and Dodona never gave. We might as well omit studying Nature because she is old." As Emerson and Thoreau well knew, the texts in these volumes transcend time: in a mysterious way, though aged, they do not grow old—they are ever new. They not only offer adventure in themselves—who has not been excited at the prospect of journeying across the Aegean with Odysseus or entering the Heorot with Beowulf to feast and sing and lie in wait for Grendel?—but they also equip students to lead adventurous lives of their own, to meet joy and sorrow, love and death, the sublime and the mundane having been shaped to desire the true, the good, and the beautiful. The student who has wept with Sophocles's Antigone and been consoled by Boethius's Lady Philosophy has been equipped, in a profound way, though she may not realize it during her education, to inhabit and bear her own sorrows. So too, because she has delighted in Theocritus and leaned and loafed at her ease with Walt Whitman, she has been taught how to leisure, to find rest in nature and poetry alike.

While the early humanists and reformers might not appear to have much in common with the American transcendentalists, both approached the authors of the past with awe and expectation, and both were intent on not leading lives of quiet desperation. In the middle of the last century, however, C. S. Lewis noticed that a profound change had occurred. Many of his students now preferred to pick up technical books of modern scholarship about the Greeks rather than to read the old authors themselves. He went on to note that, in his

experience, students often avoided the old authors out of humility. Plato's *Republic*, after all, is hard. Yet Plato is accessible and pleasurable in a way that contemporary scholarship, unfortunately, often is not. Thus, we agree with Lewis when he observed: "The simplest student will be able to understand, if not all, yet a very great deal of what Plato said; but hardly anyone can understand some modern books on Platonism. It has always therefore been one of my main endeavors as a teacher to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than secondhand knowledge but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire." For Lewis and nearly every other person living in Europe and America, Greece and Rome are the fountainheads of our civilization, and it is to these sources we must return if we hope to become "educated" in the classical sense of the word.

For example, it is in ancient Greece and Rome that you will encounter the beginnings of Western poetry in Homer and Hesiod, Ovid and Virgil. They were the founts to which all subsequent European and British letters would return, wrestle with, and imitate. They inspire the tradition and keep it alive. Those we call the medievals read them. Without the classical poets, we would have no *Song of Roland* or *Divine Comedy*. The medievals, in turn, would hand down the tradition and so shape those who came after them. So having read these volumes, when the student comes to Milton, she will not only encounter the greatest epic in English, she will also hear echoes of Hesiod's *Theogony* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. She will begin to overhear the great conversation that has been unfolding between poets and slowly become able to participate in that conversation by how she lives her own life.

Moreover, here is where students will encounter the first writers of history—Thucydides and Herodotus, Livy and Plutarch—who themselves were the education of the American founders and provided models of virtue for countless figures throughout history. This, perhaps more than anything else, is the particular value of *Humanitas*. It is by reading and wrestling with the authors themselves, with living texts, that our students can experience not only a quickening of their minds but also of their *thymos*. Classical education, after all, aims to develop virtue in the student. By participating in the great conversation that *Humanitas* presents to students, the reader can enter into that experience, not merely to read *about* the Greeks and Romans, but to read the Greeks and Romans themselves, to count them as friends and attempt to understand them from the inside out.

Humanitas then not only offers students the fountain of Western civilization and culture, the delight of reading primary texts, and the broadening of experience properly called "education," it also encourages them to develop a charitable hermeneutic. We approach the past not to assert our superiority or to home in on where we think past authors are wrong, but with a strong belief that we have something to learn and that there is wisdom in the past that can help us come to better understand our selves. This approach to history *animates* it—that is, etymologically, gives it soul. History becomes a living thing to engage and study rather than a desiccated relic of which we are embarrassed because it lacks modern sensibility.

As you open these volumes of *Humanitas* and encounter the sources of Western civilization for yourself, we believe that you will get to know the Greeks and the Romans, the medievals and early modern Europeans—how they thought, lived, worshiped, and fought—better than you could through the conventional textbooks that have occupied our classrooms for more than a century. Here you will march into Gaul with Julius Caesar, sit with Socrates as he willingly drinks the hemlock, and discover what daily life was like on a Roman farm. You will watch Rome be sacked with Augustine, meditate on the nature of law first with Justinian and then Aquinas, encounter the liberal arts of Charlemagne's court and be instructed by his teacher, Alcuin. In short, we believe that this is as close as we can take students into the past without traveling back in time to see it for themselves. In *Humanitas*, they will see it for themselves.

—Christopher Maiocca
and Nathan Antiel

Introduction to Early Middle Ages

Dawn of the Holy Roman Empire to Viking Age

Our story continues with the emergence of a new power that would come to dominate and define the west. The kingdom of the Franks that had been carved out by the Merovingians gave way to a new Frankish kingdom ruled by the Carolingians. It would quickly transform into an empire. The political importance of this new empire, as well as the importance of the Papal States that it helped bring into existence, would be difficult to overstate. They would influence the destiny of Europe for the next millennium.

The Carolingians brought about not only a new political reality but also a new intellectual one. Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne was a deep believer in the value of learning, and undertook to see it flourish across his vast domain. He gathered the greatest minds of the era about him so that they might together forge a bright new future. Founded on a knowledge of the past, Charlemagne's court was thereby equipped to address the problems of the future. He was a new western emperor, and he wanted the empire to be a place of culture. This too would set a precedent that would be imitated by later rulers, especially Holy Roman Emperor Otto the Great in the tenth century.

If the previous book covered the historical epoch of emerging national heroes, this one covers their stories: the formal accounts of their deeds, more and less fanciful, that became the conduits of their *mythoi* to the various and diverse peoples who looked to the heroes in order to discover their own identities. The great Norse sagas, the tale of Siegfried, the last stand of Roland, and the exile of the Cid became the founding stories of new nations. All those who saw themselves as the successors of the Franks, though made up of many peoples from across Europe, could look to Roland as their great hero. In a similar fashion, those who saw themselves rather as the successor to the continental Saxons in the east would gaze upon Siegfried. And on the Iberian Peninsula, as Christians carved out kingdoms for themselves and pushed back the rule of the Caliphate, El Cid would capture their collective imagination.

So too a new dynasty would rise in the eastern empire, the Macedonian Dynasty, born in conflict and betrayal. Though the story of the dynasty's rise to power is as sensational and terrible as could be, it would ultimately lead Constantinople to its greatest power and influence in the Middle Ages. It would also demonstrate, in its fall, just how volatile and dangerous the throne of Constantinople could be.

While all of this was happening, a violent storm raged across the northern lands and into central Europe, cutting across the period like a scar. The Viking Age, initiated by the sack of Lindisfarne in 793, was a time of terror and destruction. The Viking longships might appear along any waterway at any time,

bringing with them death by fire and sword and an end to the existing way of life. What they did not steal they destroyed, often burning monasteries full of precious manuscripts and records. These raids and wars destroyed an incalculable amount of cultural and historical material, especially in England. The period is thus especially difficult for us to access and understand. The loss of cultural and historical records makes it hard for us, living on this side of the catastrophe, to clearly separate history from legend and the propaganda of the victors from the truth of the conquered. It will never do to forget how much we do not know about this period.

And yet, thanks to the impressive industry of thousands of monks across Europe through the ages, this time has not been left without witness. While researchers estimate that 90 percent of manuscripts written during the Middle Ages have been lost, that still leaves upward of 3,600 extant manuscripts. Some of the most important authors of the period, such as Alcuin and Agobard of Lyon, remain largely untranslated. Yet the number and erudition of their works reveal the depth of the learning and thoughtfulness to be found in this time. Our picture of medieval life is further clarified by a massive material culture: art, buildings, furniture, items for use in worship, tools, and cemeteries. These all help to build an image of life across these lands and centuries.

Increasingly, the British Isles became the focus of Viking attention. The Anglo-Saxon struggles to fight off the invaders, and then to make peace with them, would ultimately define life in the isles for the two hundred fifty years covered by this volume. England, which emerged as an idea during this time, found its destiny wrapped up in the politics of the Northmen. In the end, they would not so much escape their shadow as merge with it.

Unit VIII

The Holy Roman Empire

Under the Merovingian kings descended from Clovis I, the Franks carved out a sizable and powerful empire in the lands that would become France and Germany. Both groups of Saxons deferred to the power of the Franks, and as the Lombards worked to subdue Italy, they were forced to keep a wary eye on their Frankish neighbors. And yet, mighty as this kingdom was, it turned out to be merely a prelude to a greater power still to come.

The Prophet Muhammad was born during the reigns of Clovis I's grandsons, after they succeeded their father, Chlothar I, in 561. Not long after the second caliphate of the Umayyads came to power in 661, the Frankish kingdoms were united under Theuderic III, the fourth great-grandson of Clovis I.

However, Theuderic was not much of a ruler. For some time, the Merovingian kings had invested their chief advisors, the mayors of the palace, with the management of the kingdom. They eventually did this to such an extent that the mayors became the real rulers in all but name. Theuderic is the first of what history now refers to as the "do-nothing kings"—puppet rulers who no longer held any real power or contributed to policy in any meaningful way. The mayors of the palace performed great deeds in the service of their kings, but it did not go unnoticed that it was the mayors, not the kings, who had done these things.

When the Umayyads invaded Spain in 711, it sent shockwaves across Europe. This new power had risen quickly and would not stay put. It troubled the east, threatening Constantinople, swept across North Africa, and now had a stronghold on the European continent. A series of losses across the eastern fronts of the caliphate—to the Chinese of the Tang dynasty, along the coasts of the Caspian Sea, and to the Byzantines in the 710s—stabilized the eastern border. The caliphate then turned its eyes westward, to the rich and abundant lands of Europe.

At the same time, a civil war began in the Frankish Empire in 715 when Ragenfrid, mayor of the palace of Neustria, the major Frankish kingdom in the west, attempted to overthrow Charles Martel, the mayor of the palace of Austrasia, the Frankish kingdom in the east. Charles emerged victorious in 718. In the years that followed, he worked to consolidate Frankish rule and influence throughout Europe; but all the time, he kept an eye on Spain, knowing the danger that the Umayyad Caliphate posed. Arguing that Islam was an existential threat to Christianity, he convinced the pope to loan him a significant amount of money to train and maintain a professional infantry, something that was not done in those days, to resist the inevitable invasion. He campaigned with these men from 717 to 731, molding them into a coherent, battle-hardened force. When the Umayyad invasion finally came in 732, Charles Martel was ready and beat the invaders back.

