CHARLEMAGNE

Matthias Becher

translated by David S. Bachrach

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RULING THE EMPIRE

In addition to its foreign policy dimensions, Charlemagne's elevation as emperor also had important effects on his exercise of lordship within his kingdom. In Charlemagne's view, this newly acquired title was not merely a formality, but rather changed qualitatively his status within the realm. Nothing makes this clearer than Charlemagne's effort in 802 to require the entire population of the realm swear an oath of loyalty—on the *nomen Caesaris*, the imperial title. This was the second general oath of allegiance since 789, one year after the fall of Duke Tassilo of Bavaria. At that time, *infideles homines*, disloyal people, had excused themselves for their revolt by stating that they had never sworn an oath of loyalty to the king and were therefore not obligated to him. This excuse was no longer to be accepted. From this time on all freemen who had reached thirteen years of age were required to swear loyalty to the emperor.

In 802, the emperor went a step beyond what had taken place in 789 by defining more strictly the flexible concept of fidelity. In

the past, the view was taken that to fulfill one's oath of loyalty it was sufficient not to threaten the life of the ruler or to summon any enemies into the kingdom. Now Charlemagne demanded more from his subjects. All people were expected to keep God's commandments, to respect all the emperor's possessions, to acknowledge his protection over the churches the weak, especially widows and orphans, and finally to obey imperial commands. These demands seem somewhat peculiar to us today because some of them have nothing to do with the business of state and others appear to be self-evident. However, in Charlemagne's time they were not and this demonstrates how little rulership had developed and how difficult it must have been to enforce state authority in the modern sense.

The other element of his demands stems from Charlemagne's conception of himself as a Christian king. He sought to fulfill the rules that were set forth in the Fürstenspiegel treatises, which were written during his time and elaborated the ideal conduct for princes. Alcuin himself repeatedly reminded Charlemagne of the most important task of the king, *correctio*, that is leading his subjects. These views ultimately originated in Augustine's work and were inspired by the admonitions to the Israelite kings described in the Old Testament. *De XII abusivis saeculi* (Concerning the Twelve Vices of the World)—attributed to the church father Cyprian and written in Ireland about 700—was an exceptionally influential work, in which the obligation of the king for *correctio* was stressed. He must not indulge in unjustified oppression of his subjects, but must give a just judgment without considering who was being judged. His obligations included the protection of the church, widows, and orphans, the fight against theft and other crimes, care for the poor, seeking good counsel and appointing good officers, as well as combating

heresy. These obligations repeatedly shine through in Charlemagne's internal political measures.

The difficulties that a medieval ruler could have in enforcing his authority can be seen, for example, in Aquitaine. In 781, Charlemagne invested his son Louis, his third son from his marriage with Hildegard, as sub-king there. During one of his father's visits, Louis only presented him with an appropriate gift after receiving a direct order to do so. When asked why, Louis answered that he found himself in a difficult position because his magnates, without exception, strove for their own advantage. On the one hand, they neglected public lands, and on the other they sought to transform them into private possessions. Louis was ruler only in name. Charlemagne's reaction to this seemingly scandalous situation was surprisingly mild. He reasserted royal control over the former royal fiscal properties but refrained from taking any punitive measures. He probably did not want to accuse the Aquitanian nobles of deliberately damaging the royal properties because this might have driven them into open rebellion. Although they had not rebelled in any way, but rather—at least in their own view—were loyal, their egoism endangered the king's position. Disciplining them over the long term was as difficult in its own way as warfare against declared enemies. Charlemagne's demand that the population of the empire leave imperial fiscal property untouched was an effort to force people, particularly the nobility, to recognize the special status of the ruler without setting out on the path toward confrontation.

All in all, the necessity of the general oath demonstrates how weakly developed lordly authority was within the realm. Thoughout his reign Charlemagne worked to increase his authority. Documentary evidence for his efforts survives in

numerous capitularies—texts which were divided into chapters—which should be classified somewhere between laws and decrees. In 779, soon after the first serious crisis of his reign, following his failed campaign into Spain in 778 and a setback in Saxony, Charlemagne issued at Herstal the most important capitulary of the early period of his rule. The problem of loyalty had already been dealt with. Here, Charlemagne banned so-called guilds and sworn associations. The members of these associations created bonds of loyalty among themselves that might be given preference in a conflict with the king.

