

Winchester practice, recognizing that liturgy changes. Over five chapters Foxhall Forbes has demonstrated that theology too developed in response to changing ideas and beliefs, that the processes of law affected the daily lives of those who knew little of the theological debate which accompanied its interpretation, and that theology played its part in the instruction of priests and the provision of pastoral care. A huge wealth of detail is presented in an entirely readable way in an important book.

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JANE ROBERTS
Institute of English Studies,
University of London
 jane.roberts@kcl.ac.uk

The Formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, Baptism, and the Imperium Christianum. By OWEN M. PHELAN.
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CHARLEMAGNE'S empire was a Christian empire, as is illustrated, for example, by the fact that the term *fidelis* was used to indicate not only fidelity to the ruler but also faith in the Christian God. The inclusion of non-Christian subjects in the empire was therefore a challenge. Adopting the Christian religion was part and parcel of the inclusion of such groups into the Carolingian political order. The proper way to Christianize Saxons and Avars after these groups had been subdued by military means was subject to discussions and in these debates the Anglo-Saxon courtier Alcuin, one of Charlemagne's most important advisers, played a crucial role. He also plays a central role in this major study, devoted to the role of Christian formation in Carolingian politics.

The book starts with a discussion of the term *sacramentum*, a term which, just like *fidelis*, is used in a secular as well as a religious sense. In antiquity we find it often in a legal context, but Vegetius writing in late antiquity on military matters already combined a legal with a religious meaning. The book then proceeds by looking at the ways authors such as Gregory of Tours, Isidore of Seville, and Bede use the term, ending with Carolingian authorities such as Alcuin or Paschasius Radbertus, who employed the term as an organizing concept that helped to identify and organize political and religious communities. Essential for belonging to the

dominant political and religious community was the sacrament of baptism. This was seen as the sacrament which established faith, incorporated outsiders into the single unified community of *fideles*, and required specific moral obligations of the baptized.

The second chapter explains the central importance of baptism in Carolingian thinking and legislation. How Charlemagne used the concept of Christian community established through baptism is demonstrated by his active role in the controversy over Adoptionism, raging in the 790s, where Carolingian sources depicted the king as having religious authority on the basis of a community that was established by baptism. Apart from such ideological uses of baptismal discourse, baptism was often the subject of legislation by Carolingian rulers. An analysis of capitularies and their concerns with baptism demonstrates that it was mostly the formational aspect of the ritual that was stressed. Baptism should not be performed without the proper amount of education. A specific case for Carolingian rulers were the Jews living in their Christian realms. The vehement discussion witnessed by the polemical treatises penned by bishop Agobard of Lyon originated from his protest against the prohibition, issued by Louis the Pious in the 820s, against baptizing slaves belonging to Jews.

Subsequently the book concentrates on the pivotal figure of Alcuin of York and his views on baptism, specifically related to the issue of the missionary strategy that should inspire the Christianization of the Avars. Alcuin's strategy stressed a peaceful approach centring around persuasion and education. His approach was threefold. First the unbelievers had to be convinced by preaching, then they should come to baptism, and thus after having received the Christian faith they should be taught how to live a proper Christian life. Alcuin's ideas are reflected in the text relating a synod on the banks of the river Danube held in 796 which dealt with the principles of preaching the faith. This synod was presided over by Paulinus of Aquileia, who stood in close contact with Alcuin. In two of his letters Alcuin adopted a treatise on baptism that scholars refer to as *Primo paganus*. It has been argued that Alcuin himself was the author of this treatise and Phelan accepts this identification. Through this work, if it is his, as well as through his manifold other works, Alcuin contributed substantially to the discourse on Christian formation and thus to the shaping of a lay morality in the Carolingian world.

That this Christian formation took hold in the Carolingian world is then examined through the works related to two

bishops, Jesse of Amiens and Gerbald of Liège. In 812 baptismal thinking received a boost when Charlemagne issued a letter to his metropolitan bishops inquiring about the ways they administered baptism in their dioceses. This imperial message generated a massive response from his subjects, leading to an impressive corpus of baptismal explanations, recently thoroughly studied by the late Susan Keefe. According to Phelan, these treatises not only testify to the diversity of Carolingian ecclesiastical thinking, but are an important witness to the importance of Christian formation in the Carolingian world. Christian formation and education rather than liturgical uniformity were central in this whole debate. Later in the ninth century the work of Jonas of Orléans, written for a lay audience, and the work of two lay authors, the female aristocrat Dhuoda and her male counterpart Nithard, confirm that the moral education proposed by Alcuin had taken hold among aristocratic members of the laity. We encounter the basic tenets of Alcuin's teaching on the subject in sermons and liturgical texts of the period, which propagated them among the laity.

This study carefully investigates a substantial number of Carolingian texts in order to demonstrate the importance of baptism and Christian formation in the late eighth and ninth centuries. It clearly argues that thanks to Alcuin Christian morals were of great importance in Carolingian thinking and further demonstrates that these morals were adopted by at least some important lay men and women. The discussion is informed and convincing, although perhaps a bit too much stress is laid on the role of baptism, thus losing sight of other important aspects of Carolingian thinking. One may further query whether the rather optimistic view concerning the role of baptism in Carolingian society is not following the Carolingian intellectual discourse too easily. Perhaps a careful scrutiny of the fissures and cracks in the source material would reveal more about tensions and problems in Carolingian baptismal thought than this otherwise convincing study suggests. But even if this would be the case, this book remains a rich and welcome contribution to the field of Carolingian studies.

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ROB MEENS
Utrecht University
r.m.j.meens@uu.nl