Charles won great renown for this victory, and passed his position on to his son, Pepin the Short. Pepin overthrew his puppet king and had himself named king of the Franks instead, a title he bequeathed to

his son, Charlemagne. This was the start of the Carolingian Dynasty, and it became a mighty empire that overshadowed the Merovingian one that gave birth to it. Charlemagne was eventually named emperor, founding a Holy Roman Empire that would last until the time of Napoleon. With more authority gathered in one place in Europe than at any other time since the height of the Western Roman Empire, a variety of questions about the boundaries and proper use of that power were bound to arise.

CAROLINGIAN FAMILY TREE

A twelfth-century drawing of the Carolingian royal line. The family tree begins with Bishop Arnulf of Metz, whom the Carolingians pointed to as their earliest ancestor. After Arnulf is Charlemagne's great-grandfather Pepin. Charlemagne is the fourth down from Arnulf with a short, dark beard. Below him, Charles the Bald holds two unfurled scrolls that connect to his brothers Lothair and Louis's families.

26

Charlemagne

> The omnipotent disposer of all things and the director of kingdoms and of the ages, when he had destroyed that wondrous statue with feet of iron or of clay among the Romans, set up the golden head of another no less remarkable statue among the Franks through the illustrious Charlemagne.
>
> —Notker the Stammerer

Introduction

While Clovis had left Burgundy an independent kingdom, his sons waged war on it and added it to the Merovingian Empire in 534. Four kingdoms emerged within that empire: Austrasia, Neustria, Burgundy, and Aquitaine. There was constant warfare between these kingdoms in the following centuries as the brothers and their descendants tried by war and assassination to gain larger portions of the empire for themselves. On several occasions, one ruler emerged to unite the empire, only to then divide it between his sons and so replay the story all over again. With so much warfare, the kings leaned heavily on their chief advisors, called mayors of the palace, or mayors of the house.[1] As time went on, the real power struggles occurred between the mayors rather than the kings. The monarchy grew weaker and weaker, such that many of the Merovingian kings were, as we have seen, "do-nothing kings." By the end of the Merovingian line, so overt and complete was the investiture of power in the mayors that the king would often be brought to court once or twice a year, at which time he would publicly adjudicate on certain matters, reading a script that had been prepared for him by the mayor.

Late in the seventh century, the mayors warred with each other for ascendance, with Pepin of Herstal finally emerging victorious in 687. At his death, there was a brief civil war: not to determine which son of the king would become king, but to see which son or grandson of the mayor would become mayor. Charles Martel, whose epithet means "hammer," emerged victorious, a fact that would prove decisive for the subsequent course of history.

A brilliant military leader, it was Charles who met the advancing forces of the Umayyad Caliphate, which was now moving out of Spain into the rest of Europe. Twice he turned back the invaders: first, in Neustria, deep in Frankish lands, at the Battle of Tours in 732, and then near the Pyrenees Mountains at the Battle of the River Berre in 737. Many historians credit Martel with saving western Christianity, as his victories stemmed the Muslim tide.

1. Latin *maior palatii* or *maior domus*; the latter is the source of our term "majordomo."

Among his other achievements, Charles the Hammer popularized the use of the stirrup in horseback riding in Europe. This invention allowed his men to fight from horseback, and was thus responsible for the creation of the heavy cavalry unit. The Huns had used the stirrup to great advantage when fighting their way across Europe, but Europeans had not adopted it. Martel incentivized the use of stirrups by only offering seized land to those who rode in the new manner. This adaptation enabled him to move his troops much faster and bring overwhelming force to bear in combat encounters. It would be a key feature of Charlemagne's forces as well.

When Martel died, his sons Pepin the Short and Carloman succeeded him as mayors of the palace. In spite of the fact that all the power in the kingdom was held in the hands of the mayors, the king was still an important symbol of unity for the empire. Carloman therefore installed the Merovingian Childeric III on the throne of the unified kingdom in 743. Just four years after this, Carloman decided that he had had enough of political life and retired to a monastery to live out his days in contemplation and prayer. This left Pepin sole mayor of the kingdom.

Pepin began to wonder what the point of the king was, as he exercised no power and took no responsibility for the kingdom. He wrote to Pope Zachary (pope from 741 to 752) to ask whether the title of king belonged more to the one who inherited it or the one who exercised royal authority. The pope responded that the one who actually wielded power should be called king. Encouraged by this papal reply, Pepin deposed Childeric in 751, sending him to live out his days in a monastery. Thus did the line of the Merovingian kings come to an end, and the line of the Carolingian kings begin.

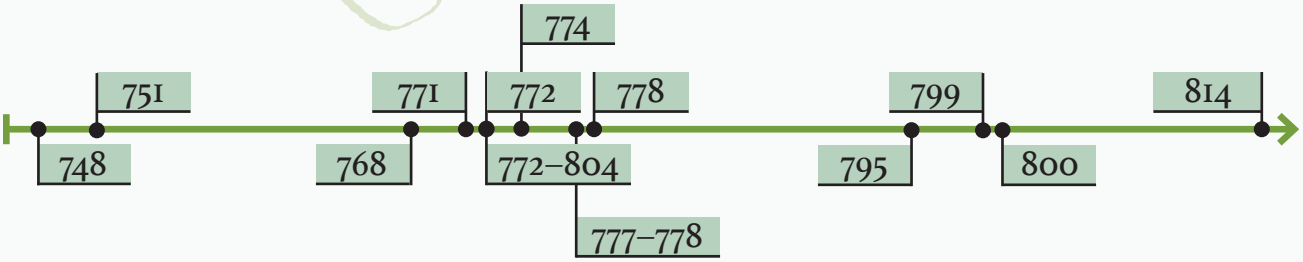
Pepin's two sons were Carloman and Charles, who came to be called Charlemagne, "Charles the Great" in French. Each inherited a portion of the kingdom. While relations between them were strained at best, they never erupted into outright war, and Carloman's sudden death in 771 left Charlemagne in sole command of the burgeoning empire.

The author of our text for this chapter, Einhard, was a member of Charlemagne's court, and possibly also connected to him by marriage. The selection that follows, written sometime after Charlemagne's death, thus offers a firsthand account not only of a great man but one whom the author counted among his friends. It is one of the most important sources of information about the character and reign of a man who reshaped Europe.

EINHARD

This monument to Einhard shows him in his role as a scholar. His best known work is Charlemagne's biography, Vita Karoli Magni, *which serves as one of the foremost sources for modern knowledge of the Carolingian period. In addition to serving Charlemagne, Einhard became Louis the Pious's private secretary in 814, before retiring in 830.*

Time Line



748 — Charlemagne is born as the eldest son of Pepin the Short.
751 — Pepin the Short deposes Childeric III and confines him to a monastery. Carloman is born.
768 — Pepin dies; Charlemagne becomes king of Austrasia, and Carloman becomes king of Burgundy, Provence, Aquitaine, and Alemannia. Pope Stephen III is elected.
771 — Carloman dies; Charlemagne becomes sole king of the Franks.
772–804 — The Saxon Wars are fought between the Carolingians and the Saxons. The Saxons are defeated, and Saxony is incorporated into Frankish lands.
772 — Adrian I becomes pope.
774 — The Lombards surrender to Charlemagne, who takes the title "king of the Lombards."
777–778 — Charlemagne wars in Spain.
778 — Louis the Pious and his twin brother Lothair are born to Charlemagne's wife Hildegard.
795 — Leo III becomes pope.
799 — Pope Leo is attacked and kidnapped in Rome.
800 — Charlemagne comes to Rome to vindicate Pope Leo; he is crowned emperor by the pope.
814 — Charlemagne dies in Aachen.

Life of Charlemagne

Einhard
c. 817–833

The Establishment of the Carolingian Dynasty

The race of the **Merovings**, from which the Franks were accustomed to choose their kings, is reckoned as lasting to **King Childeric**, who, by the order of **Stephen**, the Roman pontiff, was deposed, tonsured, and sent into a monastery. But this race, though it may be regarded as finishing with him, had long since lost all power, and no longer possessed anything of importance except the empty royal title. For the wealth and power of the kingdom was in the hands of the prefects of the court, who were called mayors of the palace, and exercised entire sovereignty. The king, contented with the mere royal title, with **long hair** and flowing beard, used to sit upon the throne and act the part of a ruler, listening to ambassadors and

Merovings
Merovingians; see HEMA1, *chapter 21.*

King Childeric
Childeric III, ruled 743–751

Stephen
Actually Zachary (pope from 741 to 752); his successor, Stephen II, crowned Pepin.

long hair
Long hair was seen as a requirement to rule.

giving them at their departure, as though of his own power, answers that he had been instructed or commanded to give.

When Childeric was deposed, **Pepin**, the father of **King Charles**, was performing the duties of mayor of the palace as if by hereditary right. For **his father Charles** had nobly administered the same office. This was the Charles who put down the tyrants who were claiming dominion for themselves through all Frankland, and crushed the **Saracens** so badly when they were attempting to conquer Gaul, in two great battles—the one **in Aquitaine**, near the city of Poitiers, the other **near Narbonne**, on the Berre, that he forced them to return into Spain. This Charles had inherited the office from **his father Pepin**. For the people did not usually give this honor except to such as were distinguished for the renown of their family and the extent of their wealth.

This office, then, was handed down to Pepin and **his brother Carloman** from his father and his grandfather. He exercised it for some years conjointly with his brother Carloman on terms of the greatest harmony, still in nominal subordination to the above-mentioned King Childeric. But then Carloman, for some unknown cause, but probably fired with love of the contemplative life, abandoned the toilsome administration of a temporal kingdom and retired to Rome in search of peace.