Shortly after another crisis—namely the rebellion by Hardrad and the removal of Duke Tassilo of Bavaria—Charlemagne issued the next important capitulary, the so-called *Admonitio generalis* or General Admonition of 789. Under the influence of the learned Anglo-Saxon Alcuin of York, Charlemagne was depicted in this capitulary as the ruler of the Christian people, impressing on all his subjects obligations to the Church such as keeping Sunday holy. There are also some significant regulations which can be understood as suggesting a general oath of loyalty. Charlemagne prohibited perjury, especially when oaths were sworn over the gospels, over an altar, or over relics, as well as when numerous people swore the same oath. The last point is most relevant to a general oath of loyalty since this was sworn in groups before royal officials.

Charlemagne's next important act as a lawmaker took place during the important Synod of Frankfurt in 794. In its ecclesiastical decisions, this council reacted in a very particular manner and contrary to the east Roman Council of Nicaea against Adoptionism, a belief which had arisen in Spain that Christ had only been a man filled by God's Holy Spirit. Its secular decisions are clearly directed against internal weaknesses of the empire.

In 792/93, Charlemagne's oldest son, Pippin the Hunchback, had revolted against his father. Pippin, who had been practically excluded from the succession, found numerous supporters in the high nobility. It seems likely that there were Bavarians within this group who wished to free Tassilo from the monastery. The rebellion failed and Pippin spent the remainder of his life behind monastery walls. Shortly thereafter, Tassilo appeared publicly for the last time at Frankfurt in order to give up any claims to rule over Bavaria in his name or in the name of his descendants. It was only then that Charlemagne could really regard his lordship over Bavaria as secure, since the "show trial" of 788 had not been a legitimate basis for deposing the duke. Establishing his lordship within the empire was more difficult than one might have imagined given Charlemagne's numerous successes in foreign affairs.

Against this background, the imperial coronation not only meant increasing power and above all respect, but also a serious threat. The Frankish nobility was resourceful when it came to evading the ruler's authority. Thus, it is easy to imagine the next impending threat. Those, like the participants in Hardrad's conspiracy of 786, who argued that they were not bound to the king because they had not sworn an oath, could now easily justify their further disloyalty by claiming that they had sworn an oath to the king but not to the emperor. Thus, from Charlemagne's point of view, the oath of 802 became a necessity. The broadened concept of fidelity, as sketched out above, was intended to enforce the ruler's demands. Many of Charlemagne's goals to strengthen the loyalty of his subjects looked good on parchment but could never be put into practice—at least not over the long term. Instead, Charlemagne, like all his predecessors, had to buy the loyalty of his magnates in the usual way—with gifts and

other demonstrations of favor, and above all by assigning them important responsibilities.

In contrast to his predecessors, however, Charlemagne was not satisfied with this practice. According to his self-conception, he sought to be a ruler like the emperors of antiquity or the Byzantine emperors of his own time. Their word was law and, at least in theory, they did not have to waste their time on willful magnates. Charlemagne's incredible tenacity is evident from the fact that he never lost sight of his goals and continually issued capitularies expressing his views despite the considerable difficulties and resistance that he faced. And indeed, just by having his directives written down, the Frankish ruler imitated his great Roman models.

In 802, Charlemagne not only made the population of the empire swear an oath, he also engaged in intense legislative activity shortly after his imperial coronation which amounted to something like a "program of imperial government." (François/Louis Ganshof). The *Lorsch Annals* sum up his activity in the following manner: "And in the month of October, the emperor assembled a general synod at the named place [Aachen] and asked the bishops along with the priests and deans to read all of the canons which had been adopted by the synod, as well as the decretals of the popes. He ordered that these decrees be translated before all the bishops, priests, and deans. In a similar manner, he assembled all the monks and abbots who were present at the synod and asked them to read the rule of the holy father Benedict which was translated for all the abbots and monks (. . .) Then the emperor himself assembled all dukes, counts, and other Christians along with the legal scholars and had all the laws of the empire read out and translated so that each man heard his own law. He ordered that improvements be

made wherever necessary, and that the improved law be written down to enable the judges to make their decisions on the basis of written law and not accept any gifts. So all people, rich and poor alike, were to have justice."

Let us take a closer look at the secular aspects of this legislation. Charlemagne either re-edited or recorded for the first time Frankish, Frisian, Saxon, and Thuringian codes of law. He made additions to the laws of the Bavarians and Alemanni in the form of capitularies. He conceded a certain amount of independence to subjugated peoples, although the influence of Frankish law is clearly perceptible. Recording laws which up to this point had been orally transmitted by various peoples had a significant impact on their traditions. Not only did Charlemagne want to give a formal structure to the legal system of his empire and thus make it easier to govern, but he also wanted to strengthen his authority throughout the empire. Therefore, for example, it is not surprising that Charlemagne was still renowned as a lawgiver in thirteenth-century Saxony.

However, these laws had to be implemented. To this end, in order to structure and organize these parts of the realm thoroughly, the administrative system of counties was exported, even into newly conquered territories. Just like the *comes* of the Merovingian period, the Carolingian count commanded the military contingent from his district and presided at court. Both functions offered considerable economic possibilities since parts of the fines were due to the count, and his decisive role in the army provided him with the opportunity to deprive free farmers of their independence. However, it was not possible to extend this system of counties to cover the entire empire because, since the Merovingian period, there had been numerous ecclesiastical immunities (areas free from royal jurisdiction but guarantied by

the ruler), as well as allodial noble lordships. Even the counts, whom Charlemagne considered his officials, sought to become independent of the ruler's control. Furthermore, the ruler was not completely independent when appointing the counts since he had to take make allowances for hereditary claims and the local balance of power. In addition, the distances between the imperial court and certain counties were sometimes very large, which in itself made it difficult to translate decisions from the central authority to the countryside.

Nevertheless, Charlemagne strove to effect a positive change in these conditions. He intervened in the judicial system to improve the position of the poor and the powerless. During the Carolingian period, public life was sometimes characterized by extreme violence. Criminals were pursued with only limited success because of the rudimentary administrative system which lacked, among other things, a police force. Taking the law into one's own hands and vendettas were the order of the day. At least in theory, Charlemagne limited these problems by the obligation that the wronged accept reparations, if offered, from the guilty party. This usually occurred in a legal case. The counts or their representatives held court in the name of the king and passed sentences, while experienced legal representatives interpreted the law. These men had been chosen on an ad hoc basis until Charlemagne required that each judicial district have regular *scabini*, or lay judges. North of the Alps, these men belonged to the ranks of the richer land owners, whereas in Italy they were professional notaries. At the same time, the obligation of all freemen to attend court was limited to three times a year. In addition, Charlemagne established the office of the so-called reprimandary witnesses who were required to bring crimes to the attention of the court if the victims did not do so themselves.

Despite his good intentions, it is doubtful whether Charlemagne was able to succeed in bringing about a universal application of his policies or achieving his stated goal of having justice prevail more frequently. Alcuin aptly describes the difficulties which even the great Charlemagne could not overcome: "I am convinced of the king's good will, unfortunately there are more people who stand in the way than support him."

One means of binding the office holders more closely to the ruler at least in a personal manner was through vassalage, i.e. through the feudal system. The word *vassus* is Celtic in origin and designates a ruler's subordinates. During the Merovingian period, dependent free people as well as the unfree were called *vassi*. Dependent free people, or their ancestors, probably entered this state of dependence because of economic necessity or due to pressure from their future liege lords. This dependence was symbolized by the *commendatio*. This meant that the subordinate put his hands in the hands of his liege and promised him *servitium vel obsequium*, service and obedience. On the other side, the liege was obliged to support those who commended themselves to him. Frequently, this meant that the liege granted his subordinate a plot of land to farm. This formalized relationship of dependence eventually made its way into the upper social classes, while its origin remained in the public consciousness for a long time. Indeed, Charlemagne had humiliated Duke Tassilo to the extreme by requiring him in 787 to become his vassal and to accept Bavaria from him as a fief.