But Pepin, after he was made king instead of mayor of the palace by the authority of the Roman pontiff, exercised sole rule over the Franks for fifteen years, or rather more. Then, after finishing the Aquitanian War, which he had undertaken against **Waifar**, duke of Aquitaine, and carried on for **nine consecutive years**, he died at Paris of the **dropsy**, and left behind him two sons, **Charles and Carloman**, to whom by divine will the succession of the kingdom came. For the Franks called a solemn public assembly, and elected both to be kings,

Pepin
Pepin the Short, mayor of Neustria from 741 to 751 and king of the Franks from 751 to 768

King Charles
that is, Charlemagne

his father Charles
that is, Charles Martel

Saracens
A general name for tribes from Arabia; the term became synonymous with "Muslim" over time.

in Aquitaine
the Battle of Tours in 732

near Narbonne
the Battle of the River Berre in 737

his father Pepin
that is, Pepin II of Herstal, mayor from 680 to 714

his brother Carloman
the elder son, who took over the mayorship of Austrasia from 741 to 754

CHARLES MARTEL
In this miniature from a medieval manuscript titled The Great Chronicles of France, *Charles Martel is shown in battle, defeating Eudo and the Saracens. The term* "Saracen" *became associated with various tribes in Arabia, but became most closely linked with Muslims.*

on the understanding that they should equally divide the whole kingdom, but that Charles should receive for his special administration that part which his father Pepin had held, while Carloman would receive the territories ruled by their uncle Carloman. The conditions were accepted, and each received the share of the kingdom that was allotted to him. Harmony was maintained between the two brothers, though not without difficulty; for many partisans of Carloman tried to break their alliance, and some even hoped to provoke them to war. But the course of events proved that the danger to Charles was imaginary rather than real. For, upon the death of Carloman, his wife with her sons and some of the leading nobles, for no obvious reason, passed over her husband's brother, fled to Italy, and placed herself and her children under the protection of **Desiderius**, King of the **Lombards**. Carloman, after ruling the kingdom for two years conjointly with Charles, died of disease, and Charles was made sole king with the consent of all the Franks.

Charlemagne's Exploits at Home and Abroad

Of all the wars that he waged, the one in Aquitaine, begun but **not finished** by his father, was the first that he undertook, because it seemed easy to accomplish. His brother was still alive, and was called upon for assistance, and, though he failed to provide the help that he promised, Charles carried out the enterprise that he had undertaken with the utmost energy and would not desist or slacken in his task before, by perseverance and continuous effort, he had completely reached the end after which he strove. For he forced **Hunold**, who after the death of Waifar had attempted to occupy Aquitaine and renew the almost finished war, to abandon Aquitaine and retire to **Gascony**. Charles did not allow him to remain even there, but crossed the **Garonne**, and sent ambassadors to **Lupus**, duke of the Gascons, ordering him to surrender the fugitive, and threatening him with war unless he did so at once. Lupus wisely not only surrendered Hunold but also submitted himself and the province over which he presided to the power of Charles.

When the Aquitanian trouble was settled and the war finished, and when his partner in the kingdom had withdrawn from the world's affairs, he undertook a war against the Lombards, urged on by the entreaties and prayers of **Adrian**, bishop of Rome. Now, this war had also been undertaken by his father at the supplication of Pope Stephen, under circumstances of great difficulty, inasmuch as some of the chiefs of the Franks, whose advice Pepin was accustomed to ask, so strongly resisted his wishes that they openly declared that they

DIVIDING A KINGDOM
Political challenges, such as dividing larger empires between children, plagued every Carolingian ruler, and Charles Martel was no exception. This medieval manuscript miniature shows Charles assigning portions of the realm to his sons Pepin and Carloman, one sitting to each side.

Waifar
The last independent duke of Aquitaine from 745 to 767; assassinated on June 2, 768.

nine consecutive years
from 759 to 768

dropsy
edema, a condition in which the body's cells retain too much water

Charles and Carloman
Charlemagne and his brother, Carloman I, who was king of the Franks from 768 to 771

Desiderius
king from 756 to 774

Lombards
See HEMA1, *chapter 22.*

not finished
Despite Pepin's nine-year war, the Aquitanians rebelled again in 769.

Hunold
Hunold II, kinsman and perhaps son of Waifar

Gascony
This duchy borders Aquitaine to the southwest.

Garonne
a river in southwest France and southern Spain that separates Aquitaine and Gascony

Lupus
Lupus II, the duke of Gascony

Adrian
Adrian I, pope from 772 to 795

King Haistulf
Aistulf, king of the Lombards; he struggled throughout his reign to conquer Rome, which was independent of Italy.

Charles's reasons
to aid the Papal State against the Lombards

restored to Adrian
in 774

hostile to our religion
The Saxons were still pagans at this time.

Elbe
a river that flows from Bohemia to the North Sea

Pyrenees
the mountain range separating Spain from France

would leave their king to return home. Despite this, Pepin had waged war against **King Haistulf**, and brought it to an end most swiftly. Although **Charles's reasons** for undertaking the war were similar to, and, indeed, the same as those of his father, he fought it out with a very different energy, and brought it to a different end. The sum of this war was the conquest of Italy, the transportation and perpetual exile of King Desiderius, the expulsion of his son Adalgis from Italy, and power taken from the kings of the Lombards and **restored to Adrian**, the ruler of the Roman Church.

When this war was ended, the Saxon War, which had seemed settled for a time, flared up again. Never was there a more prolonged nor more cruel war than this, nor one that required greater efforts on the part of the Frankish peoples. For the Saxons, like most of the races that inhabit Germany, are by nature fierce, devoted to the worship of demons and **hostile to our religion**, and they think it no dishonor to confound and transgress the laws of God and man. There were reasons, too, which might at any time cause a disturbance of the peace. For our boundaries and theirs touch almost everywhere on the open plain, except where in a few places large forests or ranges of mountains are interposed to separate the territories of the two nations by a definite frontier; so that on both sides murder, robbery, and arson were constant occurrences. The Franks were so irritated by these things that they thought it was time to no longer be satisfied with retaliation, but to declare open war against them.

CHILDERIC III DEPOSED AND TONSURED
Childeric III, the last Merovingian king of the Franks, was deposed by Pepin the Short, the first Carolingian king. This nineteenth-century painting by Évariste Vital Luminais depicts the moment after Childeric's deposition, when he was given the tonsure—a monastic hairstyle meant to foster humility—and sent away to the monastery of Saint-Bertin.

So, war was declared and was fought continuously for thirty years with the greatest fierceness on both sides, but with heavier loss to the Saxons than the Franks. At last, when all who had resisted had been defeated and brought under his power, Charles took ten thousand of the inhabitants of both banks of the **Elbe**, with their wives and children, and planted them in many groups in various parts of Germany and Gaul. And at last the war, lasting through so many years, ended on the king's terms: they were to abandon the worship of devils, to turn from their national ceremonies, to receive the sacraments of the Christian faith and religion, and then, joined to the Franks, to make one people with them.

While the war with the Saxons was constantly raging, he placed garrisons at suitable locations on the frontier and attacked Spain with the largest military expedition he could collect. He crossed the **Pyrenees**, received the surrender of all the towns and fortresses that he attacked, and returned with his army safe and sound, except for a rearguard, which he lost through the treason of the Gascons on his return through the mountains. For while his army was marching in a long line, suiting their formation to the character of the ground and the defiles, the Gascons placed an ambush on the top of the mountain, for the density and extent of the woods rendered it highly suitable for such a purpose. They then rushed down into the valley and threw the last part of the baggage train and the rearguard into disorder. In the battle that followed, the Gascons slew their opponents to the last man. Then

Carloman

In 754, Carloman was crowned king, together with his older brother, Charlemagne, while their father was still alive. He was only three at the time. We do not really know anything else about his life before, at the age of seventeen, Pepin the Short died of illness while campaigning against the rebellious Aquitanians. The brothers were then crowned kings in their own right, in separate coronation services. The kingdom was split between them, but Carloman's portion was smaller and poorer than Charlemagne's. They both ruled parts of Aquitaine, which remained in rebellion, and so they both led armies to deal with the problem. But they had a major quarrel when they met near the city of Poitiers. The reason is unknown, but Carloman took his army and went home, probably thinking that Charlemagne could not win without him. In this he was mistaken: Charlemagne won a brilliant victory and pacified Aquitaine. Relations between the brothers continued to deteriorate, with their mother taking Charlemagne's side. In fact, they were close to war with one another until Carloman's sudden death, after which Charlemagne annexed his lands. Despite the suspicious timing, it is said that Carloman died of natural causes—according to some accounts, from a severe nosebleed.

Heavy Cavalry

In 732, when Charles Martel faced the armies of the Umayyad Caliphate near Tours, his army mostly consisted of infantry. But he saw the military potential of mounted warriors, especially in light of the stirrup, which was beginning to catch on in Europe. He promoted a new way of fighting on horseback, and would only grant land to his men on condition that they fought in this new style. His grandson Charlemagne expanded on this program, providing incentives for training and maintaining mounted soldiers. The Franks gained access to much stronger horses from North Africa, having captured some at Tours and gained others by trade with Spain, and began to breed them. These stronger horses allowed the soldiers to wear much sturdier armor. The heavy cavalry unit was born, which became the key to Charlemagne's battle strategy and enabled him to deliver overwhelming military force on the various distant frontiers of his kingdom. These mounted, armored nobles were the predecessors to medieval knights.

Aachen

The city of Aachen in Germany, also known by its French name Aix-la-Chappelle, has been the home of human settlement since the third millennium BC. The site was home to several hot sulfur springs, which attracted settlers. In the second century AD, the Romans built two spas there, connected by colonnades and serviced by plumbing. Houses grew up nearby, and the town was born. Pepin the Short chose the town for a palace, which he built over the old Roman buildings. He is known to have spent both Christmas 765 and Easter 766 there. Charlemagne spent Christmas there for the first time in 768, the year he was crowned king. He eventually chose it for his capital due to the fact that it was both strategically located and situated in the heart of his family lands. In 794, work began on his palace, and in 796, construction began on the chapel. The chapel was consecrated by Pope Leo III in 805, making it one of the oldest surviving cathedrals in Europe. Charlemagne spent increasing amounts of time in Aachen as he grew older, rarely leaving it in the final eight years of his life.

they seized upon the baggage, and under cover of the night, which was already falling, they scattered with great rapidity in different directions. The Gascons were assisted in this feat by the lightness of their armor and the character of the ground where the affair took place. In **this battle** many were killed, including Eggihard, the royal butler, Anselm, a count of the palace, and Roland, governor of the Breton frontier. Nor could this assault be punished at once, for when the deed had been done, the enemy so completely disappeared that they left behind them not so much as a rumor of their whereabouts.

He conquered the **Bretons**, too, who dwelt in the extreme west of France by the shores of the ocean. They had been disobedient, and he, therefore, sent against them an expedition, by which they were compelled to give hostages and promise that they would henceforth obey his orders.