Even if it was a means of humiliating Tassilo, this event contributed decisively to the fact that vassalage became socially acceptable at the end of the eighth and early ninth century. Men, who in their youth had been brought up at the royal court and had become vassals there, frequently rose to be counts. These

vassi dominici, the vassals of the ruler (the king), were of course nobles whose fathers generally were already counts themselves. If the ruler trusted them, after years of loyal service he would offer each of these men their father's county or another. They remained his vassals and thus very closely bound to him. Over time, the two functions blended into one so that it became normal for a count or other official also to be a vassal of the king. This rise in social prestige brought with it changes in the nature of vassality, especially the obligations of the vassals. They were no longer expected to provide *servitium vel obsequium*, but rather *consilium et auxilium*, counsel and aid. In other words, the ties gradually loosened and broadened the flexibility and position of the vassals toward their liege lords.

Another means of improving the administration of the empire was to establish an intermediate authority whose task was to oversee local officials. In order to accomplish this task, the king normally dispatched the *missi dominici*, the king's envoys. According to the *Annals of Lorsch*, in 802 Charlemagne decisively altered this practice. Charlemagne no longer entrusted poorer vassals from the court with these missions, but, "rather chose archbishops, and other bishops, and abbots, and dukes, and counts in his realm who had no need to take gifts from the innocent. And he sent them throughout the empire so that the churches, widows and orphans, the poor, and all the people could have justice." The royal agents usually went out in pairs—one ecclesiastical and one secular official—and traveled a yearly circuit of numerous counties and bishoprics, "in order to control and organize everything for the benefit of the king." (R. Schieffer). But their authority was largely dependent on their status and reputation which meant that even before 802 many of them had belonged to the high nobility just like the counts over

whom they were supposed to exercise control. As a consequence, they were not open to bribery. However, even close associates of Charlemagne, such as the Bishop Theodulf of Orléans, were often faced with gifts while undertaking their duties and certainly did not turn them all down. In addition, friendships and relationships naturally led to conflicts of interest between the official obligations of the king's envoys and their personal goals. But Charlemagne was no idealist and he appears to have recognized these problems. In the "program for the imperial government" issued at Aachen, he insisted that all those who had complaints, whether Christian or heathen, stood under his protection, and that anyone who attacked such people, turned them into dependent servants, or sold them would face the death penalty. By its very existence, this rule shows the extent of the resistance to the ruler's intentions.

Only the ruler himself could properly control his officials. As a result, Charlemagne was almost always on the move. His court took up residence in various royal palaces in the countryside as well as in monasteries and episcopal sees. The royal palaces included old Merovingian sites such as Compiègne, Quierzy (north of Paris), and Attigny (near Rheims) which Charlemagne's father Pippin had also preferred. Charlemagne also brought new palaces into the spotlight which show that the empire's center of gravity had shifted eastwards. These palaces included Frankfurt, Ingelheim, Diedenhofen, Worms, and finally Aachen, which from 795 on served as Charlemagne's winter palace. Aachen was modeled after Ravenna and Pavia. One can only speculate on Charlemagne's choice of location since its advantages could certainly have been provided by many other places. Aachen did offer the advantage of the hot springs, in which the aging Charlemagne could swim, and the extensive forests to the

west where he could pass his time hunting—the appropriate activity for nobles. In 801, Charlemagne had the statue of Theuderic the Great transported from Ravenna to Aachen. In doing so he tried to establish a link with the great king of the Goths—who like Charlemagne himself was a barbarian—and had ruled large parts of the former Roman empire.

The organization of the royal court was adopted from the Merovingians. However, the office of the mayor of the palace, which the Carolingians had used to deprive the Merovingian kings of their power, was abolished. Four court offices remained: the treasurer, the marshal, the seneschal, who was responsible both for feeding the household and for the administration of the imperial fisc, and the chamberlain who oversaw the administration of the court. The count of the palace participated in administering royal justice. The functions of the Merovingian chancery were transferred to the royal chapel. The chapel was originally the place where the *cappa*, the cloak, of the Frankish royal saint Martin was kept. The clerics who served there were therefore called *capellani*. Their head, who in later times was called archchaplain, oversaw the writing of royal charters and letters. The chapel was also used to store important documents. This is how it gave its name to all the clerics who served in the chapel.

In addition to the *missi dominici* were the imperial assemblies, regularly held by Charlemagne, which served to maintain the bonds between the ruler and his ecclesiastical and secular magnates. The theoretical work, *De ordine palatii* (On the Order of the Palace), composed by Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, notes that two imperial assemblies were to be held every year, a general assembly early in the year and a smaller one in the fall where only higher officers were to appear. At these

assemblies projects for the coming year were discussed and planned. Charlemagne frequently did not hold these general assemblies until the summer. During the early years of his reign, these assemblies usually took place at Worms or Ingelheim. Later, most assemblies were held at Aachen. General problems such as the price of grain, monetary values, or simply the summoning of the army were often dealt with. However, these assemblies also involved juridical proceedings and the welcoming of foreign ambassadors. Occasionally, these assemblies also expanded into synods as was the case at Frankfurt in 794.

The royal estates were the material basis for royal rule. The fisc consisted of properties in the regions that would become Lotharingia and the area along the Mosel as well as Merovingian fiscal properties, especially in the Ile de France and in the area around Soissons. Around 800, Charlemagne had an account drawn up detailing the royal fisc throughout the empire, which meant everything down to the last wooden rake was listed including all the buildings, cattle, and an inventory of all royal properties. Only a small part of this effort has survived, but even so it provides us with our most important source for understanding the Carolingian agricultural economy. In this context the *Capitulare de Villis*—a detailed decree directed at the administrators of the royal fisc—must be mentioned. It contains regulations concerning the cultivation of fruit trees and vineyards, the care of forest lands through clearance and reforesting, the expansion of specifically designated crops, including cabbage and herbs, and the rearing of cattle and smaller animals, especially birds. The king demanded not only that the administrators deliver a precisely determined quantity of products from the royal estates, but also that an eventual surplus would be stored or sold, and these gains precisely recorded.

Charlemagne wanted the administration of the royal fisc to deal with the smallest of details, and may have been hindered here as in the administration of the entire empire by the egoism of his officials. This edict too may also have been in issued in reaction to a crisis, namely the famine of 792/93.

Charlemagne sought to reform and reorganize in other areas as well. These efforts were particularly enduring as regards monetary policy. He asserted the exclusive right of the king to mint money so that all coins were minted either in royal mints or at least with royal permission. Building on his father Pippin's efforts, Charlemagne established a monetary standard that remained the basis for the currency for a very long time. One pound of silver produced 20 shillings which corresponded to 240 pennies. Twelve pennies or denarii had the same value as one shilling or solidus. This was only a unit to assist with calculations, as the shilling was usually not minted at all since it was of no use in the daily life of an agricultural economy. The only preserved gold solidus from Charlemagne's reign, which was recently discovered in an excavation at Ingelheim, was characteristically minted at Arles in Provence. Gold coins of somewhat lesser value are known from Italy. It is likely that production in the catchment area of the Mediterranean was centered at this time on long-distance trade and finance with the result that high value coins of this type could circulate.

Charlemagne's measures to reorganize the military service of free people, the *liberi homines*, must be understood within the context of his great military campaigns. The size of one's property was supposed to determine how often and how intensively one was called up for military service. These measures were necessary because in 805 a summons for military service in the area between the Seine and the Loire had failed on account of a

famine. As a result, Charlemagne ordered that every tenant with three to five so-called hides (homesteads), as well as the holders of fiefs, were required to serve against the enemy. A tenant of two hides had to join with another in the same position. The one who was more capable of fighting had to go into battle, while the other provided him with economic support. The same rules applied to two freemen, one of whom possessed two hides and the other one hide. Men with only one hide had to join in groups of three. The one who could most easily be spared was to be equipped by the other two. Those who possessed half a hide were grouped together so that five could support a sixth who went on campaign. Charlemagne also issued similar regulations for those who did not have any land but had a certain amount of cash. Just a few years later, the size of property that obliged on to service in the army was raised from three to four hides.

These regulations were long seen as evidence for the economic decline of freemen. They could no longer bear the high costs entailed by military service because Frankish warfare over the second half of the eighth century came to be based on armored cavalry. The free farmers could not afford the horses or the expensive armor. However, the fact that even during the ninth century the majority of the Frankish army consisted of foot soldiers casts doubt on this explanation. Furthermore, the assumption of a general military obligation seems too modern. It is based on the notion that a societal order based on freedom and equality had lasted from the dim and distant past up to the late eighth century. But, circumstances were very different from what used to be believed by earlier scholars. As early as the sixth century, the magnates and their followers formed the backbone of Merovingian military forces. The numerous civil wars of the second half of the seventh and first half of the eighth centuries

were waged exclusively by the noble military retinues. There never was a general obligation of military service up to the time of Charlemagne. Indeed, it was Charlemagne himself who introduced this obligation and had to consider the conditions of poorer freemen, as we have seen, in order to recruit them at all.