The **last war** of all that Charles undertook was against those Northmen who are called Danes, who first came as pirates, and then ravaged the coasts of Gaul and Germany with a greater naval force. Their king, **Godefrid**, was puffed up with the vain confidence that he would make himself master of all Germany. He looked upon Frisia and Saxony as his own provinces. He had already reduced his neighbors, the **Obodrites**, to obedience, and had forced them to pay him tribute. Now he boasted that he would soon come to **Aix**, the seat of the king's court, with a mighty force. His boast, however idle, found some to believe it; it was thought that he would certainly have made some such an attempt if he had not been prevented by a sudden death. For he was killed by one of his own followers, and **so ended** both his life and the war that he had begun.

These, then, are the wars that this mighty king waged during the course of forty-seven years—for his reign extended over **that period**—in different parts of the world with the utmost skill and success. By these wars he so nobly increased the kingdom of the Franks, which was great and strong when he inherited it from his father, Pepin, that the additions he made almost doubled it.

Private Life and Character of Charlemagne

I have shown, then, how Charles protected and expanded his kingdom. I shall now go on to speak of his mental endowments, of his steadiness of purpose whether in prosperity or adversity, and of all that concerns his private and domestic life.

After the death of his father, as long as he shared the kingdom with his brother, he bore his brother's quarrelling and restlessness so patiently that he was never provoked to wrath. Then, having married the daughter of Desiderius, king of the Lombards, at his mother's bidding, he divorced her for some unknown reason, **a year later**. He took in marriage **Hildegard** of the Suabian race, a woman of the highest nobility. He had three sons by her—Charles, Pepin, and **Louis**—and **three daughters**—Rotrude, Bertha, and Gisela. He had also three other daughters: Theodrada, Hiltrude, and Ruodhaid. Two of these were the children of his wife **Fastrada**, a woman of the eastern Franks or Germans; the third was the daughter of a concubine, whose name has escaped my memory. On the death of Fastrada he married **Liutgard**, of the Alemannic race, by whom he had no children. After her death he had four concubines: Madelgard, who

this battle
The Battle of Ronceveaux Pass on August 15, 778; see HEMA2, *chapter 42.*

Bretons
They offered their allegiance in 800.

last war
The Danish war lasted from 804 to 810.

Godefrid
Godfrey, king of Denmark from 804 to 810

Obodrites
a Slavic tribe and allies of Charlemagne

Aix
Aix-la-Chappelle in French, or Aachen in German; part of Austrasia, the city is where modern Germany borders Belgium and the Netherlands.

so ended
Charlemagne was riding to battle him when Godfrey died.

that period
from October 9, 768, to January 28, 814

a year later
He probably married in 770 and divorced in 771.

Hildegard
Hildegard was 13 when Charlemagne married her; she died in 783.

Louis
Louis had a twin brother, Lothair, who did not survive infancy.

three daughters
Two other daughters, Adelaide and Hildegard, died in infancy.

Fastrada
Charlemagne's wife from 784 to 794, mother of Theodrada and Hiltrude

Liutgard
Charlemagne's wife from 794 to 800

bore him a daughter of the name of **Ruothild**; Gersuinda, of Saxon origin, by whom he had a daughter of the name of Adaltrude; Regina, who bore him Drogo and Hugh; and **Ethelind**, who was the mother of Theodoric.

His mother **Bertrada** lived with him to old age in great honor. He treated her with the utmost reverence, so that no quarrel of any kind ever arose between them except in the matter of the divorce of the daughter of King Desiderius, whom he had married at her bidding. **Bertrada died** after the death of Hildegard, having lived to see three grandsons and as many granddaughters in her son's house. Charles had his mother buried with great honor in the same great **church of Saint-Denis** in which his father lay.

He had only one sister, Gisela, who from childhood was dedicated to the religious life. He treated her with the same affectionate respect as his mother. **She died**, a few years before Charles's own death, in the monastery in which she had passed her life.

He lost two sons and one daughter before his death—namely, Charles, his eldest; Pepin, whom he made king of Italy; and Rotrude, his eldest daughter, who had been betrothed to **Constantine**, the emperor of the Greeks. He bore the deaths of his two sons and of his daughters with less patience than might have been expected from his usual stoutness of heart, for his domestic affection, a quality for which he was as remarkable as for courage, forced him to shed tears. Moreover, when the death of Adrian, the Roman pontiff whom he considered the chief of his friends, was announced to him, he wept for him as though he had lost a brother or a very dear son. For he showed a very fine disposition in his friendships: he embraced them readily and maintained them faithfully, and he treated with the utmost respect all whom he had admitted into the circle of his friends.

Ruothild
possibly the same person as Ruodhaid, mentioned above

Ethelind
She also bore him a son named Richbod.

Bertrada
Bertrada of Laon, also known as "the queen with the goose foot," though the reason for this nickname is not clear

Bertrada died
July 12, 783

church of Saint-Denis
in Paris

She died
in 811

Constantine
Constantine VI; Rotrude was 6 when they were engaged, and Constantine was 10. The alliance fell apart in 786, and the engagement was dissolved in 788.

CHARLEMAGNE CROSSES THE ALPS
In addition to setting the Carolingian Renaissance in motion and ensuring peace throughout the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne was also a conqueror. Like Hannibal and Julius Caesar before him, he marched on Italy. He is shown here by neoclassical painter Paul Delaroche crossing the Alps in 773. He went on to besiege the Lombard capital of Pavia, exiled Desiderius, and became king of the Lombards.

Einhard and Emma

The scholar Einhard was born to an important family in the eastern part of the Frankish Empire and educated at the Abbey of Fulda. Besides great scholars, the monastery was home to skilled tradesmen; and so, while Einhard became very learned, he also acquired much knowledge of construction. He was recruited to Charlemagne's court in 791 or 792 and placed in charge of the building projects at Aachen and Ingelheim. There is a legend, first recorded in the twelfth century, that Einhard fell in love with Charlemagne's daughter Emma. They courted in secret, and according to one version of the story, she used to carry him back from their meetings so that Charlemagne wouldn't see footprints to suggest a man had been visiting his daughter. They were eventually found out, but, seeing their great love, Charlemagne forgave them and allowed them to marry. Einhard certainly had a wife called Emma whom he loved very much, but whether she was the daughter of Charlemagne is beyond our ability to verify.

The Body of Charlemagne

Charlemagne's body was interred in the Palatine Chapel in Aachen upon his death in 814. In 1215, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II had the remains moved to a shrine in Aachen Cathedral that he had ordered to be built for that purpose. Called the *Karlsschrein* or Shrine of Charles, it was built to look like a church. Frederick personally transferred the remains. This was likely due to the fact that by this time, Charlemagne's body had become the object of almost religious reverence. A belief grew up that it would confer power on whomever dug it up. The first known exhumation was performed in the year 1000 by Emperor Otto III. According to a contemporary chronicle, they opened the tomb and found Charlemagne's body sitting upon a throne, looking as if it were alive. The body was surrounded by a strong, pleasing odor, and the only signs of decay were that the end of the nose was missing a small piece. The body has since been dug up on numerous occasions, most recently in 1998.

Harun al-Rashid

While Charlemagne was becoming the most powerful ruler in Europe since the break-up of the western empire, Harun al-Rashid was achieving the same feat in the Islamic world. Born in the middle of the 760s, in 786 he became the fifth ruler of the Abbasid Caliphate, which had overthrown the Umayyads in 750. He promoted the translation of great works of literature, philosophy, and science from Greek, Chinese, Sanskrit, Persian, and Syriac into Arabic. The library at Baghdad, begun under Caliph al-Mansur, expanded greatly, becoming the foundation for the famed House of Wisdom. Like Charlemagne, he drew great scholars to himself and presided over a rich flowering of learning. His reign is considered to mark the beginning of the Islamic Golden Age. In 799, emissaries from Charlemagne came to al-Rashid's court seeking friendship, and al-Rashid sent a number of presents back, including a water clock featuring brass balls that fell on cymbals and twelve horsemen who stepped out of various windows each hour. The clock surpassed all technology known to the Franks, who reportedly thought it operated by magic. This was a powerful statement of the caliphate's scientific superiority.

He had such care of the upbringing of his sons and daughters that he never dined without them when he was at home, and never travelled without them. His sons rode along with him, and his daughters followed in the rear. Some of his guards, chosen for this very purpose, watched the end of the line of march where his daughters travelled. They were very beautiful, and much beloved by their father. So, it is strange that he would give them in marriage to no one, either from among his own people or from a foreign state. But up to his death he kept them all at home, saying that he could not forego their company.

DROPSY
Dropsy, now known as edema, is a condition in which fluid builds up beneath the skin and is typically an indicator of a serious underlying health condition, such as heart failure. This medieval manuscript shows one of Christ's miracles, in which he cures a man of dropsy. The artist has taken care to render the sick man's body as large and puffy.

His body was large and strong; his stature tall but not ungainly, for the measure of his height was seven times the length of his own feet. The top of his head was round; his eyes were very large and piercing. His nose was rather larger than is usual; he had beautiful white hair; and his expression was brisk and cheerful; so that, whether sitting or standing, his appearance was dignified and impressive. Although his neck was rather thick and short and he was somewhat corpulent, this was not noticed, because of the good proportions of the rest of his body. His step was firm and the whole carriage of his body manly; his voice was clear, but hardly so strong as you would have expected. He had good health, but for four years before his death was frequently attacked by fevers, and eventually became lame in one foot. Even then he followed his own opinion rather than the advice of his doctors, whom he almost hated, because they advised him to give up the roast meat, to which he was accustomed, and to eat boiled meat instead. He constantly took exercise both by riding and hunting. This was a national habit; for there is hardly any race on the earth that can equal the Franks in this respect. He took delight in the vapor of hot springs, and constantly practiced swimming, in which he was so proficient that no one could be fairly regarded as his superior. Partly for this reason he built his palace at **Aix**, and lived there continuously during the last years of his life up to the time of his death. He used to invite not only his sons to the bath, but also his nobles and friends, and at times even a great number of his followers and bodyguards.

Aix
There are more than 30 hot springs in the surrounding area.

He was temperate in eating and drinking, but especially so in drinking; for he had a fierce hatred of drunkenness in any man, and especially in himself or in his friends. He could not abstain so easily from food, and used to complain often that fasting was harmful to his health. He rarely gave large banquets, and only on the **high festivals**, but then he invited a large number of guests. His daily meal was served in four courses plus roast meat, which the hunters used to bring in on spits, and which he ate with more pleasure than any other food. During the meal there was either singing or a reader for him to listen to. Histories and the great deeds of men of old were read to him. He took delight also in the books of Saint Augustine, and especially in those which are entitled the

high festivals
such as Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas

City of God
See HEMA1, *chapter 3.*

native tongue
Old Frankish, a Germanic language most similar to modern Dutch

Deacon Peter
Petrus Grammaticus (744–799); he was one of the most important grammarians of the period.