These regulations were probably necessary because the Carolingian empire had reached the limits of its fullest possible expansion around 800. During his wars of conquest, Charlemagne had largely been able to rely on the nobility and their military retinues. Small farmers, who would have been more or less forced to go into foreign regions, would of necessity have left their fields untended for an indeterminate length of time. As a result they would have been of little use. The nobility could afford to participate in these expeditions, especially since they received a disproportionate share of the booty. Now, however, the Frankish empire itself fell victim to plunderers on the prowl. From the first decades of the ninth century, the Vikings plagued the Frankish coasts and began to advance inland in search of booty. The defensive war that was necessary to resist them was of no interest to the nobles: there was nothing to gain. It is therefore not surprising that *defensio patriae*, 'home defense,' is frequently mentioned in the context of freemen's military service. Only those freemen who were directly affected by the attacks were willing to face the invaders, while the nobles, who held properties in numerous provinces, could avoid these problems.

In addition to his efforts regarding the economy, administration, and the army, Charlemagne was also concerned with education and scholarship. His court was home to the most important scholars of the western Christian world who, at least at first, were not only recruited from within his empire. These included the Anglo-Saxon Alcuin, the Visigoth Theodulf of

Orléans, the Lombards Paulinus of Aquilea and Paul the Deacon, and the Irishman Dungal. They had all benefited from exceptional educations in their homelands. Obviously at first no Frank could compete with them. Charlemagne's empire, in fact, was suffering from a near educational emergency, a result of the decline during the late Merovingian period which had had exceptionally disastrous effects on education and scholarship. It was only gradually that Franks came to join this elite, foremost among them Einhard, the author of the *Vita Karoli magni*.

Within this circle, the view probably developed that not only their own works but every written text was to be measured by classical standards. This was not an end in itself but above all to serve as a better understanding of Christian faith and the proper course of religious services. Regional developments in the liturgy conflicted with the unity of the cult. Even more importantly, the Latin language, in which all texts were written, was breaking apart and gradually developing into the various romance languages. As a consequence, there were problems of comprehension which were the basis of difficulties in establishing a unified liturgy.

The reform of the church was as much of interest to Charlemagne as the secular organization of his empire. He was able to use the preliminary work of Boniface and Chrodegang of Metz as a basis for his own efforts. In the process Charlemagne made use of authoritative works in this process which indicate the importance of Rome for Frankish church reform. As early as 774, Charlemagne asked Pope Hadrian for an anthology of church law which had been produced in the sixth century by Dionysius Exiguus and which Hadrian himself had expanded. This *Dionysio-Hadriana* was used enthusiastically in the Frankish kingdom. Likewise, the king asked Rome for a sacramentary

(a mass book) from Pope Gregory the Great, which was to serve as the basis for a unified liturgy. Furthermore, soon after 787, Charlemagne obtained a copy of the rule of Benedict of Nursia, that is a copy of the original which at that time must still have been at Monte Casino. The rule of Saint Benedict, however, was closely tied to Roman monasticism and may even be traced back all the way to Pope Gregory the Great. Even if numerous other works followed, these three texts formed the foundation of Charlemagne's effort to reform the church.

One of the central concepts of reform was concern that the correct text, which was to ensure the correct and unified organization of ecclesiastical life in the entire Frankish empire, was used. Charlemagne clearly stressed this point to his bishops and abbots in the circular letter *De litteris colendis* (On the Care of Studies). The most important precondition was the establishment of schools in episcopal churches to ensure a basic education. Charlemagne's maxim stated that "good action is better than proper knowledge, but action derives from knowledge." Clerics and monks were educated at these schools and were the only ones to put these books to good use, make copies of them and started to circulate them. In order to avoid the earlier problems of comprehension, Charlemagne insisted on the use of classical Latin. Thus, the West saw the development of a pure language, which was used almost exclusively by the learned, and from which the romance languages grew increasingly distinct. A new script even developed in the western part of the empire, the so-called caroline minuscule. The standardization of the script was an important prerequisite for the diffusion both of the new ideas and of old texts. Alcuin's contribution in this effort was the most important. At the request of Charlemagne, he edited the Bible, eliminated errors and barbarisms from it and put it down

in caroline minuscule. This text would become authoritative although, like other Carolingian texts, not universally accepted.