Alcuin
He was quite possibly the most learned man of this time; see HEMA2, *chapters 37 and 38.*

church at Aix
Aachen Cathedral, consecrated in 805; it still stands today.

City of God. He was so temperate in the use of wine and drink of any kind that he rarely drank more than three times during dinner.

In speech he was fluent and ready, and could express with the greatest clearness whatever he wished. He was not content with his **native tongue**, but took the trouble to learn foreign languages. He learned Latin so well that he could speak it as well as he spoke his native tongue; but he could understand Greek better than he could speak it. His fluency of speech was so great that he even seemed sometimes a little talkative.

He paid the greatest attention to the liberal arts, and showed the greatest respect and bestowed high honors upon those who taught them. For his lessons in grammar, he listened to the instruction of **Deacon Peter** of Pisa, an old man; but for all other subjects Albinus, called **Alcuin**, a man from Britain of the Saxon race and the most learned man of his time, and also a deacon, was his teacher. Charles spent much time and labor in learning rhetoric and dialectic, and especially astronomy, from Alcuin. He also learned mathematics, and studied the course of the stars most carefully. He tried to learn to write, and he used to carry tablets and writing-sheets with him, keeping them under the pillow of his couch so that he might practice the formation of letters in his spare moments. But he made little advance in this strange task, which was begun too late in life.

He paid the most devout and pious regard to the Christian religion, in which he had been brought up from infancy. And so he built the great and most beautiful **church at Aix**, and decorated it with gold and silver and candelabras and with wicket-gates and doors of solid brass. And, since he could not procure marble columns elsewhere for the building of it, he had them brought from Rome and Ravenna. As long as his health permitted, he attended the church diligently: in the morning, in the evening, during the night, and at the time of the Mass. He took the greatest care to have all the services of the church performed with the utmost dignity, and constantly warned the keepers of the building not to allow anything improper or dirty either to be brought into or to remain in the building. He provided so great a quantity of gold and silver vessels, and so large a supply of priestly vestments, that at the religious

CHARLEMAGNE
The famous German artist Albrecht Dürer completed a detailed portrait of Charlemagne in 1513. Although executed around seven centuries after Charlemagne's death, the painting captures the regal nature of the first Holy Roman emperor. Dürer took care to render his ceremonial robes, sword, globe, and crown with great care, emphasizing their luxurious qualities.

services not even the doorkeepers, who form the lowest ecclesiastical order, had to officiate in their ordinary dress. He carefully reformed the manner of reading and singing; for he was thoroughly instructed in both, though he never read publicly himself, nor sang except in a low voice, and with the rest of the congregation.

He was most devout in relieving the poor and in those free gifts which the Greeks call alms. For he gave it his attention not only in his own country and in his own kingdom; he also used to send money across the sea to Syria, Egypt, Africa, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Carthage. He always felt compassion for the poverty of any Christians whose miserable condition in those countries came to his ears. It was mainly for this reason that he cultivated the friendship of kings beyond the sea, hoping thereby to win for the Christians living beneath their sway some help and relief.

He loved the **church of the holy apostle Peter** at Rome above all other sacred and venerable places, and he poured into its treasury great wealth in silver and gold and precious stones. He sent innumerable gifts to the pope; and during the whole course of his reign he strove with all his might—and, indeed, no object was nearer to his heart than this—to restore to the city of Rome her ancient authority, and not merely to defend the church of Saint Peter but to decorate and enrich it out of his resources above all other churches. But although he valued Rome so much, still, during all the forty-seven years that he reigned, he only went there four times to pay his vows and offer up his prayers.

But such were not the only objects of his last visit; for the Romans had grievously outraged **Pope Leo**, had torn out his eyes and cut off his tongue, and thus forced him to throw himself upon the protection of the king. He therefore came to Rome to restore the condition of the church, which was terribly disturbed, and spent the whole of the winter there. It was then that he received the title of **Emperor and Augustus**, which he so disliked at first that he affirmed that he would not have entered the church on that day, even though it was the **chief festival** of the church, if he could have foreseen the design of the pope. But when he had taken the title, he bore very quietly the hostility that it caused and the indignation of the **Roman emperors**. He conquered their ill-feeling by his magnanimity, in which, doubtless, he far excelled them, and sent frequent embassies to them, and called them his brothers.

church of the holy apostle Peter
The old Saint Peter's Basilica was built in the fourth century by Constantine I, and removed in the sixteenth century to make space for the current Saint Peter's Basilica. It is the location of Saint Peter's tomb.

Pope Leo
Leo III, pope from 795 to 816. He was attacked on April 25, 799; his eyes and tongue are said to have miraculously grown back (see HEMA2*, chapter 27).*

Emperor and Augustus
Charlemagne's coronation as western emperor created the Holy Roman Empire.

chief festival
Christmas Day, 800

Roman emperors
the eastern emperors

Death of Charlemagne

At the very end of his life, when he was already feeling the pressure of old age and sickness, he summoned his son Louis, king of Aquitaine, the only surviving son of Hildegard, and then solemnly called together the Frankish nobles of his whole kingdom; and then, with the consent of all, made Louis partner in the whole kingdom and heir to the **imperial title**. After that, putting the diadem on his head, he ordered them to call him Emperor and Augustus. This decision of his was received by all present with the greatest favor, for it seemed to them a divine inspiration for the welfare of the realm. It added to his dignity at home and increased the terror of his name abroad.

imperial title
In 813; see the introduction to HEMA2*, chapter 29.*

He then sent his son back to Aquitaine. Charles, though broken with old age, proceeded to hunt, as his custom was, not far from the palace of Aix, and after spending the rest of the autumn in this pursuit he came back to Aix about the beginning of November. While he was spending the winter there, he was attacked by a sharp fever and took to his bed. Then, following his usual habit, he determined to abstain from food, thinking that by such self-discipline he would be able either to cure or alleviate the disease. But the fever was complicated by a pain in the side which the Greeks call **pleurisy**; and, as Charles still persisted in fasting, and only very rarely drank something to sustain his strength, seven days after he had taken to his bed he received holy communion and died, in the seventy-second year of his life and in the forty-seventh year of his reign, on the fifth day before the Kalends of February, at the **third hour of the day**.

pleurisy
a disease of the lungs

third hour of the day
9:00 a.m., January 28, 814

His body was washed and treated with the usual ceremonies, and then, amid the greatest grief of the whole people, taken to the church and buried. At first there was some doubt as to where he should rest, since he had given no instructions during his lifetime. But at length all were agreed that he could be buried

CHARLEMAGNE IN HIS LIBRARY
Einhard writes that Charlemagne placed a large importance on learning, both for himself and for his subjects. This eighteenth-century print depicts Charlemagne in his library, poring over materials that lie on the table before him. Surrounding him are members of his court and monks who assisted him in his promotion of education..

Peasant Revolt and the End of the Tang Emperor

In the middle of the ninth century, a mixture of bad harvests and local banditry set into motion a series of events that would ruin the powerful Tang dynasty of China. The people of the countryside, with little food and heavy taxes to pay, came to loathe the government for not assisting them or lowering their taxes. Salt was especially prized as the Tang government held a monopoly on the salt market. When groups of bandits started selling salt while roaming the countryside, people began to join their rebellion. An unknown salt smuggler, Huang Chao, rose through the ranks of the rebellion before splitting off to form his own military group in 876. Huang Chao conquered the port of Guangzhou in 879 and sacked the Tang capital in 881. He declared himself emperor but was defeated by Tang forces multiple times before being killed by his nephew at Shandong. Chao's rebellion, however, weakened the Tang dynasty to the point that Huang's subordinate was able to topple the dynasty in 907 and usurp the throne from Emperor Ai.

nowhere more honorably than in the great church that he had built at his own expense in the same town, for the love of our Lord God Jesus Christ and the honor of his holy and ever-virgin Mother. He was buried there on the same day he died. A gilded arch was raised above the tomb, with his statue, and an inscription that ran as follows:

Beneath this tomb lies the body
of Charles the Great, the Christian Emperor,
who nobly expanded the kingdom of the Franks
and reigned prosperously for forty-seven years.
He departed this life when more than seventy years of age
in the eight hundred and fourteenth year of our Lord,
in the seventh indiction, on the fifth day before the Kalends of February.

There were many prodigies to show that his end drew near, and he as well as others understood the meaning of their warnings. During all the three last years of his life there were constant eclipses of sun and moon, and a black-colored spot appeared in the sun for the space of seven days. The gallery which he had built, of great size and strength, between the palace and the church, suddenly, on Ascension Day, **fell in ruins** down even to the foundations. Also, the wooden bridge over the Rhine near Mainz, which he had built with wonderful skill, and the labor of ten years, so that it seemed as though it would last forever, was accidentally set on fire, and in three hours burnt so far that not a plank remained except those that were covered by the water. Further, when he was making his last expedition in Saxony against Godefrid, king of the Danes, as he was moving out of camp and beginning his march before sunrise, he suddenly saw a meteor rush across the heavens with a great blaze and pass

fell in ruins
This actually occurred in 817, when King Louis was crossing it.

from right to left through the clear sky. While all were wondering what this sign meant, suddenly the horse that he was riding lowered its head and fell, and threw him so violently to the ground that the girdle of his cloak was broken, and his sword belt slipped from it. When his attendants ran up to help him, they found him disarmed and disrobed. His javelin, too, which he was holding in his hand at the time of his fall, fell more than twenty paces away from him.

Furthermore, the palace at Aix was frequently shaken, and in houses where he lived there was a constant creaking in the fretted ceilings. The church in which he was afterward buried was struck by lightning, and the golden apple that adorned the summit of the roof was thrown down by a thunder-stroke, and fell upon the bishop's house, which adjoined the church. In the same church an inscription was written on the edge of the circular space that ran round the inside of the church between the upper and lower arches, saying by whom the sacred edifice had been built. And in the last line occurred the words: "Carolus Princeps." Some noticed that in the very year in which Charles died, and a few months before his death, the letters of the word "princeps" were so destroyed as to be quite invisible. But he either refused to notice or despised all these omens as though they had no connection at all with anything that concerned him.

CORONATION OF CHARLEMAGNE
One of the most depicted scenes from Charlemagne's life is his coronation as Holy Roman emperor on Christmas Day in 800. This fresco, completed by Raphael and his workshop, resides in the Apostolic Palace in Vatican City. Important clergy, soldiers, servants, and a young prince in full armor all look on as Pope Leo III crowns Charlemagne.