Charlemagne not only promoted education, but also called on his subjects to obey Christian teachings and to turn away completely from paganism. He did so most notably in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789 in which he emulated the biblical king Josiah, who was always concerned about the order of his realm. Charlemagne insisted that clerics and monks live a Christian life so that they could do justice to their roles as the models and shepherds of their flocks. Once Carloman and Pippin, under Boniface's influence, had taken action against secularized clerics. But they acted only half-heartedly, since they needed the political support of these clerics. Only very cautiously did they try to separate the secular and ecclesiastical functions of bishops. Charlemagne continued this cautious approach, although he did stress the need to maintain canonical regulations and venerable traditions more than his predecessors. "Bishops were supposed to spend as all their time at their sees and in their dioceses; and one bishop should never hold more than one see. Their primary concern should be for the clergy and pastoral care . . . Diocesan synods were established for the improvement of pastoral care, to educate and oversee the clergy. The bishops were supposed to keep an eye on everything, everywhere at all times: what the priests taught, how they celebrated the service, and whether they lived a proper life. Bishops should regularly visit their parishes, check on the lives of the Christians living there and confirm the adolescents." (A. Angenendt)

Anyone given such responsibility also needed to be controlled. This was the role of the archbishops. Charlemagne did not force the re-establishment of the metropolitan organization, but introduced it gradually. During the early years of Charlemagne's

reign, there was only one archbishop, Wilchar of Sens, who had replaced Chrodegang of Metz. It was only after his death in 786/87 that the number of archbishops began to increase until we reach a total of twenty-one metropolitans listed in Charlemagne's will of 811. In his capitularies, particularly the *Admonitio generalis*, Charlemagne already assumed a working metropolitan system. This system was only curbed by Charlemagne himself, as he continued to hold imperial synods. He thus counteracted the right of archbishops to summon the bishops of their own church provinces. The ruler was not supposed to name bishops and abbots, but Charlemagne nevertheless continued to do so at his discretion. On occasion, Charlemagne even left a see vacant in order to use its properties for his own purposes. The true head of the Frankish church, now as before, remained the king.

The internal organization of the Frankish empire under Charlemagne was widely marked by a considerable divergence between desire and reality. According to modern scholars, Charlemagne's empire after 800 encompassed approximately 1 million square kilometers with 180 dioceses (excluding the emerging papal state), 700 monasteries, 750 royal estates (*fisci*), which enclosed some 150 palaces with 25 fully erected residences, 150 administrative districts in Italy, 20 in Frankish Spain, and 500 in Gaul and east of the Rhine. This unimaginably large empire was probably only "governable" because far fewer demands were far made on the state by contemporaries than today. But Charlemagne himself was not satisfied with this situation. On the contrary, he continually strove to implement his far-reaching policies. But the reality in his empire looked different as he himself probably realized. In 813, at the end of his reign, Charlemagne ordered as many as five synods to be held (in

Arles, Rheims, Mainz, Chalon, Tours), which were supposed to deal with the shortcomings. Charlemagne failed because of the individual interests of the nobles, of which he was undoubtedly aware. But he could not restrict them effectively as he needed them for the administration of his empire. It was the traditional right of the nobility to serve the king in a distinguished position. The king had to consider these claims since his great conquests would have been impossible without the support of the nobility. As early as 802, Alcuin assessed the reform efforts of his lord in the following manner: "I am certain of the good intention of our lord and emperor and that he seeks to order everything in the realm granted to him by God according to what is just. However, I am also certain that he has more followers who seek to undermine justice than who seek to support it, that is more *praedatores*, robbers, of justice than its *praedicatores*, preachers, that there are more who seek their own advantage than those who look after God's advantage." Only a few of Charlemagne's undertakings for the organization of the empire proved to be lasting, with the result that the last years of Charlemagne's reign can be described as an era of decay and crisis (Ganshof). But perhaps this impression stems from Charlemagne's own high expectations of the effectiveness of his "state," which he put down in his capitularies. In the end, it was only his educational reforms that had wide-ranging effects and laid the foundations for a standardized culture of the Latin West.