Map of Charlemagne's Lands and Conquests

The overlay on this map shows the land Charlemagne inherited and those that he conquered. Francia's territories in 768 are shown in dark red, and how the empire looked in 814 at the time of Charlemagne's death is shown in blue. Rome and the Carolingian capital of Aachen are identified. The map itself comes from a world atlas published in 1570 by a trio of cartographers in the Spanish Netherlands. Spain's interest and investment into extraordinary mapmakers was fueled by their colonial activity at the time.

AFTERWORD

Charlemagne's many conquests made the kingdom of the Franks by far the largest and most powerful in Europe. On Christmas Day in 800, he was proclaimed emperor by Pope Leo III, creating the Holy Roman Empire that would last, aside from a brief interruption from 924 to 962, until 1806.

Following in the footsteps of Charles Martel, Charlemagne greatly promoted the creation of armored cavalry, which led to the development of knighthood. He built a system of castles to aid in the defense of his wide lands, entrusting them to vassals who had proved their worth and loyalty on the battlefield, thus laying the foundation for feudalism.

As important as any of these other legacies, Charlemagne's reign was also distinguished by a flourishing of learning known as the Carolingian Renaissance. Under Charlemagne's patronage, an explosion of learning and art took place that laid the groundwork for the high Middle Ages. The Frankish Kingdom became the source of advancements in science, mathematics, agriculture, theology, and more.

Of Charlemagne's legitimate sons, he had only one surviving heir—Louis the Pious—whom he crowned co-emperor in 813. When Charlemagne died early the next year, Louis inherited the entire kingdom.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. In what ways are the Merovingian kings different from the mayors of the palace, according to Einhard?
2. How does Einhard's depiction of the Merovingians compare to that of Gregory of Tours?
3. How does Einhard describe Charlemagne? In what ways is he similar to other rulers we have seen, such as Clovis or Justinian? How is he unique?
4. What are Charlemagne's chief priorities as a ruler?
5. What virtues does Einhard emphasize in his account of the Carolingians? When thinking back to accounts of other leaders such as Gregory the Great or Clovis, do these leaders share common characteristics, or are there virtues that seem to be unique to Charlemagne?
6. Describe Charlemagne's relationship with the Church. Who appears to hold more power, the pope or Charlemagne? What is the relationship between the pope and the emperor? What does his involvement suggest about the emperor's role in religious affairs?
7. How was Charlemagne influenced by the Roman world? In what ways does he act like a Frankish warlord as well?
8. From this account, what appear to be the traits of an ideal medieval leader? What kind of attributes did a successful leader such as Charlemagne need to possess to best serve his kingdom?

27

The Papacy and the Monarchy

> When you behold the harvests in the fields
> Shaking with fear, the Po and the Ticino
> Lashing the city walls with iron waves,
> Then may you know that Charlemagne is come.
>
> —Olger, in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's
> "The Poet's Tale: Charlemagne"

Introduction

In 754, Pope Stephen III conferred the title of Patrician of Rome on Charlemagne's father, Pepin the Short. This title indicated that Pepin was to serve as a protector of the Roman Church, and especially of the temporal or secular power it had been accumulating over the previous few centuries. This power had been under steady attack in the face of the growing kingdom of the Lombards (see *HEMA1*, chapter 22), and many lands traditionally belonging to the papacy were annexed by this relatively new kingdom.

In 756, Pepin came to the defense of the city of Rome, which had been besieged by the king of the Lombards. He reduced the Lombards to tribute and restored the territories the Lombards had occupied to the pope. This restoration, which has come to be known as the Donation of Pepin, created an official secular domain under the direct rule of the pope. This was new: secular and religious authority had interacted deeply since Constantine made the Roman Empire Christian, and in Flavian's intercession to the Emperor Theodosius on behalf of Antioch (*HEMA1*, chapter 2) we witnessed one instance of negotiating the relationship between the two; but political and ecclesial authority had not been combined in the same person like this since Emperor Augustus took the title *pontifex maximus* at the beginning of the Roman Empire (see *HAR1*, chapter 20). The Papal States would continue until 1870, when Italy declared war on them, conquering them in ten days. When Charlemagne came to power in 768, there was already a history of the Carolingian kingdom acting in support of an independent Rome.

The noble families of Rome wielded undue power in the early days of the Papal States, extending even to the election of the pope, which happened under their watchful eye and influence. The situation was bad enough that Pope Stephen called

a synod, a formal gathering of bishops to discuss dogma or church law, at the Lateran palace in 769. The synod aimed, among other things, at limiting noble influence in papal elections. Stephen's successor, Adrian I, was the first pope elected under the new rules, in 772. Nevertheless, he was himself from a noble Roman family, and so his election was not considered objectionable.

Adrian had to strike a delicate balance. Roman territories were under threat from the king of the Lombards, Desiderius, who sought to exploit the rift between Charlemagne and his brother Carloman I to seize all of Italy for himself. As the eastern empire still saw itself as the protector of Rome, Adrian appealed to them repeatedly to help him. But the eastern empire was facing its own problems, as Empress Irene struggled after the death of her husband, Leo IV, to hold their dynasty together. She ruled in her son's name, and ultimately in her own right as the first ever sole empress in Roman and Byzantine history. She was eventually deposed in 802, ending the dynasty she had struggled to maintain.

With Constantinople tied up with its own internal politics and unable to send aid, Adrian turned to the Franks. Desiderius's hopes fell apart when, after the death of Carloman, he supported Carloman's sons, rather than Charlemagne, as his successors. This led to direct conflict with Charlemagne, who subsequently conquered the ambitious king and sent him to live out his days in a monastery. Charlemagne was then crowned king of the Lombards, ending the Lombard threat to the Papal States. A Carolingian king had once again come to the defense of a free Rome. In 781, Adrian began to date official documents according to the years of Charlemagne's reign rather than the reign of the eastern emperor.

When Adrian died in 795, his successor, Leo III, was elected on the same day by unanimous accord according to the new rules established by the Lateran synod, and he was installed in office the next day. Leo was not from a noble family, having risen through the clerical ranks to become the papal treasurer. He was also not the candidate the nobles preferred; they may have supported the candidacy of Adrian's nephew, Paschal. In their eyes, no commoner should be pope, and it was now clear just how much the Lateran synod had checked their power.

Upon Leo's election, he immediately sent the keys of Rome to Charlemagne, indicating his recognition of Charlemagne as protector of Rome. This move was likely distasteful to the Roman nobles, as Charlemagne was not Roman, and the later Roman emperors had refused to give this honor to barbarian kings. Animosity toward the new pope grew.

Around Easter in 799, this animosity found an outlet in a conspiracy to remove Leo from power. The conspirators took him from the midst of a public parade with the goal of cutting out his eyes and tongue. Thus hindered, he would be unable to perform the duties of pope and would have to be removed from office. Their actions would have unexpected and far-reaching consequences.

The following account of these events comes from the *Book of the Popes*, a chronicle of the deeds and lives of the various popes. The book itself has an interesting history: it is the work of multiple authors across time, as new writers added to the original edition to include the popes that had lived in the meantime. The identity of the original author or authors remains a mystery. In the late eighth or early ninth century Rabanus Maurus attributed the first part, up through the middle of the fourth century, to Jerome—an attribution no longer believed to be true. The author of the next section of the text, until the middle of the ninth century, is unknown, and a certain Martin of Opava extended the book from the ninth to the thirteenth century. What the book probably represents is a gathering of various materials from the papal archives, assembled by various scribes and added to through the years. It is a major source of information about the papacies of the Middle Ages.

LEO III

A technique called chiaroscuro woodcutting was used to create this print of Pope Leo III in the seventeenth century. It entails carving several depths of the image into different blocks and printing with a spectrum of colored inks. The artist of this print chose a simpler approach, but when done correctly it can take on the look of hand blended drawings and paintings.

Time Line

769 — A synod held at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran declares that laypersons can neither be made pope nor participate in papal elections.
772 — Adrian I becomes first pope elected under the new rules.
781 — Pope Adrian begins using Charlemagne's reign to date documents.
795 — Leo III becomes pope.
799 — Pope Leo is attacked and kidnapped in Rome.
800 — Charlemagne comes to Rome to vindicate Pope Leo; he is then crowned emperor.
816 — Leo dies on June 12.

Book of the Popes

c. 816

Leo's Rise to Power and Sanctity

Leo, a Roman by nation, the son of **Atzuppius**, held the office of pope for twenty years, five months, and sixteen days. Raised and taught from a young age in the papal **vestiary**, and instructed spiritually in every ecclesiastical discipline, mighty both in the **Psalter** and in the sacred divine Scriptures, after having been made a **sub-deacon**, he advanced to the honor of the priesthood. For he was a chaste man, fruitful in speech and constant in mind. But when he came across an outstanding monk or servant of God, he would unceasingly devote himself to speaking of divine things and praying with that person. He was also greatly and even excessively joyful in almsgiving. Furthermore, he was a most diligent visitor of the sick, and preaching to them scripturally, he redeemed their souls **with alms**. Many of these, attending to his preaching, commended something to him in the name of Christ; whatever they gave, he would secretly expend day and night on the poor, continually and salubriously bringing the fruit of souls to God. He shone in performing the duties of the vestiary, and the vestiary itself was managed by him with most expert care. He was most deeply loved by all. For this reason, by divine inspiration, he was elected by one accord and with one will by all the priests, leading churchmen, and every cleric, and both the nobles and the rest of the Roman people, with God assenting, on the **feast of the first martyr**, the blessed Stephen. And he was ordained to the apostolic see as pontiff on the next day, the **feast of Saint John** the apostle and evangelist, to the glory and praise of omnipotent God.

Atzuppius
His identity is otherwise unknown.

vestiary
the treasury

Psalter
probably, that is, in singing the Psalms

sub-deacon
the lowest ordained rank in the medieval Church

with alms
That is, he offered alms on their behalf.

feast of the first martyr
December 26, 795; for the account of Stephen's martyrdom, see Acts 6:8–7:60.

feast of Saint John
December 27, 795

For he was a defender of ecclesiastical affairs and a most brave opponent of things contrary to that order, and he was exceedingly mild. He was a famous friend to those wishing the Church well, slow to anger and quick to mercy. From the time of his ordination, he did not support those rendering evil for evil, nor the one who took the deserved revenge; but, being himself pious and merciful, he supported those who worked righteousness for all.

The Attack on Pope Leo

This venerable and most holy priest performed his duties in the holy, Catholic, and apostolic Roman Church, and maintained the integrity of the orthodox faith, and he furnished it in every way, both by building churches in various places and by expanding existing ones. One day, he was processing in the **Greater Litanies**, according to his custom, where the people usually met him along the way each year with holy piety so that he might celebrate the litany and the solemnities of the Mass with the priests, and pour out the prayers of the people for the health of all Christians to almighty God. And according to ancient tradition, this litany was proclaimed in the church of the **blessed George**, a martyr of Christ, on **his feast day** by a scribe of the holy Roman Church. So everyone, men and women, crowded with devoted mind into the church of **Lawrence**, the blessed martyr of Christ, which church is also called **Lucina**, so that he might address them there.

When the aforementioned pontiff had set out from the papal residence, a wicked **canon**, called **Paschal**, came to meet him without a **chasuble**, and the hypocrite asked to be excused, saying, "I came without a chasuble because I am sick." Then the most holy priest excused him. Likewise, Campulus and others

Greater Litanies
Held on April 25, 799; this was a procession of prayer, seeking God's mercy and gentle providence.

blessed George
Saint George, patron saint of England, martyred under Diocletian in 303

his feast day
April 23

Lawrence
one of seven deacons martyred under the emperor Valerian in 258

Lucina
San Lorenzo in Lucina, consecrated in 440 by Pope Sixtus III

canon
at this time, a priest who lived together with other priests according to an established rule of life

Paschal
a nephew of the previous pope

chasuble
the outer vestment priests wear while celebrating the Mass

THE KEYS OF ROME
Historically, the Sant'Angelo Bridge brought pilgrims across the Tiber to the Castel Sant'Angelo and Saint Peter's Basillica. This relief of the coat of arms of the Holy See with Saint Peter's keys is on the bridge, signaling that you are crossing into papal territory.

took advantage of pontifical lenience to carry out their deceit, and, speaking sweet words to him that they did not mean in their hearts, excused themselves. These malignant, sinful, perverse, false Christians (or rather, pagans, and sons of the devil), gathering themselves together fiendishly, full of sinful thoughts, armed themselves and hid along his route, before the monastery of Saints Stephen and **Sylvester**, which **Pope Paul** had built, and, suddenly jumping out in ambush, swept him away to be impiously disfigured. Lacking all due reverence, Paschal grabbed him by the head and Campulus by the feet, according to their wicked plan. This done, all who were around him, unarmed and prepared for the service of God, terrified by the armed men, fled.

MARTYRDOM OF SAINT STEPHEN
Leo was elected to the office of pope on December 26, the feast day of Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Bernardo Cavallino here presents Stephen's martyrdom in a way reminiscent of Caravaggio. The red garment anticipates the bloodshed as the saint is bathed in light and looks heavenward while those around him stoop to gather rocks to stone him. Leo would not be martyred, though he would suffer much for the Church.

But the plotters and evildoers themselves, like **Jews**, without any consideration of divine or human honor, grabbed him and threw him to the ground in a ferocious manner. They mercilessly stripped him by ripping his clothes, and cruelly tried to pluck out his eyes and render him completely blind. For they planned to cut out his tongue and send him into the square blind and mute.

But afterward, like true and impious pagans, dragging him to the church of the same monastery, they cruelly attacked his eyes and tongue a second time, and, striking him with clubs, they lacerated him with various injuries, and they left him half-dead and covered in blood before the altar. Then they sent him under guard to the same monastery. But, struck by fear that he would be stolen away from there by Christian men, they hatched an evil plan, as the abbot of the monastery of Saint Erasmus himself confessed: for Paschal the canon, Campulus the **sacristan**, and Maurus Nepesinus made the abbot come to them secretly at night at the monastery of St. Sylvester, and sent him with many wicked and like-minded malefactors to secure Leo. In this way, stealing him away from there by night, they led him to the monastery of Saint Erasmus, and shut him under strict guard.

POPE LEO FLEES TO CHARLEMAGNE

But almighty God, who had for a long time patiently endured their malice, having tested their iniquity, destroyed it in a marvelous fashion. For it happened by the cooperation of God and the prayers of the blessed apostle Peter that the aforementioned pope, when he had been sent by those butchers to be guarded at the monastery of Saint Erasmus, both received his sight back and had his tongue restored to him, according to the will of the Lord and the prayers of blessed Peter, the holder of the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. And that almighty God might show forth the great miracle through his servant with his accustomed mercy, by the divine will Leo was secretly removed from that prison by faithful Christian men, namely Albinus the **chamberlain** and other faithful, God-fearing men. They brought him to the basilica of blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, where Peter's most holy body rests.

Sylvester
Pope Sylvester I, who was pope from 314 to 335; the monastery was attached to the church of San Silvestro in Capite.

Pope Paul
Pope Paul I; he built this church on the ruins of a pagan temple to the Roman sun god.

Jews
The writer probably has the crucifixion of Christ in mind, which Christians at the time attributed to the Jews.

sacristan
an officer charged with the care of the garments and vessels for worship

chamberlain
manager of a royal or noble household

THE OATH OF LEO III
In the early sixteenth century, Pope Julius II tasked a young Raphael de Urbino to redecorate the papal apartments. Simultaneously, he commissioned Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel. Raphael's frescoes included scenes from the lives of Constantine and Popes Leo III and IV. The School of Athens *fresco, featuring a debate between Plato and Aristotle, is the most recognizable of the works.*

All those who heard and saw the marvelous works of God, who had snatched the innocent and just pontiff from the hands of wicked men, glorified God, saying, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who alone does great marvels, and does not desert the ones hoping in him, but fulfills his mercy in them, that the glory and marvels of God might be manifest in them, just as he promised to those hoping in him, saying through the Psalmist, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?'[A] And again, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.'"[B]

And truly the Lord, lifting him out of darkness, returned light to him and restored his tongue, and healed his limbs, and, leading him in every work, comforted him. Then faithful and Christian men had as much joy as the attackers had sorrow, not knowing what had happened. Judging themselves to be in danger, they sought to kill each other. And when they could not find anything else to do, they destroyed the house of Albinus, and of the faithful pontiff of the blessed apostle Peter. The pontiff, now openly in the very church of blessed Peter, was met by **Winichis**, the glorious duke of Spoleto, with his army. And when he saw that the supreme pontiff was able to see and speak, he venerably took him under his care, and conveyed him to Spoleto, glorifying and praising God, who had shown forth such great marvels.

When this was heard, the faithful Roman citizens came to him from every corner. And so, accompanied by some of the Roman citizens, bishops and elders or priests, and some nobles of the citizenry, he set out for the most excellent **lord Charles**, king of the Franks and Lombards and Patrician of the Romans. That most Christian and orthodox, and especially most merciful, king, as soon as he heard this, sent **Hildebald** the archbishop and chaplain, Count Ascheric, and later his own son, the most excellent king **Pepin**, accompanied by other counts, to meet him. And **he received him** as the vicar of the blessed apostle Peter with veneration and honor, with hymns and spiritual songs. And embracing one another with tears, they kissed one another, and first the pope began

[A] **Psalm 27:1**

[B] **Psalm 119:105**

Winichis
Duke of Spoleto from 789 to 822; he was in Rome at Charlemagne's order to ensure the peace.

lord Charles
that is, Charlemagne

Hildebald
Bishop of Cologne (787–795), and first archbishop of Cologne (795–818); he was a close friend of Charlemagne.

Pepin
Born Carloman and renamed Pepin; he was king of Lombardy, and so had Italy in his domain.

he received him
at Paderborn in northwest Germany, where Charlemagne had a castle

Charlemagne and Hildebold

A legend records that one day while Charlemagne was out hunting near Cologne, he became tired and needed a place to rest. Seeing a small chapel, he went inside and sat down. Not long after, people began to file into the chapel for worship. The priest, a man called Hildebold, came in and began the service. Charlemagne was so moved by his sermon that he went to the priest afterward to give him gold to support his chapel. Hildebold, not realizing who the man was, refused. He asked only for a bit of leather from the next deer the man killed so the priest could rebind his worn-out prayer book. Charlemagne was greatly impressed by this, and the two became friends. In 791, Charlemagne made him the royal chaplain. As Hildebold was the bishop of Cologne by then, he was not free to live at court, and Charlemagne obtained special permission from Pope Adrian I for Hildebold to live away from the people of his bishopric. In 795, partly through Charlemagne's influence, Cologne was made an archbishopric, and Hildebold became its first archbishop. He was one of the witnesses to Charlemagne's last will and testament and donated to the construction of the royal tomb at Charlemagne's death.

A New Peter and Constantine

In 313, Constantine the Great donated the Lateran Palace in Rome to the pope. The attached gallery was converted into a church and dedicated in 324. It eventually became the official seat of papal power and the prime church of western Christendom. An inscription declares it to be the "Most Holy Lateran Church, mother and head of all the churches in the city and the world." The pope resided in the palace until 1309, when the papacy briefly moved to Avignon. It was the site of five ecumenical councils, including Lateran IV in 1215, perhaps the most significant western council of the Middle Ages. In the banqueting hall, Pope Leo III had a mosaic installed where Christ sends the apostles out to preach the Gospel. On the mosaic's left, Christ gives the keys of Heaven to Saint Peter and a battle standard to Constantine the Great. On the right, Saint Peter gives the symbol of papal authority to Pope Leo III and the battle standard to Charlemagne.

Antipope Constantine II

When Pope Paul I died in 767, Toto of Nepi led an army to the Basilica of the Apostles in Rome, where the papal election was to take place. He commandeered the election, elevating his brother Constantine to pope. A soldier by profession, Constantine was not even ordained. Those opposed to Constantine's election fled to Desiderius, king of the Lombards, to seek his support. In the meantime, Constantine attempted to gain the support of Pepin the Short, but Pepin ignored the two letters sent to him. The Lombards marched on Rome and were met by the army of Toto. The two forces battled in the streets of Rome. Toto was killed, and Constantine tried to hide, but he was discovered and arrested. He was removed from office and blinded. At his later trial, he at first protested that he had been forced to become pope and confessed to having done wrong; but the next day he retracted his confession, arguing that his election was legitimate and that he had done nothing wrong. This enraged the court, which had him beaten and cut his tongue out before sending him to a monastery to end his days. Nothing further is known of him after that. A synod held at the Lateran in 769 ruled that no layperson could be elected pope.

Broken Engagement

Regent Irene, ruling in the name of the child emperor Constantine VI, was looking to strengthen ties with both the Franks and the pope. She engaged in formal diplomatic relations with Charlemagne, which culminated in 781 in an engagement between Charlemagne's daughter Rotrude and Constantine VI, both of whom were children at the time. Irene sent one of her courtiers to the Frankish court to teach Rotrude Greek so she would be prepared when she came to Constantinople. The marriage, had it happened, would potentially have reunited the two halves of the Roman Empire. But relations soured between the two great realms, partly due to a disagreement over who had the right to control Italy, and Irene broke off the engagement in 787, twelve years before Charlemagne became Holy Roman emperor. The young Constantine was against ending the engagement, but was unable to overrule his mother, who was growing more powerful. The Byzantines invaded Italy the next year but were repulsed. When Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor, it put an end to any hope of an alliance with the Byzantines, who saw this as an attack on their power: since Justinian, they had considered the west to be theirs, and that those who ruled had done so under their imperial authority.

to sing the *Gloria*, and then the rest of the clerics took it up, and they offered prayers for the whole people. Then the most benign lord Charlemagne, gazing upon the pope, offered thanks to God, who had worked such great wonders over his servant through the prayers of the apostles Peter and Paul, and had frustrated the plans of the wicked men.

Charlemagne and the Pope Return to Rome

When the most serene king had had the pope with him for some time in great honor, those wicked **prelates** and sons of the devil, hearing about it, after the dire and wicked fires they had inflicted on the possessions and affairs of the blessed apostle Peter, gathered themselves and, with God set against them, sent false accusations against the most holy pontiff, which they were in no way able to prove, to the king. For they wanted to humiliate the holy Church through traps and such iniquities as are unworthy to be spoken. But while the pope was spending time with the most merciful great king, archbishops as well as bishops and other priests came to him there, and together with the counsel of the most pious great king and all the leading men of the Franks, by God's leading, they sent him with excessive honor, as was fitting, back to his honored apostolic see in Rome. They led him through each city, as if receiving a very apostle, all the way to Rome.

The Romans, receiving back their pastor on the **eve of the feast** of the blessed apostle Andrew, met him at the **Milvian Bridge** with signs and banners: present were the leaders among the clerics, and the leading men, and the senate, and all the soldiers, and the whole Roman people, with the nuns and deaconesses and the most noble matrons and all the women, together with a crowd of pilgrims from among the Franks, Frisians, Saxons, and Lombards. These, all joined together, received him with spiritual songs and led him with excessive joy to the church of the blessed apostle Peter, where he celebrated the solemnities of the Mass and everyone partook equally and faithfully of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the next day, celebrating the feast of the blessed apostle Andrew, according to ancient custom, he entered the **Lateran residence** with great joy and happiness. And after some days, the most faithful persons who had come with him in pontifical obedience, namely Hildebald and **Arno**, most reverend archbishops, and Cunibert, **Bernard**, Atto, and **Jesse**, most reverend and holy bishops, and also Erflaicus, a bishop-elect, and then Helmgoth, Rottecar, and Germar, the most glorious counts, who ate at the very table of the lord Pope Leo, interrogated those most unspeakable malefactors Paschal, Campulus, and their followers for

Gloria
a common liturgical song based on Luke 2:14

prelates
those holding a high church office

eve of the feast
that is, November 29

Milvian Bridge
Site of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312; see HAR2*, chapter 44.*

Lateran residence
The papal residence attached to the church of Saint John Lateran, which is the oldest public church in the western world (founded in 324) and the pope's principle church. It was in use as the papal residence until 1309.

Arno
bishop of Salzburg from 785 to 798 and first archbishop of Salzburg from 798 to 821

Bernard
archbishop of Vienne, France, from 810 to 842

Jesse
bishop of Amiens from 799 to 836

TRICLINIUM OF LEO III
This architectural feature is a remnant of the original Lateran Palace gifted to Pope Leo by Charlemagne. The apse once was one end of a massive banquet hall. The mosaics show Christ with eleven apostles, all but Judas, and Pope Leo kneeling at the feet of Saint Peter.

more than a week, asking what malice they had had from their pontiff. And they had nothing they could say against him. Then the aforementioned men sent them to the king of the Franks.

king came
Charlemagne arrived in Rome on December 1, 800.

After a short time, that great **king came** to the basilica of the blessed apostle Peter and was received with great honor. He called an assembly of the archbishops, bishops, abbots, Franks of every noble rank, and noble Romans. The great king and the most blessed pontiff both sat down, and made the most holy archbishops, bishops, abbots, and the rest of the priests sit in session in the presence of the leading men of the Franks and Romans to lay out the charges that had been spoken against the kind pontiff. All the churchmen unanimously said, "We do not dare to judge the apostolic see, which is the head of all the churches of God. For we are judged by it and its vicar, but it is judged by no one, as was the ancient custom. Rather, as the highest pontiff himself thinks, we obey, according to church discipline." But the venerable pope said, "I follow in the footsteps of my predecessors as pontiff, and I am prepared to vindicate myself of such false accusations as have recently burned fruitlessly against me."

Some days later
on December 23, 800

Some days later, in the same church of the blessed apostle Peter, in the presence of all the churchmen, the Franks who were in the service of the great king, and all the Romans, the venerable pontiff embraced the four holy Gospels in front of everyone and said under oath in a clear voice, "I do not have knowledge of those false crimes that the Romans who have wickedly persecuted me have alleged, nor am I aware that I have done such things." And when this was done, all the archbishops, bishops, abbots, and clerics performed a litany and gave praise to God and to our lady, the mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, and to blessed Peter, prince of the apostles and of all the saints of God.

Charlemagne Crowned Emperor

After this, everyone gathered again in the basilica of the blessed apostle Peter on the day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then the venerable and nourishing prelate with his own hands crowned Charlemagne with a most expensive crown. Then all the faithful Romans, seeing such great things done both for the defense of the church and out of the love that he had toward the holy Roman church and its vicar, exclaimed with unanimous loud voice, by the will of God and of blessed Peter who holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven: "Life and victory to Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned by God, the great and peace-making emperor!" It was cried three times before the holy tomb of the blessed apostle Peter; and he was established by all as emperor of the Romans. The most holy priest also anointed the holy **Charles**, his most excellent son, king on the same day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Charles
Charles the Younger was crowned king of the Franks on the same day; he died in 811, and his part of the kingdom went to his younger brother Louis the Pious.

CROWNING OF CHARLEMAGNE
As you read, Charlemagne's coronation by Pope Leo III held great political and religious significance. The struggle between royalty and the Church would continue across Europe throughout the Middle Ages and into the era of Protestant reformations. Despite this—or perhaps because of its inherent drama—the coronation was a favorite scene for artists across mediums.

The Papal States

In 321, Constantine the Great enacted a law allowing Christian churches to possess property, and restoring previously confiscated property. The first and most notable secular gift to the Church was the Lateran Palace in Rome; but soon, wealthy and devout Christians in Italy and elsewhere began to donate estates to the Church. The papacy held these lands as a private landowner, becoming a de facto political player in a landscape where land was one of the things that grounded authority. After Justinian's reconquest of Italy, the duchy of Rome was established as a division of the Exarchate of Ravenna, an administrative district of the Byzantine Empire. This authority was greatly reduced by the Lombard invasion, which left the pope the largest landowner in Italy. The papacy assumed the governance of Rome and its environs, still in the name of the Byzantine emperor. In 728 the Lombard king Liutprand gifted Sutri and several other towns to Pope Gregory II, enlarging the papacy's territories beyond Rome. In 751, the Exarchate of Ravenna fell to the Lombards, and the pope was cut off from all allies. This may have influenced Pope Zachary's decision to support Pepin the Short's seizure of the Frankish throne, as he hoped for an ally in the new king. He was not disappointed: Pepin led armies against the Lombards in 754 and 756, conquered the lands of the former Exarchate, and gave them to the pope. Many date the start of the Papal States as an independent political entity from this "Donation of Pepin." The Papal States continued independent until 1870, when King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy conquered them as part of the unification of Italy.

King Desiderius

Desiderius ruled the Lombards from 756 to 774. In the beginning of his reign, he had the support of Pope Stephen II. He promised to restore lands the Lombards had taken from the pope and enlarge the Papal States at his coronation; however, he actually had plans to bring Italy under his dominion and began to harass the papacy. In 770, his daughter Desiderata married Charlemagne, a move that simultaneously strengthened the Lombard kingdom and put further pressure on Carloman, but the marriage only lasted a year. In 773, Pope Hadrian cut diplomatic relations with Desiderius, the last in a series of provocations probably meant to bait Desiderius into rash action. The king did not disappoint, immediately moving to seize papal holdings. Hadrian sent word to Charlemagne, begging his help in his capacity as a protector of the papacy. Charlemagne responded by sending two armies into Italy. He captured the capital and Desiderius after eight months of warfare. He deposed Desiderius and added the Lombard kingdom to his own. There would never again be another Lombard king of Italy.

AFTERWORD

The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor created the Holy Roman Empire, which existed until it was dissolved in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars. But even more deeply, it firmly established the role of popes as kingmakers. Leo explicitly extended this to the claim that even in secular matters, Christian kings were under the authority of the pope. From this time, it became normal for kings to be crowned by the pope, or a bishop acting in his place, a practice seen even today.

But Charlemagne and, more importantly, his son Louis did not see things this way. The crowning of Charlemagne thus set the stage for ever more intense disagreements between the papacy and monarchs over supreme authority, with the papacy increasingly appropriating secular authority and monarchs trespassing on spiritual authority.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. How did Pope Leo III rise to power?
2. What virtues does Leo exhibit in this excerpt? How are Leo's virtues similar to Charlemagne's, given that one is a pope and the other a monarch? How do they differ?
3. How do the pious actions of Charlemagne in this source compare with his depiction in Einhard?
4. What details of Charlemagne's coronation are left out? How does this affect the portrayal of this event?
5. According to this text, what is expected of a medieval pope, as leader of Christendom? What is expected of priests? Of nobility?
6. What is God's role throughout this text? How are the saints involved in earthly affairs?
7. How was the Church structured at this time, both in terms of hierarchy as well as liturgies and prayers? What dissension is seen within the Church in Rome?
8. What kind of power does Leo have? Charlemagne?
9. How might Charlemagne's coronation by a pope shift the power dynamic between Church and state in the following centuries? How did both the pope and the emperor benefit from this arrangement?